

**CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE OF SERBIAN
ORTHODOX TEMPLES: IMPROVING THE INSTITUTION
OF THE STUDENT ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION FOR
A TEMPLE THROUGH PRE-DEFINED EVALUATION CRITERIA**

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Abstract. *Within the topic of architectural design of a contemporary Serbian Orthodox temple, student competitions have been held for a few years at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture in Niš. The research of the current phenomenon of the contemporary Serbian temple through the innovation of competition practice directly advances the architectural science. The main goal of the work is to improve the institution of the competition through pre-defined evaluation criteria, which belong to the fields of architectural design, history and theory of architecture, but also to the teachings of the Serbian Orthodox Church.*

This paper documents the student competition for the memorial temple on Delijski Vis in Niš. In accordance with the design principles, the students' works and the results of their evaluations were analyzed. In the first part of the paper, the points awarded by the expert jury were presented. In the second part, the works are analyzed according to design principles. In the third part, in the synthesis of the research, the results of the first and second part of the research were compared by a comparative analysis. In the discussion, based on the discrepancy between the results of the first and second groups, it was concluded that it is necessary to define in advance the categories that the jury would evaluate in the evaluation phase. Candidates should receive the evaluation framework in the competition announcement. Since the members of the jury are not only architects, it is necessary to provide for areas from several disciplines, so that the candidate's answer is more comprehensive. In the conclusion of the work, specific evaluation criteria were proposed, created through the transformation of design principles.

Key words: *competition for a temple, sacral architecture*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The scientific justification of the research of modern Serbian sacral architecture is based on the social need to define the architectural freedom in creating a modern Serbian Orthodox temple, in order to improve the architectural science and practice in accordance with the requirements of the modern architectural theory and practice. The constant enlargement of buildable areas of big cities in Serbia requires the construction of new temples, so that believers can visit them within their residential communities. According to planning norms, a medium-sized temple (up to 500 m²) should be placed in the centre of a community of 10,000 inhabitants (not believers) [1]. From this need follows the topicality of modern sacral architecture in Serbia, whose population is of the Orthodox faith in 84% of cases.

Interest in research on the topics of the modern Serbian Orthodox temple is evident in the scientific literature at the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century [2-14]. Within this important architectural and social phenomenon, the role of student competitions has only just opened with a few papers [15]. We are of the opinion that it is necessary to significantly improve this topic, because architectural competitions are an increasingly common practice in the construction and planning of public buildings.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH AND METHODS

The goal of the research is to improve the institution of the student architectural competition for the Orthodox temple at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture in Niš. The first part of the work documents the works of students, as part of the competition for the memorial temple on Delijski Vis in Niš, which was realized in the 2021/22 school year. The processes of the call for competition, the holding classes and the announcement of winners are described. In this part of the paper, the points of all participants, obtained in the evaluation phase of the expert jury, are presented. In the second part, the works are analyzed according to design principles, which students use within the topic of architectural design. Based on the processing of the database, graphs were created with the aim of a simpler comparison of the results obtained in the judging process and according to design principles. In the research synthesis (discussion), the results from both parts of the research were analyzed using a comparative method. Based on the discussion of the results, recommendations were made for the improvement of competition practice in the subject of "Sacral Architecture" at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture of the University of Niš.

In other words, success in the competition was measured using design principles. Recommendations for the improvement of the competition concern the publication of evaluation criteria, in accordance with the results of the above-mentioned comparison.

3. SACRAL ARCHITECTURE

Within the framework of architectural education, temples are researched on subjects from the field of history and theory of architecture and art, and within the framework of specialized subjects that exclusively deal with the design of sacral buildings or temples. In Serbia, specialization in this field exists at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University

of Pristina and at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, University of Niš. The subject "Sacral Architecture" at the Faculty of Niš officially became part of the study program in the field of Architecture in 2014. Its realization was realized in the school year 2018/19. According to the first syllabus, which was compiled in the accreditation phase by M. Vasov (PhD, assistant professor) and A. Momčilović-Petronijević (PhD, assistant professor), the aim of the course is to overcome special problems of designing sacral buildings. During the exercises, students realize the conceptual design of a sacral building, individually or in groups of up to two students. According to the more recent accreditation from 2020, compiled by M. Vasov (PhD, associate professor), M. Stanimirović (PhD, assistant professor) and A. Momčilović-Petronijević (PhD, associate professor) the aim of the course is to acquire the basic knowledge about sacral buildings and gain practical experience in the field of designing sacral buildings. The goal is also to overcome the special problems of designing Serbian Orthodox churches, because that topic is most often used in the history of this subject. According to the appropriate outcome of the course, students will be able to recognize and master the architectural and constructional specifics of the design of sacral buildings. In this way, three narrow scientific fields are connected, to which the mentioned teachers belong: design of architectural constructions, architectural design and history and theory of architecture and art. This setting is completely justified, because the students realize the conceptual solution of the sacral building in the exercises, which they present at the end in verbal and in the form of posters. Each sacral building represents a synthesis of theory and practice, which consists of the above areas.

Students who attended this elective course from 2019/20 had the opportunity to participate in student competitions, which were dedicated to the conceptual design of Orthodox churches in Niš. This institution of the competition was realized first through the cooperation of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Orthodox Diocese of Niš. Later, the organization was joined by the City of Niš, the Cluster of Urban Planning and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Niš. The cooperation implied the joint shaping of the competition task, from the idea of where the Orthodox church would be built, to the judging of the competition works and the announcement of the awarded solutions. Representatives of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture in Niš are teachers of this subject, the authors of this paper. Representatives of the Diocese of Niš were delegated by His Eminence the Bishop of Niš, Mr. Arsenije, who also participated in the classes in the form of guest lectures. With his blessing, Archpriest Boban Stojković, a professor at the Prizren Theological Seminary in Niš, is a permanent member of the jury and a guest lecturer. Architect Elena Vasić Petrović was a member of the jury and a guest lecturer on behalf of the Institute for the Protection of Monuments. Architects Tanja Obradović (chief city urbanist) and Ana Kostić participated in the competition of 2021/22 on behalf of the City of Niš. A more detailed description of the subject "Sacred Architecture" and previous competitions in Niš was given by M. Stanimirović [15].

4. COMPETITION FOR THE MEMORIAL TEMPLE ON DELIJSKI VIS IN NIŠ

At the beginning of the semester during 2022, students were presented with works realized within the competition for the temple in the settlement of Čalije in Niš, which was realized in 2020/21. Then, a call for tenders was submitted to them – the conceptual architectural and urban design of the building of the Orthodox memorial temple on

Delijski Vis. According to the announcement, the church should be designed in the spirit of Orthodoxy in Serbia, according to the rules of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The idea for the construction of a memorial temple at the "Old Military Cemetery on Delijski Vis" belongs to Archpriest Boban Stojković. The intention of Mirko Stanimirović was to form an institution of competition that would be realized in the future, which was supported by the Orthodox Diocese of Niš, headed by His Holiness the Bishop of Niš, Mr. Arsenije. The main goal was to start negotiations with the leadership of the City of Niš, in order to realize the first-prize winning solution in this competition. Necessary and later elaborations of the conceptual solution would be realized by the teams of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Diocese of Niš (general design and construction permit design) with the engagement of awarded authors. Further practical work on projects is not part of teaching this subject, but authors of this paper believe that practical experience is useful for future architects, so we wanted to improve the development of education of architects within our faculty in this way.

According to the decision of the Municipal Assembly of Niš from 1993, the memorial park "Old Military Cemetery on Delijski Vis" was declared an immovable cultural property – a landmark. It is located in the eponymous settlement of the city of Niš. It is thought that after the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 burial continued during the First and Second World Wars. The cemetery was devastated after the war, and in 1988, the Yugoslav Army built 15 residential buildings on the plot of the cemetery. The current area of the memorial is 300 m², as opposed to the former area of 5 ha.

The beginning of classes in this subject and thus the beginning of this competition was realized in the field, in the form of practical classes. The students first got acquainted with the situation of this landmark, and then they got acquainted with the function of the memorial temple and the program of the competition. According to the announcement of the competition, the candidates are allowed to design a parish church of smaller dimensions. In the continuation of practical classes, according to the experience from previous competitions, we introduced students to the liturgical function of the Serbian Orthodox temple. The needs of the movement of priests during the Liturgy are shown in the Hilandar convent in the temple of Saint Sava on Delijski Vis. The architectural composition of this temple is also explained, with a special reference to the construction of the dome. These two aspects of the architecture of Serbian temples were also covered in the later classes of practical classes, in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, the Temple of the Holy Emperor Constantine and Empress Helen and the Temple of St. Luke. The competition was open to all students of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture. During the semester, open lectures were held in the form of Microsoft Teams meetings, where candidates received the necessary knowledge necessary for the realization of the conceptual design of the memorial temple. In addition to teachers in this subject, lectures within this competition were held by prof. Boban Stojković and Elena Vasić Petrović.

Within the competition, 14 teams presented their designs within the public presentation, which was held on February 9th, 2022. Out of the competition in the same period, 5 teams presented the conceptual design of the memorial temple, and in April the number of teams was 11. According to the previously set voting system, each member of the jury distributed a total of 105 points to 14 teams, so the best work gets 14 points, next 13 etc. The members of the jury were:

1. Boban Stojković – representative of the Diocese of Niš,
2. Elena Vasić Petrović – representative of Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Niš,
3. Tanja Obradović – representative of the City of Niš and
4. Miomir Vasov – representative of the faculty and jury president.



Fig. 1 Project 1: Nikolina Stepanović – third prize – 42 points



Fig. 2 Project 2: Isidora Mitrović – 27 points



Fig. 3 Project 3: Anđela Pešić and Kristina Pešić – first prize – 53 points

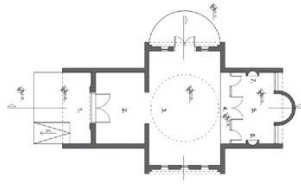


Fig. 4 Project 4: Marijana Ćendić and Marta Rakonjac – 25 points

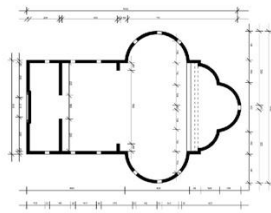


Fig. 5 Project 5: Dušan Pavlović and Ignjat Stebih – 13 points

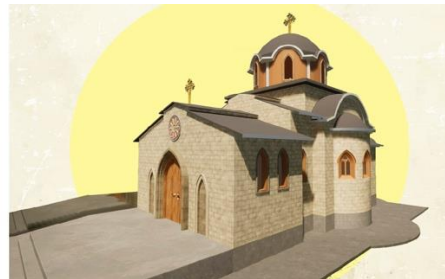
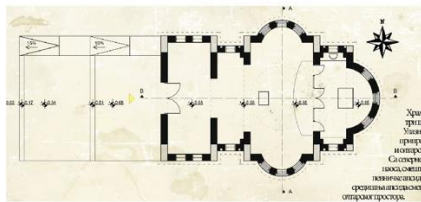


Fig. 6 Project 6: Aleksanda Tasić i Biljana Cvejić - second prize – 51 points

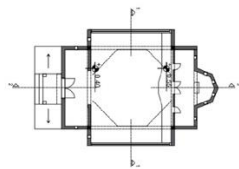


Fig. 7 Project 7: Valentina Bagarić and Jana Trajković – third prize – 42 points

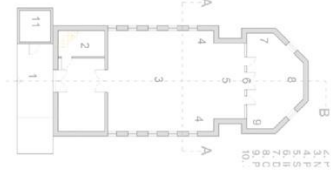


Fig. 8 Project 8: Mihajlo Petrović and Natalija Marjanović – 27 points

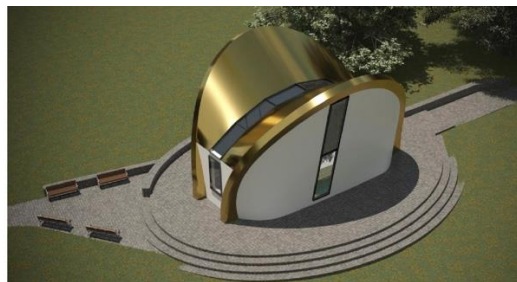
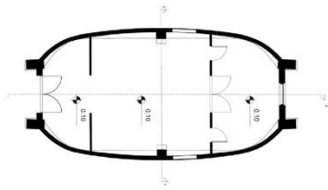


Fig. 9 Project 9: Bogdan Živković and Minja Vuković – 11 points

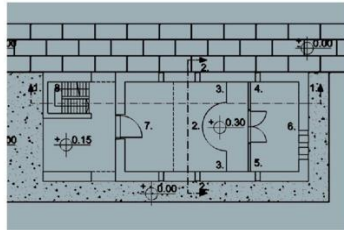


Fig. 10 Project 10: Miloš Breznik and Minja Vuković – 30 points



Fig. 11 Project 11: Jovana Krivačević and Dunja Vasiljević – 23 points

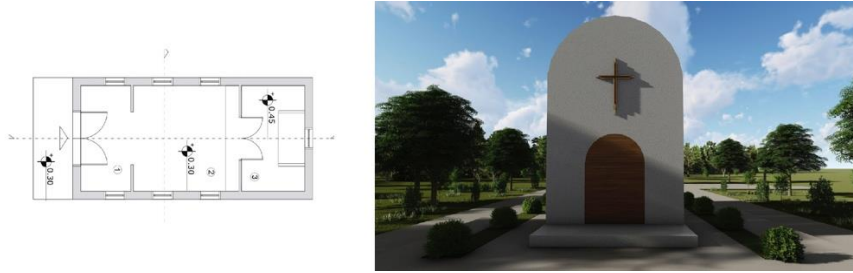


Fig. 12 Project 12: Kristina Pešić and Andrija Ristić – 10 points



Fig. 13 Project 13: Aleksa Čpajk – 32 points



Fig. 14 Project 14: Stefan Dinčić – 36 points

The jury (03.03.2022.) awarded the first (project number 03, students: Anđela Pešić and Kristina Pešić; 53 points), the second (project number 06, Aleksandra Tasić and Biljana Cvejić; 51 points) and two equal third prizes (project number 07; Valentina Bagarić and Jana Trajković; project number 01, Nikolina Stepanović; 42 points). All the works are here presented, so that later in the discussion we can form recommendations for the improvement of the institution of the student architectural competition, based on the comparison of the achieved points in the competition and points within the evaluation of design principles.

5. EVALUATION OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Design principles are a set of recommendations that see architectural design as a comprehensive thought, ethical, creative process [16]. Contemporary architecture is a synthesis of engineering knowledge and artistic talent of architecture. All aspects should be considered: engineering (construction, physics, etc.) and artistic (context, form, function, composition, etc.). The artistic aspects do not refer exclusively to artistic or artistic properties, but to the field of architecture. According to the ancient division of art, architecture is an artistic discipline. The architectural composition of the masses is based on the artistic composition. The design process corresponds to the processes of design and creation of a work of art. Buildings with a specific purpose are created through the synthesis of architecture as a plastic art (in space) and technology as an engineering science.

From such a comprehensive view of the architectural design process, design principles emerged, which advocate the view that architectural design as a creative process should result in a continuous improvement of the quality of the built environment. The five design principles are: unity of space, ambiantalization, contextuality, evolution of ideas and professional ethics [17]. Although it is important for this topic to analyse the principles of contextuality and evolution of ideas, we will conduct a tabular scoring of the described examples. Within each principle, we rated each of the cases with 0 or 1, depending on whether it is in line with the recommendations.

Within the first principle (A), we observe whether each intervention in space is viewed as part of the overall structure of space. Indivisibility in the design process means that there is no division of competencies into architecture and urbanism - the design is reflected in the temple and landscaping (cemeteries / courtyards). The concept of the shape of the temple participates in the design of the courtyard.

The principle of ambiantalization (B) in this case refers to the realized ambiances in the temple and its surroundings. This principle follows from the first principle and refers to the perceptual connections of spatial levels (common, public and private). The altar is a space intended only for priests. There is space in the nave of the temple for the community of believers. Everything around the temple belongs to the public space. According to the liturgical process, the Orthodox church must have a nave (in which the faithful are located) and an altar in the east (in which the sacred mystery of the Eucharist is celebrated).

Table 1 Evaluation of architectural designs by Design principles

Project	A	B	C	D	E	SUM
1	0	1	1	1	1	4
2	1	1	1	1	1	5
3	1	1	1	0	1	4
4	1	1	1	0	0	3
5	1	1	0	0	0	2
6	0	1	1	0	0	2
7	1	1	1	1	0	4
8	1	1	1	0	1	4
9	0	1	1	0	1	3
10	1	1	1	1	1	5
11	1	1	1	0	1	4
12	0	1	1	0	1	3
13	1	1	1	0	1	4
14	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	9	14	12	4	9	

Within contextualization (C) we observe the interaction of architecture with place and time. Respect for context is possible in space, time, spirit, heritage and material. Contextual architecture is a logical interaction with the environment or visualization of the properties of a place. Contextuality in architectural design, which we will evaluate within the framework of this analysis, refers to the interpretation of the local social and cultural milieu and local architectural culture. The Serbian Orthodox Church has a rich heritage. The expectations of the Orthodox Church and the faithful are a building that looks like temples from our past. This request of the competition, for the temple to be in the spirit of Orthodoxy in Serbia, we believe is challenging for the entire architectural scene. However, through its use, the seriousness and reality of the student task was confirmed.

Within the evolution of ideas (D), we observe a creative reworking of an inherited role model. We believe that the development of architectural design is more suited to the evolution (qualitative development) of ideas, instead of revolution, which implies a completely new construction by annulling previous experience. Revolutionary changes bring new ideas, concepts, theoretical settings, but they neglect and destroy those qualities that have historically confirmed their values.

Under the fifth principle (E), we condemn the literal taking of ideas from practice. A common occurrence in the newer Serbian sacral architecture is the construction of temples that in specific ways resemble medieval temples. One part of the designers still resorted to literally copying the tradition, creating unconvincing architectural compositions. Another group of designers creates an insufficiently convincing composition using medieval quotations. Distorted repetition of exemplary solutions is actually a problem of modern sacral Orthodox architecture [18].

6. DISCUSSION

The results presented in the first part of the research refer to the total number of points won. If we present this success in percentages and compare it with the results from the second part of the research, we will notice a discrepancy in the results. Thus, for example, the project under number 2 fully complies with the principles of design (100%), while its success according to the jury vote is 51%. A similar case is related to project under ordinal number 10 (100% vs. 57%). The project under number 6 has a 40% success rate within the design principles and as much as 96% according to the opinion of the jury. The fact is that there are disagreements, because the jury did not distribute points according to the evaluation of design principles. The success ratio of the first and second surveys shows the percentage of disagreements. It is highest in the case of 6 (240%) and 14 (340%) labour. The last work satisfied only one of the five principles (20%), and the jury evaluated it with as many as 36 points (which is 68% compared to the first-prize winning work). If we look only at the awarded works, the success rate is the most balanced in the third prizes (99%, 1st and 7th project), the first is partially in balance (125%, 3rd work), while the second is out of balance (240%, 6th project).

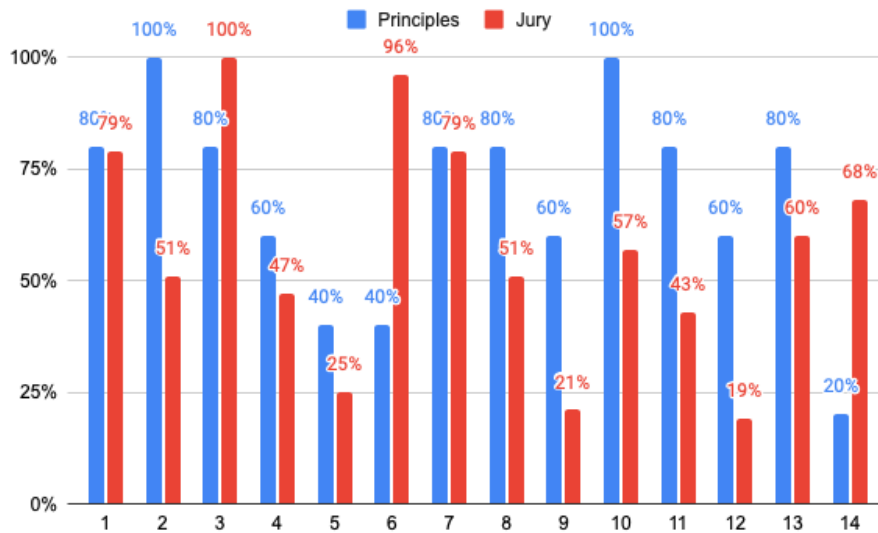


Fig. 15 Comparative performance analysis

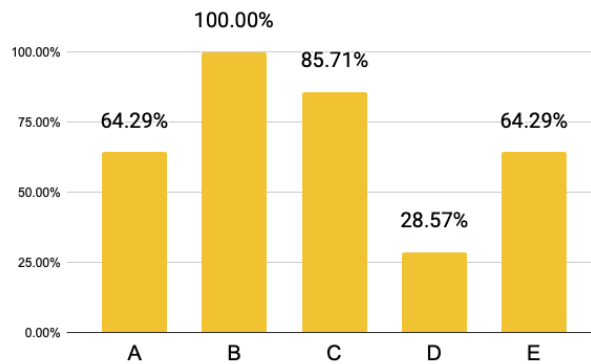


Fig. 16 Disagreement between the results of the first and second research in this paper

As we do not intend to question the way the jury scores, but only to improve future voting processes, we have analysed the individual successes of the candidates within the principles in the second part of the research. The principle of ambientalization (B) is met by all candidates. This means that the liturgical process was observed in each of the solutions. The temple is divided into a nave and an altar. The principle that is least satisfied is the evolution of ideas (D). According to this result, creative processing of inherited principles is represented in one third of the works. From the results that belong to the following category (E), the literal download of quotations is represented in one third of the papers. Most temples really look like temples from the past - this can be concluded based on 85.71% success within the category that looks at the context of construction (C).

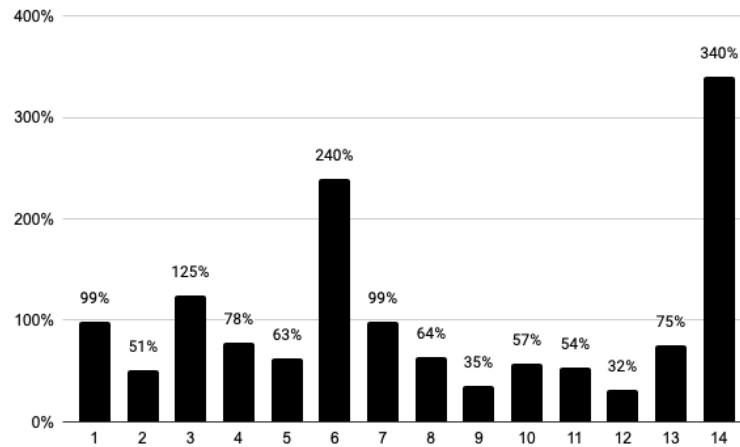


Fig. 17 Success by categories in the second part of the research

7. CONCLUSION

The overall performance, regarding the evaluation of 5 design principles is 67.57%. A feature that should be improved is the creative processing of exemplary solutions from the history of architecture, in order to reduce the importance of taking them literally and copying. This is in line with the defined problem within contemporary sacral architecture in Serbia - design criteria are not set clearly enough. It is recommended to dedicate a significant part of teaching to this property, by increasing the number of practical classes on the construction site in this area. Namely, raising the awareness of students about the consequences of uncreative taking over of inherited design elements is most effective in the field. One should first get acquainted with the values of medieval monuments, and then analyse the modern architecture of temples in the mentioned context. Visiting lectures by architects who have already encountered this problem would be of great help.

From the discrepancy between the results of the first and second groups, we conclude that it is necessary to define in advance the categories that will be evaluated by the jury in the evaluation phase. Candidates should be given an evaluation framework in the call for proposals at the beginning. As the members of the jury are not only architects, it is necessary to agree on areas from several disciplines, in order for the candidate's answer to be more complete. Our proposal is a transformation of the presented 5 principles in the form of the following categories:

- A. Construction time,
- B. Orthodox spirit of designing,
- C. Tradition,
- D. Evolution of ideas and
- E. Liturgical and iconographic program of the temple.

Within the first category (A), students should adapt their solution to the current situation in architecture and construction. The construction should correspond to modern materials and building concepts. Also, the form should be built so that the appearance of

the temple corresponds to the creative processing of the inherited principles, through the interpretation of the heritage, not through its literal copying. The second category (B) is firmly tied to the Orthodox view of the temple. With this principle, egoistic solutions, as well as forms that manipulate ideas that do not concern the space where the liturgy takes place, are annulled. This means that the designer does not call Orthodox teaching into question, but improves the experience of believers in the temple with his design. Tradition (C) is given as a criterion to exclude radical solutions. We are of the opinion that new concepts should be reached through evolution or smaller steps, because the sign of the church is also important. Related to this is the fourth criterion (D), which is completely taken over from the 5 design principles. It concerns the creative reworking of the inherited model, because the temple always relies on the history of the church and architecture. This principle cancels all those solutions that literally take over forms from the past. It ensured the architectural development of the temple. The last criterion (E) was given in order to control the movement of the priest during the liturgy. The function of each building has always been important for the constitution of architecture. At the same time, it justifies the implementation of architecturally new solutions. Its attachment to the competencies of the priest leads to a certain evaluation of each solution in relation to the realized liturgical program of the temple, without affecting the aesthetic categories of architecture, which should be declared by experts in the field of architecture.

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SAVREMENA ARHITEKTURA SRPSKIH PRAVOSLAVNIH HRAMOVA: UNAPREĐENJE INSTITUCIJE STUDENTSKOG ARHITEKTONSKOG KONKURSA ZA HRAM PREMA DEFINISANIM KRITERIJUMIMA VREDNOVANJA

U okviru teme arhitektonskog projektovanja savremenog srpskog pravoslavnog hrama, studentski konkursi se par godina unazad realizuju na Građevinsko-arhitektonskom fakultetu u Nišu. Istraživanje aktuelnog fenomena savremenog srpskog hrama kroz inoviranje konkursne prakse direktno unapređuje arhitektonsku nauku. Osnovni cilj rada je unapređenje institucije konkursa kroz unapred definisane kriterijume vrednovanja, koji pripadaju oblastima arhitektonskog projektovanja, istorije i teorije arhitekture ali i učenju Srpske pravoslavne crkve..

U ovom radu je dokumentovan studentski konkurs za spomen hram na Delijskom Visu u Nišu. U skladu sa projektantskim principima, analizirani su radovi studenata i rezultati njihovih vrednovanja. U prvom delu istraživanja su predstavljeni bodovi dodeljeni od strane stručnog žirija. U drugom delu su radovi analizirani prema projektantskim načelima. U trećem delu, u sintezi istraživanja, komparativnom analizom su upoređeni rezultati prvog i drugog dela istraživanja. U raspravi je na osnovu nepodudaranja rezultata prve i druge grupe, zaključeno da je potrebno unapred definisati kategorije koje će žiri vrednovati u fazi ocenjivanja. Kandidati bi morali dobiti okvir ocenjivanja u raspisu konkursa. Kako članovi žirija nisu samo arhitekti, potrebno je predvideti oblasti iz više disciplina, kako bi odgovor kandidata bio celovitiji. U zaključku rada su predloženi konkretni kriterijumi ocenjivanja, nastali kroz transformaciju projektantskih načela.

Ključne reči: konkurs za hram, sakralna arhitektura