

PROFESSION AND BUSINESS IN CONSTRUCTION PRACTICE – Questions for discussion, Part 1/3¹

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Summary: *"Business has ruined the construction industry and destroyed the profession". Does it happen only in civil engineering or also in other areas? Does it happen with profession or its ethics only? How did it happen and is that the case only in the societies that undergo transition? Could this happen without conscious abuse of the profession and the absence of professional moral? What was the role of higher education in all of this? With which assets, with what kind of background and with which flows did business buy and neutralized profession in the construction industry? What is actually management and "money making", something that business boasts about the most today but the industry timidly contests? Are the businessmen and managers actually middlemen and resellers who with the help of bankers dictate the terms of construction? Why is it that money origin and cash flow are crucial features defining each major construction project today, while specialized disputes and expert opinions often appear to be its secondary characteristics? Is it essentially the problem referring to a lack of moral and public ethical standards, characteristic for the time of crisis, or is it the consequence of business and its trait to use people of low moral standards in order to gain profit? Why are the top experts in developed countries in most cases also successful and unconcealed businessmen? Why can this not be applied to experts in undeveloped countries? Should the state stimulate that kind of relationship or should it be their regulator? Why is the profession permanent and stable, bounded by tradition and sustainable projects, and business is fast, unstable, irrespective in case of the tradition but only to the business opportunities? Through the numerous examples of modern construction practice with many comments about the place and role of the profession in business and their mutual relationship, this research paper which is simultaneously a feasibility study, presents a modest contribution to this very significant, and at the same time a little-known and rarely mentioned subject within construction circles. With that in mind, some consciously left out data is less this paper's deficiency, and more lack of achieved level of professional experience, although it should not be forgotten that **"understanding a question is half an answer"** (Socrates).*

Keywords: *Construction practice, business and profession, management, trade, ethics*

¹ The paper represents an excerpt from the author's studies, dedicated in memory of Danilo Rašković, a respectable engineer, mathematician, mechanic and useful professor at several engineering and natural science faculties in the country and abroad. Excluding an extensive article of *Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU)* it's paradoxical that Danilo Rašković, after his professional knowledge, sharp wit, publicly manifested patriotism and high moral values, is still mentioned more abroad than in Serbia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1-1. Profession and business in the ancient world. Alexander, the son of the famous Macedonian statesmen and military leader Philip, during his predatory raids on the Achaemenid Empire, undertaken long before similar raids on Caesar in Gaul, Trajan in Dacia or Cassius at Rhodes, had noted with astonishment that, in Persia, it was forbidden to trade goods near schools, nor was it allowed to teach children trading in the schools. Why? Because traders cheat, and therefore corrupt people and society!

In other words, the base of trade is manipulation, which is contrary to humane principles, culture and everything that children are supposed to be taught in school.³

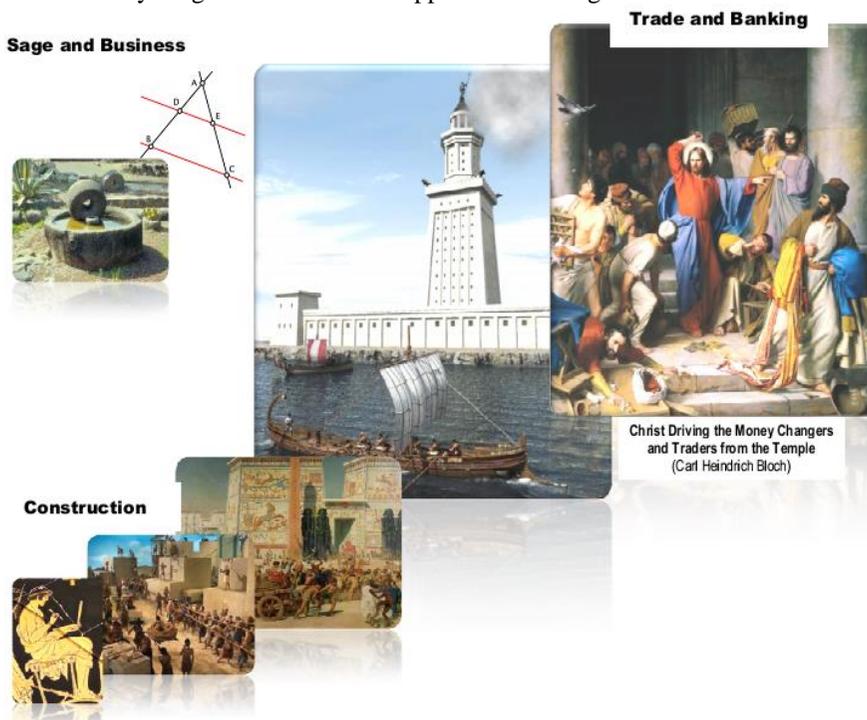


Figure 1. Profession and business in the ancient world: the basic questions and answers related to Thales and the Bible

Although modern, isn't business together with its management and marketing just that, an ordinary manipulation of the human mind, knowledge and goals, in order to appropriate surplus value and to make a profit?⁴ And nothing else, because without this there is no business and all of its advertising characteristics.

³ Although similar could be found in the English translation of the Code of pre-ancient Mesopotamia, the most famous example is from the *Bible* and it's referring to the banishment of Christ to Palm Sunday, traders and money changers from Herod's temple because of the spreading of immorality and manipulation of money (Figure 1.)

⁴ Often without feelings and measures how and to what moral, ethical then, and above all the natural boundaries may desire for earning the material bases as part of power. No matter what kind of power is about, whether

1-2. Profession and business in the modern world⁵. If Alexander the Great⁶, and later the Romans lived and built on the basis of robbery, therefore, on the basis of what children should not learn in school, is modern construction practice based on the same principles with the only difference that now we should teach children this in schools? If it is based on, who robs who and in which manner? Especially where it is being built and the local economy is not making money for construction. (Figure 2.)



Figure 2. Profession and business in the modern world: the basic questions and some answers related to "better cheating through better packaging" (see also Part 2/3)

2. QUESTIONS VS. METHODS AND RESULTS

2-1. Question № 1. Question about education. "The question of education for modern societies is a matter of life and death, because education is what the future depends upon" (Ernest Renan).

purely mathematical (Bošković, R., "Theoria philosophiae naturalis redacta ad unicam legem virium in natura existentium", 1758/63) or philosophical (Nietzsche, F., "Der Wille zur Macht" - unfinished work).

⁵ The author is the first civil engineer and one of the first participants from Serbia on several foreign business and management colleges and trainings supported by domestic and foreign governments, organizations and institutions, from the time when they were hiding in Serbia manager's name – usually anonymous experts

⁶ In the history of the victors written by the Roman Greeks it is rarely referred to the names of Alexander III of Macedon which were for life and long after that given him such as chronologically: Alexander, the son of Philip, Alexander the Kid, (Small), Alexander the Macedonian, Two-horned Alexander, Alexander the Devil, Alexander the Cursed etc., but never Alexander the Great

What is the difference and what is essentially new and more valuable, that can be learned in business and management schools in comparison to what used to be taught in traditional vocational schools, and then in practice perfected: cost estimations, organisation of projects, preparations of plants, site preparations, PPM etc.?

Is it only that very simple trade which corrupts people, but at the same time does not make them more professional, but on the contrary, less educated, less skilled, less cultural and generally less humane?⁷

Is this really the same trade that encourages “insatiable greed for money and power” in many areas and which easily destroyed patriotism and made them attractive for business - but not for professionals and real experts? (Figure 3-4.)



Figure 3. Difference between profession and business: Basic objective. What does the word "earning" in construction industry actually mean? (for more detail see: Part 3/3)

⁷ The question has not arisen only now because not so long ago scientific titles were confirmed by theses and views of candidates on the issues in practice, as a checkup on whether the candidate has a practical sense of recognizing and solving problems and with what kind of moral values he is guided by. For example, Michail Pupin, respected electrical engineer who as part of his dissertation in physical chemistry handled 3 more theses, where in the first referred to the importance of possessing a practical sense already in the preparatory schools for the study. In his later abundant scientific research and educational work he remained true to the profession and ethics, so that from his seat and laboratories came out a pleiad of engineers with high moral values and a few Nobel Prize winners. Similar applies to certain well-known in Serbian practice mathematicians, mechanics and designers, such as E. Stipanić, D. Rašković, Đ. Lazarević et al. whose lectures and tests of future engineers always shown that it is not only about the excellent specialists in the field of profession, but also people of high moral and humanistic orientation with clearly formed worldviews ("Weltbild").

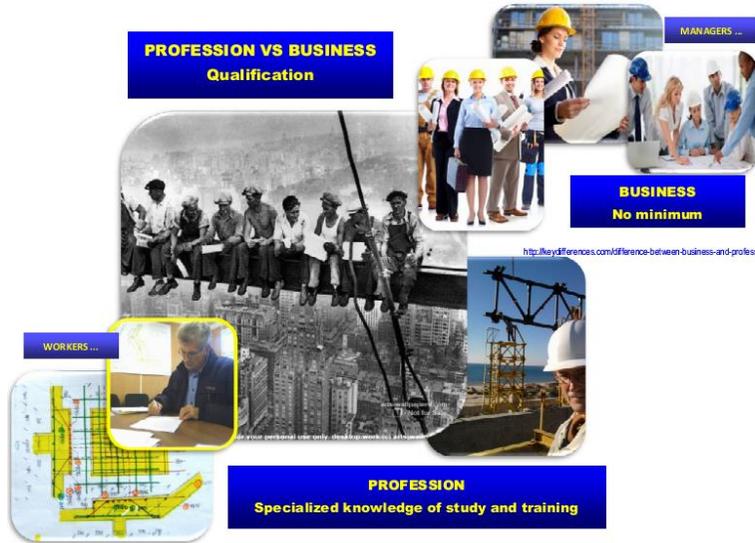


Figure 4. Whether the business is actually kills the work, together with profession, not only in the construction industry but everywhere? (for more details see Part 3/3)

2-2. Question № 2. Question about certificates. What is the reason and purpose of the production of papers, diplomas, titles and vocations with less practically useful and tangible professional knowledge? Is it only in order to cover up and protect business by profession that is, "better cheating through better packaging"? (Figure 4-5)



Figure 5. Production of valueless papers: "Better cheating through better packaging"?

2-3. Sub-question about education and certificates. Legality. In other words, is it profession actually that, which gives legitimacy of theft in civil engineering and everywhere? Could this happen without the absence of professional moral?

2-4. Sub-question about teachers and professors. (Figure 5.)

2-5. Question № 3. Question about leadership. Have the business and its management managed to legally enter in academic institutions and construction companies and to seize organization of work and complete management via only one, not very human upgrade of labour organization?

If they have, was it again basically by the same trade that has many underdeveloped areas made tempting for business? But generally not for the profession which leaves into those countries which invented business and export it smoothly. (Figure 3 and 4)

2-6. Question № 4. Question about experts. (Figure 3, 4 and 6)

2-7. Sub-question about experts. Data banks. If it is true that a business transaction actually destroyed profession, and everything except for trade and banking, why are the representatives of the business the biggest users of data banks of professionals in the world, and not professionals?

2-8. Sub-question about experts. Why are do we, in Serbia, so rarely mention independent high level experts and teams, who deny following the principles of high profession and ethics, and with the systematic support of their countries, have a regulatory role in the construction industry? At the same time not compromised anyone in the legal business?



Figure 6. What is the business without scam and the support of profession?

2-9. Sub-question about experts. Why are, such organizations so rarely found in the less developed countries and why do the greatest experts of these countries, or more precisely their professional moral and patriotism, pose the biggest threat to businesses in these communities?

2-10. Sub-question about experts. What is the essential difference today and what is the impact of the profession in a way of thinking and making high level decisions in the field of construction industry?

2-11. Question № 5. Question about sequence of actions. What is the reason why in profession you get a job first and then start to get a money, as a cover for work done, while in business you get a money first and then start to look for a job, as a cover for money obtained?

2.12. Sub-question about sequence of actions i.e., origin. Is it the most distinctive and easily recognizable characteristics of the business in construction industry, especially transaction one, which is skillfully hidden from the public⁸



Figure 7. Why labour costs are the lowest on the biggest projects? Profit in profession and in business – is it the essential difference between profession and business?

⁸ Is it also the reason why in the underdeveloped countries, societies under transition and countries with autocratic regimes, there are no efficient government regulation and associations for transactional business?.

2-14. Question № 6. Question about surplus value. Are labour costs the lowest on the biggest projects due to business i.e., its ability to increase the brute price, and to reduce net earnings? In other words, are they the worst earnings in the best business? What business is that, why, how and through what source is the total cost being increased?

2-15. Sub-question about surplus value. Employment and job positions. Who and how actually employs the workers in civil engineering and in what ways? Is it the profession or the business?

2-16. Question № 7. Question about production – is it the essence of the problem with business? Why is it that the business takes over and controls the profession, but still doesn't completely destroy i.e., eradicate it? On the contrary business sometimes even maintains and supports profession.

Is it because the business essentially, besides a redistribution of income and good packaging, doesn't produce anything worthy and, except valueless papers, isn't even able to produce?

Who's the one unable to exist without the other one and in what ways? Who threatens whom and who controls whom?

3. CONCLUSION VS. DISCUSION

3-1. Question № 1. Question about human health and professional moral. Those and similar questions referring to the relations of profession and business are actually the same questions that arise between ecologically healthy (not only organic one) and poisoned food, created, not for the health of people but because of higher profits. Even though both of them must exist, if there is no healthy food there will be poisoning. Not the other way around!



Figure 8. "Who's the one unable to exist without the other one and in what ways?"

Therefore, business, especially transactional business, can never completely destroy or eradicate the profession in civil engineering and everywhere, because, without its knowledge and helps surplus value can not legally be confiscated.

But if profession doesn't have its own pride and doesn't care for its value, its moral could drop so much that in practice it becomes servant of business with the lowest human values. Especially in underdeveloped countries on their, sometimes ridiculously naive ways of development and "joining" – and, thus, even greater dumbing down.

This paper was written in the name of that servant who had almost forgotten that she was the lady.

PRILOG SAVREMENOM SRPSKOM NEIMARSTVU-8/1 Biznis i struka u savremenoj izgradnji - prilozi za diskusiju

Rezime: "Biznis je upropastio građevinsku industriju i uništio struku". Da li je to slučaj samo u građevinarstvu ili u drugim oblastima? Da li je uništio struku ili samo njenu etiku? Na kakav način i da li se to desilo samo u sredinama u tranziciji? Ili samo u onim sredinama bez kulture rada?

Da li je to moglo da se desi bez svesne zloupotrebe struke i odsustva stručnog morala? Kolika je u svemu tome bila uloga visokog školstva?

Kojim sredstvima, kakvog porekla i kojim tokovima biznis u građevinarstvu kupuje i neutrališe struku?

Šta je zapravo menadžment i "pravljenje para", ono čime se biznis najviše diči, a struka plašljivo osporava?

Da li su biznismeni i menadžeri zapravo posrednici i prekupci koji uz pomoć bankara diktiraju uslove izgradnje, a uz nemoć struke organizuju radove?

Zašto su danas poreklo i tokovi novca osnovna odrednica svakog većeg građevinskog projekta, a usko stručne rasprave i mišljenje eksperata ne retko njegove drugorazredne karakteristike? Da li je u osnovi to problem nepostojanja etike i morala u vremenu krize ili osobine biznisa da koristi ljude niže vrednosti?

Zašto su u razvijenim zemljama vrhunski stručnjaci sa visokim moralom i etikom mahom i uspešni biznismeni? Zašto takav slučaj nije sa stručnjacima u nerazvijenim zemljama?

Da li država treba da bude podstrekač takvih odnosa ili njihov regulator?

Zašto je struka spora i trajna, vezana za tradiciju i održive projekte, a biznis njena suprotnost vezana samo za poslovne šanse?

Sa širim uvodom, brojnim ne slučajno postavljenim pitanjima i komentarima o mestu i ulozi struke u biznisu i njihovom međusobnom odnosu, kao i primerima iz savremene građevinske prakse, rad daje skromni doprinos na tu vrlo značajnu, a u isti mah malo poznatu i retko pominjanu temu u građevinskim krugovima.

Imajući to u vidu, pojedini svesno izostavljeni podaci su manje nedostatak rada, a više profesionalnog iskustva, pri čemu ne sme biti zaboravljeno da "**razumeti pitanje je pola odgovora**" (Sokrat).

Ključne reči: Savremena praksa, izgradnja, biznis, struka, menadžment, trgovina, etika