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The collection includes articles by Russian and Serbian historians, philosophers devoted to various aspects of urbanization. The works are distinguished by their diversity and have a multifaceted character. The collection is intended for teachers of universities and schools, graduate students, students and all interested in history.

Editorial Board:

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A. Rastović

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### **VUKSANOVIĆ-MACURA Z.**

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### **GARDEN CITY IN INTERWAR SERBIA: FROM ENGLAND *VIA* RUSSIA**

The conclusion of the First World War was the turning point in the urbanization process in Serbia, which became part of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, after 1929 named as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Uncontrolled population growth led to a pronounced housing crisis in all major cities. During the two interwar decades, the population of the capital, Belgrade, tripled. The housing shortage resulted in an uncontrolled urban sprawl [15]. It led to the illegal construction of impoverished housing with dreadful sanitary conditions in many parts of the city from the centre to the peripheries [14]. One of the solutions that were discussed to overcome the complicated situation was the garden city concept that linked the spatial and social

organization of the community [11]. However, in the reality of Serbian cities, the idea was only sporadically implemented.

As Lewis Mumford wrote in his essay, the garden city promised “a better dwelling-place on earth for man” [6, p. 29]. The idea developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928), an English stenographer and philanthropist, was quickly transformed into a “diversified tradition” around the globe [17, p. 249]. In Serbia, intellectuals of different professions have promoted and advocated the garden city idea, and researchers have thoroughly studied their activities [4, 11]. Jan Dubovi (Jan Dubový, 1892–1969), a Czech architect then employed in the Technical Office of the Belgrade Municipality delivered lectures on theoretical and practical aspects of the garden city concept. Urban planner and architect Branko Maksimović (1900–1988) publicly presented and analysed examples from England and Germany and discussed the possibility of their application in Serbia. Physician Vojislav Kujundžić emphasized hygienic aspects, while publicist Slobodan Ž. Vidaković (1905–1983) stressed the social dimension of the garden city concept. Based on plans and urban designs of an architect, urban planner and later professor at the University, Mihailo Radovanović (1899–1980), several garden suburbs were built in different Serbian cities. However, the contribution of the architects and engineers of Russian origin who lived and worked in Serbia during the interwar period has been rarely studied.

This article examines the role and importance of the authors of Russian origin in applying the concept of a garden city in interwar Serbia. In order to explain their contribution, the examples of planned and realized garden-city-type neighbourhoods in two cities, Belgrade, the capital, and Kragujevac in central Serbia, are analysed. Original and unpublished documents and urban plans have been used in the description and analysis. In particular, George Pavlovich Kovalevsky’s book *Big city and garden-cities* (Большой город и города-сады), published in 1916 in Kyiv [7], is analysed and interpreted in this paper.

After the Revolution in 1917, some 45,000 people immigrated to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from Russia. Russian immigrants had a considerably higher education level than the local population, due to which many of them played an important creative role in the life of their adopted homeland [8]. Around 1,200 engineers of various kinds, some 250 of whom were architects and civil engineers, got actively involved in design and construction work in Serbia and very quickly became leaders in designing the most important state buildings. Their monumental designs for various ministerial buildings, state archives, army headquarters, the patriarchy and numerous others reflected the strength and magnitude of the newly-formed Kingdom Yugoslavia [13]. Some architects and civil engineers played a significant role in urban planning practice, e.g. George Pavlovich Kovalevsky and Nikolai Aleksandrovich Zhitkevich, who were involved in the development and implementation of garden-city-type settlements in Belgrade and Kragujevac, respectively.

George Pavlovich Kovalevsky (Георгий Павлович Ковалевский, 1888–1957) was born in Yelisavetgrad (today Kropyvnytskyi). He studied civil engineering in Kiev and later was a professor at the Kiev Polytechnic Institute. He came to Belgrade in 1920, together with his family and the first wave of Russian refugees. His practical

experience and knowledge were quickly recognized, making him the most important urban planner in Belgrade during the interwar period [13]. He developed regulatory plans for entire city areas, as well as numerous urban designs for public squares, city parks, promenades, lookouts, streets, etc. Kovalevsky was a leading author of the 1923–1924 Belgrade General Plan, the most significant planning document from the interwar period. The Kovalevsky family stayed in Belgrade until 1944, when they moved to Munich and subsequently to the USA. Kovalevsky was buried at the cemetery in the Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York [13].

In his above-mentioned book, *Big city and garden-cities*, Kovalevsky presented the findings from his study visit to garden city ‘places of pilgrimage’ in England and Germany [7]. Kovalevsky underlined diverse aspects of Howard’s initial idea, such as the settlement form, the communal financing system and social principles. He elaborated and documented various spatial forms that embodied the concept of garden city in practice – from self-contained garden cities, through new garden suburbs, to garden quarters, rather small residential neighbourhoods with modest houses. Kovalevsky believed that the idea of a garden city could help in addressing the “painful issues of contemporary cities [...] the spontaneous and unregulated growth of the surrounding areas of cities, contributing to their sanitary and hygienic improvement” [7, p. 6]. According to him, garden suburbs were the perfect form of suburbs in modern cities, which should be built for ordinary citizens, as well as workers, when located near factories. He emphasized that the vitality of garden suburbs lied in their spatial characteristics and the opportunity to use cultural, traffic, commercial, and other resources of the neighbouring city. Kovalevsky concluded: “garden suburbs will be the long-lasting and the most widely used form of Howard’s idea” [7, p. 19].

The 1923–1924 Belgrade General Plan proposed new neighbourhoods built in the spirit of garden suburbs [13]. In this regard, garden suburbs were at the same time a suitable solution for housing shortage and a way to ensure the rational expansion of the city and suburban growth. During two interwar decades about 20 new garden suburbs and garden quarters, known as “cottages” or “colonies”, were established in Belgrade. They were low-density residential development characterized by an attractive design and their layout is easily recognizable even on the present-day city map. Those garden suburbs were established by private companies or co-operatives which parcelled out the land and leased at a price affordable to the residents of middle income. Two prominent garden suburbs were built by the Construction Company *Neimar*, the first was named *Kotež Neimar* and constructed in the 1920s and the next was *Novi Neimar* initiated in the 1930s [12]. Several profession-based cooperatives were created as well. They planned and organized new garden suburbs and offered credit to assist home purchase contributing to the construction of some of the most successful residential development in interwar Belgrade, such as Professors’ Colony and Railway Clerks’ Colony.

In addition, on the northeast outskirts of the city, the General Plan envisaged the construction of one utterly new “workers’ settlement”, located near the Danube River, the industrial area and large brickyards. It was to have a harmonious composition of streets and green spaces with about 100 residential buildings, an elementary school,

playgrounds, and a centrally located market square [11]. The entire complex and its structures were referred to as “public buildings and facilities”, which emphasized their specificity with respect to other residential areas within the General Plan. The urban matrix of the planned workers’ settlement reveals striking similarities to the urban design of Hampstead, the garden suburb in London, which Kovalevsky considered “the best-realized example of a garden suburb, in terms of space organization, beauty of the streets, etc.” [7, p. 77]. Unlike Hampstead, the Belgrade workers’ settlement was never built.

Another Kovalevsky’s urban design that followed Howard’s idea was the Clerks’ Colony (*Činovnička kolonija*) a garden quarter built in the southern edge of Belgrade [13]. Building in Clerks’ Colony started in 1929 and was almost completed by 1940. The street layout, arrangement of open spaces and division of lots were realized according to the Kovalevsky’s idea quite closely. Modest detached houses with small gardens, public green squares, an elementary school and centrally locate an open market with public fountain and children's playground characterised the spatial structure of the neighbourhood. The Clerks’ Colony consisted of 10 large housing blocks with a total of 300 houses, covering an area of about 20 hectares. The design of houses was confined to fewest renowned Belgrade’s architects who produced several types of single-story houses. The residents were of similar social backgrounds and diverse professions, such as engineers, professors, civil servants and small merchants. Even today the Clerks’ Colony is recognized as an attractive place to live in Belgrade.

The garden city idea found its place in other Serbian cities, as well. The Workers’ Colony (*Radnička kolonija*), a suburb designed in the spirit of garden city, was built in Kragujevac, in central Serbia. Kragujevac was a smaller city than Belgrade, in both population and size, but at the time, it was an important industrial center, with advanced military production that employed almost one-eighth of the city’s population. Like Howard’s initial concept, municipality-owned land in Workers’ Colony in Kragujevac was transferred to the benefit of the community. At the same time, built structures were leased to inhabitants for residential, commercial or other use. Raised by joint efforts of the local authority, military factory, state bodies and workers association [1], the Workers’ Colony in Kragujevac was distinguished as “a unique complex of workers’ flats in that part of Europe” [10].

The Colony was built based on the design of Professor Nikolay Aleksandrovich Zhitkevich (Николай Александрович Житкевич, 1868–?) an engineer of Russian origin, who was born in Kiev. Before the Russian Revolution in 1917, Zhitkevich worked as a professor at the St. Petersburg Military Engineering-Technical University (Nikolaevsky). He was an expert on industrial buildings and was widely known, both at home and abroad, as one of the pioneers in the introduction of reinforced concrete in construction. Nevertheless, the life and work of Nikolay Zhitkevich in Serbia are not researched yet. After emigrating from Russia to Yugoslavia in 1920, he first came to Kragujevac and later moved to Belgrade [5]. He shortly worked as an engineer in the Engineering-Technical Department of the Ministry of the Army and Navy where he resigned in 1922 [9]. Later he became a professor at the Belgrade University whit an



expertise in building and industrial structures, and occasionally was engaged as supervising engineer for the military factory in Kragujevac. [16]. Zhitkevich was very active in the Association of Russian engineers in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, becoming their president in early 1930s [2].

The Workers' Colony in Kragujevac was erected on the western periphery of the city in 1928–1929. The construction was financed from several state and local sources, such as State Mortgage Bank, Ministry of Social Welfare and Public Health, Ministry of Army and Navy, State Fund for Aid to Unemployed Workers, and local Fund for Workers of Military-Technical Factory. The Municipality of Kragujevac donated 25 ha of land for construction, and built a public bath, laundry and healthcare facilities [1]. The Military Technical Factory constructed the infrastructure, water and sewerage, paved the streets and sidewalks, provided electricity from their sources, arranged public park and squares, and built a kindergarten and an elementary school for both children of factory workers and from the surrounding area.

The dwellings were single-story multi-family buildings, mainly wooden cabins obtained from Germany as war reparation, and each apartment had a small yard for farming [3]. The orthogonal layout of the Colony ensured a rational spatial organization. Public open spaces and community facilities such as a park, squares, a music pavilion, a hotel, retails, shops, an infirmary, a pharmacy, a kindergarten, an elementary school, an administration building and fire barracks with a bell tower were arranged along a centrally positioned wide street. The Colony was fenced and was accessed through an accentuated entrance gate. It was a model example of semi-autonomous settlements.

The examples presented in this paper demonstrate the contribution of architects and engineers of Russian origin in applying the concept of a garden city concept in response to rapid urbanization and uncontrolled urban growth in Serbian between two World Wars. George Pavlovich Kovalevsky, an engineer and urban planner, who had a direct personal experience of English and German garden cities, was focused on both physical and social aspects of Howard's vision. He advocated for the implementation of garden suburbs, which were the dominant settlement forms proposed in the 1923–1924 Belgrade General Plan. The work of Nikolay Aleksandrovich Zhitkevich, an engineer and University professor, contributed not only to the construction of Workers' Colony in Kragujevac, one of the most successful garden suburb in Serbia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia but was also fundamentally crucial for introducing the modern building technics in the construction of industrial facilities in Serbia.

More generally, the experience of authors of Russian origin significantly contributed to the realization of garden suburbs and garden quarters in Serbian cities such as Niš, Novi Sad, Jagodina, Šabac, etc., thus contributing to implementation of garden city idea into the urban discourse of interwar Serbia, as well as subsequently in the decades of the socialist period. The examples presented in this article have shown the diversity of influences on planning and implementation of garden-city-type settlements in interwar Serbia. Furthermore, this paper sets new directions for critical research on the knowledge transfer in urban planning theory and practice between Russia and Serbia.

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