

Stanice promjene: Arhitektura u tranzitu

Stations of Change: Architecture in Transit

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dipl. ing. arch.

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Sažetak U ovom radu Agošton se osvrće se na više od četiri desetljeća arhitektonske prakse oblikovane obrazovanjem u Sarajevu i obogaćene radom na šest kontinenata. Posebnu pažnju posvećuje projektovanju tranzitnih stanica kao ključnih javnih prostora — struktura koje nadilaze svoju funkcionalnu ulogu i postaju mjesta kulturnog identiteta, društvenog susreta i svakodnevnog rituala. Na osnovu projekata poput metroa u Dubaiju i stanice Sheppard West u Torontu, pokazuje kako se njegov pristup razvijao u pravcu uspostavljanja ravnoteže između tehničke efikasnosti i empatije, preciznosti i kontekstualnog značenja. Tranzitna arhitektura, prema njegovom iskustvu, pruža jedinstvenu priliku da se infrastruktura oblikuje kao otporna i održiva, ali istovremeno humanocentrična i demokratska. Kroz ovu refleksiju zagovara dizajnersku filozofiju koja duboko osluškuje — prostor, ljude i kulturu — te potiče arhitekte da razmotre kako infrastruktura može doprinositi stvaranju gradova s dušom i inkluzivnošću u eri brze urbane transformacije.

Ključne riječi urbanizacija; infrastruktura; metro stanice; kulturni identitet; održivi gradovi.

Abstract In this paper, Agošton reflects on over four decades of architectural practice shaped by his education in Sarajevo and enriched through work across six continents. He focuses particularly on the design of transit stations as essential civic spaces — structures that go beyond their functional role to become places of cultural identity, social encounter, and everyday ritual. Drawing from projects such as the Dubai Metro and Toronto's Sheppard West Station, he shares how his approach has evolved to balance efficiency with empathy, and technical precision with contextual meaning. Transit architecture, in his experience, offers a unique opportunity to create infrastructure that is not only resilient and sustainable, but also human-centered and democratic. Through this reflection, he advocates for a design philosophy that listens deeply to place, people, and culture, and invites architects to consider how infrastructure can help shape soulful and inclusive cities in an era of rapid urban transformation.

Keywords urbanization; infrastructure; metro stations; cultural identity; sustainable cities.

1 Osnove i prve impresije: Sarajevo i rani uticaji

Arhitektura nas često prvi put susreće u svakodnevnim prostorima — autobuskim i tramvajskim stajalištima, metro stanicama — javnim pragovima koji nose karakter grada. To nisu puki konektori, oni su demokratski portali identiteta jednoga mjesta.

Odrastajući u Sarajevu, gradu s osmanskim avlijama, austrougarskim bulevarima i modernističkim stambenim blokovima, rano sam se naučio osluškivati dijalog između epoha u građenom prostoru. Sarajevo je arhitektonski *palimpsest* u kojem slojevi historije koegzistiraju — ponekad u napetosti, češće u harmoniji. Život u takvom stratificiranom okruženju naučio me da arhitekturu promatram ne kao niz izoliranih objekata, već kao kontinuiranu naraciju oblikovanu vremenom, politikom, sjećanjem i svakodnevnom uporabom.

Moje formalno obrazovanje na Arhitektonskom fakultetu Univerziteta u Sarajevu (1977–1982) bilo je transformativno. Imao sam privilegiju učiti od izuzetnih profesora koji su u poslijeratnim godinama oblikovali jedinstveni jugoslavenski arhitektonski identitet. Među

1 Foundations and First Impressions: Sarajevo and Early Influences

Architecture often greets us first in everyday spaces — bus and tram stops, metros, stations — public thresholds that convey a city's character. These are not mere connectors; they are the democratic portal to a place's identity.

Growing up in Sarajevo, a city etched with the traces of Ottoman courtyards, Austro-Hungarian boulevards, and modernist social housing, I became attuned early on to the dialogue between eras in built form. Sarajevo itself is an architectural palimpsest, where layers of history sit side by side — sometimes in tension, often in harmony. Living in this textured environment taught me to see architecture not as a series of isolated objects, but as a continuous narrative shaped by time, politics, memory, and daily use.

My formal architectural education at the University of Sarajevo, from 1977 to 1982, was transformative. I was fortunate to study under a generation of exceptional professors, many of whom had been instrumental in defining Yugoslavia's unique architectural identity in the post-war years. Among them, Professor Zlatko Ugljen stood out as a poetic and rigorous thinker. His work — a fusion



njima se posebno isticao profesor Zlatko Ugljen, pjesnički i rigorozan mislilac. Njegova djela — sjedinjena bosanska vernakularna tradicija i moderna duhovna osjetljivost — ostavila su trajan dojam. U predavanjima i studijskim kritikama naučio nas je snazi tišine u arhitekturi: pauzi između formi, modulaciji svjetla, ritmu materijala. Poučio nas je da građevina može imati "autentičnu dušu" samo ako je istinski ukorijenjena u kulturni i fizički kontekst, a ta je lekcija odzvanjala kroz čitavu moju karijeru.

Diplomirao sam s pohvalom (skromnih 10+), što mi je, vjerujem, omogućilo preporuku akademika Ivana Štrausa, mog ispitivača, da budem među prvim arhitektima koji će se pridružiti projektantskoj službi UNIS Dizajna. Za vrijeme rada u UNIS Dizajnu sudjelovao sam u unutarnjem uređenju UNIS-ovih tornjeva — kasnijih Unitica — simbola moderne ambicije i poslijeratne obnove Sarajeva. Da će moj vlastiti ured, Studio International Architects kasnije biti smješten u tim tornjevima, nisam mogao ni naslutiti. Danas svakodnevno radim u prostoru koji sam nekada pomagao oblikovati, svjedočeći kako arhitektura, ako je promišljeno projektovana, može trajno služiti potrebama grada kroz generacije.

Također sam imao sreću biti komšija cijenjenim arhitektima Tanji i Stjepanu Roš, te njihovom bliskom prijatelju Nikoli Bašiću, koji su me uveli u svijet brojnih arhitektonskih natječaja. Njihovo mentorstvo i prijateljstvo duboko su utjecali na moj profesionalni put i učvrstili trajnu posvećenost učenju od najboljih u Sarajevu i regiji — iskustvo koje i danas usmjerava moj rad.

2 Globalno putovanje kroz arhitekturu i dizajn tranzitnih struktura

Moje arhitektonsko putovanje ubrzo je preraslo brda i rijeke Sarajeva. U ranim godinama međunarodne karijere uranjao sam u kontrastne urbane teksture Australije, Singapura i Hong Konga — svaka sredina pružila je posebne lekcije o prostornoj gustoći, materijalnoj kulturi, klimatskom odgovoru i suptilnoj umjetnosti urbanog pregovaranja. Ti različiti konteksti natjerali su me da preispitam vlastite stavove i izoštrili su moje razumijevanje izuzetne prilagodljivosti arhitekture. Istodobno su potaknuli senzibilitet za jedinstvene zahtjeve projektovanja u kulturološki slojevitim ambijentima, gdje se globalne aspiracije neprestano susreću s lokalnom autentičnošću.

Upravo su u Singapuru, Hong Kongu i potom Dubaiju tranzitne građevine postale središnja nit moga rada. Projektovanje mobilnosti pretvorilo se u projektovanje povezanosti — među geografijama, zajednicama i vremenima. Među najtransformativnijim iskustvima bilo je vođenje projektovanja metroa u Dubaiju, ambiciozne infrastrukturne mreže s više od 45 nadzemnih i podzemnih stanica. Taj pothvat je predstavljao ne samo tehnički i logistički, nego i kulturološki i simbolički izazov. Arhitektonski jezik stanica namjerno je oblikovan narativima ukorijenjenim u emiratskoj tradiciji — motivi tradicionalnih brodova, tornjeva vjetrenjača

of Bosnian vernacular traditions with a deeply spiritual and modernist sensibility — left a lasting impression. In his lectures and studio critiques, he introduced us to the power of silence in architecture: the pause between forms, the modulation of light, the rhythm of material. He taught us that a building could have an "authentic soul" if it was genuinely rooted in its cultural and physical context. That lesson has echoed throughout my career.

Upon graduation, I completed my studies with distinction (a modest 10+), a mark of academic excellence that, as I would like to believe, encouraged Academician Ivan Štraus, my examination mentor, to recommend me as one of the early architects to join UNIS Design. During my tenure at UNIS Design, I had the privilege of contributing to the interior design of the UNIS Towers — later known as the Unitic Towers. Originally designed by Ivan Štraus himself, the towers stood as symbols of modern ambition and post-war reconstruction. That my own practice, Studio International Architects, would later find its home in the very same building is something I could not have foreseen at the time. It offers a rare continuity — to work daily in a space I once helped shape, and to witness how architecture, if well designed, continues to serve the evolving needs of its city across generations.

I was also fortunate to have been a neighbor to the esteemed architects Tanja and Stjepan Roš, along with their close friend Nikola Bašić, who introduced me to numerous architectural competitions. Their mentorship and friendship deeply influenced my professional path and inspired a lasting commitment to learning from the finest in Sarajevo and the wider regional architectural community. This formative experience has remained a guiding force throughout my career.

2 A Global Journey in Architecture and Transit Design

My architectural journey soon extended far beyond the hills and rivers of Sarajevo. In the early years of my international career, I found myself immersed in the contrasting urban tapestries of Australia, Singapore, and Hong Kong — each place offering distinct lessons in density, material culture, climatic response, and the subtle art of urban negotiation. These diverse contexts challenged me to recalibrate my thinking and sharpened my appreciation for architecture's remarkable adaptability. They also nurtured a sensitivity to the unique demands of designing in culturally layered environments, where global ambition meets local authenticity.

It was during my time in Singapore, Hong Kong, and later Dubai that transit architecture emerged as a central thread in my work. Designing for mobility became a means of designing for connection — across geographies, communities, and time. Among the most transformative of these experiences was leading the design of the Dubai Metro, an ambitious infrastructure project comprising over 45 stations across both overground and underground networks. It was not only a technical and logistical challenge but a cultural and symbolic one. The architecture of the stations was intentionally shaped by narratives rooted in Emirati heritage, with design motifs inspired by traditional *dhow*s (wooden boats), *barjeel* wind towers, and

i iridescentnih školjki bisernica evocirali su stoljetnu povezanost regije s morem i trgovinom.

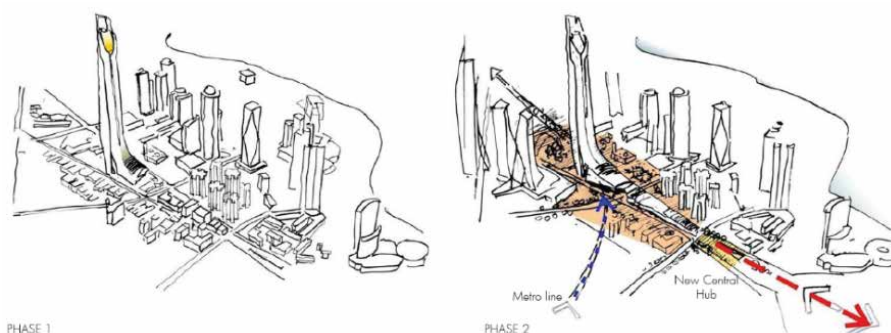
Takav kulturološki utemeljen pristup je bio presudan u prostoru poput Dubaja, gdje nagli razvoj prijeti otuđenjem od lokalnog identiteta. Tempo gradnje bio je izniman, ali stalno smo postavljali pitanja: *Šta će ove stanice značiti za dvadeset ili trideset godina? Hoće li i dalje biti prihvaćene kao dio gradskog tkiva? Može li građevina podignuta za kretanje postati i mjesto pripadanja?* Ta su pitanja vodila svaku dizajnersku odluku i podsjećala nas da tranzitni prostori moraju biti više od pukog usmjeravanja toka — moraju nositi značenje.

Ipak, moj se rad nikada nije ograničavao samo na prometne čvorove. Tokom godina sudjelovao sam u osmišljavanju nebodera mješovite namjene, stambenih zajednica, komercijalnih objekata, hotelskih kompleksa i opsežnih regulacionih planova. Ova raznolikost naučila me da sve tipologije, bez obzira na programsku namjenu, sudjeluju u koreografiji urbanog života. Izložbeni salon, hotel ili stambeni blok mogu usmjeriti pješačke tokove, definirati vizure i potaknuti javnu interakciju. Arhitektura uvijek mora voditi dijalog sa širim urbanim kontekstom, a svaka intervencija nosi odgovornost da taj dijalog ojača, a ne da ga naruši.

the iridescent forms of pearl shells — paying homage to the region's long-standing relationship with the sea and trade.

This culturally embedded approach was essential in a place like Dubai, where rapid development risks detachment from local identity. The pace of construction was extraordinary, but we continuously asked: *What will these stations mean twenty or thirty years from now? Will they still be embraced as part of the city's civic fabric? Can a structure built for movement also become a place of belonging?* These questions guided every design decision and reminded us that transit spaces must do more than facilitate flow — they must hold meaning.

My work, however, has never been confined to transport nodes alone. Over the years, I've contributed to the design of mixed-use towers, residential communities, commercial buildings, hospitality venues, and large-scale masterplans. This diversity taught me that all typologies, regardless of their program, contribute to the choreography of urban life. A showroom, a hotel, or a housing block can influence pedestrian patterns, define vistas, and foster public interaction. Architecture must always be in dialogue with the broader urban fabric, and every intervention carries the responsibility to strengthen that dialogue rather than disrupt it.



Ilustracija 1a Konceptualne skice Tornja Suk Al Thalath Al Gadeem, Tripoli, Libija. Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2008.; **1b** Perspektiva Tornja Suk Al Thalath Al Gadeem iz uličnog ugla. Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2008.



Figure 1a Sketches of Tower at Suk Al Thalath Al Gadeem, Tripoli, Libya. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2008.; **1b** Street Perspective of Tower at Suk Al Thalath Al Gadeem, Tripoli, Libya. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2008.



Ilustracija 2a Konceptualna skica, Hong Kong "Border Crossing Facilities". Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2009.; **3a** Funkcionalni slojevi, Hong Kong "Border Crossing Facilities". Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2009.

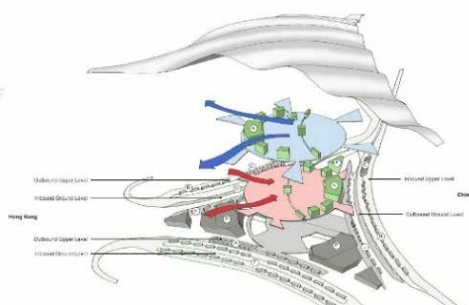
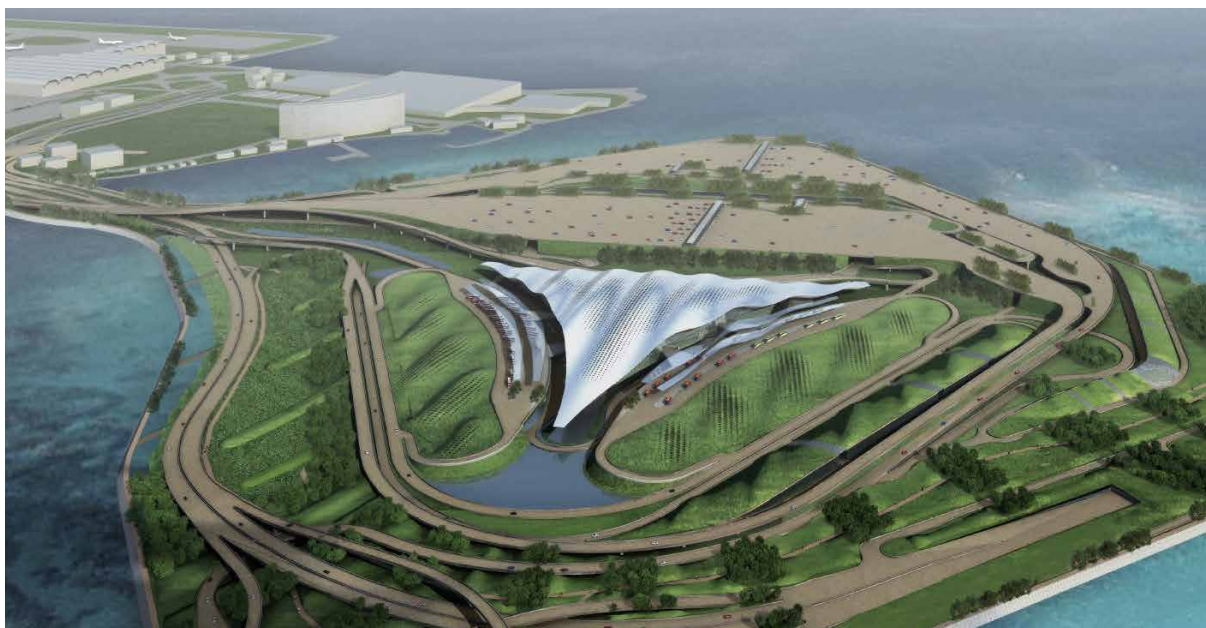


Figure 2a Conceptual sketch, Hong Kong Border Crossing Facilities. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2009.; **3a** Functional layers, Hong Kong Border Crossing Facilities. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2009.

Svaki grad u kojem sam djelovao donio je nova saznanja. U Torontu, primjerice, projektovanje stanice Sheppard West je otvorilo dodatnu dimenziju mog razumijevanja humanocentričnoga dizajna tranzitnih prostora. Za razliku od ekspresivnosti formi razvijenih u Dubaju, ovaj je projekt naglašavao suzdržanost, prirodno osvjetljenje i emocionalni

Each city I worked in brought new insight. In Toronto, for example, the design of Sheppard West Station introduced another dimension to my understanding of human-centered transit design. Unlike the expressiveness of Dubai's forms, this project emphasized restraint, daylight, and the emotional tone of underground spaces. We asked



Ilustracija 3 Hong Kong "Border Crossing Facilities".
Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2009.

Figure 3 Hong Kong "Border Crossing Facilities".
Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2009.

ambijent podzemnih prostora. Pitali smo se kako dopustiti dnevnoj svjetlosti da proдре duboko u stanicu; na koji način materijali mogu evocirati toplinu umjesto sterilnosti; te kako putnik može osjetiti sigurnost, smirenost i orijentiranost u podzemnome okruženju. Ovo nisu bila sporedna pitanja, već temeljna načela. Cilj je bio neutralizirati nelagodu koja se često veže uz podzemna putovanja i zamijeniti je jasnoćom, ugodom i dostojanstvom.

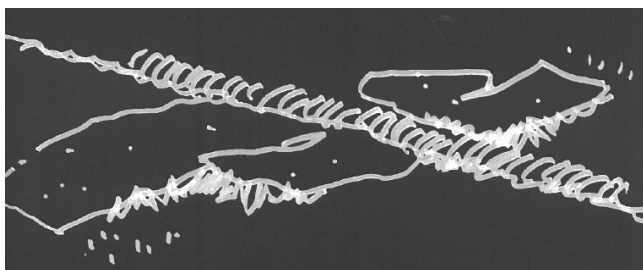
Stanica Sheppard West služi kao portal prema susjednim parkovnim površinama i uklopljena je u planski oblikovani distrikt koji spaja niskonamjenske uredske zgrade s mješovitom urbanom izgradnjom. Arhitektura je promišljena kao produžetak prirodnog okruženja: niska, valovita linija krova prati topografiju, dok zasjenjenja, ostakljenja i enterijer bez stubova otvaraju prostor i omogućuju fluidno kretanje. Svjetlost prodire u stanicu ne kao naknadna misao, nego kao vodeće načelo, poboljšavajući orijentaciju i toplinsku udobnost. Građevina jednako nestaje u okolišu koliko iz njega izrasta, zadržavajući skroman, ali svrhovit arhitektonski izraz u pejzažu.

Kroz ovakve projekte spoznao sam da tranzitna arhitektura može biti i infrastrukturna i poetska: zahtijeva ravnotežu sistemskog razmišljanja i kulturnog pripovijedanja, tehničke rigoroznosti i emocionalne rezonance. Iznad svega, traži duboko poštovanje prema ljudima koji je koriste — putnicima, čistačima, djeci, starijima — jer svaki njihov pokret i prisutnost udahnuju život ovom prostoru.

how natural light could reach deep into the station. How could materials evoke warmth rather than sterility? How might a commuter feel safe, calm, and oriented in a subterranean setting? These were not secondary concerns — they were central. The goal was to dissolve the anxiety often associated with underground travel and replace it with clarity, comfort, and dignity.

Sheppard West Station is positioned as a gateway to the adjacent parklands and sits within a masterplanned area that blends low-rise office buildings with mixed-use development. The architecture was conceived as an extension of its natural surroundings. Its low, curving roofline responds to the undulating topography, while shaded glazing and a column-free interior invite openness and spatial fluidity. Light penetrates the station not as an afterthought, but as a guiding principle, enhancing both orientation and thermal comfort. The building disappears into the land as much as it rises from it — a humble but purposeful presence in the landscape.

Through projects like these, I've learned that transit architecture can be both infrastructural and poetic. It requires a balance of systems thinking and cultural storytelling, technical rigor and emotional resonance. Above all, it demands a deep respect for the people who use it — commuters, cleaners, children, elders — each of whom brings life to the space through their movement and presence.



Ilustracija 4 Sheppard West Station, Toronto, Kanada. Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2007.



Figure 4 Sheppard West Station, Toronto, Canada. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2007.

3 Urbane refleksije: Održivost, izgrađenost i humanocentričnost

Kako se u gradovima povećava gustina naseljenosti, tranzit postaje i nužnost i prilika. Omogućuje urbanu koheziju, ali može dovesti i do otuđenja ako nije oblikovan s empatijom. U projektovanju infrastrukture sve se više oslanjam na učenja Juraja Neidhardta, čije je djelo nepogrešivo spajalo modernističku jasnoću s regionalnim slojevitostima. Njegovo uvjerenje u ekspresivnu snagu konstrukcije — ukorijenjenu u tradiciji i klimi — trajno me vodi, osobito u vrućim podnebljima gdje zasjenjenje, orijentacija i taktilnost presudno određuju kvalitetu prostora.

Uočio sam da korporativni i ugostiteljski objekti često dijele slične izazove s tranzicijskom arhitekturom — naime, kako međusobno povezati različite dijelove grada, revitalizirati ih otkrivanjem nove aktivnosti i ljudi te pritom sačuvati održivost u prvom planu. Primjer za to su parcele J16 i J17, Masdar u Abu Dabiju. Geometrija zgrada omogućila je podizanje pojedinih blokova za dvije etaže, čime se sjeverni te sjeverozapadni i jugoistočni vjetrovi uvode dublje u parcelu. Dobitak u visini pomno je odmjerjen prema eventualnim nepovoljnim zasjenjenjima; viši uglovi koncentrirani su ponajviše na jugozapadnim uglovima dvorišta ili sjeverozapadnim uglovima blokova. Tako se masa zgrada postupno stepenasto spušta od sjevernog ka južnom uglu. Kroz parcelu je formiran koridor u smjeru sjever-jug koji usmjerava vjetar u naselje i ograničava zavjetrinu nizvodno od parcele (vidi Ilustraciju 5).

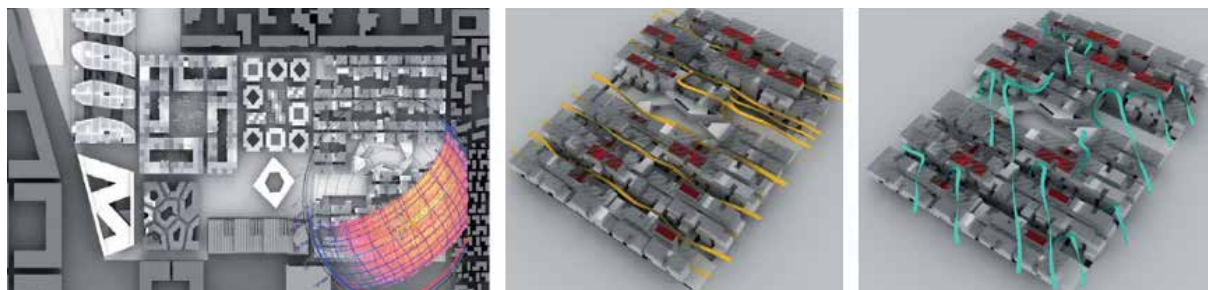
Drugi je primjer projekt The Pulse Townhouses u Dubai Southu (Ilustracija 6), gdje je dizajn bio vođen humanocentričnim pristupom. Za razliku od tipičnih velikih razvojnih projekata u Dubaiju, koji često zanemaruju pješačko iskustvo, ovdje je prioritet bio čovjekova mjera. Inovacija se ogleda u vraćanju fokusa na stanovnike i pješake, stvarajući izgrađeni ambijent koji je pristupačan, udoban i usklađen sa svojim korisnicima.

3 Urban Reflections: Sustainability, Density, and Human-Centered Design

As cities densify, transit becomes both a necessity and an opportunity. It enables urban cohesion, yet can also alienate if not designed with empathy. In designing infrastructure, I have increasingly drawn from the teachings of Juraj Neidhardt, whose work always balanced modernist clarity with regional interlay. His belief in the expressive power of structure — rooted in both tradition and climate — has stayed with me, especially in hot regions where shading, orientation, and tactility make all the difference.

In my work, I observed that corporate and hospitality facilities often face similar challenges as transitional architecture — namely, how to connect different parts of the city and revitalize them by attracting new activity and people, but also have sustainability in mind. A great example for this was Masdar Plot J16 and J17. The geometry of the buildings offered opportunities to raise specific blocks, by two stories, to bring both the north wind and the NW/SE winds deeper into the plot. The height gains are evaluated against any disadvantages in overshadowing. Taller corners have been predominantly concentrated at the SW corners of courtyards or NW corners of blocks. As a result the building mass gradually steps from the north corner towards the south. A N/S wind corridor has been created through the site to channel wind into the development and limit the wind shading downwind from the plot (see Figure 5).

Another example is The Pulse Townhouses project in Dubai South (Figure 6), where the design was driven by a human-centered approach. Unlike typical large-scale developments in Dubai, which often overlook the pedestrian experience, this project prioritized the human scale. The innovation lay in shifting the focus back to the residents and pedestrians, creating a built environment that feels accessible, comfortable, and connected to its users.



Ilustracija 5 *iznad* Dijagram Životne sredine: Masdar (Parcela J16 & J17), Abu Dhabi, UAE. Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2005.

Figure 5 *above* Masdar (Plot J16 & J17), Abu Dhabi, UAE. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2005.



Ilustracija 6 *lijevo* The Pulse Stambeno naselje, Dubai South, Dubai, UAE. Izvor: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2017.

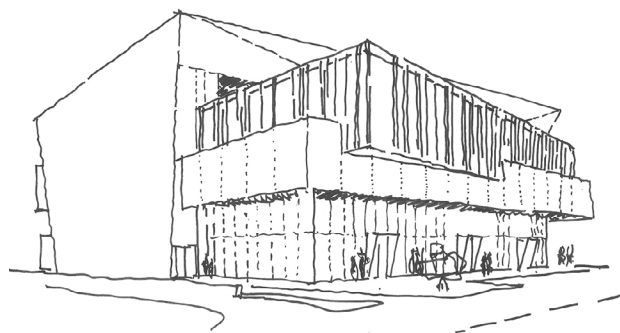
Figure 6 *left* The Pulse Townhouses, Dubai South, Dubai, UAE. Source: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2017.



Utjecaj arhitekture na svoje okruženje snažno se manifestira u projektu prodajno-poslovne zgrade Showroom Building at Sheikh Zayed Road 21 (SZR-21). Ovaj objekat, kojem je časopis *Design Middle East* dodijelio nagradu za najbolju inovaciju 2019. godine, smješten je u samom srcu prestižne "showroom" zone Dubajia i predstavlja reper modernog dizajna, tehnološke inovacije i arhitektonske sofisticiranosti. Koncipiran kao vrhunski prostor za izložbeno-prodajne namjene i uredske funkcije, SZR-21 utjelovljuje novu generaciju komercijalne arhitekture u kojoj se spajaju funkcionalnost, estetika i inovacija.

Ono što ovaj objekat doista izdvaja jest hrabra integracija naprednih tehnologija, prije svega masivnih LED ekrana koji obavijaju fasadu. Visokorezolucijski displeji transformiraju zgradu u dinamičan reklamni reper, učvršćujući njen identitet kao vrhunac savremenog poslovnog čvorišta. Osim vizuelnog dojma, SZR-21 primjenjuje pametne građevinske sisteme i energetske efikasne tehnologije, postavljajući nove standarde održivih i tehnološki naprednih projekata. Pažljivo dizajniran eksterijer upotpunjen je prostranim, svjetlom obasjanim "showroom" prostorima i vrhunskim uredskim kapacitetima, nudeći okruženje koje je jednako racionalno i inteligentno koliko i estetski sugestivno.

U središtu svih ovih nastojanja nalazi se načelo koje je profesor Finci često naglašavao: zgrade nisu nijeme — one pripovijedaju. Poučio nas je da je arhitektura prostorno utjelovljena kulturna pismenost. U mom radu na mrežama metroa to podrazumijeva ugradnju suptilnih naznaka i narativa: lokalnih materijala, uzoraka i historija koje i najkraće iskustvo putovanja povezuju sa širim kulturnim kontinuitetom.



Ilustracija 7 Izložbeni prostor/Poslovna zgrada, Sheikh Zayed Road 21 (SZR-21). Izvor: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2018.

4 Nivoi značenja: Filozofija arhitekture tranzitnih struktura

Tranzitne stanice nisu puka čvorišta cirkulacije. One su kulturni portali. Omogućuju kretanje ne samo između fizičkih odredišta, nego i između identiteta, iskustava i emocionalnih stanja. To je posebno vidljivo u multikulturnim gradovima poput Dubajia, Toronta ili New Delhija, gdje svaki putnik u svoju dnevnu rutu unosi jedinstven ritam, jezik i kulturnu perspektivu. U takvim sredinama tranzitni prostori nisu samo javna infrastruktura — oni postaju zajedničke arene raznolikosti i koegzistencije.

U tim trenucima prijelaza arhitektura preuzima veliku odgovornost. Može ili nivelirati individualnost generičkim dizajnom, ili osnažiti identitet stvaranjem prostora koji

The influence of architecture on its surroundings is powerfully demonstrated in the design of the Showroom Building at Sheikh Zayed Road 21 (SZR-21). This project was honored by *Design Middle East* as the best innovation project of 2019. Located in the heart of Dubai's premier showroom district, SZR-21 stands as a benchmark of modern design, technological innovation, and architectural sophistication. Conceived as a premium space for both showroom and office use, it represents the next generation of commercial architecture, where functionality, aesthetics, and innovation converge.

What truly distinguishes SZR-21 is its bold integration of advanced technology, most notably the massive LED screens that wrap the façade. These high-resolution displays transform the building into a dynamic advertising beacon, reinforcing its identity as a cutting-edge commercial hub. Beyond its visual impact, SZR-21 embraces smart building systems and energy-efficient technologies, setting a new standard for sustainable and tech-forward developments. The meticulously designed exterior is paired with expansive, light-filled showroom areas and state-of-the-art office spaces, offering an environment that is as efficient and intelligent as it is visually compelling.

At the heart of these efforts is a principle Professor Finci emphasized often: that buildings are not mute — they tell stories. He taught us that architecture is cultural literacy rendered in space. In my work on metro networks, this has meant embedding subtle clues and narratives: local materials, patterns, and histories that connect even the briefest transit experience to a broader cultural continuum.



Figure 7 Showroom Building at Sheikh Zayed Road 21 (SZR-21). Source: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2018.

4 Thresholds of Meaning: Philosophy of Transit Architecture

Transit stations are more than circulation hubs — they are cultural gateways. They facilitate movement not only between physical destinations but between identities, experiences, and emotional states. This is particularly evident in multicultural cities such as Dubai, Toronto, or New Delhi, where every commuter brings a unique rhythm, language, and cultural lens to their daily journey. In such environments, transit spaces are not just public infrastructure — they become shared arenas of diversity and coexistence.

In these moments of transition, architecture holds great responsibility. It can either flatten individuality through generic design, or amplify identity by creating spaces that

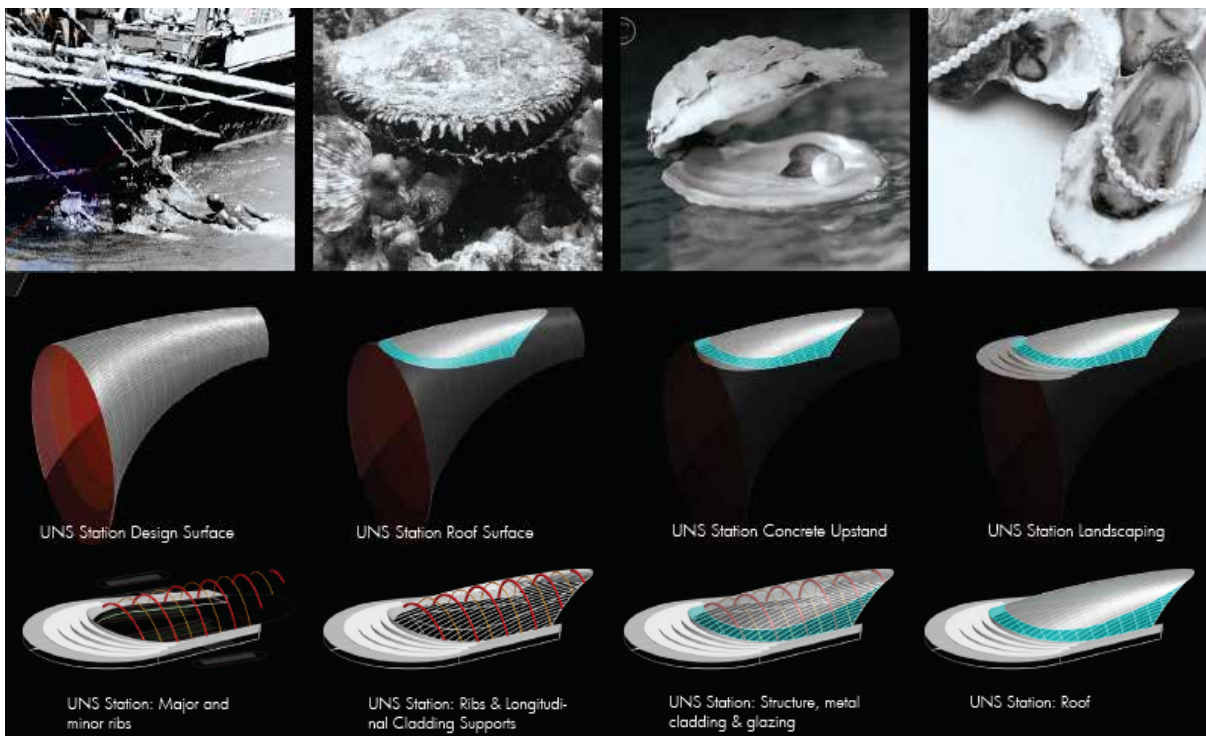
rezoniraju s lokalnom kulturom i ljudskom prisutnošću. Prema mom iskustvu, najbolje stanice nude više od puke funkcionalnosti — one svima koji kroz njih prolaze pružaju prostorno dostojanstvo. Tokom rada na međunarodnim transportnim sistemima spoznao sam duboke sličnosti između antičkih karavansaraja i modernih terminala. Oba tipa prostora nude zaštitu, usmjerenje, povezanost i predah — priliku da se udahne između točaka kretanja i da se usred tranzita na trenutak zastane i promisli.

resonate with local culture and human presence. In my experience, the best stations offer more than functionality — they provide spatial dignity to all who pass through. Over the years, while working on international transportation systems, I've come to see profound similarities between ancient *caravanserais* and modern terminals. Both offer protection, guidance, connection, and pause — a chance to breathe between points of movement and reflect in the midst of transit.



Ilustracija 8 Dubai Metro Stanica, Dubai, UAE. Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2017.

Figure 8 Dubai Metro Station, Dubai, UAE. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2017.

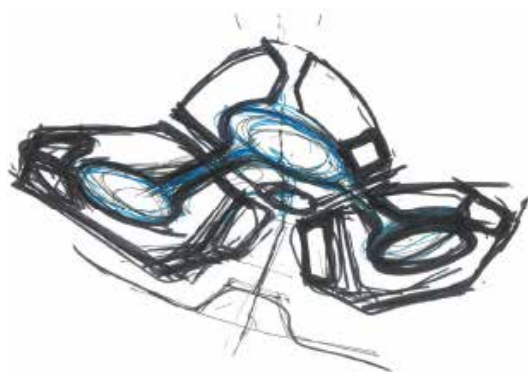


Ilustracija 9 Razrada koncept dizajna Dubai Metro Stanica, Dubai, UAE. Izvor: AEDAS, Agošton, 2006.

Figure 9 Dubai Metro Station Concept Development, Dubai, UAE. Source: AEDAS, Agošton, 2006.

Projektovanje takvih prostora zahtijeva poniznost i duboku usredotočenost. U praksi Aedasa naučio sam svako stajalište sagledavati očima posjetioca koji prvi put dolazi — pitajući se kako će stranac doživjeti prostor, gdje bi mogao naići na tren zbrke i gdje bi mogao osjetiti male iskre radosti. Taj senzibilitet za psihologiju korisnika — koji direktno povezujem s ranim kritikama profesora Zlatka Ugljena — prati me kroz cijelu profesionalnu karijeru. Podsjeća me da uspješan dizajn nije samo stvar performansi ili efikasnosti, nego i prisutnosti, ambijenta i sjećanja. Čak i suptilna promjena teksture poda ili snop prirodne svjetlosti može rutinsko putovanje pretvoriti u trenutak orijentacije, ugone ili tihe inspiracije.

Designing such spaces demands humility and deep attentiveness. At Aedas, I learned to approach every station as a first-time visitor might — questioning how a stranger would experience it, where moments of confusion could arise, and where small sparks of joy might be felt. That sensibility toward user psychology — something I trace directly to my early critiques with Professor Zlatko Ugljen — has stayed with me throughout my practice. It reminds me that successful design is not only about performance or efficiency, but about presence, atmosphere, and memory. Even a subtle shift in floor texture or a shaft of natural light can transform a routine commute into a moment of orientation, comfort, or even quiet inspiration.



Ilustracija 10a Konceptualna skica Središte Business Bay, Dubai, UAE. Izvor: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2013.; **10b** Business Bay Master plan, Dubai, UAE. Izvor: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2013.

Figure 10a Conceptual sketch for the Heart of Business Bay, Dubai, UAE. Source: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2013.; **10b** Business Bay Master plan, Dubai, UAE. Source: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2013.



Ilustracija 11 Središte Business Bay, Dubai, UAE. Izvor: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2014.

Figure 11 The Heart of Business Bay, Dubai, UAE. Source: STUDIOI, Agošton, 2014.

5 Zaključak: Poruka budućim arhitektima

Nakon više od četiri desetljeća arhitektonske prakse, uvijek se iznova vraćam temeljnim vrijednostima usvojenim tokom studija u Sarajevu: svjetlu, jasnoći prostora, *genius loci* i javnoj službi. To nisu apstraktni ideali, nego trajni orijentiri koji su usmjeravali moje djelovanje kroz krajnje različite geografije, kulture i tipologije.

Arhitektura mora težiti nečemu većem od estetskoga dojma — mora izdržati provjeru vremena. Mora odzvanjati kontekstom, razvijati se u skladu s potrebama zajednice te nuditi trenutke orijentacije, dostojanstva i značenja. Učenja akademika Ivana Štrausa o projektovanju usmjerenom na budućnost, Neidhardtovo sjedinjenje regionalnoga izraza i modernizma, duhovna jasnoća profesora Zlatka Ugljena, te poetski pragmatizam profesora Fincića čine filozofsku okosnicu mog pristupa. Ti mentori podsjetili su me da arhitekti nisu samo tvorci forme, nego čuvari konteksta, kontinuiteta i brige.

Premda se tranzitna infrastruktura naizgled čini rutinskom ili utilitarnom, ona je uistinu jedno od najdemokratskijih i najkorištenijih javnih prostora u svakome gradu. Stanice metroa, terminali, čekaonice — tu se svakoga dana ukrštaju milioni ljudi, često tiho, ali s dubokim kolektivnim prisustvom. Projektovati takve prostore znači oblikovati srčani ritam urbanoga života: rijetku priliku da se stvore ne samo efikasne veze nego i mjesta značenja, otpornosti i pripadanja.

Novim generacijama arhitekata poručujem: pogledajte izvan blistavih vizualizacija. Obratite pažnju na nezapažene prostore — prodajna mjesta karata, tihe kutke, klupe na kojima neko predahne između dva svijeta. Posmatrajte kako se ljudi kreću kroz ljepotu i nelagodu. Shvatite kako arhitektura može i otuđiti i zagrliti. A kada projektujete, činite to ne samo radi performansi ili spektakla, nego radi memorije — radi onih sitnih, često neprimjetnih trenutaka koji čine stvarno iskustvo mjesta.

U vremenu ubrzanih urbanih promjena i globalne neizvjesnosti, projektujmo s poniznošću, empatijom i dubljim uvidom. Nikada ne zaboravimo da i najprolazniji prostor može nositi trajno značenje.

5 Conclusion: A Message to Future Architects

After more than four decades of architectural practice, I find myself returning time and again to the foundational values instilled in me as a student in Sarajevo: light, clarity of space, *genius loci*, and public service. These are not abstract ideals — they are the enduring compass points that have guided my journey through vastly different geographies, cultures, and typologies.

Architecture must aspire to more than aesthetic impact — it must stand the test of time. It must resonate with place, evolve with community needs, and offer moments of orientation, dignity, and meaning. The teachings of Academician Ivan Štraus on future-oriented design, Juraj Neidhardt's integration of regional expression and modernism, Professor Zlatko Ugljen's reverence for spiritual clarity, and Professor Finci's poetic pragmatism form the philosophical spine of my approach. These mentors taught me that architects are not just creators of form, but custodians of context, continuity, and care.

Transit infrastructure may appear routine or utilitarian on the surface, but in reality, it serves as one of the most democratic and widely used public spaces in any city. Metro stations, terminals, waiting halls — these are places where millions intersect each day, often silently, yet with profound collective presence. To design them is to shape the heartbeat of urban life. It is a rare opportunity to create not just efficient connections, but spaces of meaning, resilience, and belonging.

To the emerging generation of architects, I offer this: look beyond glossy renderings. Pay attention to the uncelebrated spaces — the ticket counters, the quiet corners, the benches where someone rests between worlds. Observe how people move through both beauty and discomfort. Understand how architecture can either alienate or embrace. And when you design, do so not only for performance or spectacle, but for memory — for those small, often unnoticed moments that form the lived experience of place.

In a time of rapid urban change and global uncertainty, let us design with humility, empathy, and depth. Let us never forget that even the most transient space can carry lasting meaning.

