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# Lifestyle as Habitat of Tomorrow Coexisting Models of Housing in the City

Aleksandar Petanovski*, Dimitar Papasterevski, Gordan Petrov

*University of Ss Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia*

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**Key words:** Lifestyle; Habitus; Housing, Community; Coexisting models

***Correspondence:** Aleksandar Petanovski, University of Ss Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. E-mail: aleksandar_petanovski@hotmail.com

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**Abstract**

Living in a time of uncertain future, the home is in a constant process of re-thinking; from pluralization and individualization in the society and discontinuation with historical models, to social and spatial mobility, rational choice and availability of resources, leisure time and changing socio-demographic characteristics and the buildup of social fragmentation, there is a need for a re-qualification of the home as a way of identification.

The term lifestyle, way of life or style of life in the contemporary society is often used in mainstream culture, media and marketing, but the term has a long theoretical background in early social research. From the individual psychology research of Alfred Adler's style of life, through Pierre Bourdieu's hierarchical models, lifestyles constitute the entirety of the actions of man in given conditions of the context. Can lifestyles emerge from the static and dynamic processes of social stratification, or can they transform their properties in the contemporary society of globalization?

The research of the social structure (the way of life) and the material structure (architecture) of chosen areas of the city of Skopje in which we can find the idea of collective form, from the traditional Novo maalo neighborhood and living in the house, the courtyard and the street, to the community living in the atrium building of the Railway workers, the vertical dwellings on the bank of the river Vardar, emerging from the horizontal structure of the open and transit City Trading Center, to the small ring of the center of the city defined by the blocks and towers of the City Wall. The research is carried through 182 questionnaires of inhabitants in these areas, operationalizing lifestyles in empirical research.

Can lifestyle become an analytical and in the same time generative tool for the future habitat models?

## Introduction

Living in a time of uncertain future, the home is in a constant process of re-thinking; from pluralization and individualization in the society and discontinuation with historical models, to social and spatial mobility, rational choice and availability of resources, leisure time and socio-demographic characteristics and the buildup of social fragmentation, there is a need for a re-qualification of the home as a way of identification.

To understand the human need for a home in the present and future, we need to understand the term *lifestyle.* The term *way of life* or *style of life* in the contemporary society is often used in mainstream culture, media and marketing, but the term has a long theoretical background in early social research. From the individual psychology research of Alfred Adler's style of life [1], through Pierre Bourdieu's of habitus as a concept that tries to bond the objective, material conditions and integrate them with the subjective disposition as a practical set of expectations in which the objective future represents a field of opportunities. Lifestyles can be seen as a reflection of the habitus, that active dimension that constitutes the entirety of the

actions of man in given conditions of the context [2].

The research of the social structure (the way of life; people lifestyles) and the material structure (living spaces; architecture) of chosen areas of the city of Skopje in which we can find the idea of collective form, from traditional areas of housing in the city, to archetypical examples of integrated living of the modern and the post-modern. Can we anticipate how the future form of the urban housing emerges from the contemporary lifestyles and how by recognizing the way of life is crucial to generating an integrated model of housing in the city?

### *Coexiting Models of Housing in the City*

The unity of social characteristics in order to achieve certain goals is realized through the latent functions of lifestyles, in which choice has functional dimension. Lifestyles can be observed as a reflection of the individual utility of the means and resources in a context, both chosen and predetermined. The margins in which this active dimension is possible are not structurally fixed and can be changed at individual level, thus the context represents both the condition and the reason of the behavior of the inhabitants [3]. Can lifestyles emerge from the static and dynamic processes of social stratification, or can they transform their properties in the contemporary society of the post-globalization era?

### *The Housing Fragments of Skopje as a Model of Integrated Living*

The research of the social structure (the way of life) and the material structure (architecture) of chosen areas of the city of Skopje in which we can find the idea of collective form, from the traditional Novo maalo neighborhood and living in the house, the courtyard and the street, to the community living in the atrium building of the railway workers, to the “small ring” of the center of the city defined by the blocks and tower of the City Wall. All of the chosen examples as physical structures are built in different time periods and they emerge from a different social background. The chosen fragments represent housing forms with an active social dimension; it is both a dynamic form, existing and transforming, and also a static frame of possible opportunities.

The apartment blocks, (ground level + 6 floors) and towers, (ground level + 11 floors) of the “City Wall” (1965, various architects) in its physical characteristics represents a mega-structure, incorporating mix used programs with the dominant housing structure of 1814 apartments. This is a plan developed after the devastating earthquake in 1963, in which almost 80% of the city tissue was destroyed. The City Wall is a segment of the wining proposal of the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange from the international competition (1965) to rebuild the city of Skopje, especially the center of the city on the right bank of the river Vardar. The term *mega-structure* [4] in this case refers to the polyvalence properties that makes the frame as a *ring* (Figure 1) that socially and physically integrates the center of the city, from the main pedestrian concentric walkway, under a thick green belt, that becomes main artery of the pedestrian movement, connecting the dispersed tissue of the fragmented city of Skopje, to the infrastructure that run along with it. Six different housing apartment types with common falcilites: one-bedroom apartment for a person responsible for service maintenance, a meeting room / children’s play room, a workshop, bicycle storage, a laundry room along with the mix-progam in the street level with interval passages, makes this structure as a network for different categories of users, an authentic collectivity as a social condenser.

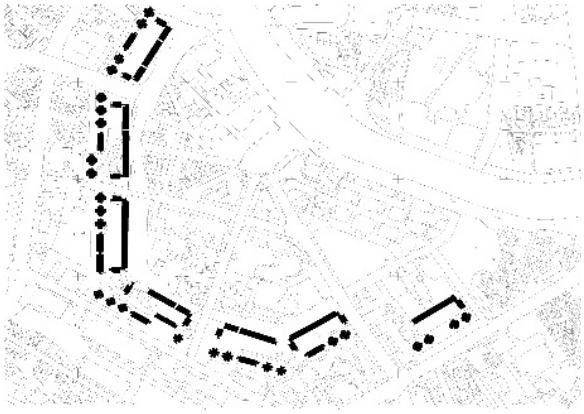


*Figure 1: Plan of the small city ring, the city wall*

The GTC towers (ground level + 8 floors) on the bank of the river Vardar (1952, architect Aleksandar Serafimovski) is a composition of five verticals, with an alternating position in plan, connected with a later built structure of an open commercial center (1973, architect Zivko Popovski). The ground level in incorporated in the structure of the shopping mall and a series of passages linking a park from the south, with the open commercial area and the bank of the river to the north (Figure 2).

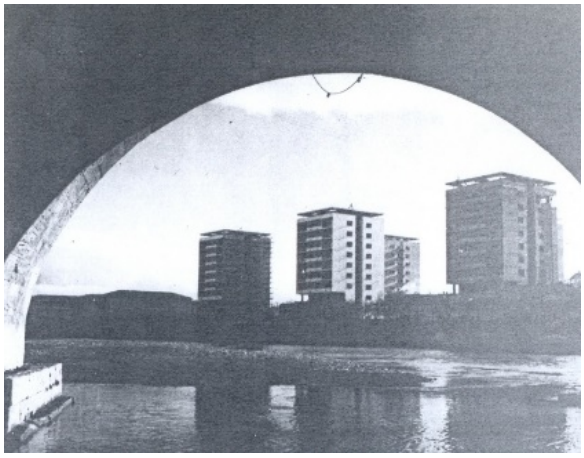


*Figure 2: The towers seen from under the stone bridge (https://marh.mk/)*

The towers itself have two different types of apartments, with four apartments per level and also common areas in the top of the tower, a laundry room and an open terrace. It is impossible to separate these structures as two, they are integrated through function and space and that complexity in the interaction of the two can teach us of the ingenuity of creating architecture through the social relationships and special relations (Figure 3).

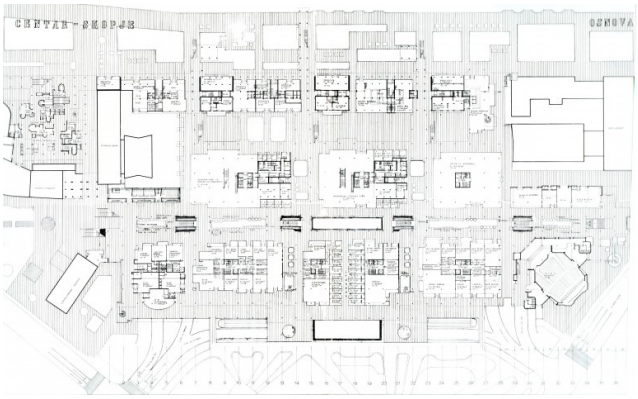


*Figure 1: Plan of the ground level / intergrating the old (Towers) with the new (GTC, open comercial center)*

"Novo maalo" and "Madzir maalo" are relatively old neighborhoods, and imprint of the small remaining single-family housing tissue of the late IX century Skopje. It can be considered as a bridge from the traditional Balkan city towards the project of modernization. The everyday life in this neighborhood is undoubtably connected to the traditions and the genius loci of the place. With its habits and activities, today the inhabitants live in the traces of the past, dealing with the challenges of growth of the city everywhere around them. Despite these are the one of the oldest single-family housing neighborhoods, especially in the center of the city, there is a plan for a radical re-urbanization of this areas, threatening to completely erase the existing structures and erase the memory they carry in relation to the city. There are very special social activities that the inhabitants from this neighborhood have had as traditions for a very long time; the annual "Traditional Madzir Maalo Gatherings" where participants compete and socialize through many sport competition, food and drink making and music. There is also the traditional bonfire for Christmas Eve in Novo Maalo, an old tradition, a ceremony, the night before Christmas, with lighting the fire, drinking spirits, organized from the inhabitants and open to the whole public, all as a part of their history and tradition, especially important in todays way of disintegrated social family life (Figure 4).

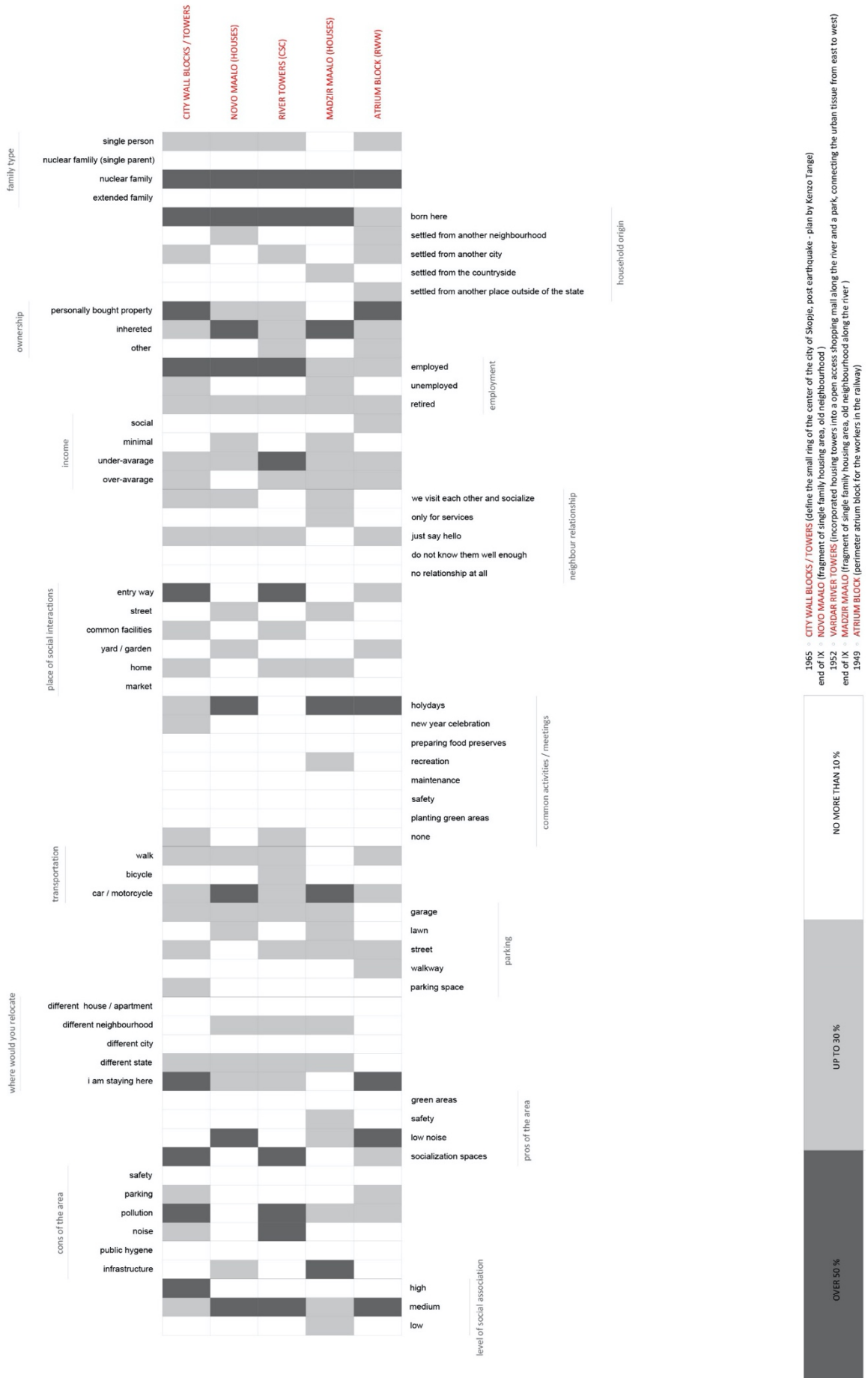


*Figure 4: Bonfire in novo maalo on christmas eve*

The structure of the neighborhoods relating to the street scheme is a modern orthogonal grid / deformed by the local geo-morphological forces of the context, the river Vardar to the north (Madzir maalo) and super positioned, regulated street plan in different direction (Novo maalo), creating extraordinary spaces in the cross sections, creating a *star* [5]. There is, in both cases, a contradiction between the regulation and the spontaneity of the scheme; strait street that converge in irregular cutouts, with houses that even today have the traditional models of living in a community. From our point of view, what characterizes these neighborhoods is the combination of the density and the human scale (Figure 5), offering both individual freedom and social coherency, with the ability for a evolutive growth. We can say there are key elements / patterns emerging; density, individuality, critical mass, flexibility, evolutive growth, diversity, human scale, public, informality, identity.



*Figure 5: Novo maalo street (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Novo_maalo,_kon_Prolece.jpg)*


CITY WALL BLOCKS / TOWERS
NOVO MAALO (HOUSES)
RIVER TOWERS (CSC)
MADZIR MAALO (HOUSES)
ATRIUM BLOCK (RWW)
family type
single person
nuclear famlily (single parent)
nuclear family
extended family
household origin
born here
settled from another neighbourhood
settled from another city
settled from the countryside
settled from another place outside of the state
ownership
personally bought property
inhereted
other
employment
employed
unemployed
retired
income
social
minimal
under-avarage
over-avarage
neighbour relationship
we visit each other and socialize
only for services
just say hello
do not know them well enough
no relationship at all
place of social interactions
entry way
street
common facilities
yard / garden
home
market
common activities / meetings
holydays
new year celebration
preparing food preserves
recreation
maintenance
safety
planting green areas
none
transportation
walk
bicycle
car / motorcycle
parking
garage
lawn
street
walkway
parking space
where would you relocate
different house / apartment
different neighbourhood
different city
different state
i am staying here
pros of the area
green areas
safety
low noise
socialization spaces
cons of the area
safety
parking
pollution
noise
public hygene
infrastructure
level of social association
high
medium
low
OVER 50 %
UP TO 30 %
NO MORE THAN 10 %
1965 - CITY WALL BLOCKS / TOWERS (define the small ring of the center of the city of Skopje, post earthquake - plan by Kenzo Tange)
end of IX - NOVO MAALO (fragment of single family housing area, old neighbourhood )
1952 - VARDAR RIVER TOWERS (incorporated housing towers into a open access shopping mall along the river and a park, connecting the urban tissue from east to west)
end of IX - MADZIR MAALO (fragment of single family housing area, old neighbourhood along the river )
1949 - ATRIUM BLOCK (perimeter atrium block for the workers in the railway)

The atrium perimeter block, (ground level + 3) designed for the railway workers, (1946, architect Michail Dvornikov) is one of the first multi-family housing project in the city. It carries the idea of an organized housing community / colony (informal name of the building is Railway colony), is a referent example of an atrium perimeter block (Figure 6).

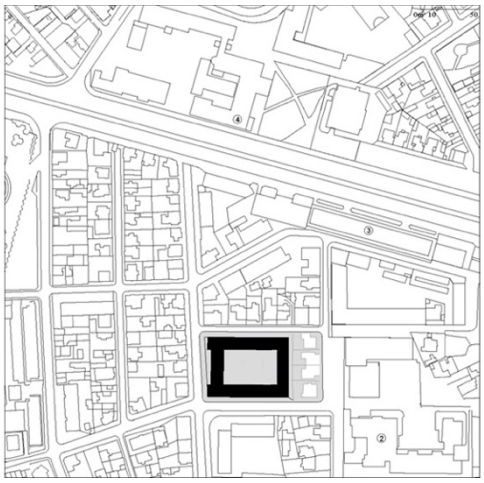


*Figure 6: Plan of the atrium perimeter block in the context*

The main characteristic is the inner courtyard, an oasis for the inhabitants. It is the primary outdoor space for recreation and socialization (Figure 7).



*Figure 7: Panorama of the inner courtyard*

The apartments are spacious with high ceilings and they have a dual orientation - to the street and to the inner courtyard. In its structure, in the south wing, there are common facilities such as a laundry room and a two-story high ceiling cinema. It is an interesting combination od programs, beneficial for both the inhabitants of the building and inhabitants of the surrounding area. Today it is a silent reminder of the possibilities that this various mix programs offer, but it still carries the collective way of life and the strong social association of the inhabitants.

### *Lifestyles: Investigating the Social Background*

The research is carried through 182 questionnaires of inhabitants in these areas, operationalizing *lifestyles* in empirical research. The questionnaire explores and investigates first, the demographic structure of the inhabitants, the chronology of the household and the typology of the family structure and second, the social interrelations of the inhabitants generated within the physical structure, everyday habitual patterns and psychological aspects of the social life. The lifestyle is investigated through quantitative and qualitative analysis research in the interaction between the duality of the objective and subjective present living conditions. By investigating the contemporary lifestyles in the relationship between the “function” and “structure”, hidden behind the urban fragments of housing in the city, we can highlight the schemes of orientations and observe behavioral patterns, which can become a generating tool for architecture itself.

The first part is an investigation in the family typology, its chronology and density. Next is the social relationships that dominate in the chosen area and latest the individual association and identity of the inhabitants with what we call a home.

It is in the relations of the social activities where we can find the regularities and irregularities of the lifestyles. They can be seen as a consequence of the physical surroundings and vice versa, the physical as consequence of the particular lifestyles. The questionnaires derived from the generally known social structure and were intentionally focused so that the inhabitants can easily note the answers, who later can become patterns [6], [7]. By simply presenting the finds in simplified integrated disposition we can observe the general inclinations and behavioral patterns that emerge from the comparative study of the different fragments (Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Comparative Lifestyle research through the carried questionaries*

The observations can be sometimes very indicative, but sometimes also contradictory and ambiguous. Can we unravel the strings from the mechanism and by a further investigation of a specific pattern of observation create a tool for the idea of the future home?

### *Recognising the Lifestyles as Social Condensers*

Even though the term *lifestyle* can be hard to specify and concretize as a fixed object, mainly due to the fact that they are interdependent of the dynamic processes between the individual and the context of the society, we can simply observe them as structures for identification, integration and communication.

By identifying the particular lifestyles of a chosen habitat and organizing them in integrated patterns, as well as attributing those forms to appropriate structures, we can anticipate the needs of the future home through the vital forces of the past.

Can *lifestyle* become an analytical and in the same time generative tool for the future habitat models?

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