



**Figure 3. Perpetuation of rural plot boundaries, duplication of access ways and dominance of paved surfaces (photographs by I. Samuels and A. A. Kantarek).**

- separateness of neighbouring units;
- poor internal structure of enclaves with regard to shops and schools;
- excessive provision of internal roads;
- insufficient co-ordination between the design of individual projects.

The lack of any system of co-ordination between separate developments illustrated here exemplifies

the problems arising in Polish cities as the once comprehensive planning system is progressively dismantled.

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## **Burgages and *partayas***

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In Newcastle upon Tyne, burgages were described by Conzen (1962) as medieval in origin. Much later, *partayas* were recognized as similar forms in the present city of Belgrade, Serbia. What is the relationship, if any, between these two forms?

Morphological similarities between these two phenomena suggest the possibility of their essentially common origin. The differences between

them may reflect variations in morphological process. The main purpose of this Viewpoint is to explore the conditions that caused transformation of the plot pattern in one context and resilience in another.

According to Conzen (1962) burgages are narrow plots occupied by the enfranchised members of medieval boroughs for a fixed annual rent. Initially

changes were slow, but following industrialization in the nineteenth century, the transformation process accelerated. Slater (1981) describes changes in burgages: for example, division lengthways and amalgamation. Amalgamation was much less frequent until the second half of the nineteenth century. Many researchers who followed Conzen's evolutionary approach aimed to discover original patterns and to reconstruct changes in measurable characteristics, such as building coverage and plot boundaries.

Belgrade's *partayas* attracted the interest of both urban sociologists and architects. Macura described *partayas* as long and narrow and containing buildings in line along the plot, on one or both sides. These buildings were mainly small, low standard dwellings, usually consisting of a kitchen and one other room (Macura, 1996). Macura, Petovar and Vujovic (1997) compare *partayas* to low standard English housing, emphasizing the difference between this type and other informal, unhygienic types such as existed in the Balkans. This difference can be explained through legal constraints on redevelopment and reconstruction. During socialism, the market was controlled by the state with regulations that forbade any refurbishment of *partayas*, except where a whole *partaya* settlement was transformed through demolition and replaced by multi-storey buildings. Đokić (2008) clarifies the social and economic status of *partayas*, describing them as housing for multiple low-income families living on a single plot.

The privatization of land in 1990 led to complex ownership, since citizens who previously rented *partaya* units became owners of parts of the plots. Amalgamation is evident only in city centres with stronger economic forces. Other *partayas* have

been left with their original boundaries but with a dramatically increased building coverage (Figures 1 and 2). Even though they emerged as a rapid response by the state to the housing needs of a poor population in the 1930s, *partayas* were not recognized in planning documentation as a specific housing type before the 2003 General Master Plan (Official Gazette of Belgrade, 2003).

The main difference between burgages and *partayas* is the degree of change over time in plot boundaries. As time passed, burgages were exposed to truncation or amalgamation and they are rarely evident today except in small towns. But *partayas* have changed relatively little.

These differences reflect different socio-economic conditions. The negative effects of industrialization, agrarian crises and ecological problems of English towns in the nineteenth century were resolved in particular by planned development, and burgages often lost their characteristic narrow form. Industrialization in Serbia reached its peak during the socialist period when all land was nationalized: new parts of the cities were developed and historical city centres were partially reconstructed. *Partayas* located outside these areas were left in their original state.

The *partaya* is worthy of detailed research as a cultural, social and morphological phenomenon. It could well be informative where research extends over long periods, including key stages in the expansion of the Belgrade urban region: the pre-socialist, socialist and post-socialist phases. The impact of the market and deregulation have greatly influenced the transformation of *partayas*, leading to their degradation. This problem should be a spur to developing a model that could reveal market uncertainties and shed light on the resilience of morphological units. Examination of

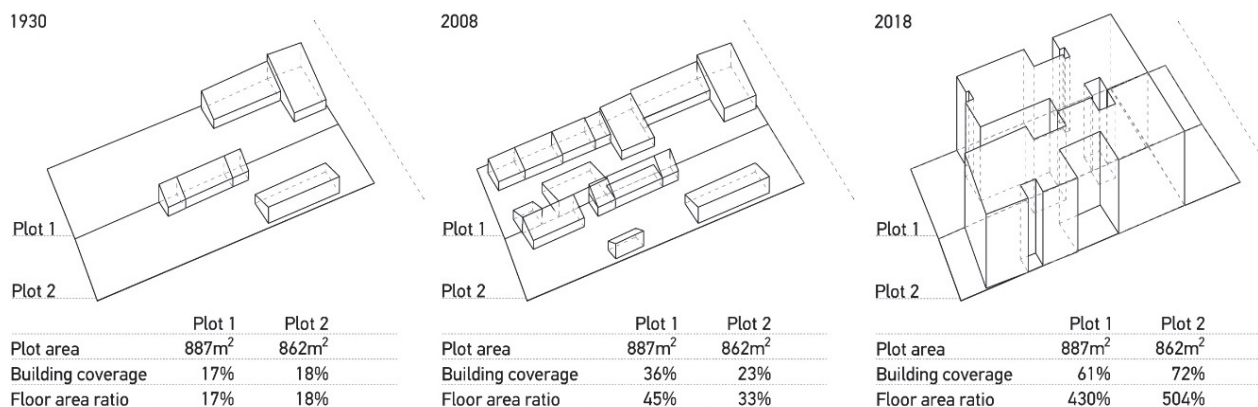


Figure 1. Stages of *partaya* transformation.



**Figure 2. Street frontage: the old and the new.**

particular cases in different post-socialist societies, analysed plot by plot, could reveal varieties of conditions to which similar morphological units

have been exposed. Such studies will form part of the project on post-socialist urban form currently being undertaken with the support of Belgrade and Krakow universities and ISUF.

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## The potential of the *li* and the *wangcheng* for contemporary urban design

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China's rapid urbanization over the past two decades has favoured high-density development, rather than drawing on the country's rich urban history and planning concepts (Chen, 2008). The result is too often urban landscapes devoid of local history and identity, designed for vehicles rather than pedestrians.

The number of cities in China grew from 193 in 1978 to 667 in 2003 (Song and Yu, 2005, p. 106), and these new cities are regularly overlooked in urban studies. One such city is Xuecheng, known as Lincheng until 1952, in south-west Shandong Province. It has grown from a rural town into a

significant urban centre over the past century. Its analysis using a Conzenian approach suggests the scope for design grounded in traditional urban form.

The history department of Xuecheng's city government has prepared diagrams that show the morphological changes during the first half of the twentieth century. Measured drawings of the contemporary city allow further analysis from the late-1970s to the mid-2010s. These can be compared with traditional Chinese planning concepts, such as the *li* and the *wangcheng*. This is timely because the Chinese central government is