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Časopis objavljuje istraživanja koja obuhvataju širok spektar relevantnih tema i povezuje teoriju i praksu u oblastima arhitekture i urbanizma. Otvoren je za prijavu rukopisa istraživača iz različitih oblasti, uključujući arhitekturu, urbanizam, dizajn enterijera i pejzaža, građevinarstvo, historiju umjetnosti, geografiju, kulturu, antropologiju, sociologiju, psihologiju i druge discipline koje proučavaju arhitekturu i izgrađeno okruženje iz različitih perspektiva.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S NOTE

The June issue emerges in a bright green colour, with layered graphics of our journal logo—an image that conveys optimism and renewal. This sense of optimism is further strengthened by important news: the AAeU journal has been included in the EBSCO and CEEOL databases, marking a significant step in enhancing its international visibility and accessibility. The scientific section addresses key topics in architectural education and heritage, reflecting on how these fields continue to evolve in response to contemporary challenges. The professional section focuses on museums and cultural facilities, bringing together old and new topics, past and present, and future perspectives.

Scholarly articles open with *Fortresses as Stages of Transformation: Negotiating Historical Memory, Spectacle, and Ambivalence* by Jovana Škuletić, which examines coastal fortifications in Montenegro through a critical lens, between historical memory and contemporary aestheticization. *Mapping Living Heritage: Integrating Pattern Language and Urban MorphoMetrics for Socio-Cultural Resilience* by Yaozhong Zhang and Branka Dimitrijević offers a framework for assessing living heritage towards sustainable heritage planning in rapidly urbanising Chinese metropolises. *Industrial Heritage Matters: Experiential Approaches in Architectural Education* by Maja Plićanić and Anica Draganić demonstrates how experiential and reflective educational models, can strengthen students' sense of responsibility towards dissonant industrial heritage. *I Love Delirious New York (or The Importance of Oswald Mathias Ungers in the Formation of Rem Koolhaas)* by Silvio Squizzardi examines the mentorship dimension and the intellectual influence shaping Koolhaas' early theoretical formation. *Circular Economy in Architectural Education: Pedagogical Approaches and a Proposed Framework* by Hatidža Čapkin addresses how architectural schools can embed circularity more systematically into curricula, equipping future designers for a sustainable built environment. *Unity without Uniformity: A Comparative Study of the Great Mosque of Xi'an and the Tabakča Mosque in Visoko* by Chen Shen and Melika Konjicanin offers a comparative architectural and urban analysis bridging China and Bosnia and Herzegovina, contributing to a decentralised historiography of Islamic architecture. *Disprogramming the Syllabus: Embracing Non-Utility in Architectural Design* by Višnja Žugić, Bojan Stojković, and Petar Mitrović explores how architectural education can move beyond purely technical concerns towards more creative and critical understandings of structure and context. *Mahala: Magical Islands – A Nissological Perspective on the Historical Landscape of Sarajevo* by Eldar Hajdarević investigates Sarajevo's mahale as Ottoman residential neighbourhoods, their origins, and contemporary re-emergence, arguing for their critical reassessment and reinvention.

A central feature of the professional section is the Ars Aevi Museum, a symbol of solidarity, resistance, and continuity, initiated during the siege of Sarajevo. Through interviews with key figures involved in its development—beginning with an exclusive conversation with Renzo Piano—we follow the project's ongoing journey toward realization, with completion expected in 2030. The theme of museums continues in an interview with architect and professor at TU Wien, Mladen Jadrić, with a focus on the award-winning Photography Seoul Museum of Art, completed in 2025. In the rubric *(Un)wanted Heritage*, we present three reviews on iconic projects by Academician Živorad Janković, former Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo with coauthors—cultural and sports complexes in Sarajevo, Split, and Novi Sad—together tracing a narrative of past, present, and future. We conclude with a review of publications and doctoral dissertation abstracts from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo (2025–2026).

Enjoy the new issue of Acta Architectonica et Urbanistica (AAeU) and its diverse research perspectives.

Editor-in-Chief **Assoc. Prof. Nermina Zagora, PhD** University of Sarajevo – Faculty of Architecture

Junski broj pojavljuje se u svijetlozelenoj boji, s slojevitom grafikom logotipa časopisa—slikom koja odražava optimizam i obnovu. Ovaj osjećaj optimizma dodatno je osnažen važnom viješću: časopis AAeU uvršten je u baze podataka EBSCO i CEEOL, što predstavlja značajan korak u unapređenju njegove međunarodne vidljivosti i dostupnosti. Naučna sekcija obrađuje ključne teme arhitektonskog obrazovanja i nasl(ij)eda, u sve tri jezičke varijante koje reflektiraju regionalni kontekst i autore, promišljajući kako se ove oblasti kontinuirano razvijaju u odgovoru na savremene izazove. Profesionalna sekcija fokusira se na muzeje i objekte kulture, objedinjujući stare i nove teme, prošlost i sadašnjost, te perspektive budućnosti.

Naučni članci otvaraju se tekstom *Tvrđave kao pozornice transformacije: Pregovaranje istorijskog pamćenja, spektakla i ambivalencije* autorice Jovane Škuletić, koji kroz kritički pristup analizira primorske fortifikacije u Crnoj Gori, između memorije i savremene estetizacije. Rad *Mapiranje živog naslijeđa: Integracija jezika obrazaca i urbane morfometričnosti za socio-kulturnu otpornost* autora Yaozhonga Zhanga i Branke Dimitrijević nudi okvir za vrednovanje živog naslijeđa u cilju održivog planiranja u kontekstu ubrzane urbanizacije kineskih metropola. *Značaj industrijskog naslijeđa: iskustveni pristupi u arhitektonskom obrazovanju* autorica Maje Plićanić i Anice Draganić pokazuje kako iskustveni i refleksivni modeli obrazovanja mogu ojačati osjećaj odgovornosti studenata prema disonantnom industrijskom naslijeđu. *Volim Delirious New York (ili važnost Oswalda Mathiasa Ungersa u obrazovanju Rema Koolhaasa)* autora Silvia Sguizzardija analizira mentorsku dimenziju i intelektualni utjecaj koji je oblikovao ranu teorijsku fazu Koolhaasa. *Cirkularna ekonomija u arhitektonskom obrazovanju: pedagoški pristupi i prijedlog okvira* autorice Hatidže Čapkin razmatra načine sistemskog uvođenja cirkularnosti u nastavne planove arhitektonskih škola, s ciljem osposobljavanja budućih projekatata za održivo izgrađeno okruženje. *Jedinstvo bez uniformnosti: Komparativna studija Velike džamije u Xi'anu i Tabačke džamije u Visokom* autora Chena Shena i Melike Konjićanin nudi komparativnu arhitektonsku i urbanističku analizu koja povezuje Kinu i Bosnu i Hercegovinu, doprinoseći decentralizovanoj historiografiji islamske arhitekture. *Disprogramiranje nastavnog plana: Prihvatanje neutilitarnosti u arhitektonskom projektovanju* autora Višnje Žugić, Bojana Stojkovića i Petra Mitrovića istražuje pomjeranje arhitektonskog obrazovanja izvan isključivo tehničkih okvira ka kreativnijim i kritičkim pristupima strukturi i kontekstu. *Mahala: Magična ostrva – nisološka perspektiva historijskog pejzaža Sarajeva* autora Eldara Hajdarevića analizira sarajevske mahale kao osmanske stambene cjeline, njihovo porijeklo i savremenu reinterpretaciju, zagovarajući njihovo kritičko preispitivanje i reinenciju.

Centralni segment profesionalne sekcije ovog izdanja zauzima Muzej Ars Aevi, simbol solidarnosti, otpora i kontinuiteta, započet tokom opsade Sarajeva. Kroz intervju s ključnim akterima uključenim u njegov razvoj — počevši od ekskluzivnog razgovora sa Renzo Piano — pratimo put projekta ka realizaciji, čiji se završetak očekuje 2030. godine. Tema muzeja nastavlja se i u intervjuu s arhitektom i profesorom Mladenom Jadrićem, s fokusom na nagrađeni Photography Seoul Museum of Art, realizovan 2025. godine. U rubrici *(Ne)željeno naslijeđe* predstavljamo tri prikaza kulturnih objekata akademika Živorada Jankovića, nekadašnjeg dekana Arhitektonskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu, s koautorima—kulturno-sportskih kompleksa u Sarajevu, Splitu i Novom Sadu—koji zajedno oblikuju narativ o prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti. Ovaj broj zaključujemo pregledom publikacija i sažetaka doktorskih disertacija s Arhitektonskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu (2025–2026).

Uživajte u novom izdanju Acta Architectonica et Urbanistica (AAeU) i njegovim raznovrsnim istraživačkim perspektivama.

SCIENTIFIC

SECTION

Jovana Škuletić

Fortresses as Stages of Transformation:
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Fortresses as Stages of Transformation: Negotiating Historical Memory, Spectacle, and Ambivalence

Tvrđave kao pozornice transformacije:
Pregovaranje istorijskog pamćenja, spektakla i ambivalencije

Jovana Škuletić

Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
j.skuletic.arch@gmail.com | orcid.org/0009-0007-7739-0501

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Abstract Coastal fortifications in Montenegro constitute complex cultural landscapes whose functions have undergone profound transformations. Originally conceived as military and defensive structures, they are increasingly reinterpreted as cultural venues, tourist attractions, and event settings. The research addresses the evolving roles of fortresses by critically exploring the interplay between historical memory and contemporary aestheticization. Drawing on theories of architectural aesthetics (Scruton, Zumthor, Böhme), spectacle and hyperreality (Debord, Lefebvre, Baudrillard), and heritage studies (Riegl, Ashworth & Tunbridge, Graham), the research employs a comparative case study approach. Six fortresses—Budva Citadel, Kanli Kula, Španjola, Mamula, Traste, and Straznik—are analyzed as paradigmatic examples of how temporary events, festivals, and cultural programs redefine the symbolic and functional significance of heritage. Findings indicate that event-based transformations generate ambivalent outcomes. On the one hand, they revitalize heritage through economic sustainability, atmospheric experience, and enhanced public visibility. On the other hand, they risk its reduction to scenographic utility, privileging market logics over historical depth and collective memory. Our comparative analysis highlights diverse trajectories: inclusive cultural activation contrasts with processes of commercialization and exclusivity. It is argued that the aesthetic activation of fortifications can contribute to sustainable revitalization only when coupled with critical interpretation, inclusive cultural policies, and strategies that preserve historical narratives. Without such frameworks, the spectacularization of heritage may erode its authenticity and weaken its role as a shared space of memory and identity.

Keywords architectural heritage; fortifications; aesthetics of spectacle; historical memory; eventification.

Sažetak Obalna utvrđenja u Crnoj Gori predstavljaju složene kulturne pejzaže čije su se funkcije tokom vremena značajno mijenjale. Prvobitno zamišljena kao vojni i odbrambeni objekti, ona se danas sve češće reinterpetiraju kao prostori kulture, turističke atrakcije i mjesta održavanja raznovrsnih događaja. Istraživanje se bavi promjenljivim ulogama tvrđava kroz kritičko sagledavanje odnosa između istorijskog pamćenja i savremene estetizacije. Oslanjajući se na teorije arhitektonske estetike (Scruton, Zumthor, Böhme), spektakla i hiperrealnosti (Debord, Lefebvre, Baudrillard), kao i studija kulturne baštine (Riegl, Ashworth i Tunbridge, Graham), istraživanje primjenjuje komparativni pristup studije slučaja. Analizira se šest tvrđava – Citadela u Budvi, Kanli kula, Španjola, Mamula, Trašte i Stražnik – kao paradigmatični primjeri načina na koji privremeni događaji, festivali i kulturni programi redefinišu simbolički i funkcionalni značaj baštine. Rezultati ukazuju na ambivalentne ishode transformacija zasnovanih na događajima. S jedne strane, one doprinose revitalizaciji baštine kroz ekonomsku održivost, doživljaj ambijenta i povećanu javnu vidljivost. S druge strane, postoji rizik od njenog svođenja na scenografsku funkciju, pri čemu tržišna logika dobija prednost nad istorijskom dubinom i kolektivnim pamćenjem. Komparativna analiza ukazuje na različite razvojne putanje: inkluzivna kulturna aktivacija suprotstavlja se procesima komercijalizacije i ekskluzivnosti. Zaključuje se da estetska aktivacija fortifikacija može doprinijeti održivoj revitalizaciji samo ukoliko je praćena kritičkom interpretacijom, inkluzivnim kulturnim politikama i strategijama očuvanja istorijskih narativa. U odsustvu takvih okvira, spektakularizacija baštine može dovesti do gubitka njene autentičnosti i slabljenja njene uloge kao zajedničkog prostora sjećanja i identiteta.

Ključne riječi arhitektonska baština; fortifikacije; estetika spektakla; istorijsko pamćenje; eventifikacija.

1 Introduction

Coastal fortifications along the Montenegrin coast constitute a unique spatial and cultural palimpsest. Built across centuries of shifting geopolitical frontiers, from Venetian and Ottoman rule to the Austro-Hungarian period, these structures now stand as silent witnesses to changing notions of power, identity, and space. Once instruments of defense and surveillance, fortresses today occupy a paradoxical position within the cultural landscape: they are at once remnants of conflict and symbols of heritage, sites of collective memory and platforms of tourism and spectacle (Graham et al., 2000). Their stone walls, formerly barriers of exclusion, have become open stages of cultural production and aesthetic experience.

In the last three decades, Montenegro's coastal cities have undergone rapid transformation driven by the expansion of tourism and real-estate urbanism. Within this process, fortifications such as the Budva Citadel, Kanli Kula in Herceg Novi, Spanjola, and Mamula Island Fortress have been reinterpreted as cultural and economic assets. The adaptation of these spaces for festivals, concerts, and exclusive events has redefined their symbolic meaning, converting them from historical artefacts into performative environments. This shift reflects a broader global trend of the eventification of heritage, where cultural value is increasingly mediated through spectacle and experience (Richards & Palmer, 2010).

To address this transformation, the paper integrates three theoretical domains: heritage studies, architectural aesthetics, and theories of spectacle. These perspectives are utilized as complementary lenses for interpreting the interaction between memory, aesthetics, and contemporary cultural use.

As Böhme (2017) argues, the aesthetic perception of space is not limited to its material form but emerges from its atmospheric qualities. When historical spaces are reprogrammed as event venues, their atmospheres are inevitably altered, sometimes enriched through public engagement, but often reduced to scenographic utility. Similarly, Debord's (1995/1967) notion of the "society of the spectacle" underscores how the commodification of images transforms social relations into representations, turning cultural heritage into a consumable experience. These frameworks collectively highlight the tension between preservation and performance that underlies the current condition of Montenegrin fortifications.

The central research problem addressed in this paper concerns the transformation of coastal fortresses from defensive infrastructures into stages of aesthetic and cultural production. The aim is to critically investigate how processes of aestheticization and eventification reshape the perception, accessibility, and authenticity of these historical sites. The study focuses on the interplay between historical memory and the aesthetics of spectacle, seeking to understand whether the spectacular revitalization of heritage can sustain or distort its original meanings.

Accordingly, the principal research question guiding the study is: How do aesthetic and event-based transformations of fortifications affect their symbolic,

functional, and social roles within contemporary urban and cultural contexts?

From this question derives the central hypothesis of the paper: that event-based revitalization generates ambivalent outcomes. On one hand, it revitalizes heritage through economic viability, atmospheric experience, and public visibility. On the other hand, it risks reducing historical sites to scenic commodities, privileging market logic over memory and authenticity (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1996). The paper argues that sustainable heritage activation can only occur when aesthetic transformation is accompanied by critical interpretation, inclusive cultural policy, and participatory management frameworks (UNESCO, 2011).

To test this hypothesis, the study employs a comparative case-study approach. Four fortresses – Budva Citadel, Kanli Kula, Spanjola, and Mamula – are analyzed as paradigmatic examples of adaptive reuse, while two additional sites, Straznik and Traste, are included as counterpoints representing inaction and neglect. Together, these six cases form a structured comparative framework that captures both visible and latent trajectories of fortification reuse. The selection of these cases is based on three criteria: (1) differing historical origins and periods of use; (2) contrasting ownership and management models; and (3) divergent contemporary trajectories ranging from intensive commercialization to abandonment. Each case is examined through architectural observation, discourse analysis, and policy review.

While the selected fortresses differ significantly in their historical origins, spatial relationships to contemporary urban settlements, and legal and governance frameworks, they are connected by a shared context of uneven and fragmented heritage management. The cases range from municipally managed cultural venues to privatized luxury developments and neglected peripheral sites, reflecting the absence of a coherent, value-based approach to heritage governance. Rather than proposing a universal model of revitalization, the study focuses on examining the outcomes of such divergent and often uncoordinated practices within a transitional socio-political context, where heritage transformation unfolds through spontaneous, market-driven, and institutionally uneven processes.

This approach follows the interpretive logic outlined by Yin (2014), who emphasizes that case studies enable contextual understanding of complex socio-spatial phenomena. By analyzing both active and dormant fortifications, the paper captures the full spectrum of heritage dynamics, ranging from hyper visible cultural icons to silent ruins that resist commodification. The inclusion of inactive sites such as Straznik and Traste also introduces a critical dimension to the study, exposing the selective nature of heritage valorization and questioning whether the absence of visibility equates to absence of value (Harrison, 2012).

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to debates on the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of heritage transformation. While revitalization projects often claim to preserve history through creative reuse, they can simultaneously depoliticize memory by framing heritage as spectacle (Baudrillard, 1981). The Montenegrin context provides a revealing microcosm of these global

processes, where small coastal cities negotiate between preservation imperatives and tourism economies. Understanding this negotiation is essential not only for heritage management but also for rethinking the role of architecture as a medium of collective identity.

Methodologically, the research combines architectural observation, discourse analysis of cultural and media representations, and review of policy and governance documents. These methods allow for a qualitative, comparative evaluation of how historical narratives, spatial practices, and management structures interact in shaping the contemporary trajectories of fortification reuse.

The paper's structure is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework, drawing on theories of heritage, aesthetics, and spectacle.
- Chapter 3 situates fortresses as urban and cultural actors, exploring their spatial and symbolic roles in the transformation of Montenegrin coastal cities.
- Chapter 4 presents detailed case studies of six fortresses – Budva Citadel, Kanli Kula, Spanjola, Mamula, Straznik, and Traste – illustrating different modes of activation and neglect.
- Chapter 5 discusses the ambivalence of spectacular revitalization, emphasizing the need for critical and inclusive approaches.
- Chapter 6 concludes by synthesizing findings and proposing principles for sustainable aesthetic activation of heritage.

This study approaches Montenegrin fortifications as architectural stages of ambivalent transformation, where history, aesthetics, and market forces intersect. By examining how these spaces mediate between memory and spectacle, it seeks to illuminate broader questions about the future of cultural heritage in the age of tourism and visual consumption.

2 Theoretical Framework: Heritage, Aesthetics, and Spectacle

The transformation of fortifications from military to cultural spaces cannot be adequately understood without a multilayered theoretical lens. This research draws on three analytically complementary frameworks: heritage theory, which interprets the cultural and political construction of the past; architectural aesthetics, which examines the perceptual and affective qualities of the built form; and theories of spectacle and hyperreality, which interrogate the mediatization and commodification of cultural experience. Rather than functioning as parallel or autonomous discourses, these frameworks operate as complementary analytical lenses addressing distinct but interrelated dimensions of fortification reuse. The convergence of these frameworks provides a critical basis for analyzing how Montenegrin fortresses are reimagined in contemporary urban and tourism-related contexts.

2.1 Cultural Heritage and Urban Context

Cultural heritage has long been a contested field of meaning, oscillating between preservation and reinterpretation. In his foundational essay *The Modern*

Cult of Monuments, Alois Riegl (1903) introduced the concept of value pluralism in heritage, distinguishing between historical, use, and newness values. For Riegl, heritage is not an immutable relic of the past but a product of contemporary cultural intentions. This recognition that every epoch redefines what is worth preserving has profoundly influenced later heritage discourse.

Building on Riegl's insights, Graham et al. (2000) argue that heritage is less about material remains than about processes of meaning-making. Within this framework, fortifications function not merely as remnants of historical conflict but as active components of urban identity formation. Their renewed visibility within the Montenegrin landscape demonstrates how local and national identities are being renegotiated through spatial symbols.

Urban theorist Spiro Kostof (1991) describes cities as "collective works of art," where layers of history coexist within the built environment. Fortifications, as elements of urban morphology, act as palimpsests – sites where successive historical moments leave traces without erasing what came before. This palimpsestic nature is especially evident along the Adriatic coast, where Venetian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian fortresses coexist within the same cultural horizon. Contemporary revitalization thus entails mediating between overlapping historical narratives while acknowledging present-day social and economic pressures.

The UNESCO (2011) Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape redefines heritage as an integrated relationship between cultural, natural, and social dimensions. It emphasizes that conservation must account for "the dynamic nature of cities" and incorporate community participation in managing change. Similarly, ICOMOS (1999) insists that cultural landscapes are "living heritage," requiring continuous adaptation rather than static preservation. These institutional frameworks align with the interpretive approach of this paper, which views fortifications not as isolated monuments but as cultural systems embedded in urban and regional dynamics.

2.2 Architectural Aesthetics and Atmosphere

If heritage theory addresses the meaning of fortifications, architectural aesthetics illuminates their experience. According to Roger Scruton (1979), architectural beauty emerges from the harmony between form, purpose, and context. He posits that aesthetic judgement in architecture depends on understanding the building as an intentional object, one that carries both functional and symbolic dimensions. Fortresses exemplify this duality: their geometry is dictated by defense but simultaneously evokes sublimity, solidarity, and order.

Contemporary architectural phenomenology deepens this perspective by emphasizing atmosphere as the bridge between spatial form and human perception. Peter Zumthor (2006) writes that architecture communicates through the emotional resonance of materials, light, and sound, shaping the way spaces are felt rather than simply seen. In this paper, his notion of atmosphere is employed as an analytical tool for examining how spatial qualities shape experiential continuity and collective memory in reused heritage sites.

Within heritage studies, atmosphere and aesthetic experience are not treated as purely subjective impressions, but as recognized attributes of authenticity. UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention identify "spirit and feeling" as one of the attributes through which authenticity may be expressed, alongside form, material, use, and function. Although experiential in nature, this attribute is assessed through established heritage evaluation processes that combine expert judgment with participatory engagement of communities and users. In this sense, atmosphere is understood not as a stylistic preference, but as a value-bearing dimension of heritage, negotiated through both expert and social perspectives.

Philosopher Gernot Böhme (2017) expands this into a full-fledged aesthetic of atmospheres, arguing that architecture does not merely contain experiences but produces them. Atmosphere, as he argues, is the reality of the aesthetic, a spatially diffuse but perceptible quality that envelops both subject and object. This notion is particularly relevant for fortresses repurposed as event venues, where lighting, music, and crowd dynamics actively construct new atmospheres. This shift from defensive to performative use thus entails an aesthetic reprogramming of space, altering not only function but also perception and meaning.

However, this transformation raises critical ethical questions. The aesthetic enhancement of heritage through events can democratize access and emotional engagement, but it can also aestheticize history into surface spectacles. Scruton (1996) warns against the reduction of architecture to mere visual pleasure, insisting that beauty carries moral responsibility toward the community. When applied to heritage, this argument suggests that aesthetic interventions must respect the temporal and cultural depth of place rather than exploit it for ephemeral effect.

The concept of authenticity, central to heritage discourse, also acquires aesthetic significance. Lowenthal (1985) observes that authenticity is often less about historical accuracy than about the feeling of the past, what he calls "the aura of antiquity." In the context of Montenegrin fortresses, authenticity is therefore approached as an experiential and relational condition rather than a fixed historical state. Overly designed spectacles may erode the subtle atmospheres that sustain emotional continuity between past and present.

2.3 Spectacle and Hyperreality

The recontextualization of heritage as entertainment cannot be separated from the broader cultural condition that Guy Debord (1995/1967) termed the society of the spectacle. Debord describes modern life as dominated by representations, where everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation. Within this logic, cultural heritage becomes a stage upon which images circulate, and its value is measured by visibility rather than meaning. The fortress, once a site of defense, becomes a photo backdrop, a performative interface between visitors and mediated memory.

Expanding Debord's critique, Henri Lefebvre (1991) conceptualizes space as a social product shaped by

economic, political, and cultural forces. His triadic model – perceived, conceived, and lived space – offers a powerful tool for analyzing heritage transformations. Fortifications as lived spaces embody collective practices, but as conceived spaces they are redesigned according to urban plans, investor visions, or festival programming. The tension between these dimensions reveals how heritage is simultaneously experienced, managed, and commodified.

Jean Baudrillard (1981) radicalizes this discussion through the notion of simulacra – copies that no longer refer to an original. In the heritage context, simulacra emerge when historical environments are reconstructed or staged to fulfill aesthetic expectations rather than convey historical truth. Tourism driven heritage economies thus risk producing hyperreality, where visitors consume the appearance of authenticity while the underlying historical narratives are simplified or displaced. In this paper, hyperreality is treated as a potential outcome of certain heritage practices, not as a totalizing condition applicable to all forms of reuse.

Yet spectacle is not solely destructive. As Lefebvre (1996) later suggested, urban festivals can also act as moments of reconciliation, temporarily restoring communal bonds through shared experience. The ambivalence of spectacle lies in its dual capacity to activate heritage through participation while simultaneously aestheticizing and commodifying it. This ambivalence constitutes the central dilemma of contemporary fortification reuse.

2.4 Heritage as Capital and Dissonance

Heritage transformations unfold within political economies that privilege visibility and consumption. Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) coined the term dissonant heritage to describe the conflicts that arise when different groups attach incompatible meanings to the same site. Fortresses, as symbols of past conflicts and shifting sovereignties, are quintessentially dissonant. Their reinterpretation as cultural venues often suppresses uncomfortable memories, such as military violence, occupation, or imprisonment in favour of marketable narratives of beauty and leisure.

For Brian Graham (2002), heritage operates as both cultural capital and a political resource. Its commodification is inevitable in globalized contexts, where economic sustainability increasingly dictates heritage policy. Nevertheless, commodification does not necessarily negate value; rather, it redefines it within new systems of exchange. The key question becomes how to ensure that economic activation does not eclipse historical and social depth.

Contemporary heritage theory recognizes this dilemma. Smith (2006) critiques what she calls the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" (AHD), a set of institutional practices that prioritize monumental aesthetics and expert authority over community narratives. Smith proposes an understanding of heritage as a performative practice – something enacted through use, participation, and negotiation. This perspective is particularly relevant for event-based fortification reuse, where heritage is continually reproduced through cultural programming rather than merely preserved as fabric.

International frameworks reinforce the need for such inclusive approaches. The UNESCO (2011) Historic Urban Landscape approach advocates integrating conservation with social and economic development, while the Council of Europe (2005) Faro Convention foregrounds the right of citizens to participate in heritage decisions. These documents collectively shift the focus from the preservation of fabric to the preservation of meaning, a principle crucial for balancing aesthetic revitalization with ethical responsibility.

2.5 Integrative Discussion

Together, these perspectives form an integrated analytical framework rather than a cumulative theoretical backdrop. In this integrative view, fortresses become testing grounds for the contradictions of contemporary heritage practice. Their massive forms embody the endurance of history, yet their new uses demonstrate its fluid reinterpretation. As Choay (2001) observes, the modern cult of heritage is a paradox: it seeks to protect the past by continually reinventing it. The fortresses of Budva, Herceg Novi, and the Bay of Kotor exemplify this paradox, where acts of preservation often coincide with acts of reinvention.

Consequently, the theoretical framework adopted here does not oppose aesthetic transformation but situates it within a critical understanding of its implications. Spectacle is approached as an ambivalent condition – capable of both enriching and undermining heritage – rather than as an inherently negative force. This dialectical perspective informs the subsequent analysis, where each fortress is interpreted as a case of negotiation between aesthetic experience, economic logic, and historical memory.

3 Fortresses as Urban and Cultural Actors

Fortifications are among the most visible and symbolically charged components of the urban landscape of Montenegro's Adriatic coast. As architectural artefacts, they embody the intersection between geography, power, and identity; as cultural artefacts, they mediate between memory and modernity. Once conceived as instruments of control, physical manifestations of territorial surveillance and military defense, fortresses today are increasingly repositioned within contemporary urban and cultural frameworks through processes of reuse, management, and interpretation. Their renewed presence within the contemporary city transforms them into active participants in the redefinition of urban identity and public space (Kostof, 1991; Graham et al., 2000).

The Montenegrin coast, from Ulcinj to Herceg Novi, contains an extraordinary density of fortifications, each reflecting the imprint of successive empires. Venetian bastions in Budva and Kotor, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian fortresses in Herceg Novi, collectively form a continuous defensive landscape. This military network, originally conceived to control maritime routes and political boundaries, has in the post-industrial era been subsumed into a new geography of cultural tourism.

Within this geography, fortresses no longer signify danger or exclusion but rather heritage value, symbolic visibility, and experiential potential.

3.1 From Defense to Display

The shift from defense to display encapsulates the broader transformation of fortresses from military to symbolic infrastructures. In urban theory, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between spaces of representation and representational spaces: the former designed by power, the latter reinterpreted through lived experience. Fortifications exemplify this dialectic. Originally conceived as spaces of representation, embodiments of political order, they have become representational spaces through tourism, cultural use, and artistic reinterpretation.

In Budva, for instance, the Citadel now serves as a curated symbol of the city's historical continuity, its stone bastions framing theatrical performances, exhibitions, and commercial and semi-public events. The same walls that once repelled sieges now host international audiences, demonstrating the fluidity of architectural meaning. This process aligns with Harvey's (1989) concept of postmodern urban spectacle, where cities commodify history as an image to be consumed. The fortress, therefore, transitions from being a defensive apparatus to a cultural interface, a medium through which urban identity is selectively represented and marketed.

3.2 The Fortress as an Urban Node

Urban morphologists have long emphasized that fortifications are not external additions to the city but integral to its spatial structure. As Kostof (1991) notes, the morphology of many Mediterranean cities emerged from the geometry of their walls and gates. In the case of Budva, Kotor, and Herceg Novi, the fortresses delineated the limits of civic life and organized spatial hierarchies. The modern dismantling and reprogramming of these boundaries thus transform not only physical space but also the social order previously structured by them.

Today, the fortress operates as a node of urban memory, a condensate of historical meanings in the expanding field of the tourist city. According to Rossi (1982), urban artefacts carry a permanent value capable of resisting time, acting as anchors of continuity within changing urban dynamics. Yet in the context of neoliberal development, these anchors risk being detached from their historical moorings. The transformation of fortresses into event venues or private resorts, while seemingly preserving their form, can sever their ties to collective experience and convert them into aesthetic commodities (Baudrillard, 1981).

This paradox manifests clearly in coastal Montenegro, where fortified structures are frequently integrated into high-end tourism masterplans. The case of Mamula Island, for example, illustrates how adaptive reuse can produce what Zukin (1995) calls the aestheticization of power. Heritage becomes a visual marker of exclusivity rather than a public resource. In contrast, Kanli Kula in Herceg Novi represents an alternative model, where the fortress is used as an open cultural venue for public events, maintaining its connection with the local community. The

divergent fates of these sites highlight how fortresses, as urban actors, can reproduce either inclusive or exclusive spatial logics.

3.3 Fortresses and the Production of Urban Meaning

The symbolic function of fortifications extends beyond their physical form. They participate in what Graham and Howard (2008) term the production of heritage meaning, a process through which societies construct narratives of belonging and difference. In Montenegro, fortresses are mobilized within a discourse of Mediterranean identity that reconciles local distinctiveness with European cultural aspirations. The visibility of restored fortifications in tourism marketing, cultural festivals, and film production illustrates how heritage becomes instrumental in branding the coastal city (Richards & Palmer, 2010).

At the same time, this visibility can obscure the more complex social histories embodied in these structures. Fortresses often carry memories of colonial domination, displacement, and imprisonment – dimensions that are rarely foregrounded in contemporary interpretations. The Mamula case, where a World War II prison is transformed into a luxury resort, epitomizes what Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) describe as dissonant heritage, the selective remembrance of certain pasts and the silencing of others. The tension between memory and marketability thus becomes central to the cultural life of fortresses.

3.4 The Spatial Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion

The reactivation of fortresses as cultural spaces also brings to light questions of accessibility and spatial justice. The concept of spatial justice, developed by Harvey (1996) and Soja (2010), extends the idea of social equity into the spatial realm, emphasizing the right of all citizens to participate in and benefit from urban space. From this perspective, the privatization of fortresses through exclusive events or commercial concessions represents not merely an aesthetic issue but a form of spatial inequality.

In Budva, access to the Citadel is partly restricted during private functions, while the high cost of maintenance is offset through commercial rentals. Conversely, Kanli Kula operates under municipal management, offering free or low-cost entry for most cultural events, thereby fostering inclusivity. These differing management models demonstrate that spatial justice in heritage depends on governance as much as on architecture. As Smith (2006) argues, heritage must be understood as a cultural process that includes the negotiation of rights, values, and voices.

Peripheral sites such as Straznik and Traste, by contrast, exemplify spatial injustice through absence. Located outside major tourist circuits, they remain inaccessible, deteriorating, and largely invisible within policy frameworks. Their neglect reflects the structural bias of heritage valorization, which prioritizes visibility and profit over community relevance. The silence surrounding these sites underscores what Harrison (2012) calls the “politics of absence” in heritage, where certain spaces are excluded from narratives of progress precisely because they resist commodification.

3.5 Fortresses as Cultural Mediators

Despite these contradictions, fortifications continue to function as powerful mediators between the past and present. Their commanding locations and monumental forms give them enduring capacity to organize collective memory and imagination. In architectural and urban terms, they provide vantage points, both literal and symbolic, from which society observes itself. As Augé (1995) suggests, places of memory serve as anchors of identity in a world of transience. The challenge is to activate this mnemonic potential without reducing it to spectacle.

Recent restoration and cultural programming efforts reveal that fortresses can indeed operate as mediators of civic engagement. Projects such as the ongoing Spanjola Fortress revitalization, initiated through UNDP-organized architectural competition in 2020, represent a shift toward institutional and participatory models of heritage management. These initiatives demonstrate how international frameworks can support local empowerment, transforming dormant sites into platforms of inclusive culture. However, they also raise questions about the balance between global development agendas and local identity formation, issues that will be further explored in the case studies.

3.6 Toward a Dynamic Understanding of Urban Heritage

The conceptualization of fortresses as urban and cultural actors invites a dynamic rather than static understanding of heritage. Drawing on Rossi's (1982) notion of the collective memory of the city, these structures can be seen as repositories of urban continuity that actively shape new spatial practices. Their reuse is not merely a matter of conservation but of production: the production of meaning, experience, and identity.

In this sense, Montenegrin fortifications exemplify what Choay (2001) calls the heritage paradox, societies seek to preserve the past precisely by transforming it. The adaptive reuse of fortresses into cultural venues, tourist attractions, or even private enterprises reveals that heritage is never neutral, it is constantly negotiated between public interest and private investment, memory and marketing, authenticity and performance. Understanding fortresses as actors in this negotiation provides the conceptual bridge to the next chapter, which examines how these dynamics materialize in specific architectural and managerial contexts.

4 Case Studies: Six Fortresses of the Montenegrin Coast

The Montenegrin coastline, stretching from Ulcinj in the south to Herceg Novi in the north, contains a dense and heterogeneous network of fortifications that reflect successive geopolitical regimes and uneven contemporary heritage trajectories. While each fortress has a distinct historical origin and spatial context, they are connected by a shared condition of post-military transformation, whereby former defensive structures are

reinterpreted within contemporary cultural, economic, and governance frameworks. This chapter examines six case studies: Budva Citadel, Kanli Kula, Spanjola Fortress, Mamula Island Fortress, and the marginal sites of Straznik and Traste, selected to represent contrasting models of heritage activation, governance, and neglect.

The selection of cases reflects differences in historical origin, ownership and management structures, and contemporary modes of transformation, ranging from intensive commercialization to institutional revitalization and deliberate non-intervention. Through this comparative framework, the chapter maps a spectrum of outcomes produced by heritage transformation—from inclusive cultural reuse and participatory revitalization to luxury appropriation and infrastructural abandonment—thereby operationalizing the paper's central concept of ambivalence as an analytical lens.

The case studies are examined through three analytical criteria: governance, accessibility, and interpretation, addressing ownership and management models, degrees of public access, and the framing of historical narratives through contemporary use and cultural programming.

4.1 Budva Citadel: Commercial Aestheticization

The Budva Citadel, positioned at the southern tip of the Old Town, represents a paradigmatic case of commercially driven heritage transformation on the Montenegrin coast. Originally built in the 15th century under Venetian rule, the Citadel served as a defensive stronghold controlling maritime access to the Adriatic. In its contemporary condition, the Citadel operates within a market-oriented governance framework, functioning as a hybrid assemblage of museum space, private event venue, and high-end hospitality facility.



Figure 1 “Something historical happened on the Citadel. A fortress became a dancefloor!” – Instagram post by Exotica Experience, illustrating the transformation of the Budva Citadel into a contemporary event space. Source: [exotica.experience](#) (Instagram), accessed July 23, 2025.



Figure 2 Preparation of the space for an exclusive wedding within the walls of the Budva Citadel, illustrating the aestheticization and privatization of the historical setting. Source: Wedding in Montenegro – Malović Wedding Agency (Facebook), accessed July 23, 2025.

This mode of reuse corresponds to what Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) describe as heritage commodification, whereby historical significance is increasingly subordinated to economic visibility and consumption. Its courtyard regularly hosts festivals, fashion shows, and private receptions, all framed by meticulously restored stone walls and panoramic sea views. Although such programming secures financial sustainability and physical upkeep, it also redefines the primary function of the site, reconfiguring its atmosphere from one of contemplation toward controlled spectacle and curated exclusivity, as illustrated in Figure 1.

From an aesthetic perspective, this transformation can be interpreted through Böhme's (2017) concept of atmosphere as a spatially produced and managed condition. The artificial lighting, amplified soundscapes, and curated events within the Citadel exemplify an intentional atmospheric reconfiguration, in which sensory elements are mobilized to enhance experiential appeal rather than historical interpretation. Crucially, this aesthetic and economic activation produces tangible effects on accessibility and public use. Entrance fees, commercial leasing, and private bookings periodically restrict access, as illustrated in Figure 2, transforming a historically collective urban landmark into a selectively accessible space.

The result is an ambivalent condition: a fortress preserved materially but symbolically redefined into a controlled heritage commodity operating within market logics rather than civic frameworks.

4.2 Kanli Kula: Public Cultural Inclusivity

In contrast to commercially oriented transformations, Kanli Kula in Herceg Novi represents a model of publicly oriented cultural reuse grounded in municipal governance and long-term cultural programming. Constructed during Ottoman rule in the 16th century and later modified by the Venetians, Kanli Kula dominates the upper part of the old town, offering sweeping views over the Bay of Kotor. Restored in 1966, the fortress gained a new function when its interior was redesigned into an open-air amphitheatre with a stage and stands, which has since served as a

setting for the Herceg Novi Film Festival and numerous cultural gatherings, as shown in Figure 3.

This transformation exemplifies what Richards and Palmer (2010) term cultural activation, the process of integrating heritage into the living cultural life of a city. Unlike privatized or concession-based models, Kanli Kula remains publicly owned and municipally managed, ensuring stable governance structures and relatively unrestricted public access. The fortress thus operates as a social condenser, strengthening the relationship between built heritage, collective use, and civic participation.

From an aesthetic standpoint, Kanli Kula preserves what Zumthor (2006) calls the authentic atmosphere of place. Its rough stone textures, minimal intervention, and open-air character maintain continuity without excessive scenographic modification. Within this context, contemporary performances function not as aesthetic overlays but as extensions of what Smith (2006) conceptualizes as heritage-as-process, whereby meaning is continually produced through use, participation, and repetition. Rather than presenting a universally replicable model, Kanli Kula illustrates how sustained public ownership, cultural continuity, and moderate architectural intervention can generate a relatively stable balance between historical memory, functional use, and social accessibility within a transitional heritage context.



Figure 3 The 38th Herceg Novi Film Festival held at Kanli Kula Fortress, representing the integration of heritage and contemporary cultural production. Source: bokaneews.me, accessed August 1, 2025.

4.3 Španjola Fortress: Institutional Revitalization and Participatory Reuse

The Španjola Fortress, located above the historic core of Herceg Novi, represents a distinct model of heritage transformation characterized by the transformation from informal grassroots activation to institutionally coordinated revitalization. Erected by the Spaniards in 1538 and expanded during Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian periods, Španjola has functioned historically as a strategic military structure while remaining marginal to the city's everyday social and cultural life. For decades it remained physically intact but socially dormant, its vast interior spaces lying beyond the everyday cultural life of the town.

In the decade preceding formal institutional intervention, local artists and cultural collectives were



Figure 4 The Španjola Fortress Festival, Herceg Novi, 2017 – an example of cultural activation through artistic and community events within a heritage setting. Source: arh.bg.ac.rs, accessed August 3, 2025.

among the first actors to identify the fortress's potential as a space for creative and educational experimentation. Through informal workshops, site-specific installations, and open-air performances, they initiated a bottom-up process of spatial activation that preceded official revitalization efforts, as illustrated in Figure 4. These grassroots initiatives reframed Španjola as a space of experimentation and dialogue, illustrating how heritage meaning can be reconstituted through use rather than formal designation. This dynamic aligns with Smith's (2006) conception of heritage as a cultural process sustained through practice, participation, and repetition rather than solely through expert classification.

Building on these locally initiated practices, Španjola became the subject of a structured revitalization process following a 2020 architectural competition organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Municipality of Herceg Novi, as shown in Figure 5. This moment marks a transition from informal activation toward institutionally coordinated heritage management, in which international development frameworks intersect with local cultural initiatives and municipal governance. The UNDP project emphasizes sustainability, accessibility, and the integration of cultural and educational functions. In this sense, Španjola exemplifies what Graham et al. (2000) describe as the transformation of heritage from static object to a process of negotiation among multiple actors and interests.

Importantly, the revitalization framework incorporates participatory mechanisms for community engagement,



Figure 5 The first-prize winning design proposal for the Španjola Fortress revitalization competition, illustrating the institutional approach to heritage reuse. Source: enforma.me, accessed August 3, 2025.

aligning with the principles of the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005), which affirms citizens' rights to access, interpret, and shape heritage. The initiative positions Spanjola not as a closed monument but as an evolving civic platform, rooted in both artistic experimentation and institutional collaboration. This new momentum distinguishes it from earlier ad-hoc interventions and signals a maturing process-oriented phase in Montenegrin heritage management.

Aesthetically, the fortress retains its atmospheric power, massive stone bastions overlooking the bay, while its renewed cultural activity redefines the site's presence in public consciousness. Following Böhme's (2017) understanding of atmosphere as relational and produced through use, this transformation can be interpreted as a shift from abandonment toward anticipatory engagement, generated through collective presence rather than scenographic intervention.

4.4 Mamula Island Fortress: Dissonant Heritage and Luxury Appropriation

If Spanjola represents inclusive revitalization, Mamula Island Fortress stands at the opposite end of the spectrum. Built by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the mid-19th century, the circular fortress occupies a small island at the entrance of the Bay of Kotor. During World War II, it served as an Italian prison camp, a site of confinement, forced labor, and collective trauma. In the 2010s, the Montenegrin government leased the island to a private company for conversion into a luxury resort, sparking intense public controversy and international criticism.

This transformation epitomizes Ashworth and Tunbridge's (1996) notion of dissonant heritage: the tension between competing narratives of memory and economic development. By rebranding the site as an exclusive leisure destination, the project reframes its historical narrative, privileging consumption-oriented experiences over commemorative functions, as illustrated in Figure 6. Baudrillard's (1981) theory of simulacra is relevant here, as the renovated Mamula offers a carefully curated experience of "heritage" that abstracts architectural form from historical suffering.



Figure 6 Mamula Island Fortress, 2023 – the transformation of a former prison site into a luxury resort, exemplifying the commodification of memory. Source: rhapsody-magazine.com, accessed August 3, 2025.

Public opposition to the project highlighted the ethical dilemmas of privatizing memory. Civil society groups, former prisoners' families, and local historians organized petitions, performances, and commemorative gatherings to contest the commodification of the site. Their activism led to the subsequent inclusion of a memorial component within the resort, an exhibition that narrates the fortress's wartime history. However, as Harrison (2012) notes, such gestures often function as symbolic compensations rather than genuine reconciliations. The memorial, enclosed within the boundaries of a luxury enclave, risks becoming part of the same spectacle it seeks to critique.

Mamula thus serves as a cautionary emblem of how heritage can be appropriated by market forces under the guise of preservation. It also exposes the fragility of ethical frameworks when historical memory is managed through private capital. Rather than presenting Mamula as an unequivocal failure or success, this case demonstrates the ambivalent outcomes of market-driven heritage activation, where material conservation may coexist with symbolic displacement. The case reveals that without transparent governance and active public dialogue, the aesthetics of restoration can drift toward the aesthetics of amnesia.

4.5 Straznik and Traste Fortresses: Marginalized Heritage and the Politics of Absence

Beyond the well-known fortresses of Budva and the Bay of Kotor lie smaller and largely forgotten structures such as Straznik and Traste, located near Tivat. These fortifications, dating from the Austro-Hungarian period, occupy elevated sites overlooking the coast but remain physically deteriorated and institutionally neglected. Unlike the previously discussed case studies, these two fortresses are neither formally protected cultural properties nor integrated into any active management or revitalization framework. Access to both sites is extremely limited – overgrown paths, collapsed retaining walls, and the absence of basic infrastructure render them almost invisible even to local residents. Once strategically positioned to control maritime approaches, they now exist on the periphery of both physical and cultural maps.

Straznik and Traste exemplify what Harrison (2012) defines as the politics of absence, the structural invisibility of sites that fall outside dominant regimes of value, protection, and investment. Their isolation is not only physical but administrative: neither fortress has been included in national or municipal revitalization programs, nor are they accessible to the public or signposted from main roads. In the case of Traste (Figure 7), the fortress is recorded in the cadastral registry as property of the Municipality of Kotor, yet without heritage protection status or a defined management plan. Straznik (Figure 8), by contrast, is not recorded in the real estate registry as a fortress at all, no cultural asset is formally registered on the parcel where the remains are located, despite their documented historical existence. The lack of maintenance has allowed vegetation to engulf their masonry, transforming the remains into ambiguous landscape features that oscillate between ruin and terrain.



Figure 7 The current condition of the Traste Fortress – illustrating neglect and physical decay as forms of silent heritage. Source: dneвно.me, accessed August 28, 2025.

The condition exposes the criteria by which heritage is selected for recognition and investment – legal visibility, administrative clarity, accessibility, and economic potential. In a system where value is tied to spectacle, sites without immediate touristic or aesthetic appeal are left to decay. Yet from a critical heritage perspective, these “silent fortresses” challenge the assumption that revitalization is inherently positive. Their very inertia reveals alternative temporalities of heritage, spaces where decay, rather than restoration, preserves authenticity.

As DeSilvey (2017) suggests, allowing certain ruins to persist in their entropy can serve as a form of curated decay, maintaining the integrity of material and memory outside market logic. In this sense, the overgrown paths and inaccessible approaches to Straznik and Traste become spatial metaphors for the marginalization of less profitable histories. Their neglect, while symptomatic of systemic disinterest, also constitutes a kind of resistance – a quiet refusal to be absorbed into the economy of spectacle.

The absence of intervention at these sites functions as a critical indicator of the limits of contemporary heritage policy, revealing how non-designated and administratively unresolved sites are excluded from both protection and discourse. It raises the question: Does the lack of events signify the lack of value, or does it preserve a deeper, unspectacular authenticity? Addressing this question requires rethinking the metrics of heritage significance beyond economic visibility and tourist performance and acknowledging that silence and distance can also embody forms of cultural memory.

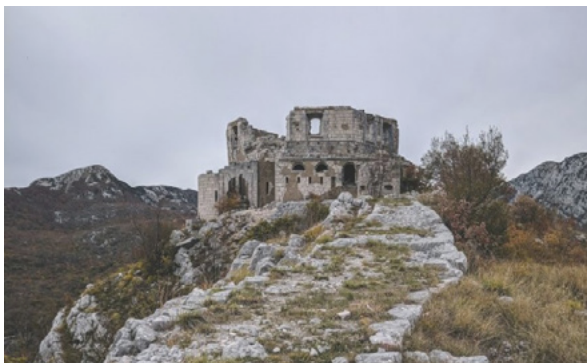


Figure 8 The current condition and access road to the Straznik Fortress – representing marginalization and inaccessibility within contemporary heritage policy. Source: sharemontenegro.me, accessed August 28, 2025.

4.6 Comparative Synthesis: Models of Transformation

The six case studies enable a comparative synthesis of fortification transformation along the Montenegrin coast, based on clearly defined criteria of ownership, legal status, governance, and functional outcome.

Rather than constituting a linear spectrum, the cases demonstrate how similar fortification typologies generate divergent outcomes depending on legal recognition, ownership structures, and governance mechanisms. The comparison reveals five dominant modes of transformation: commercial aestheticization, public cultural reuse, institutional participatory revitalization, luxury appropriation of dissonant heritage, and non-activation resulting in neglect.

The active fortresses – Budva Citadel, Kanli Kula, Spanjola, and Mamula – reveal differing balances between commercialization, public participation, institutional mediation, and historical interpretation. The latent fortresses – Straznik and Traste – expose the structural consequence of non-protection and absent governance, where infrastructure absence and physical inaccessibility directly correlate with neglect, inaccessibility, and physical decay.

Across all cases heritage value is shown to be institutionally produced rather than inherent, amplified through legal protection, management structures, and programmed visibility. At the same time, the non-activated sites complicate the assumption that visibility and activation are prerequisites for heritage value, suggesting that non-intervention may preserve material integrity outside market-driven logics. The comparative analysis thus confirms the study’s central hypothesis – that aestheticized and event-based revitalization of fortifications generates ambivalent outcomes, oscillating between preservation and performance, inclusion and exclusion, remembrance and erasure.

5 Discussion: Ambivalence in Heritage Transformation

The comparative analysis of Montenegrin coastal fortresses reveals an ambivalent relationship between heritage conservation, aesthetic transformation, and economic activation. Processes of revitalization can both sustain historical structures and expose them to visual and experiential consumption that challenges their integrity. This duality constitutes the central condition of contemporary heritage practice in Montenegro and comparable tourism-driven contexts. The initial hypothesis concerning the ambivalent effects of event-based revitalization is operationalized here through three interrelated evaluative criteria: governance structure, degree of accessibility, and modes of historical interpretation. These criteria translate the theoretical discussion into an analytical framework that enables systematic comparison across the six case studies.

Table 1 Comparative synthesis of fortress transformation based on governance and outcome. Source: Author's own elaboration (2025).

Fortress	Budva Citadel	Kanli Kula (Herceg Novi)	Spanjola Fortress (Herceg Novi)	Mamula Island Fortress	Traste Fortress	Straznik Fortress
Historical period	Venetian (15th c.)	Ottoman (16th c.) + later phases	Spanish (1538) + Ottoman / AH layers	Austro-Hungarian (19th c.) WWII prison camp	Austro-Hungarian (late 19th c.)	Austro-Hungarian (late 19th c.)
Ownership / Governance	Private / Private commercial use within heritage setting	Municipality of Herceg Novi / Municipality of Herceg Novi	Municipality of Herceg Novi / UNDP-led revitalization framework	State-owned / Long-term private lease	Municipality of Kotor / Municipality of Kotor	Municipality of Kotor / Municipality of Kotor *Site not formally registered as a built heritage structure in the cadastral registry (Parcel exists)
Legal protection status	Protected (within Old Town heritage zone)	Protected cultural monument	Protected; revitalization in progress	Protected fabric; memory interpretation contested	Not under cultural protection	Not under cultural protection
Current function	Museum, event venue, restaurant	Open-air theatre, festivals	Cultural, educational, participatory reuse (emerging)	Luxury resort with memorial component	No active use	No active use
Accessibility	Partly restricted (fees, private events)	Broad public access	Increasing, project-based	Restricted (exclusive access)	Very limited / informal	Very limited / informal
Transformation model	Commercial aestheticization	Public cultural inclusivity	Institutional revitalization (participatory)	Luxury appropriation (dissonant heritage)	Latent heritage (neglect)	Latent heritage (administrative absence)
Outcome	Financially sustainable, high visibility, but socially exclusive and partially privatized	Strong civic role, balanced reuse, heritage as living public infrastructure	Transitional model; long- term outcome depends on governance continuity	High economic activation, ethical controversy, selective remembrance	Institutional invisibility; physical decay and absence from cultural policy	Double marginalization: legal non- recognition and advanced physical deterioration

5.1 Preservation and Performance: Divergent Models of Activation

The comparative analysis demonstrates that event-based transformation is not inherently problematic; its effects depend on governance, accessibility, and narrative framing. The distinction becomes evident when comparing two contrasting governance trajectories: Budva Citadel and Kanli Kula.

At the Budva Citadel, cultural programming operates within a predominantly commercial framework. Access is frequently regulated through entrance fees and private events, and historical interpretation is subordinated to visual appeal and market-driven aesthetics. In this configuration, the site aligns with Debord's (1995/1967) notion of spectacle, where heritage operates primarily as a controlled visual experience rather than a space of public interpretation.

Kanli Kula, by contrast, demonstrates how performance can reinforce rather than diminish heritage values. As

a municipally managed open-air theatre, it remains accessible and embedded in the everyday cultural life of Herceg Novi. Here, performance functions as a mechanism of continuity between historical fabric and contemporary use. In line with Smith's (2006) understanding of heritage as practice, meaning emerges through collective use and shared authorship rather than visual consumption.

Taken together, these cases confirm that the effects of event-based activation depend not on the presence of events themselves, but on governance arrangements, accessibility, and interpretive responsibility.

5.2 Governance, Economy, and Memory

The cases of Mamula and Spanjola further reveal how governance models shape the relationship between economic activation and historical memory. Although both sites have undergone revitalization, their governance frameworks produce markedly different outcomes.

Mamula represents a model of privatized heritage development. The conversion of a former wartime prison into a luxury resort illustrates what Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) define as dissonant heritage: the coexistence of incompatible historical meanings within a single site. While a memorial component has been formally incorporated, its placement within a luxury hospitality setting constrains interpretive autonomy and public access, subordinating memory to commercial logic.

Spanjola, in contrast, illustrates institutional ambivalence rather than outright commodification. The ongoing UNDP-led revitalization builds upon earlier grassroots cultural initiatives, combining international development frameworks with local participation. This hybrid governance structure aligns with principles articulated in the Faro Convention and UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach, emphasizing accessibility, education, and community engagement. Rather than replacing historical meaning, the process foregrounds negotiation among institutional goals, local cultural practices, and long-term public use.

Taken together, Mamula and Spanjola demonstrate that economic activation alone does not determine heritage outcomes; rather, governance structure and interpretive control are decisive in shaping how memory is preserved, transformed, or constrained.

5.3 Ethics, Access, and Spatial Justice

Questions of access and visibility are central to the ethical evaluation of heritage transformation. Across the analyzed fortresses, exclusion operates through different mechanisms rather than through a single uniform process.

At the Budva Citadel, access is conditioned by commercial logic, where economic and symbolic thresholds regulate who can enter, participate, and interpret the site. At Mamula, exclusion takes the form of luxury enclosure, where heritage is embedded within a privatized resort environment and access is restricted to a limited user group. Straznik and Traste represent a third mode of exclusion: institutional absence rather than active control.

Straznik and Traste are neither commercialized nor curated, remaining absent from formal management frameworks, heritage registers, and cultural programming. As Harrison (2012) argues, such absence constitutes a form of heritage politics in itself. Their exclusion results not from conflict or contestation, but from limited economic visibility and institutional priority.

From the perspective of spatial justice (Harvey, 1996; Soja, 2010), investment, visibility, and governance unevenly distribute heritage value. This comparison demonstrates that access to heritage is shaped less by physical openness than by institutional recognition and governance choices.

5.4 Event-Based Activation and Heritage Interpretation

Event-based activation appears across the case studies as a contingent interpretive mechanism, not a uniform revitalization strategy. Its effects depend on how events are framed, governed, and connected to historical meaning.

Three criteria are central for evaluating event-based activation: (1) purpose – whether events support historical interpretation or prioritize entertainment; (2) duration – whether events function as temporary interventions or lead to permanent reprogramming of the site; (3) relationship to historical narrative – whether events engage with, reinterpret, or obscure the site's historical significance.

Where these criteria are met, as in Kanli Kula and early initiatives at Spanjola, event-based activation reinforces heritage relevance and public engagement. Where they are subordinated to exclusivity and visual consumption, heritage risks reduction to a scenographic backdrop.

This evaluative framework shifts the discussion from subjective impressions toward explicit and comparable criteria. Event-based activation produces divergent outcomes depending on governance, accessibility, and interpretive responsibility.

5.5 Ambivalence as Method

The analysis confirms that ambivalence is not an incidental outcome of heritage transformation but its defining condition. Across the examined cases, heritage reuse unfolds through uneven negotiations between historical memory, governance models, economic activation, and public access. No single revitalization model proves universally applicable, nor should it.

The finding aligns with the ICOMOS premise of living heritage, which understands heritage as a dynamic process shaped by changing social and cultural contexts rather than a fixed state to be preserved. The cases demonstrate that attempts to impose uniform revitalization strategies – commercial, institutional, or curatorial – risk erasing site-specific values and historical complexity.

When approached methodologically rather than normatively, ambivalence enables a more precise and ethically grounded evaluation of heritage outcomes. Rather than categorizing interventions as successful or failed, this approach evaluates how different configurations of governance, access, and interpretation produce distinct forms of inclusion and exclusion.

Within this framework, the diversity of outcomes observed across the case studies is not a weakness of heritage practice but evidence of its contextual nature. The coexistence of activation and neglect, participation and exclusion, remembrance and erasure reflects broader governance and policy conditions rather than isolated design decisions.

Recognizing ambivalence as a method thus shifts the focus from prescribing universal solutions toward developing criteria-sensitive, value-based approaches to heritage management. It encourages adaptive strategies that remain responsive to local context, historical layers, and evolving community needs.

In this sense, ambivalence becomes a productive analytical tool: it enables heritage practitioners and scholars to navigate transformation without reducing heritage to spectacle, commodity, or static monument. Instead, it affirms heritage as a field of ongoing negotiation – one that must remain open to multiple meanings, temporalities, and futures.

6 Conclusion

This paper examined the transformation of Montenegrin coastal fortifications through a comparative, criteria-based analysis of six case studies, focusing on governance models, accessibility, and modes of interpretation rather than on subjective impressions of events. The findings demonstrate that contemporary heritage revitalization operates within a fundamentally ambivalent condition, shaped by uneven negotiations between historical memory, economic activation, institutional capacity, and public access.

The analysis confirms that fortification reuse does not follow a universal model but produces distinct outcomes depending on governance, access, and historical interpretation. Commercially driven models, such as Budva Citadel and Mamula, tend to privilege visibility and revenue, often at the cost of interpretive depth and inclusivity. By contrast, Kanli Kula and the emerging revitalization of Spanjola illustrate how participatory and publicly oriented governance can sustain heritage values while enabling contemporary use. The neglected fortresses of Straznik and Traste further reveal that absence and non-intervention are not neutral conditions, but outcomes of institutional and economic priorities that shape what is allowed to remain visible within heritage policy.

Rather than treating these divergent trajectories as successes or failures, the study adopts ambivalence as an analytical lens for evaluating heritage transformation. This approach aligns with the ICOMOS understanding of living heritage, recognizing heritage as a dynamic and

context-dependent process rather than a fixed state to be preserved or optimized. Ambivalence allows for a critical evaluation of how different configurations of governance, access, and interpretation generate both inclusion and exclusion, activation and erasure.

By shifting the focus from spectacle-driven outcomes to evaluation criteria, the research contributes to a more grounded and applicable framework for heritage analysis. It emphasizes that event-based activation, institutional revitalization, or deliberate non-intervention are not inherently positive or negative practices, but contingent strategies whose implications must be assessed in relation to site-specific values and social context.

Ultimately, the Montenegrin fortresses examined here demonstrate that heritage transformation entails continuous negotiation between preservation and change. Acknowledging ambivalence as an inherent condition of heritage practice enables more transparent, adaptive, and ethically responsible approaches – ones that resist uniform solutions and instead remain attentive to the multiple temporalities, meanings, and communities embedded within historic structures.

Beyond the Montenegrin context, these findings speak to broader challenges in heritage policy and practice in tourism-driven and post-socialist regions, particularly where fortifications and former military landscapes are used as cultural and economic assets. By foregrounding governance, accessibility, and interpretation as evaluative criteria, the paper offers a framework applicable to other contexts negotiating similar tensions between economic activation, public access, and historical responsibility.

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Mapping Living Heritage: Integrating Pattern Language and Urban MorphoMetrics for Socio-Cultural Resilience

Mapiranje živog nasljeđa: Integracija jezika obrazaca
i urbane morfometričnosti za socio-kulturnu otpornost

Yaozhong Zhang¹, Branka Dimitrijević²

¹: Independent researcher, United Kingdom
zhangyaozhong0311@gmail.com | orcid.org/0009-0003-2236-6513

²: Department of Architecture, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom
b.dimitrijevic@strath.ac.uk | orcid.org/0000-0003-2817-7986

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Abstract Urban heritage conservation amidst rapid city transformation frequently prioritises the preservation of tangible structures over the continuity of daily life. In Chengdu, a southwestern Chinese city, which is experiencing intense redevelopment of its historic districts, the built environment has been meticulously preserved, while numerous collective socio-cultural practices have diminished. This research advocates for a synthesised approach to heritage assessment, bridging form-based and life-based evaluations through a dual analytical framework. This framework integrates qualitative pattern-based interpretation with quantitative Urban MorphoMetric modelling—a Python-based geospatial analytical approach. We examine six historic neighbourhoods—Shaocheng, Caoshijie, Ma'an, Jianshe Rd., Zhiminlu, and Fuqin—to investigate how varied urban morphologies either facilitate or impede the persistence of quotidian cultural practices. Ethnographic fieldwork identified recurrent spatial patterns, such as open-air markets, communal dancing, gardening, and teahouses. These patterns were subsequently correlated with 296 MorphoMetric descriptors that capture aspects of enclosure, density, and connectivity. MorphoMetric clustering delineated thirty-two distinct urban typologies, each associated with varying intensities of social interaction and place attachment. Our findings elucidate how concrete spatial configurations underpin intangible cultural resilience and how computational metrics can augment qualitative insights in identifying the living dimensions of heritage. By integrating behavioural observation with spatial measurement, this paper introduces a reproducible framework for assessing living heritage as a hybrid material and social system, thereby charting new pathways for sustainable heritage planning in rapidly urbanising Chinese metropolises and potential extensions to the international sphere.

Keywords societal values; historic neighbourhoods; pattern Language; urban morphometrics

Sažetak Očuvanje urbane baštine usred brze transformacije gradova često daje prioritet očuvanju fizičkih struktura nad kontinuitetom svakodnevnog života. U Čengdu-u, gradu na jugozapadu Kine, koji doživljava intenzivnu obnovu svojih historijskih četvrti, izgrađeno okruženje je pažljivo očuvano, dok su brojne kolektivne socio-kulturne aktivnosti smanjene. Ovo istraživanje zagovara sintetizirani pristup procjeni baštine, povezujući evaluacije zasnovane na formama i životnom stilu kroz dvostruki analitički okvir. Ovaj okvir integriše kvalitativnu interpretaciju zasnovanu na obrascima sa kvantitativnim urbanim morfometrijskim modeliranjem – geoprostornim analitičkim pristupom zasnovanim na Pythonu. Analizirano je šest historijskih naselja - Shaocheng, Caoshijie, Ma'an, Jianshe Rd., Zhiminlu i Fuqin - kako bi se istražilo kako različite urbane morfologije olakšavaju ili ometaju opstanak svakodnevnih kulturnih praksi. Etnografskim terenskim istraživanjem identificirani su prostorni obrasci koji se ponavljaju, kao što su tržnice na otvorenom, zajednički ples, vrtlarjenje i čajdžinice. Identificirane su veze između ovih obrazaca i 296 morfometrijskih opisa koji obuhvataju aspekte zatvorenosti, gustine i povezanosti. Morfometrijsko grupiranje je ocrtao trideset dvije različite urbane tipologije; svaka je povezana s različitim intenzitetom društvene interakcije i vezanosti za mjesto. Naši nalazi objašnjavaju kako konkretne prostorne konfiguracije podržavaju nematerijalne socio-kulturne aktivnosti i kako računarske metrike mogu proširiti kvalitativne uvide u identifikovanju živih dimenzija baštine. Integracijom posmatranja socio-kulturnih aktivnosti sa prostornim mjerenjem, ovaj rad predstavlja okvir za procjenu žive baštine kao hibridnog materijalnog i društvenog sistema, čime se trasiraju novi putevi za održivo planiranje baštine u brzo urbanizirajućim kineskim metropolama i potencijalno proširenje primjene ovog okvira na međunarodnom nivou.

Ključne riječi društvene vrijednosti; historijska naselja; jezik obrazaca; urbana morfometrika

1 Introduction

Historic urban districts in rapidly transforming cities face growing pressure to reconcile urban renewal with the preservation of socio-cultural continuity (Kalman & Létourneau, 2020). While traditional heritage conservation has prioritised material fabric—such as façades, street alignments, and architectural ensembles—research increasingly demonstrates that neighbourhood identity and social well-being are sustained through everyday cultural routines embedded in public space (Gehl, 2010; Whyte, 1980). Despite this shift, many restoration and regeneration initiatives continue to privilege built form, often at the expense of the socio-cultural practices that animate historic environments (Chen et al., 2024; Liang, Ahmad, & Mohidin, 2023).

The UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) responds to this limitation by reconceptualising urban heritage as the “historic layering of cultural and natural values,” explicitly recognising intangible practices, daily routines, and experiential meanings alongside physical attributes (UNESCO, 2011). Subsequent UNESCO policy documents further emphasise the “social value of place” as a core dimension of urban heritage (UNESCO, 2016). Nevertheless, despite these conceptual advances, urban planning practice remains dominated by form-centric evaluation tools that struggle to detect, quantify, or spatially represent intangible socio-cultural values (Meissner, 2021; Pendlebury, 2013).

A key methodological challenge lies in the separation between spatial analysis approaches that focus primarily on built form and those that examine social activity, with few frameworks able to integrate both dimensions. Urban MorphoMetrics (UMM) enables high-resolution, comparative analysis of urban form through extensive MorphoMetric descriptors capturing shape, density, enclosure, and connectivity (Fleischmann et al., 2020). However, UMM alone cannot explain how specific socio-cultural practices are enabled, constrained, or transformed by these morphological conditions. Conversely, Pattern Language approaches, drawing on Alexander’s work (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977), offer interpretive tools to describe how spatial configurations support social behaviour and everyday practices, but lack quantitative rigour and cross-neighbourhood comparability (Zhang & Dimitrijevic, 2025). As a result, existing heritage assessment frameworks remain limited in explaining where socio-cultural practices occur, how they are spatially structured, and why certain historic fabrics sustain cultural vitality while others do not.

This study addresses this gap by operationalising the HUL framework through an integrated methodology combining Urban MorphoMetrics, historical morphogenetic analysis, and Pattern Language validation. Using Chengdu—a rapidly transforming regional capital in southwestern China—as a case study, the research applies UMM to classify six historic neighbourhoods into distinct urban typologies and to assess their spatial affordances at neighbourhood scale, including enclosure, density, grain, and street connectivity. These typologies

are then interpreted through Chengdu’s historical development phases to identify how morphogenetic trajectories shape opportunities and vulnerabilities for socio-cultural practices (Jiao et al., 2023; Zhang, Dimitrijevic, & Romice, 2025). Building on this analysis, the study infers likely spatial conditions for practices such as Mahjong socialisation and open-air dancing, which are subsequently verified and formalised through a Pattern Language framework derived from empirical field observation.

The study is guided by three research questions:

1. How can Urban MorphoMetrics classify historic neighbourhoods into meaningful urban types and elucidate their spatial affordances for socio-cultural activity at neighbourhood scale?
2. How can these MorphoMetric typologies be correlated with Chengdu’s historical layers and developmental cycles to identify zones of cultural vitality or vulnerability?
3. How can a Pattern Language model validate and translate these inferred socio-cultural practices into practical planning and design guidance within the HUL paradigm?

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant literature on living heritage, socio-cultural practices, and urban morphology. Section 3 outlines the integrated methodological framework. Section 4 presents the empirical findings from the six Chengdu neighbourhoods, and Section 5 discusses their implications for heritage planning, urban planning policies, and the operationalisation of the HUL framework; and Section 6 concludes with reflections on limitations and avenues for broader applicability.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Living Heritage and the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Framework

Over the past two decades, heritage discourse has expanded from a monument-centred focus toward a broader understanding of urban environments as dynamic systems shaped by both material form and intangible socio-cultural processes (Sun, Jigyasu, & Nakajima, 2025). The UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) conceptualises heritage as a layered assemblage of cultural, social, and natural values, explicitly recognising everyday practices, spatial morphology, and collective meaning alongside architectural fabric (UNESCO, 2011). Through tools such as spatial mapping, impact assessment, and integration into urban planning, the HUL extends heritage management from individual sites to wider urban systems (Veldpaus, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2013).

Despite this conceptual advancement, a persistent challenge lies in translating the recognition of living heritage into operational and spatially grounded methodologies. Everyday practices—such as markets, communal rituals, and informal uses of public space—are central to social cohesion, identity, and urban resilience, yet they remain difficult to capture within planning frameworks that prioritise fixed spatial typologies and formal designation (Poulios, 2014). This difficulty is further compounded by a mismatch between the fine-

grained, transient nature of socio-cultural practices and the relatively coarse spatial units typically employed in urban analysis and governance (Tarrafa Silva et al., 2023). Although intangible heritage is increasingly framed as a global public good linked to cultural diversity and continuity (Nebot-Gomez de Salazar et al., 2023), its integration into planning instruments remains underdeveloped (Deacon, 2018). As a result, expert-driven inventories and authorised heritage discourse often fail to capture the community-negotiated values embedded in everyday urban life (Poulios, 2014).

Recent scholarship has increasingly positioned cultural heritage as a key component of socio-cultural resilience, highlighting its role in sustaining community continuity, social cohesion, and adaptive capacity in the face of urban transformation (Fabbricatti, Boissenin, & Citoni, 2020). However, much of this work remains conceptually oriented, with limited translation into spatially explicit and operational planning tools (Deacon, 2018). These challenges become particularly visible in rapidly transforming urban contexts such as Chinese cities, where historic neighbourhoods embody complex socio-spatial systems shaped by long-term interactions between built form and daily practices. Fine-grained street-alley networks, courtyard structures, and mixed-use frontages support diverse forms of social interaction and informal economic activity, forming an integral part of living heritage (He & Wu, 2009; Song et al., 2024; Zhang & Dimitrijevic, 2025). However, large-scale redevelopment and standardised planning approaches frequently disrupt these systems, leading to the erosion of socio-cultural practices despite the formal preservation of physical fabric (Jian et al., 2025; Li, Li, & Ma, 2024). While existing studies have examined either urban form or socio-cultural resilience, there remains a lack of methodological approaches capable of systematically linking measurable spatial structures with observed cultural practices.

Within this context, the HUL framework's call to integrate tangible and intangible attributes presents not only a conceptual ambition but a methodological imperative. To effectively inform planning and governance, socio-cultural practices must be integrated into spatial analysis alongside urban form. Responding to this gap, this study proposes a dual methodological framework that combines quantitative Urban MorphoMetrics with qualitative socio-cultural interpretation. By aligning these approaches within the HUL management cycle, the research seeks to operationalise living heritage at the neighbourhood scale and provide a spatially explicit basis for heritage-informed urban planning.

2.2 UMM and the Quantification of Historic Urban Space

The historic urban landscape is defined by spatial configurations or urban morphology that have developed over extensive periods (Rodwell, 2009), with classical theories highlighting how the arrangement of built and open spaces, public-private interfaces, and connectivity networks impact the spatial allocation of daily urban functions (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977; Hillier & Hanson, 1984; Sim & Gehl, 2019; Trancik, 1986). Although these frameworks clarify cultural and experiential facets of urban form, they possess limited capacity for systematic

cross-neighbourhood spatial comparison or for assessing form-driven socio-cultural practices.

Typomorphology offers an intermediate analytical layer by classifying urban tissues (Kropf, 2009) based on their morphological lineage, such as street network configurations, plot patterns, block geometries, and building typologies (Moudon, 1994). Applied to Chengdu's historic districts—such as Ma'an neighbourhood, this approach uncovers recurring public-space typologies shaped by layered urbanism: street frontage zones, public open squares, green spaces, semi-private courtyards, and alley corridors where socio-cultural activities occur (Zhang, Dimitrijevic, & Romice, 2025). Each typology exhibits distinct spatial structures and degrees of openness, which influence potential social interactions, informal economic activities, and communal rituals (ibid.). Building on Typomorphology theory, UMM offers a systematic, multi-scale measurement framework to quantify the geometric and spatial configuration of urban morphology (Fleischmann et al., 2020; Porta & Romice, 2014). It deconstructs the urban morphology into coherent morphological components, independent of the conventional “plot” paradigm, emphasising “tessellation cells” as the fundamental urban spatial units, and extends this approach within quantitative MorphoMetrics through standardised mathematical descriptors (Fleischmann et al., 2020).

While precedents in using UMM with historical, behavioural or social datasets remain limited, they still effectively reveal the influence of morphological conditions on territorial evolution, urban types variation (Fleischmann et al., 2021; Venerandi et al., 2021), and also cultural traditions within these urban types (Zhang, Dimitrijevic, & Romice, 2025). For instance, in old Chinese neighbourhoods, narrow alley corridors with high enclosure ratios and low vehicular permeability are correlated with informal social activities such as tea gatherings or children's play areas (ibid.).

In this context, UMM functions not solely as a descriptive instrument but as a diagnostic methodology capable of revealing the spatial affordances embedded within diverse public-space typologies. Quantifying physical spatial quality in relation to street frontages, courtyards, squares, and alleys through MorphoMetric descriptors facilitates the identification of material conditions that sustain specific socio-cultural patterns. This analytical foundation underpins subsequent Pattern Language analyses, which interpret how these spatial affordances are culturally enacted and maintained.

2.3 Pattern Language and the Socio-Cultural Complexity of Everyday Urban Practices

Research on intangible cultural heritage increasingly illustrates the inseparability of socio-cultural practices from the spatial conditions that host and reproduce them (Motonaka, 2025; Nie et al., 2023). Pattern Language, developed by Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein (1977), offers a conceptual model for analysing this relationship by identifying recurrent socio-spatial configurations—patterns—that emerge from stable interactions between the built environment, collective routines, and cultural semantics. This approach reframes space and behaviour

not as discrete but as interconnected categories, elucidating how specific spatial formations, e.g., corners, edges, thresholds, clusters, and enclosures (Gehl, 2010; Low & Smith, 2003; Mehta, 2014; Rapoport, 1990; Whyte, 1980) correspond with particular modes of quotidian activity. Seamon (1979) study focuses on “body-ballets” and “place-ballets,” exploring how rhythmic movement and encounter patterns generate socio-spatial fields that foster familiarity, place-attachment, social cohesion, and communal identity. This echoes the Pattern Language theory that a complex socio-cultural behaviour is combined with many smaller patterns that demonstrate the spatial quality of space.

Empirical research across Chinese urban settings reveals how informal food markets favour permeable street frontages with significant pedestrian throughput (Xu, 2014; Zhang & Dimitrijevic, 2025); how communal dance forms (Martin & Chen, 2020) gravitate toward open, paved corners or courtyards that optimise visibility and acoustic dissemination (Duan, 2016); how routine gardening emerges along residual green strips, setbacks, and fence-lined micro-spaces (Zhang & Xin, 2023); and how social activities such as Mahjong and teahouse gatherings are situated in semi-enclosed threshold environments that support prolonged interaction through enclosure and outward orientation (Wang, 2008). These scenarios resonate with spatial motifs from Pattern Language, e.g., “activity nodes,” “edge conditions,” “outdoor rooms,” and “intimacy gradients” (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977), demonstrating that socio-cultural practices are systematically embedded within specific spatial configurations.

This interpretive framework aligns with UNESCO’s HUL guidelines, which emphasise heritage emergence from layered tangible and intangible attributes within dynamic urban systems (UNESCO, 2011). Although the HUL provides a broad conceptual basis, it lacks detailed procedures for embedding intangible practices in specific spatial contexts. Pattern Language operationalises this, illustrating how socio-cultural activities such as informal markets, social dance, community gardening, and Mahjong gatherings are facilitated by unique morphological settings. This enhances the spatial legibility of cultural practices and supports their integration into urban conservation and design. In historic neighbourhoods, disrupting micro-scale spatial logic may threaten the preservation of these practices, highlighting the need for systematic methods to connect everyday activities with their sustaining material structures.

2.4 Towards an Integrated Socio-Spatial Analytical Framework

In response to these methodological limitations, this study adopts an integrated analytical framework that combines MorphoMetric quantification with pattern-based socio-spatial interpretation. By linking Urban MorphoMetrics with a Pattern Language approach, the framework enables both the systematic classification of urban form and the spatial interpretation of everyday socio-cultural practices. This integration provides the methodological foundation for the empirical workflow presented in Section 3.

3 Methodology

The case study city, Chengdu, is the capital of Sichuan Province in Southwest China; it functions as a significant metropolitan hub with a population surpassing 21.47 million (Cities, 2024) and an administrative jurisdiction covering approximately 14,355 km² (ibid.). Located within the fertile Chengdu Plain, this urban centre has experienced uninterrupted spatial expansion for over three millennia (Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2023), resulting in a complex, stratified urban morphology. Its old historic centre, primarily corresponding to the area bounded by today’s Second Ring Road (Fig.1), exhibits the highest density of traditional neighbourhoods—pre-reform communities in 1949—and early socialist housing complexes, whereas subsequent developments extending beyond the Second Ring reflect rapid post-1978 urbanisation processes. This multilayered spatial configuration renders Chengdu an ideal case for applying the HUL paradigm, especially its focus on synthesising tangible urban fabric, intangible socio-cultural practices, and long-term urban transformation (UNESCO, 2011). In addition, Chengdu is on the UNESCO “Creative Cities Network” and was designated as a “City of Gastronomy” (UNESCO, 2010).

To encompass the complete morphological diversity of the city, six neighbourhoods were selected along Chengdu’s chronological and spatial trajectory: Shaocheng (A) and Caoshijie (B) as embodiments of traditional alleyway networks; Ma’an (C) representing an organic settlement in the early socialist era (from 1949 to 1955) (Wang & Su, 2016)—the Jiefang model; Jianshe Road (D) exemplifying socialist-era Danwei compounds (from 1956 to 1978) (ibid.); Zhiminlu (E) as a high-rise gated residential complex developed post-2005; and Fuqin (F), illustrating early Xiaoqu models emerging after the 1978 economic reforms. These neighbourhoods collectively offer a cross-sectional perspective on Chengdu’s urban evolution, facilitating a comparative analysis of how divergent morphological logics influence spatial openness, enclosure, permeability, and socio-cultural routines.

This study integrates Urban MorphoMetrics (UMM) and Pattern Language into a unified analytical framework designed to link urban form, everyday socio-cultural practices, and heritage-informed planning guidance. The methodological sequence proceeds as follows: first, UMM is applied to compute MorphoMetric descriptors (Fleischmann et al., 2020) and generate Urban Types through clustering analysis, capturing structural variations in Chengdu’s historic neighbourhoods. This will utilise Geospatial data (Street & Building shapefiles) accessed from the Amap Open Access Platform. Second, archival analysis and historical interpretation (with historic maps accessed through Google Earth (2025)) are used to situate these Urban Types within Chengdu’s layered morphogenesis. Third, fieldwork is undertaken to document the socio-cultural activities occurring within each neighbourhood through photographic documentation (Gehl & Svarre, 2013). Using Pattern Language as a structured observation protocol, these activities



Figure 1 Location of the six study neighbourhoods within Chengdu's historic urban core. Source: Authors, 2026.

are systematically examined and disaggregated into recurrent spatial patterns and their underlying spatial requirements, allowing everyday practices to be interpreted in relation to the physical configurations that enable or constrain them. Through this sequential process, the framework progresses from urban form to social behaviour and subsequently to the assessment and validation of planning rationales within the Historic Urban Landscape approach, thereby establishing an evidence-based link between everyday practices and heritage-informed urban governance.

3.1 Urban MorphoMetrics

Urban MorphoMetrics (UMM) provides a quantitative, multi-scalar approach for analysing the spatial configuration of the built environment by systematically measuring buildings, parcels, blocks, and street networks (Fleischmann et al., 2021). It is particularly suitable for historic urban contexts, where subtle variations in enclosure, permeability, grain, and connectivity strongly influence everyday socio-cultural practices.

In this study, UMM is operationalised within a Python-based geospatial analysis environment, primarily using the open-source library *momepy* (Morphological Measuring in Python), which is part of the PySAL ecosystem for spatial analysis (Fleischmann, 2019; Rey, Arribas-Bel, & Wolf, 2023). The analytical workflow was implemented in a reproducible computational setting (e.g., Jupyter Notebook), relying on a standard geospatial stack including GeoPandas for vector data processing (Jordahl, 2014),

NetworkX for street network analysis (Hagberg, Swart, & Schult, 2008), and auxiliary libraries such as NumPy (Harris et al., 2020) for numerical computation and Matplotlib (Hunter, 2007) for visualisation. The *momepy* toolkit enables the systematic computation of morphometric descriptors—such as shape, density, spatial distribution, and network connectivity—across multiple urban elements, as well as the construction of relational units (e.g., morphological tessellation and street-based metrics) (Fleischmann, 2019). The analysis was conducted in Python (version 3.x) within a managed environment (e.g., Conda), ensuring library compatibility and reproducibility. Preprocessing steps included the cleaning and standardisation of building and street geometries, coordinate reference system (CRS) harmonisation, and the generation of morphological tessellations and network representations required for *momepy*-based analysis. These steps were implemented through scripted procedures to ensure consistency and replicability across all study areas.

All analytical steps, including data preprocessing, feature extraction, and descriptor calculation, were conducted through scripted workflows to ensure transparency and replicability. This includes the use of custom Python scripts¹ to standardise input datasets (e.g., building footprints and street networks), compute UMM indicators, and aggregate them into higher-

¹ The Python Script for each descriptor's calculation can be found in https://docs.momepy.org/en/stable/user_guide/intro.html.

level morphological units. Explicitly specifying the software environment, analytical libraries, and scripted procedures is essential for reproducibility, enabling other researchers to replicate or extend the analysis in comparable urban contexts.

Within this framework, UMM is employed not as an end in itself, but as a classificatory tool to generate Urban Types that capture structurally distinct urban fabrics across Chengdu. The UMM workflow begins with the construction of a consistent morphological base model comprising building footprints, parcel-based tessellations, urban blocks, and street networks. MorphoMetric descriptors are computed across these scales to quantify geometric and configurational properties of the urban fabric. In total, 296 MorphoMetric descriptors required by this method (Fleischmann et al., 2020) (the whole list of factors can be found through the link in footnote 1) were calculated for the study areas within Chengdu's Second Ring Road, ensuring a statistically robust representation of urban form. A subset of representative morphometric descriptors—covering key dimensions such as enclosure (e.g., *sdbAre*, building area), density (e.g., *sicFAR*, floor area ratio), and street network structure (e.g., *mtdDeg*, node degree)—was selected to enable comparative analysis between neighbourhoods, with the full list of abbreviations and corresponding definitions provided in Appendix Table 2a.

These descriptors were subsequently subjected to clustering analysis, resulting in the classification of 32 distinct Urban Types, which were further organised into four higher-order morphological groups. Rather than interpreting individual descriptors in isolation, the analysis focuses on how combinations of MorphoMetric properties, such as shape, spatial distribution, density and network structure, cohere into recognisable urban typologies. This typological output provides a legible, comparative framework for examining spatial variation across neighbourhoods shaped by different historical and planning trajectories. In this way, UMM functions as the initial step in translating complex urban form into analytically meaningful categories that can be linked to everyday practices and heritage-informed planning guidance.

3.2 Historic Cartographic & Morphogenetic Analysis

To contextualise the quantitative outputs of the UMM Analysis, this study applies a lightweight morphogenetic interpretive framework to the six Chengdu neighbourhoods. This interpretive layer does not introduce additional analytical procedures; rather, it links present-day morphological performance to historically accumulated spatial structures, allowing UMM descriptors to be read as products of long-term urban development trajectories.

Five temporal points—1947, 1965, 1982, 2001 and 2025—were selected based on the availability of comparable cartographic records from Google Earth (2025) and their correspondence to key phases of urban transformation in China, including the pre-1949 period, the socialist era, the post-socialist transition, housing privatisation, and the contemporary condition.

- 1947 represents the pre-1949 urban condition;
- 1965 captures the socialist era (1949–1978) of Danwei-led spatial organisation;
- 1982 marks the immediate post-socialist transition;
- 2001 reflects the restructuring following the 1998 housing privatisation reform;
- 2025 provides the current morphological baseline.

Existing research highlights the path-dependent nature of Chinese residential environments, in which street alignments, block shapes, and parcel structures persist through successive architectural renewals and policy phases (Chen & Thwaites, 2013; Lu, 2006; Zhang, Dimitrijevic, & Romice, 2025). Building on this principle, the historical typologies summarised in Appendix Table 1a are used solely as an explanatory framework for interpreting why each neighbourhood exhibits specific UMM characteristics across the five descriptor themes outlined in Section 3.1.

Neighbourhoods rooted in traditional fine-grain urban fabrics, such as Shaocheng (Hutong morphology) and Caoshijie (Linli morphology), demonstrate strong enclosure, articulated frontages, and high granularity, consistent with narrow alley networks, dense block subdivisions, and porous building-street interfaces inherited from pre-reform planning logics (Zhang, Dimitrijevic, & Romice, 2025).

In contrast, socialist-era Ma'an (Jiefang morphology) and Jianshe Rd. (Danwei compound morphology) display regularised block geometries, controlled spatial depths, and reduced permeability, reflecting the administrative and production-oriented planning ideals of the 1950s–1970s. Post-1978 fabric, such as Fuqin (early Xiaoqu typology), exhibits smaller-sized parcels, increased setbacks from streets, and moderate reductions in granularity, shaped by the proliferation of 6–7 storey building blocks with no lifts installed. Meanwhile, Zhiminlu, representing the post-2005 high-rise tower model, is characterised by large consolidated parcels, extensive open spaces, simplified frontage conditions, and strong verticality.

This morphogenetic interpretation clarifies how the five UMM descriptor themes—Enclosure & Spatial Configuration, Permeability & Frontage Dynamics, Granularity & Density, Street Network Topology, and Contextual Morphology—emerge as consequences of historically embedded spatial logics rather than isolated numerical variations. It provides a typology-sensitive foundation for Section 3.3, where these morphological configurations are further integrated with socio-cultural practices through a Pattern Language analytical framework.

3.3 Pattern Language Approach

To enhance the structural analysis derived from UMM, this research employs a Pattern Language methodology to systematically document the integration and adaptation of socio-cultural activities within urban neighbourhoods. Utilising the validated pattern catalogue established by Zhang and Dimitrijevic (2025) (Appendix, Table 1b), thirteen patterns were identified that span four domains, representing essential socio-cultural activities (intangible cultural heritage) in old Chengdu neighbourhoods. These activities are

Traditional Markets (with subtypes: M1-M4), Square Dance (D1-D3), Socialisation in Community Gardens (G1-G3), and Teahouses for Playing Mahjong (T1-T3). Each socio-cultural activity encompasses multiple patterns delineating specific spatial behaviours. Spatial data were geo-referenced through site cartography and recorded via a binary Yes (Y) /No (N) protocol across six delineated neighbourhoods (A-F), facilitating direct linkage of activity instances to UMM-defined spatial units, such as parcels, tessellation cells, and street profiles. This methodological approach allows for a comparative spatial analysis of activity distribution and its correlation with underlying morphological configurations. Rather than focusing on quantitative measurement of behaviours, the pattern-based approach provides an interpretive layer as an observational prototal elucidating how conditions mapped from UMM, such as enclosure, permeability, adjacency, and openness, are expressed through lived socio-cultural routines. Consequently, the Pattern Language framework functions as a triangulation tool, integrating historic morphological tendencies (Section 3.2) with quantitative spatial analyses (Section 3.1), thereby yielding a comprehensive understanding of the co-production processes linking built form and cultural practices in fostering neighbourhood vitality.

4 Results

4.1 Urban MorphoMetrics Findings

The Urban MorphoMetrics analysis provides a multi-scale spatial characterisation of six Chengdu neighbourhoods, drawing on building footprint and street network data from Amap (Gaode), a publicly accessible national geospatial platform. These datasets were used to construct a consistent MorphoMetric framework comprising buildings, parcel-based tessellations, urban blocks, and street networks. In total, 296 MorphoMetric variables were computed.

The results are presented in three stages. Section 4.1.1 establishes the morphological baseline through visualisation of the four foundational spatial layers. Section 4.1.2 reports the agglomerative hierarchical clustering results, identifying distinct Urban Types and their higher-order morphological groupings. Section 4.1.3 then interprets the differentiation of these types across the six neighbourhoods and relates them to existing typological classifications.

4.1.1 Multi-Scale Morphological Characteristics of the Six Neighbourhoods

The multi-scale spatial data derived from Urban MorphoMetrics reveal a clear gradient of morphological granularity across the six study neighbourhoods, observable consistently across building footprints, tessellation parcels, block structures, and street networks (Table 1). Together, these layers delineate a spectrum ranging from highly compact, fine-grained urban fabrics to coarse-scale, consolidated morphologies, with several transitional conditions in between.

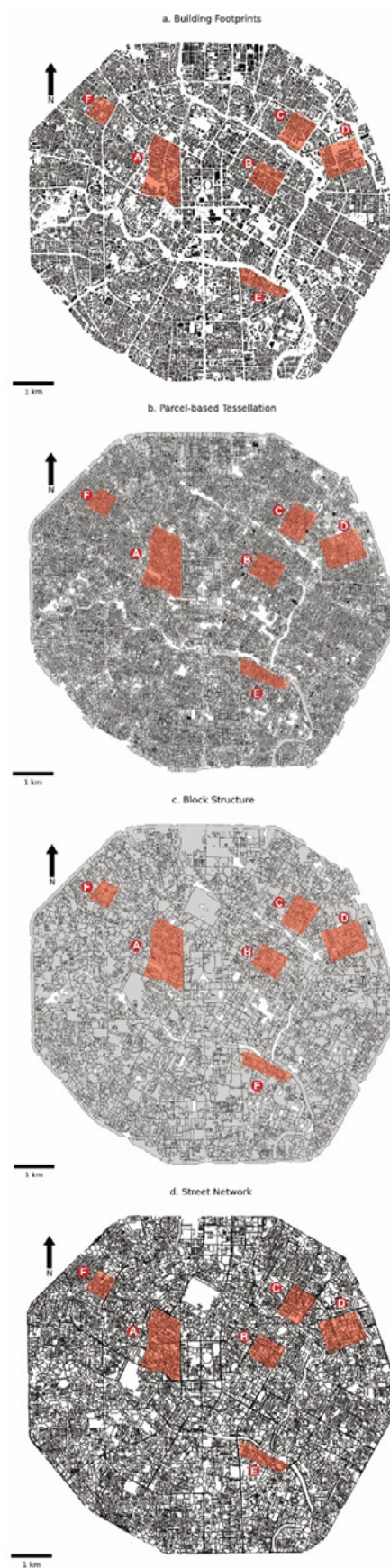


Figure 2 Multi-scale morphological characteristics of the six study neighbourhoods: a) building footprints; b) parcel-based tessellation; c) block structure; and d) street network. Source: Authors, 2026.

At one end of the spectrum, Shaocheng (A) and Caoshijie (B) exhibit fine-grained configurations characterised by small building footprints, dense parcel subdivisions, small block sizes, and highly permeable street networks (Fig.2). Ma'an (C) and Jianshe Road (D) occupy intermediate positions, where fine-grain elements coexist with more regularised block structures and clearer street hierarchies, reflecting hybrid and transitional morphologies (Fig.2). At the coarser end, Zhiminlu (E) and Fuqin (F) display large-scale spatial structures with larger parcels and blocks, simplified street networks, and reduced internal permeability, although Fuqin retains a more articulated internal structure than the more consolidated morphology of Zhiminlu (Fig.2).

This multi-scale continuum provides the spatial foundation for the subsequent MorphoMetric and clustering analyses, enabling systematic comparison across neighbourhoods shaped by different historical development trajectories.

4.1.2 Clustering and Grouping of MorphoMetric Descriptors

Cluster analysis of the MorphoMetric descriptors classified Chengdu's urban fabric into 32 Urban Types (UTs). Their spatial distribution across the Second Ring Road area is illustrated in the Urban MorphoMetric Map (Fig.3), which reveals a structured pattern of morphological differentiation corresponding to distinct phases of urban development.

The dendrogram (Fig.4) organises these 32 Urban Types into five higher-order morphological groups, each representing a broadly shared spatial logic. By taking reference from Fig.5 on the presentation of descriptor values, at one extreme, we have Group I (UT 11, 18, 25 & 31), which corresponds to fine-grained, low-rise, and low-intensity street-block fabrics typically associated with traditional or early urban forms. Group II (0, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 & 29) comprises middle-density residential morphologies characterised by moderate

Table 1 Findings from the basic morphological factors analysis.

Neighborhood	Building footprints	Tessellation cells (parcels)	Block structure	Street network
A	• Very small footprints • Irregular shapes • Tightly packed with minimal spacing	• Very small cells • Highly irregular outlines • Compact cell arrangement	• Very small blocks • Curving/angled boundaries	• Dense, fine-grain alleys • Many short segments and junctions
B	• Small footprints • More rectilinear • Continuous frontage	• Small cells with moderate regularity • Closely aligned with the grid	• Small-medium blocks • More orthogonal edges	• Dense network • Mix of alleys and short streets
C	• Mix of small + medium footprints • Distinct contrast between finer and coarser areas	• Coexistence of small, irregular cells + larger, regular cells	• Combination of very small blocks + very large ones	• Mixed network: fine-grain in one part, straighter/longer streets in another
D	• Medium-sized, rectilinear footprints • Buildings aligned to internal roads	• Mostly rectangular parcels • Similar size and highly regular	• Medium-large blocks • Closed perimeters with limited openings	• Clear street hierarchy • Fewer intersections than in A-C
E	• Large, repetitive footprints • Very regular shapes	• Large parcels • Simple geometry • Low internal subdivision	• Large, continuous blocks	• Sparse network • Movement channelled through main streets
F	• Medium-sized slab-like footprints • Short gaps between buildings	• Medium-sized parcels • Moderate regularity with small local variations	• Medium blocks • Several internal passages	• Moderate intersection density • Mix of internal streets and connectors

Table 2 Urban Types existing in the studied neighbourhoods.

Neighborhood	Urban Types
A - Shaocheng	UT 10 only
B - Caoshijie	UT 6 (dominant), with a small part of UT 3
C - Ma'an	UT 1 and UT 6
D - Jianshe Rd.	UT 1 only
E - Zhiminlu	UT 9 (dominant) with a small part of UT 4
F - Fuqin	UT 0 only

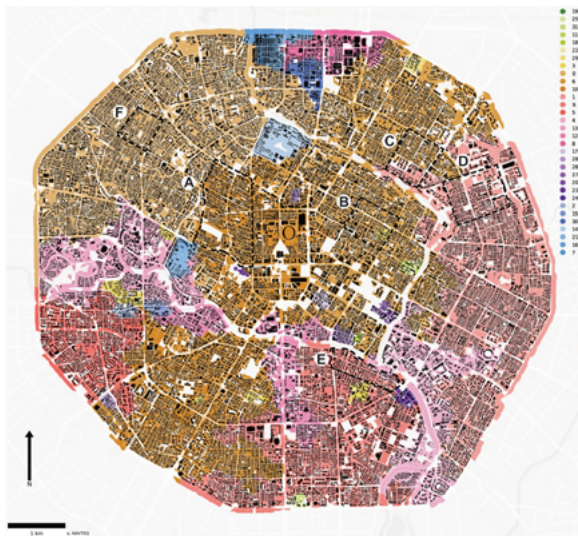


Figure 3 Spatial distribution of the 32 Urban Types (UTs) generated through Urban MorphoMetric clustering within Chengdu's Second Ring Road area. Source: Authors, 2026.

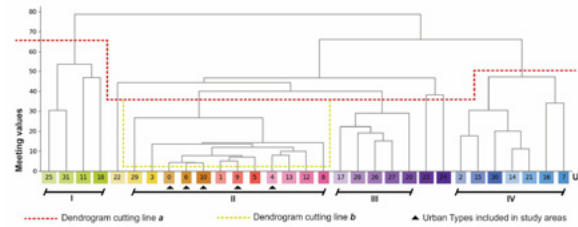


Figure 4 Hierarchical clustering dendrogram showing relationships among the 32 Urban Types and their higher-order morphological groupings. Source: Authors, 2026.

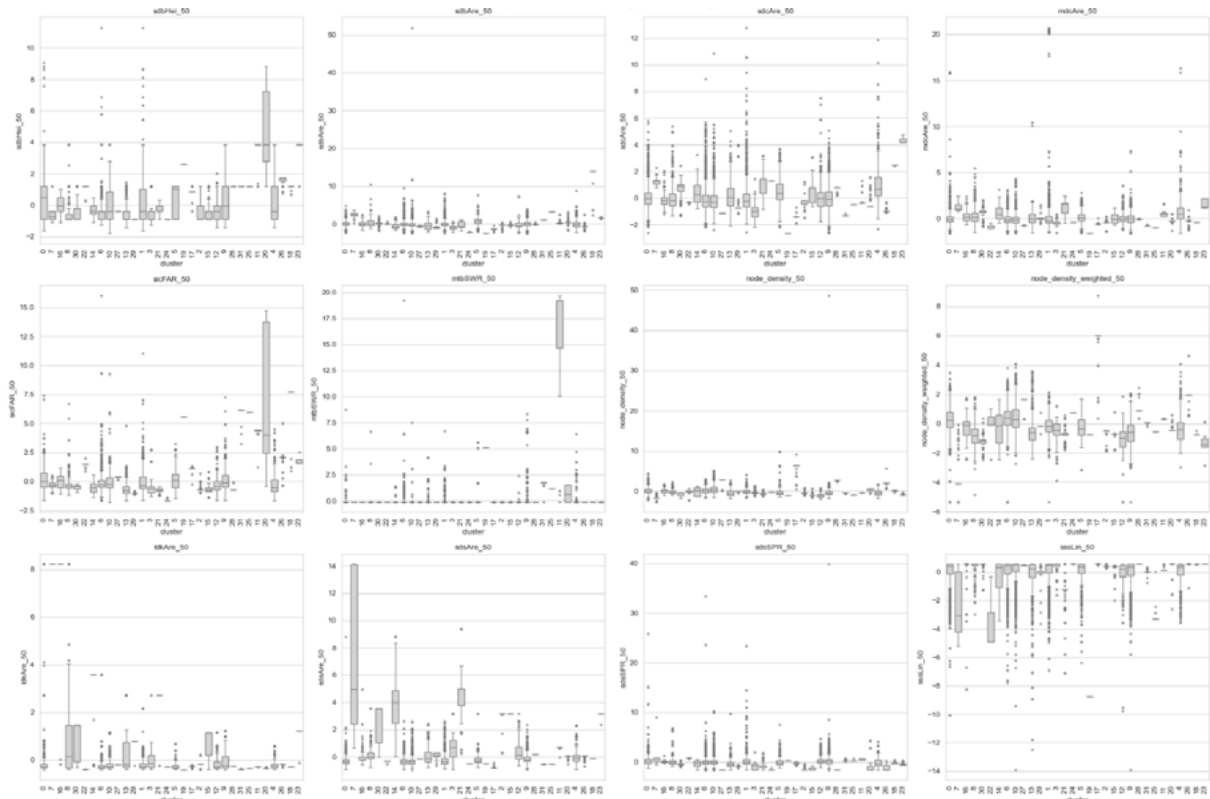


Figure 5 Distribution of representative MorphoMetric descriptors across Urban Types, illustrating variations in enclosure, density, and network structure. Source: Authors, 2026.

building intensity, regularised parcel structures, and relatively stable street networks. Group III (17, 20, 26, 27 & 28) is distinguished by heightened street-network connectivity and centrality, indicating circulation-intensive fabrics shaped more by movement structures than by building mass. Group IV (2, 7, 14, 15, 16, 21 & 30) represents the most intensive redevelopment typologies, marked by large parcels, high building volumes, and strong verticality, while Group V consists of a small number of outlier types with highly specific or uncommon MorphoMetric signatures.

When the analysis is restricted to the six selected historic neighbourhoods, the citywide typology resolves into a much smaller, neighbourhood-specific set of Urban Types (Table 2). Shaocheng (A) is composed exclusively of UT 10, Caoshijie (B) is dominated by UT 6 with a minor presence of UT 3, and Ma'an (C) comprises UT 1 and UT 6, reflecting a transitional morphology. Jianshe Road (D) consists solely of UT 1, while Zhiminlu (E) is primarily defined by UT 9 with a small proportion of UT 4. Fuqin (F) is entirely composed of UT 0.

Although all Urban Types present in the six neighbourhoods fall within the broadly middle-density residential family (Group II), their relative positions within the dendrogram indicate meaningful internal differentiation shaped by distinct historical and planning trajectories. This structure provides the conceptual bridge between MorphoMetric classification and the historical interpretation developed in Section 3.2 and elaborated further in Section 4.2.

4.1.3 Cross-Neighbourhood Differentiation and Typological Interpretation

Although all major Urban Types (UT 0, 1, 6, 9, and 10) present in the six studied neighbourhoods fall within the broadly middle-density residential family (Group II), their MorphoMetric profiles reveal clear internal differentiation across enclosure, density, and street-network characteristics (Fig. 6; Table 3).

UT 0 represents the most fine-grained morphology within the group. It is characterised by very small building footprints, low Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and minimal inter-building distances, producing compact, low-rise fabrics with narrow passageways and strong spatial enclosure. This configuration reflects human-scale environments with limited vertical intensity and dense micro-spatial articulation.

UT 10 retains a traditional morphogenetic structure but exhibits moderate densification. Compared to UT 0, it shows increased building footprint area and FAR, alongside more coherent frontage conditions. These shifts indicate incremental consolidation while preserving elements of earlier block structures, resulting in a denser yet still historically legible urban fabric.

UT 6 marks a transition toward planned modern residential forms. Its profile combines moderate FAR and coverage with higher intersection density and improved network integration, signalling regularised parcel structures, widened internal roads, and rationalised circulation systems. This morphology reflects a balance between redevelopment and retained fine-grain elements.

UT 1 constitutes the most intensive redevelopment trajectory within Group II. It is distinguished by high building volume, compact footprints, and peak FAR values, together with highly regular parcel geometries. These characteristics correspond to consolidated block forms and high-rise or perimeter-block redevelopment, prioritising land efficiency and volumetric intensity.

UT 9 occupies a hybrid position between densification and permeability. While its FAR and coverage exceed those of UT 0 and UT 10, its defining feature lies in strong street-network performance, with high connectivity and detour efficiency. This combination produces morphologies

where moderately dense building forms coexist with fine-grained, highly permeable circulation systems.

Taken together, these Urban Type profiles demonstrate that even within a shared middle-density morphological family, the six neighbourhoods occupy distinct MorphoMetric positions shaped by different redevelopment intensities and spatial logics. This differentiation provides the quantitative foundation for the historical interpretation in Section 4.2 and the subsequent analysis of how specific spatial configurations condition socio-cultural practices.

4.2 Historic Cartographic & Morphogenetic Analysis

The MorphoMetric signatures identified in Section 4.1—fine-grain enclosure, variable permeability, shifting grain sizes, and restructured networks—reflect the layered morphogenesis of the six Chengdu neighbourhoods rather than isolated spatial outputs. This section synthesises archival cartography from 1947, 1965, 1982, 2001 and 2025 (Fig.7) to explain how each neighbourhood acquired its present-day morphological form and why their UMM values diverge across enclosure, density, and network dimensions.

4.2.1 Morphogenetic Foundations (1947–2025)

The historical layering (Fig.7) of Chengdu's urban form provides a crucial explanatory foundation for understanding the differentiated Urban Types (UTs) identified in the MorphoMetric analysis. Although the six neighbourhoods broadly fall within the same dendrogram family (Group II), their present morphologies reflect distinct morphogenetic pathways. Shaocheng (A), for example, preserves the fine-grained logic of its pre-1949 courtyard—or hutong fabric—but has been progressively densified since the 1980s. The replacement of single-storey courtyards with 6–7 storey residential buildings has increased their Standard Building Area (sdbAre), raised Floor Area Ratio (sicFR) and produced more coherent frontage lines, features that define the UT 10 profile of “densified traditional morphology.” A similar but more transitional condition exists in Caoshijie (B) and northern parts of Ma'an

Table 3 Urban form features of the Urban Types (UTs) within the studied neighbourhoods.

Urban Type	General Characterisation	MorphoMetric Signature
UT 0	fine-grain historic fabric	lowest Floor Area Ratio (FAR), smallest parcels, tight spacing
UT 10	densified traditional morphology	moderately higher FAR, larger footprints, semi-continuous frontages
UT 6	planned mid-rise blocks	higher coverage, moderate FAR, regular and integrated networks
UT 1	high-density consolidation	highest FAR, high volume, large footprint blocks
UT 9	hybrid dense-permeable grid	moderate FAR + highly permeable, fine network

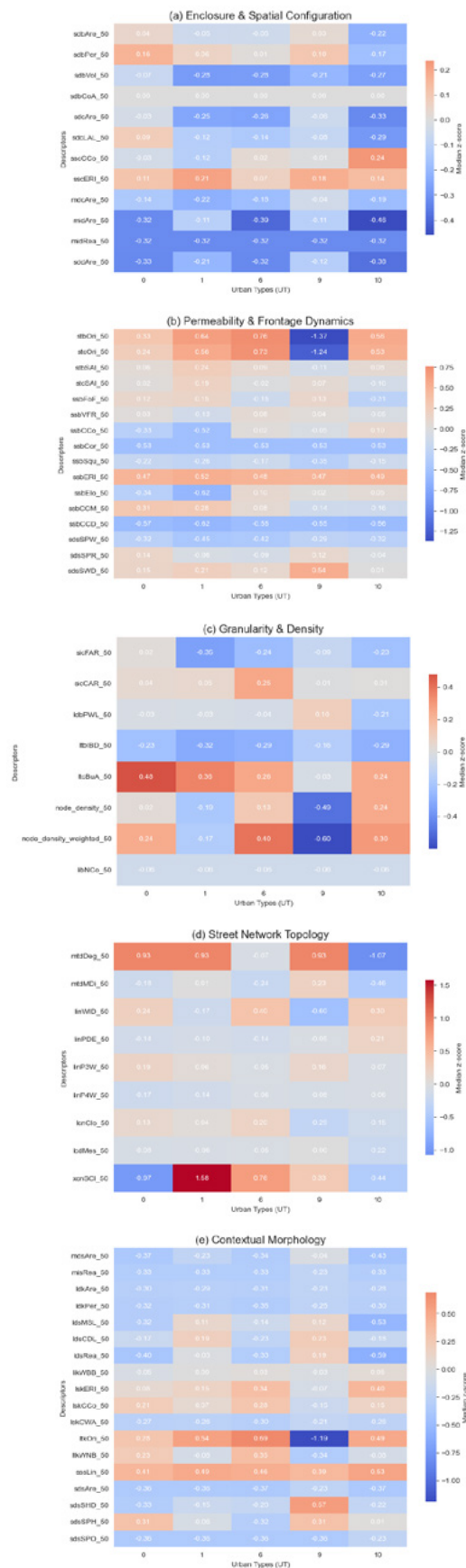


Figure 6 Standardised MorphoMetric profiles of Urban Types: a) enclosure and spatial configuration; b) permeability and frontage dynamics; c) granularity and density; d) street network topology; and e) contextual morphology. Source: Authors, 2026.

(C). Originally traditional, both underwent systematic redevelopment in the 1990s–2000s that introduced mid-rise slab blocks, widened internal roads and rationalised the street network. These interventions resulted in higher Coverage Area Ratio (sicCAR), increased mean Node Degree (mtdDeg) and Closeness Centrality (lcnClo), and moderate Floor Area Ratio (sicFAR), matching the UT 6 signature of early planned modern blocks.

In contrast, Jianshe Rd. (D) and the consolidated southern sections of Ma'an (C) originated as socialist work-unit compounds, whose planned geometry, enclosed courts and post-2000 introduced tower-form (UT 1) insertions created the highest Building Volumes (sdbVol), compactness values regarding Courtyard Area (sdbCoA) and Floor Area Ratio (sicFAR) among the six areas. Their elongated, regular parcel forms implied by the tessellation cell Equivalent Rectangular Index (sscERI) further define the UT 1 condition of high-density consolidation. Zhiminlu (E) represents a different lineage: once an informal riverside settlement, it underwent selective high-rise redevelopment after the 2000s but retained much of its alley-based circulation system. The coexistence of medium-density blocks with a permeable, historically rooted network explains its elevated mtdDeg, higher Meschedness (lcnMes) and strong Square Clustering Index (xenSCI), which together characterise UT 9 as a “dense-permeable hybrid grid.”

Fuqin (F) completes this spectrum through its early post-1980s Xiaoqu morphology. Although formally planned, it still rests on a fine alley geometry inherited from earlier settlements, producing small, closely spaced footprints with low Standard Building Area (sdbAre), short Mean Inter-Building Distance (ltnIBD) and low Floor Area Ratio (sicFAR). These elements correspond directly to the UT 0 profile of compact but low-rise structures. Taken together, these differentiated morphogenetic trajectories clarify why the six neighbourhoods, despite their shared classification within a “middle-density residential” family, occupy distinct MorphoMetric positions. This historical interpretation anchors the transition from the quantitative UMM results in Section 4.1 to the behavioural and socio-cultural analysis undertaken in Section 4.2.2 and provides the structural foundation for pattern verification in Section 4.3.

4.2.2 Interpretive Link Between Morphogenesis, UMM Signatures, and Behavioural Patterns

The morphogenetic layers described above provide an interpretive foundation for understanding why the six neighbourhoods are predisposed to distinct socio-cultural practices, as evidenced in previous empirical work in decoding complex socio-cultural activities by using a Pattern Language approach (Zhang & Dimitrijevic, 2025). Although this article does not reproduce full observational protocols, the spatial logics embedded in each Urban Type (UT) closely correspond to the behavioural patterns (Table 4) documented in earlier fieldwork across markets, dance activities, gardening practices and teahouse cultures.

Traditional courtyard-based morphologies, clearly expressed in Shaocheng (A) and Caoshijie (B), and sharing key features with the early-1980s Xiaoqu

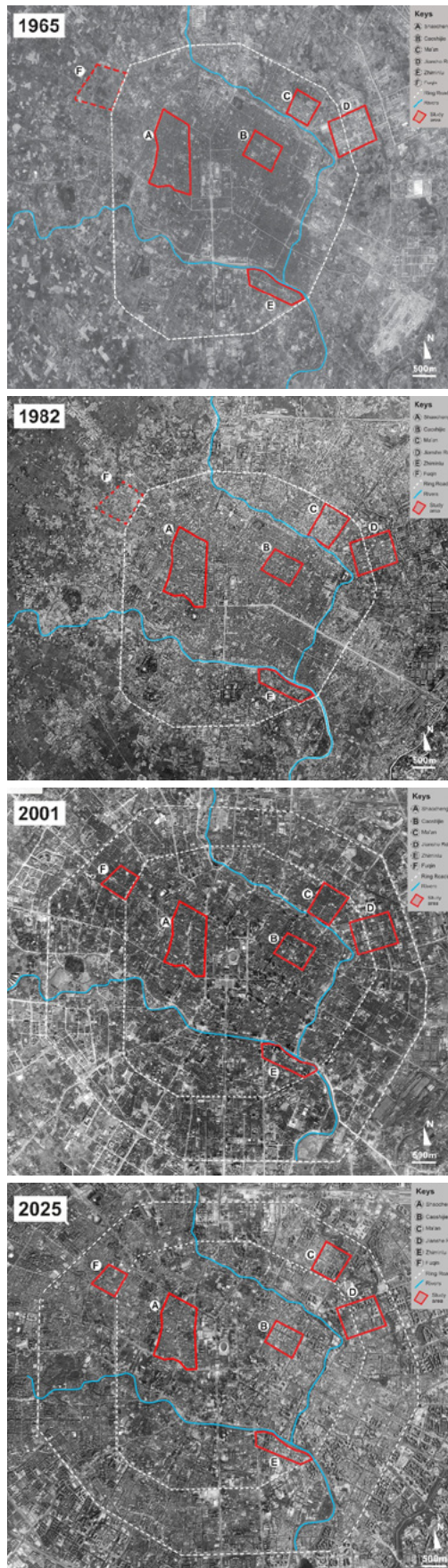


Figure 7 Morphogenetic evolution of the six study neighbourhoods from 1965 to 2025. Source: Authors, 2026.

neighbourhood of Fuqin (F), combine narrow corridors, continuous frontages, short inter-building distances, and highly permeable street networks. These fine-grain structures generate intense street-threshold interfaces and frequent micro-encounters. Such conditions align with socio-cultural patterns reliant on short visibility lines, rhythmic pedestrian flows, and porous edges, including informal food markets and threshold-based retail (M1-M2), home-based teahouses (T1), and informal community gardening (G2). At the MorphoMetric level, small building footprints, compact parcels, close spacing, and dense networks reinforce the capacity of these fabrics to sustain edge-dependent practices.

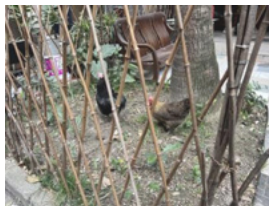
Planned socialist-era Jiefang and Danwei compounds, represented by Ma'an (C) and Jianshe Road (D), introduce a more internally structured spatial order. Rectilinear blocks, semi-enclosed circulation loops, and centrally positioned communal courts form stable, legible, and well-lit nodes suitable for patterned collective movement. These conditions support coupled and matrix-based dancing (D1-D2), circled dancing in larger plazas (D3), planned community gardens (G1), and certain forms of retail-based teahouses (T2). Corresponding MorphoMetric indicators, such as moderate building intensity, regularised parcel geometry, and relatively integrated street networks, reinforce these behavioural affordances.

Hybrid grid-alley systems and transitional riverfront morphologies, most notably in Zhiminlu (E) and parts of Ma'an (C), combine medium-rise building forms with varied visibility conditions, partially retained alley networks, and permeable circulation structures. These environments accommodate semi-structured and flexible practices, including large open-air markets and residential-to-commercial conversions (M3-M4), outdoor teahouses (T3), and vertical gardening (G3). MorphoMetrically, these areas, especially those characterised by UT 9, exhibit strong network integration and spatial adaptability, supporting both movement intensity and functional flexibility.

Post-2000 tower-form estates, present in parts of Ma'an (C), Zhiminlu (E), and Jianshe Road (D), provide fewer micro-scale interaction interfaces due to large parcels and simplified frontages. However, expansive plazas, linear open spaces, and peripheral seating zones support organised and highly visible activities, including circled dancing (D3), managed gardening (G1), and some retail-oriented teahouses (T2). These characteristics correspond to the consolidated block patterns associated with UT 1.

Taken together, these correspondences establish an intermediate analytical layer between the MorphoMetric typologies identified in Section 4.1 and the empirical pattern-mapping results presented in Section 4.3. Rather than constituting observational evidence, this layer formulates a set of spatial expectations regarding where specific socio-cultural patterns (M1-T3) are most likely to emerge based on the affordances embedded in each Urban Type. In summary, UT 0 and UT 10 are expected to sustain edge-dependent practices; UT 6 to support organised collective activities centred on internal courts; UT 9 to enable hybrid and semi-structured uses requiring both permeability and visibility; and UT 1 to

Table 4 Empirical work on exploration of subtypes of four socio-cultural activities in old Chengdu neighbourhoods.

a. Traditional Food Market				
Types	Informal stalls by boundary walls (M1)	Ground floor retail unit (M2)	Large open-air markets under the tent (M3)	Market converted from the former residential units (M4)
Photos				
				
				
b. Elderly Square Dance				
Types	Coupled dance (D1)	Dance in a matrix (D2)	Circled dance (D3)	
Photos				
				
c. Socialisation in Community Garden				
Types	Planned plantation garden (G1)	Informal plantation garden (G2)	Vertical plantation garden (G3)	
Photos				
				
d. Teahouse for Playing Mahjong				
Types	Ground floor family unit converted into a teahouse (T1)	Original ground floor retail Teahouse (T2)	Outdoor Teahouse (T3)	
Photos				
				

concentrate formalised activities within plazas and linear open spaces. These expectations provide the analytical scaffold for the pattern verification undertaken in Section 4.3.

4.3 Pattern Language Findings Across Six Neighbourhoods

Building on the morphogenetic expectations established in Section 4.2.2, this section reports the empirical verification of socio-cultural patterns across the six neighbourhoods through Pattern Language-based observational mapping (Fig.8). Four major activity domains: markets, elderly square dance, community gardening, and teahouse practices, were examined using the spatial attributes defined in the observation protocol (Table 1b), including visibility, enclosure, frontage adaptability, circulation rhythm, seating edges, and degrees of openness. Rather than treating socio-cultural activities as isolated events, the analysis evaluates how specific spatial features required by each pattern are supported or constrained by different Urban Types (UTs). The resulting distribution (Fig. 8; Table 5) confirms that socio-cultural practices cluster selectively within morphological niches where these spatial features align.

Across the six neighbourhoods (A-F), fine-grain morphologies (UT 0 and UT 10) consistently supported socio-cultural practices dependent on short visibility lines, porous thresholds, and frequent edge encounters. Small building footprints, narrow inter-building distances, continuous frontages, and dense street networks produced highly articulated street-building interfaces. These conditions sustained informal and hybrid market activities organised along pedestrian corridors, home-based teahouses where domestic interiors blended acoustically and visually with the street, and informal community gardening through self-organised edge planting and low-intervention appropriation of residual spaces. The recurrent co-occurrence of these practices confirms that fine-grain fabrics structurally favour edge-dependent and threshold-based socio-cultural activity.

Planned mid-rise morphologies (UT 6), associated with socialist-era and early post-reform redevelopment, generated a contrasting constellation of practices. Rectilinear blocks, semi-enclosed circulation loops, and centrally positioned communal courts produced stable, legible spatial nodes with moderate enclosure and consistent lighting. These environments supported organised elderly dance practices reliant on predictable movement fields, repeated edge reoccupation, and surrounding seating surfaces. Planned community gardens also emerged in these settings, enabled by defined plots, circulation paths, and the possibility of local management oversight. Regularised frontage conditions further sustained ground-floor retail and retail-oriented teahouses, indicating that UT 6 environments are particularly suited to repetitive, organised collective routines rather than highly permeable informal uses.

Hybrid and transitional morphologies (UT 9) exhibited the greatest functional elasticity. Medium-rise buildings combined with retained alley networks created varied visibility fields, permeable circulation, and flexible semi-open spaces. These conditions accommodated



Figure 8 Pattern Language verification of socio-cultural activities across the six neighbourhoods. Source: Authors, 2026.

Table 5 Availability of socio-cultural activity subtypes in each neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood	M1	M2	M3	M4	D1	D2	D3	G1	G2	G3	T1	T2	T3
A – Shaocheng	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
B – Caoshijie	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
C – Ma'an	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
D – Jianshe Rd.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
E – Zhiminlu	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
F – Fuqin	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y

large open-air markets, residential-to-commercial conversions, and outdoor teahouses that rely on adaptive reuse, emergent clustering, and seasonal open-air sociability. Circled dance practices also appeared in expansive, well-lit plazas that allowed unobstructed collective movement. The concentration of these activities demonstrates that UT 9 morphologies function as spatial mediators, enabling semi-structured practices that require both openness and adaptability.

High-rise and consolidated block morphologies (UT 1) displayed a narrower but clearly defined socio-cultural profile. Large parcels, simplified frontages, and reduced micro-scale interfaces constrained informal and edge-based practices. However, these environments consistently supported activities benefiting from high exposure, long sightlines, and extensive open surfaces, including circled dancing, planned gardening, and retail-oriented teahouses. Expansive plazas, linear open spaces, and predictable circulation corridors facilitated organised and highly visible routines, indicating a restructuring of socio-cultural activity toward formalised expressions rather than its elimination.

Taken together, the verified pattern distributions reveal a strong correspondence between morphological affordances and socio-cultural practice requirements as defined in the observation protocol. Fine-grain fabrics favour informal and domestic practices; structured mid-rise compounds support organised collective routines; hybrid morphologies enable adaptive and semi-structured uses; and high-rise estates concentrate formalised, high-visibility activities. These findings confirm that socio-cultural patterns are spatially conditioned behaviours rather than incidental appropriations. By demonstrating that the spatial features specified in Table 1b systematically align with UT-based morphologies, this section completes the empirical validation of the Pattern Language framework and provides a direct bridge between MorphoMetric classification, historical morphogenesis, and the policy discussion in Section 5.

5 Discussion

5.1 Answering the Research Questions

The findings presented in Sections 4.1–4.3 enable a direct and structured response to the three research questions guiding this study, clarifying how Urban MorphoMetrics, historical morphogenesis, and pattern-based behavioural analysis can be integrated to interpret and support socio-cultural practices in historic neighbourhoods.

5.1.1 How can UMM classify historic neighbourhoods into meaningful urban types and elucidate their spatial affordances relative to socio-cultural activity at neighbourhood scale?

The MorphoMetric analysis identifies distinct dominant Urban Types (UTs) across the six case-study neighbourhoods—most prominently UT 10 in Shaocheng (A), UT 6 in Caoshijie (B), UT 1 and UT 6 in Ma'an (C), UT 1 in Jianshe Rd. (D), UT 9 in Zhiminlu (E), and UT 0 in Fuqin (F), with minor subsidiary types appearing locally. Each UT expresses measurable differences in enclosure, frontage continuity, permeability, grain, street-node configuration, and internal court structure.

These physical differences align closely with the empirically observed distribution of socio-cultural activities summarised in Table 5. Neighbourhoods characterised by fine-grained street-alley fabrics (A and B) consistently support threshold-based retail, home-based teahouses, and informal gardening practices. Transitional neighbourhoods containing hybrid UT 1 and UT 6 fabrics (C) accommodate the widest range of socio-cultural activities, including multiple market forms, dance routines, and gardening types, reflecting their mixed enclosure and circulation structures. More formal UT 1 neighbourhoods (D) reliably support organised collective activities such as dancing and planned gardening, while constraining informal or edge-dependent practices. High-rise neighbourhoods dominated by UT 9 (E) accommodate only a limited subset of large-scale collective activities, most notably circled dancing, indicating reduced socio-cultural

diversity. Early reform-era UT O Xiaoqu neighbourhoods (F) support a narrower but still legible mix of activities anchored in low-rise, domestic-scaled environments.

Through these correspondences, Urban MorphoMetrics demonstrates not only that historic neighbourhoods can be classified into meaningful urban types, but also that each type possesses a distinct socio-spatial affordance profile arising from its morphological structure.

5.1.2 How can these MorphoMetric typologies be correlated with Chengdu's historical layers and developmental cycles to identify zones of cultural vitality or vulnerability?

The spatial differentiation of UTs across the six neighbourhoods mirrors Chengdu's historical cycles of urban development, revealing how morphogenetic trajectories condition present-day cultural vitality. Shaocheng (A) and Caoshijie (B), shaped by pre-1949 and early socialist street-alley assemblies, retain fine-grained, permeable urban forms that continue to support edge-based and threshold-dependent practices. However, the absence of informal markets in both neighbourhoods—despite their morphological suitability—demonstrates how contemporary governance and conservation-oriented regulation can override historic spatial affordances.

Ma'an (C) and Jianshe Rd. (D), whose UT 1 and UT 6 morphologies derive from socialist and transitional Danwei structures, exhibit robust clustering around activities that depend on semi-enclosed communal interiors, predictable circulation loops, and mid-sized courts. These include coupled and matrix dancing as well as planned gardening practices. Zhiminlu (E), representing post-2005 high-rise redevelopment, supports only a limited range of socio-cultural activities and displays diminished functional diversity, marking it as a zone of reduced cultural vitality. Fuqin (F), developed during the early reform era, represents an intermediate condition in Chengdu's morphogenetic sequence, sustaining some, but not all, historic socio-cultural routines.

The alignment between UT distributions and socio-cultural practices therefore reflects the city's layered historical development, clarifying where living heritage remains resilient, where it has partially eroded, and where it is most vulnerable to further transformation.

5.1.3 How can a Pattern Language model validate, detail and translate these inferred socio-cultural practices into practical planning and design guidance within the HUL paradigm?

Building on established empirical studies of socio-cultural activities, the Pattern Language framework in this study operates as a translational layer that substantiates and refines the spatial expectations emerging from UT classifications. The thirteen verified socio-cultural activity subtypes (M1–M4, D1–D3, G1–G3, T1–T3) provide fine-grained mechanisms that anchor intangible practices to concrete spatial configurations. Informal markets cluster along permeable transitional alleys; open-air markets stabilise within semi-enclosed courtyards; coupled and matrix dances depend on

stable mid-scale courts; circled dances require large, evenly lit open plazas; informal gardens colonise lightly managed edges; planned gardens remain confined to formal internal courts; and teahouse practices anchor themselves in shaded, semi-enclosed thresholds.

These spatially explicit configurations demonstrate that socio-cultural practices are not abstract cultural tendencies, but behaviours tightly coupled to specific morphological features. The Pattern Language framework translates these relationships into operational parameters—such as enclosure depth, threshold continuity, court proportions, façade articulation, and edge permeability—that can be mobilised by planners and designers at neighbourhood and block scales. Rather than treating intangible heritage as diffuse or symbolic, the framework renders it spatially legible, analytically verifiable, and applicable within future heritage-sensitive planning and design interventions under the Historic Urban Landscape approach.

5.2 Corroborating the Findings with Existing Literature

The convergence between MorphoMetric affordances identified through UMM and the empirically verified socio-cultural sub-patterns corroborates and extends existing scholarship on sociospatial practices in historic urban environments. In particular, the observed alignment between fine-grained street-building interfaces and threshold-oriented activities supports well-established arguments that intimate, human-scale streetscapes foster informal commerce and everyday social interaction (Gehl & Svarre, 2013; Whyte, 1980). In Shaocheng (A) and Caoshijie (B), the persistence of home-based teahouses, informal gardening, and micro-retailing exemplifies this relationship. At the same time, the absence of informal food markets in these neighbourhoods, despite clear morphological suitability, highlights the mediating role of regulatory and governance frameworks. This finding reinforces the view that spatial affordances interact with sociopolitical conditions rather than determining behaviour unilaterally.

The exceptional socio-cultural vitality observed in Ma'an (C) further substantiates research emphasising the importance of medium-scale enclosure, semi-open courtyards, and stable circulation structures in sustaining collective routines and everyday sociability (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl & Svarre, 2013). The hybrid UT 1/UT 6 morphology of Ma'an provides precisely these conditions, enabling the full manifestation of all thirteen validated socio-cultural patterns. The coexistence of informal, planned, and vertical gardening practices extends existing discussions by demonstrating how adaptable communal interiors can support layered and hybrid forms of social production that transcend rigid typological categories.

In contrast, Zhiminlu (E) exhibits a markedly restricted range of practices, consistent with broader findings that large, open plazas and high-rise redevelopment tend to privilege formalised, collective activities while discouraging informal, resident-driven uses (Carmona et al., 2010). The exclusive presence of circled dancing (D3) in E aligns with this spatial logic. The absence of informal markets, gardening, and alley-based social interaction reflects patterns identified in international literature on superblock redevelopment, which has

been shown to erode fine-grained socio-cultural ecologies historically embedded in older urban fabrics (Jian et al., 2025; Song et al., 2024).

The intermediate outcomes observed in Jianshe Rd. (D) and Fuqin (F) add further nuance. In Jianshe Rd., the socialist-era block structure supports organised collective activities reliant on predictable movement and enclosed courts, while simultaneously constraining informal practices such as street vending or ad hoc gardening—an outcome consistent with studies of Danwei-derived morphologies. Fuqin, representing an early reform-era Xiaoqu morphology, retains a degree of socio-cultural flexibility through its moderate scale and semi-open thresholds, echoing findings that early Xiaoqu developments preserve residual capacities for everyday social practices despite subsequent densification pressures.

Taken together, these results confirm that the distribution of socio-cultural practices across Chengdu's historic neighbourhoods cannot be attributed solely to cultural preference or community agency. Instead, they substantiate a growing body of literature arguing that socio-cultural vitality emerges from the interaction between spatial affordances, governance conditions, and historically layered urban form. By demonstrating how distinct Urban Types facilitate, inhibit, or transform specific socio-cultural sub-patterns, this study provides empirical support for the Historic Urban Landscape approach, reinforcing the proposition that living heritage is inseparable from the spatial configurations that enable its continued reproduction.

5.3 Broader Applicability Across Global and Regional Contexts

Building upon the empirical findings, the framework proposed in this study synthesises and extends three established components of research (section 3)—quantitative urban morphology, historical morphogenesis, and socio-spatial observation—into a structured and transferable analytical sequence (Fig. 9). Unlike conventional linear approaches, the framework introduces intermediate interpretative and participatory mechanisms that enable the translation of spatial analysis into socio-cultural resilience-oriented planning insights.

First, Urban MorphoMetrics (UMM) is applied to compute a comprehensive set of spatial descriptors and generate Urban Types through clustering analysis, following recent developments in the numerical taxonomy of urban form (Fleischmann et al., 2020; Fleischmann et al., 2021). This step provides a systematic and comparable representation of structural variations across urban neighbourhoods, allowing complex urban fabrics to be classified into measurable typologies. Second, these morphometric outputs are situated within a morphogenetic perspective through archival analysis and historical interpretation, drawing on traditions in urban morphology that emphasise historical layering and the evolutionary logic of urban form (Conzen, 1960; Whitehand, 2001). At this stage, a behaviour-related protocol is formulated, translating historically grounded spatial configurations into expectations of potential socio-cultural practices. This intermediate step establishes a critical bridge between morphological classification and

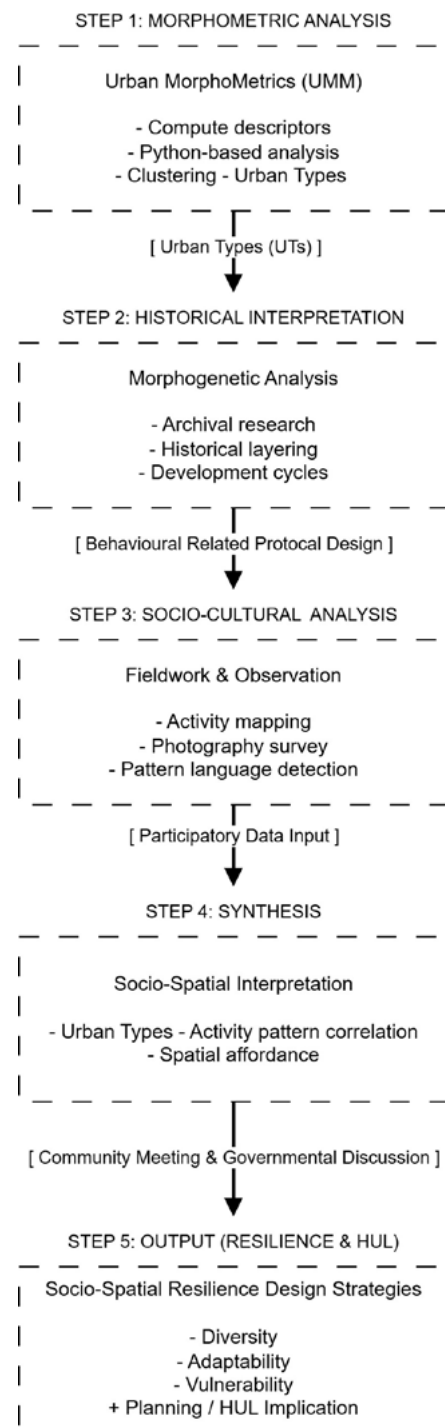


Figure 9 Integrated framework linking Urban MorphoMetrics, historical interpretation, and socio-cultural analysis. Source: Authors, 2026.

behavioural interpretation. Third, socio-cultural analysis is conducted through fieldwork, including activity mapping and photographic documentation, following established approaches in public life studies (Gehl & Svarre, 2013; Whyte, 1980). The observed practices are structured through a Pattern Language approach (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977), enabling recurring behavioural configurations to be systematically identified. In addition, participatory data input is incorporated

to capture local knowledge and lived experience, reinforcing the framework's alignment with community-oriented planning principles. Fourth, a synthetic step integrates these analytical layers through socio-spatial interpretation. Urban Types are correlated with observed activity patterns, allowing spatial affordances to be inferred from measurable morphological characteristics. This step is further extended through community consultation and governmental discussion, ensuring that analytical findings are translated into socially grounded and policy-relevant interpretations. Finally, the framework produces outputs oriented toward socio-cultural resilience and planning applications. By evaluating the diversity, adaptability, and vulnerability of socio-cultural practices across different urban conditions, it supports the formulation of resilience-informed design strategies within the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) framework (Fabbricatti, Boissenin, & Citoni, 2020; UNESCO, 2011).

Although developed through the case of Chengdu, this framework addresses a set of challenges widely recognised across historic urban environments globally. In rapidly urbanising contexts, historic neighbourhoods are frequently subject to redevelopment pressures that transform or displace everyday socio-cultural practices embedded in fine-grained urban fabrics. Existing studies have shown that while such practices are closely related to spatial configurations, planning approaches often lack systematic tools to connect measurable urban form with lived cultural activities (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl & Svarre, 2013).

At the same time, in European contexts, particularly in cities characterised by historically layered urban forms, the key challenge lies not only in preservation, but in the operationalisation of heritage within contemporary planning processes. The Historic Urban Landscape approach has been widely adopted as a conceptual framework for integrating tangible and intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2011), yet its implementation often remains at a strategic level, with limited methodological instruments for analysing how spatial structures support or constrain everyday practices. This gap is particularly evident in Southeast European contexts such as Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the historic urban core reflects multiple historical layers (Ottoman period, Austro-Hungarian period and Socialist Yugoslav period) and complex socio-cultural dynamics. While the HUL has been introduced as a guiding framework, studies have highlighted the need for more practice-oriented and analytically grounded approaches to support its implementation in planning and design (Ibrisimbegovic & Tatlic, 2025; Kudumović, 2024). In such contexts, the framework would help identify how specific morphological configurations, such as courtyard-based structures or compact street networks, can support or constrain everyday practices including informal gatherings, small-scale commerce, or community-based social interaction. For instance, in the historic commercial core of Baščaršija in Sarajevo, the urban fabric is characterised by low-rise structures of Ottoman origin arranged in an organic spatial configuration. Within this setting, both residents and visitors frequently occupy the building frontages to consume Bosnian coffee, a practice that extends beyond mere consumption to function as a form of everyday

social interaction. In contrast, areas developed during the Austro-Hungarian period exhibit more formalised urban layouts, including Western-style gardens and planned green spaces, where activities such as reading and strolling are more prevalent. These examples, occurring across distinct morphological zones within the same city, illustrate how different spatial configurations afford varied patterns of use. They provide a basis to further examine how specific urban features can be integrated into the proposed model to reveal the interrelationship between spatial form and socio-cultural practices.

In this regard, the framework proposed in this study offers a transferable methodological pathway. By systematically linking MorphoMetric analysis, historical interpretation, behavioural observation, and participatory input, it enables the identification of spatial conditions that support or constrain locally embedded practices. Although the specific socio-cultural activities differ between Chengdu and Sarajevo and beyond, the analytical logic, connecting morphology, affordance, and practice, remains applicable. As such, the framework provides an operational bridge between theory and practice, supporting the implementation of the HUL approach in diverse urban settings.

6 Conclusion

This study set out to demonstrate how Urban MorphoMetrics, combined with a Pattern Language approach, can make the lived dimensions of Chengdu's historic neighbourhoods spatially legible and operational within a Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) framework. By integrating quantitative MorphoMetric types with empirically verified socio-cultural sub-patterns, the research clarifies how distinct spatial fabrics afford, constrain, or reconfigure the everyday cultural practices that constitute living heritage at neighbourhood scale.

The findings demonstrate that MorphoMetric classification is not merely an abstract typological exercise, but a reliable predictor of socio-cultural vitality. Fine-grained, pre-1949 morphologies retain strong affordances for threshold-based sociability, despite regulatory pressures that suppress informal vending. Transitional UT 1/6 neighbourhoods sustain the highest cultural density, supporting markets, dancing, gardening, and teahouse practices through balanced enclosure, adaptable courts, and permeable frontage conditions. Socialist-era blocks, while more regulated, continue to anchor choreographed collective activities and planned gardens. Conversely, post-2005 redevelopment forms exhibit sharply reduced socio-cultural diversity, underscoring their vulnerability in sustaining living heritage. These differentiated relationships demonstrate that long-term morphogenetic processes, rather than isolated design elements, play a decisive role in shaping the persistence, transformation, or erosion of socio-cultural practices.

The corroboration with the Pattern Language model further strengthens these interpretations. The thirteen sub-patterns validated through field evidence translate cultural routines into concrete spatial parameters, including threshold depth, court proportion, vertical articulation, visibility corridors, and circulation rhythms.

Their distribution confirms that socio-cultural expressions are not diffuse or purely symbolic phenomena, but spatially contingent practices rooted in the micro-configuration of urban form. In this sense, the integrated UMM-pattern framework provides a methodological basis for interpreting spatial affordances and linking them directly to culturally embedded behaviours.

Crucially, this relationship allows socio-cultural resilience to be interpreted in spatial terms. Within this study, resilience is understood as the capacity of urban environments to sustain, adapt, and reproduce everyday cultural practices over time in response to morphological and socio-institutional change. The results show that resilience is not evenly distributed, but varies systematically across different Urban Types, depending on their capacity to support diverse, adaptable, and socially embedded practices. By making this relationship explicit, the framework moves beyond abstract discussions of cultural resilience and provides a means to identify where living heritage is robust, where it is transforming, and where it is most vulnerable.

There are, however, several limitations that define the scope of this work. Field validation was conducted within a specific temporal window, meaning that seasonal or time-dependent practices may not have been fully captured. The analysis remains primarily morphology-driven; while governance conditions and demographic change were

acknowledged, they were not systematically measured. Furthermore, the study focuses on six neighbourhoods within a single city, which, although morphologically diverse, do not represent the full spectrum of urban conditions. These limitations point towards future research directions, including longitudinal observation, comparative cross-cultural studies, and the integration of governance and socio-economic variables. Despite these constraints, the study offers a coherent methodological and conceptual contribution. It demonstrates that living heritage can be spatially modelled, empirically validated, and translated into design-relevant knowledge through the systematic integration of MorphoMetrics and pattern language. More broadly, the framework contributes to the operationalisation of the HUL approach by providing a replicable pathway for linking urban form, socio-cultural practices, and planning intervention.

For rapidly transforming cities worldwide, where redevelopment risks disconnecting cultural practices from their enabling environments, this approach offers a grounded and transferable method to interpret, protect, and enhance everyday urban life. In doing so, it reinforces the contemporary relevance of the HUL: safeguarding cultural vitality not through the preservation of form alone, but through the sustained support of the socio-spatial systems within which heritage continues to be lived.

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+ Appendices

Table 1a The literature-informed neighbourhood morphology and spatial context.

Neighbourhood	A. Enclosure & Spatial Configuration	B. Permeability & Frontage Dynamics	C. Granularity & Density	D. Street Network Topology	E. Contextual Morphology
A – Shaocheng	High enclosure; compact block forms; narrow alleys producing strong edge definition	Highly permeable frontages; shallow setbacks; rhythmic façade articulation	Very fine grain; small plots; dense spatial texture	Organic, interconnected network with multiple short segments	Strong historical persistence; continuous alignment with pre-1949 morphology
B – Caoshijie	Moderate-to-high enclosure; rectangular parcels shaping semi-enclosed alleyways	High permeability; frequent door-window rhythm; active street edges	Fine grain but slightly more regular than Shaocheng	Orthogonal but intricate alley grid; high local connectivity	Southern pre-year-reform morphology still strongly legible
C – Ma'an	Mixed enclosure; combination of narrow lanes and wider retrofitted streets	Moderate permeability; retained active interfaces; some later infilled frontages	Transitional grain—fine in older areas, coarser in later insertions	Hybrid network; organic base with rationalised interventions	Reflects incremental growth during early socialist urbanisation
D – Jianshe Rd.	Lower enclosure; open building spacing; controlled spatial hierarchy	Lower permeability; organised frontages; planned setbacks	Coarser grain; larger blocks; internally oriented layout	Highly structured network with hierarchy; clear primary axes	Strongly administrative spatial logic; work-unit morphology
E – Zhiminlu	Low enclosure at ground level; large open spaces; tower-separated forms	Very low permeability; deep setbacks; minimal active edges	Very coarse grain; large parcels; vertical, high-density typology	Low internal street connectivity; perimeter-based movement	Modern gated compound morphology; privatised spatial organisation
F – Fuqin	Moderate enclosure; wider distances between buildings	Reduced frontage complexity; deeper setbacks; regular façades	Medium-to-coarse grain; repetitive 6–7 floors block structure	More uniform grid; moderate connectivity	Early reform-era mass housing logic; limited organic layering

Table 1b The literature-informed neighbourhood morphology and spatial context.

Pattern	Sub-pattern Code	Sub-patterns to be observed	A	B	C	D	E	F
M1 Informal food market	M1-1 M1-2 M1-3 M1-4	Densely clustered informal stalls lining pedestrian corridors Intermittent vendor positioning High visibility along pedestrian desire lines Social permeability shaped by rhythmic pedestrian flows	(Document the presence or absence of specific socio-cultural activity subtypes within the neighbourhood and characterise the spatial qualities of their sub-patterns.)					
M2 Ground-floor retail unit	M2-1 M2-2	Threshold-based interactions at neighbourhood edges Transitional boundaries between private/public						
M3 Large open-air markets	M3-1 M3-2 M3-3	Hybridised use of courtyards or garages Co-existence of sales + storage/production Adaptive reuse and emergent clustering						
M4 Markets converted from residential units	M4-1 M4-2 M4-3	Commercial rhythm along internal roads Clearer frontage and longer visibility lines Territorial clarity & legibility						
D1 Coupled dance	D1-1 D1-2 D1-3	Ambient lighting enabling evening activities Convergence of movement & sociability Repeated reoccupation of peripheral edges						
D2 Dance in a matrix	D2-1 D2-2 D2-3	Flexible use of internal access roads/courtyards Spontaneous evening occupation Seating edges surrounding dance nodes						
D3 Circled dance	D3-1 D3-2 D3-3	Large multifunctional plazas High exposure and natural brightness Embodied collective access rituals						
G1 Planned garden	G1-1 G1-2 G1-3 G1-4	Defined plots and circulation paths Supported by local management Structured yet open layout Intergenerational visibility						
G2 Informal gardens	G2-1 G2-2 G2-3 G2-4	Self-organised edge gardens Vines and recycled planters Makeshift seating Low-intervention appropriation						
G3 Vertical garden	G3-1 G3-2 G3-3 G3-4	Vertical gardens on façades and balconies High observability Creative container/railing uses Domestic identity in shared streetscape						
T1 Home-based teahouse	T1-1 T1-2	Blending of home and street Acoustic and visual permeability						
T2 Retail teahouse	T2-1 T2-2 T2-3	Extended social stays Familiar hosts and repeated users Public-yet-intimate ambiance						
T3 Outdoor teahouse	T3-1 T3-2 T3-3 T3-4	Seasonal outdoor setups Shaded sidewalks or squares Portable furniture Open-air sociability						

Table 2a Abbreviation and full name of UMM descriptors.

a) Enclosure & Spatial Configuration	
sdbAre	Standard Building Area
sdcAre	Standard Cell Area
sdbVol	Building Volume
sdbPer	Standard Building Perimeter
sdbCoA	Courtyard Area
sscCCo	Cell Circular Compactness
sscERI	Cell Equivalent Rectangular Index
sdLAL	Longest Axis Length
mdcAre	Area Covered (tessellation cells)
midAre	Area Covered (nodes/M)
sddAre	Area Covered (nodes/S)
midRea	Reached Cells
b) Permeability & Frontage Dynamics	
ssbFoF	Form Factor
stbOri	Building Orientation
stcOri	Cell Orientation
stbSAI	Street Alignment (building)
stcSAI	Street Alignment (tessellation cells)
ssbVFR	Volume Façade Ratio
ssbCCo	Building Circular Compactness
ssbCor	Number of Corners
ssbSqu	Squareness
ssbERI	Building Equivalent Rectangular Index
ssbElo	Elongation
ssbCCM	Centroid-Corner Mean Distance
ssbCCD	Centroid-Corner Distance Deviation
sdsSPW	Street Profile Width
sdsSPR	Street Profile
sdsSWD	Setback Deviation
c) Granularity & Density	
sicFAR	Floor Area Ratio
sicCAR	Coverage Area Ratio
ltbIBD	Mean Interbuilding Distance
libNCo	Number of Courtyards
ldbPWL	Perimeter Wall Length
d) Street Network Typology	
mtdDeg	Node Degree
mtdMDi	Mean Distance to Nodes
linWID	Weighted Intersection Density
linPDE	Proportion of Dead-Ends
linP3W	Proportion of 3-Way Intersections
linP4W	Proportion of 4-Way Intersections
lcnClo	Local Closeness Centrality
lcnMes	Meshedness
xenSCI	Sqaure Clustering
e) Contextual Morphology	
mdsAre	Area Covered (tessellation cell/M)
misRea	Reached cells (M)
ldkAre	Block Area
ldkPer	Block Perimeter
ldsMSL	Mean Segment Length
ldsCDL	Cul-de-sac Length
ldsRea	Reached cells (L)
likWBB	Weighted Buildings (block)
lscERI	Block Equivalent
lscCCo	Block Circular Compactness
lscCWA	Compactness Weighted Axis
ltkOri	Block Solar Orientation
ltkWNB	Weighted Neighbours (block)
sssLin	Linearity
sdsAre	Area Covered (tessellation cell/S)
sdsSHD	Height Deviation (street)
sdsSPH	Street Profile Height
sdsSPO	Street Openness

Industrial Heritage Matters: Experiential Approaches in Architectural Education

Značaj industrijskog naslijeđa:
iskustveni pristupi u arhitektonskom obrazovanju

Maja Pličanić¹, Anica Draganić²

1: Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
majasiric@gmail.com | orcid.org/0000-0001-7884-9424

2: Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
atarher@gmail.com | orcid.org/0000-0002-3520-7058

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Abstract Although industrial heritage is increasingly recognised in European discourse, it remains marginal within formal architectural curricula across the post-Yugoslav region. This study demonstrates how experiential and reflective models, tested through the Sleeping Giants project, can strengthen students' critical awareness and sense of professional responsibility towards dissonant industrial heritage. The findings indicate that field-based, collaborative, and community-oriented pedagogies foster a deeper contextual understanding and support heritage protection through education. The study further argues that integrating such models into academic curricula can contribute to both the revalorisation and safeguarding of industrial heritage. It concludes by proposing a transferable framework for the future implementation of experiential learning within architectural education.

Keywords industrial heritage; dissonant heritage; architectural education; Sleeping Giants project; practice-based learning.

Sažetak Iako se industrijsko naslijeđe sve više prepoznaje u evropskom diskursu, ono i dalje ostaje marginalno u formalnim kurikulumima arhitektonskog obrazovanja u postjugoslavenskom prostoru. Rad analizira potencijal iskustvenih i refleksivnih pedagoških modela, razvijenih i testiranih u okviru projekta Sleeping Giants, u unapređenju kritičke svijesti studenata i njihovog razumijevanja profesionalne odgovornosti prema disonantnom naslijeđu. Rezultati ukazuju da terenski, kolaborativni i zajednički orijentisani pristupi doprinose razvoju kontekstualnog razumijevanja i afirmaciji zaštite naslijeđa kroz obrazovanje. Nadalje, rad ukazuje na mogućnosti integracije ovih modela u postojeće akademske kurikule, s ciljem unapređenja procesa revalorizacije i očuvanja. U završnom dijelu predlaže se konceptualni okvir za buduću primjenu iskustvenog učenja u arhitektonskom obrazovanju.

Ključne riječi industrijsko naslijeđe; disonantno naslijeđe; arhitektonsko obrazovanje; projekat Sleeping Giants; učenje kroz praksu.

1 Introduction: Industrial Heritage Between Oblivion and Education

Industrial heritage constitutes one of the most significant yet simultaneously most vulnerable layers of the cultural landscape in the post-Yugoslav region. Although industry played a decisive role in processes of modernisation, urban development, and the formation of social identities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its material and immaterial legacies have largely been relegated to the margins of public policy, cultural institutions, and educational curricula. This tendency is

particularly pronounced in the post-socialist context, where industrial heritage often emerges as a dissonant and difficult-to-interpret legacy, shaped by tensions between narratives of modernisation, ideological interpretations of the socialist period, and the consequences of post-war transition. This layered ambivalence positions industrial heritage as a paradigmatic example of dissonance, in which diverse – and often competing – memory, political, and economic perspectives intersect.

At the same time, recent developments across Europe point to the potential of industrial heritage as a resource of cultural, educational, and economic development. However, in the countries that emerged

following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, these trends are only sporadically reflected in institutional practice. Analyses presented in previous regional studies (Plićanić, 2024), as well as in relevant national TICCIH reports from the past decade (2015, 2018, 2022, 2025), indicate a general lack of systemic frameworks, limited museum and interpretive provision, and the absence of integrated approaches to industrial heritage education. While there are positive examples – from Slovenia's technical and mining museums to individual initiatives in Croatia and Serbia – these remain isolated cases rather than components of a coherent strategy or a formally established educational model. Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite its rich industrial past, most clearly illustrates the consequences of this institutional vacuum: industrial heritage is largely absent from cultural policy, the museum sector, and formal architectural education.

Building on these insights, this paper aims to highlight the need for the systematic integration of industrial heritage into architectural education, with particular emphasis on its dissonant character and the specific challenges of the post-Yugoslav context. The central question is how educational institutions can contribute to the understanding and reinterpretation of industrial heritage, and how they might foster the development of critical, contextually sensitive professional competencies among future architects.

Methodologically, the paper combines theoretical and empirical approaches. The theoretical component draws on contemporary memory studies and heritage scholarship, which conceptualise industrial heritage as a dynamic, selective, and ideologically conditioned process of interpretation (Draganić, 2021). This framework is complemented by a regional analysis of educational, institutional, and museological practices, informed by comparative insights from a relevant publication (Plićanić, 2024) and available national reports (TICCIH, 2015, 2018, 2022, 2025). The empirical component is grounded in the *Sleeping Giants: (Re)thinking Mutual Industrial Heritage* project, within which two interdisciplinary student workshops were held in Sarajevo and Novi Sad, focusing on direct engagement with selected industrial sites. These workshops functioned as experimental models of experiential, field-based, and reflective learning, enabling students to develop a sensitivity to the complexities of industrial heritage through research, dialogue with local communities, and creative interpretation.

On this basis, the paper is structured around two complementary parts. The first elaborates the theoretical framework of dissonant industrial heritage and analyses the regional context of architectural education, emphasising the structural reasons why industrial heritage remains outside formal curricula. The second part presents empirical insights through the case studies of Energoinvest and Beton, demonstrating how experimental pedagogical models can open up space for new forms of interpretation, protection, and activation of industrial sites. By integrating theoretical and practical dimensions, the paper argues that education is not merely a mechanism for the transmission of knowledge, but also a crucial instrument for the revalorisation and long-term safeguarding of this dissonant yet highly significant aspect of shared cultural heritage.

2 Dissonant Heritage and Architectural Education: Between Memory and Practice

2.1 Dissonant Heritage as a Space of Conflicting Memories

Current European Union heritage discourse promotes an integrative and largely consensual narrative of a shared European heritage – one that emphasises harmony, diversity, and common values. Yet, as several scholars have observed, this liberal-universalist perspective often overlooks the ruptures, antagonisms, and traumas that have shaped modern European history (Delanty, 2017). Europe's experience of totalitarianism, war, and ideological polarisation challenges the notion of a unified cultural memory. Instead, the continent's heritage is profoundly marked by dissonance – the coexistence of competing interpretations, contested values, and unresolved memories.

Within heritage studies, the concept of dissonant heritage (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1996) addresses precisely this complexity. Heritage, understood as a “contemporary product shaped from history” (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1996, p.6), is inherently selective and interpretative, thus inevitably conflictual. Dissonance arises not only from the commodification of the past or competing uses of memory but also from deeper political and identity-based struggles that determine which histories are preserved, forgotten, or reimagined (Smith, 2006; Graham & Howard, 2008; Kisić, 2017). As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Couldry (2010) argue, reinterpretations of the past activate latent dissonance, generating new meanings that destabilise dominant historical narratives.

While such conflicts may threaten social cohesion, they can also serve as productive sites of dialogue and transformation. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005) emphasises participatory and inclusive approaches as key mechanisms for addressing contested interpretations of the past. Scholars like Harrison (2013) and Kisić (2017) have further developed this line of argument, highlighting how the acknowledgement of pluralism and conflict within heritage processes strengthens democratic participation and cultural understanding.

In this context, the dissonant industrial heritage of the former Yugoslavia offers a particularly rich and complex terrain. It embodies not only the material and technological achievements of socialist modernisation but also the ideological, emotional, and social infrastructures of a society grounded in the principles of self-management, solidarity, and collective progress. The factories, industrial complexes, and workers' settlements of socialist Yugoslavia were spatial manifestations of a distinct social model that sought to reconcile industrial growth with social justice and cultural emancipation.

Today, many of these sites stand in ruins – physically decaying and symbolically marginalised. Their meanings are fractured, oscillating between nostalgia, denial, and indifference. For some, they represent the remnants of an authoritarian system and economic inefficiency; for others, they stand as monuments to social cohesion, equality, and a

belief in a collective future. This ambivalence makes socialist industrial heritage profoundly dissonant: it encapsulates the tension between pride and disillusionment, between the utopian imagination of the socialist project and the fragmentation that followed its collapse.

However, these contradictions also open up space for critical reinterpretation and educational engagement. By revisiting industrial heritage through critical, participatory, and experiential approaches, new generations can engage with the complexities of the past without resorting to nostalgia or denial. Examining phenomena such as workers' self-management (*samoupravljanje*), youth labour actions (*omladinske radne akcije*), and organisations like the Anti-Fascist Women's Front (*Antifašistički front žena*) allows for a re-examination of the social ideals and collective practices that once underpinned Yugoslav modernity. At the same time, these phenomena can be situated within broader post-war processes of industrialisation and reconstruction in Europe, while recognising the specificity of the Yugoslav model, characterised by practices such as workers' self-management and a high degree of social participation, with few direct parallels elsewhere in Europe. Such an approach acknowledges dissonance as an inherent and valuable characteristic of heritage – a condition that invites dialogue rather than consensus.

From this perspective, education becomes a crucial tool for the protection and reactivation of dissonant industrial heritage. Engaging students and young researchers in the study of industrial sites – through fieldwork, oral history, creative interpretation, and critical reflection – fosters both cognitive and affective understanding of the socialist legacy. It transforms heritage learning into an act of civic participation, in which engagement with conflicting memories cultivates ethical awareness and intercultural empathy. The ultimate pedagogical aim is not to resolve contradictions but to develop the capacity to live with them – to understand industrial heritage as a reflection of societal complexity and a space for imagining more inclusive and solidaristic futures.

Thus, by framing post-Yugoslav industrial heritage as a space of competing memories, we can move beyond narratives of loss or nostalgia towards a more critical mode of engagement that integrates remembrance, analysis, and projection. Such an approach positions dissonant heritage not as a burden of the past, but as a catalyst for contemporary reflection on democracy, social justice, and collective responsibility – values that remain central to both European and global debates on the future of heritage.

2.2 The Regional Context of Architectural Education: Fragmentation and the Absence of a Systematic Approach to Industrial Heritage

The overview of the regional state of industrial heritage education presented in this chapter draws on a comparative analysis of national TICCIH reports from the last decade (2015, 2018, 2022, 2025) and the findings of relevant interdisciplinary research encompassing all post-Yugoslav countries (Pličanić, 2024). Taken together, these sources offer the most coherent insight into how industrial heritage is currently addressed within education, musealisation, and

cultural policy across the region.

In the post socialist context, industrial heritage occupies a paradoxical position. Although it played a significant role in shaping economic structures, spatial development, and social relations throughout the twentieth century, it is often marginalised within the institutional priorities of contemporary post-Yugoslav states. Processes of deindustrialisation, accelerated privatisation, and shifting societal values since the 1990s have radically transformed industrial spaces, in which market logic emerged as the dominant criterion for managing post-industrial sites. Industrial zones – despite their crucial role in understanding modernisation – have largely been perceived as attractive assets for real-estate development, resulting in their demolition, fragmentation, or complete disappearance before being documented or valorised.

Moreover, the ideological reinterpretation of the socialist past has profoundly influenced the perception of industrial heritage. Spaces associated with self-management, working-class identities, and collective modernisation projects were often labelled as aesthetically or ideologically problematic, creating conditions in which institutions were more inclined to tolerate their decay than to implement protective strategies. In this way, industrial heritage has been constructed as a distinctly dissonant category – culturally, politically, and symbolically charged – and consequently often excluded from institutional care.

This discursive framework is further reinforced by institutional fragmentation. Most countries lack comprehensive inventories of industrial heritage, specialised technical museums, and strategic documents that recognise industrial heritage as a relevant cultural or developmental concern. Comparative regional research (Pličanić, 2024) confirms this pattern, showing – with Slovenia as the notable exception – a widespread reliance on individual initiatives, limited professional capacities, and the absence of coordinated institutional policies.

Within this broader landscape, Slovenia represents the most advanced model for integrating industrial heritage into both educational and museological sectors. Here, industrial heritage is linked to themes such as sustainable development, the circular economy, and adaptive reuse. A well-established museum infrastructure – including the Technical Museum of Slovenia, the Mining Museum of Slovenia, and the Idrija Mining Museum – continually develops programmes that interpret industrial history as an integral part of national cultural identity. At the same time, the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana offers courses on industrial buildings, modern heritage preservation, and adaptive reuse, ensuring that industrial heritage is firmly embedded within the curriculum. Projects such as the reconstruction of Cukrarna or the revitalisation of the Rog factory further illustrate the capacity of Slovenian institutions to reinterpret industrial heritage as a resource for development. This framework is underpinned by a robust body of literature, including works such as *Zaštita i ponovna upotreba industrijske baštine: dileme, problemi, primjeri* and research published by the Slovenian ICOMOS and TICCIH committees (Ifko & Stokin, 2017; Ifko & Marušić, 2018, 2022, 2025).

Croatia has developed distinct yet complementary approaches, characterised by strong engagement from universities, museums, and civil society organisations.

The first university lectures in industrial archaeology were introduced at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb as early as 2000, after which interest expanded to Rijeka, Split, and Osijek. There, students of architecture, civil engineering, and art history engage in the study of abandoned industrial complexes and develop project proposals for their revitalisation. Museum institutions – such as the Zagreb City Museum, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, and the interpretation centre Nizozemska kuća – develop exhibitions and educational programmes dedicated to industrial heritage. Numerous adaptive reuse projects (Lauba, Rikard Benčić, Jedinstvo, Labin) further demonstrate the cultural sector's capacity to transform industrial spaces into new forms of urban infrastructure. The long-standing work of the Pro Torpedo association, along with the production of industrial heritage maps in Rijeka and Sisak, provides an important documentary foundation for future research and education (Barišić Marenčić, 2022, 2025).

In Serbia, education on industrial heritage has developed primarily through strong academic and project-based initiatives. The Faculty of Technical Sciences in Novi Sad plays a particularly important role, offering courses on the adaptive reuse of built heritage and regularly organising project workshops at industrial sites such as the Beton factory, Veliki Liman, and the former railway marshalling yard. The Museum of Science and Technology in Belgrade, together with numerous local initiatives—including projects related to the revitalisation of the Creative District – contributes to raising public awareness of industrial history. The professional literature, including relevant monographic studies on research, restoration, and presentation methodologies, as well as studies on the industrial development of Vojvodina, provides a theoretical and documentary framework for interpreting this heritage (Pašković, 2015; Draganić & Siladić, 2018, 2022, 2025).

North Macedonia is currently in the early stages of developing this field. The translation of key texts from TICCIIH's Industrial Heritage Re-tooled, the publication of the digital edition Perspectives for the Protection of Industrial Heritage, and the organisation of international expert forums represent initial yet significant steps towards establishing a specialised discourse. However, educational and museum practices remain limited, with no substantial integration into higher education or cultural institutions (Kocevska, 2022).

Bosnia and Herzegovina most clearly reflects the fragmentation of the regional approach. Although industrial heritage is a key element of the country's historical development, it remains largely unintegrated into cultural policy or the museum system. There is no national technical museum, and existing museum formats, such as the Solana Tuzla Museum, the Sarajevo Brewery Museum, or various internal industrial museums, operate within narrow, site-specific frameworks. Within education, industrial heritage is addressed only sporadically, primarily through the individual engagement of faculty members at the University of Sarajevo, where it is occasionally included in teaching at the Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Education. Over the past decade, significant academic research emerged, offering methodological frameworks for the valorisation of industrial heritage; however, its translation into public policy has remained absent. This

gap further reinforces the dissonant status of industrial heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Plićanić, 2025).

In the broader European context, Poland represents a relevant comparative example. Like the post-Yugoslav region, Poland developed within a socialist framework, albeit as part of the Eastern Bloc, in contrast to Yugoslavia's non-aligned position, yet it has become one of the most active countries in Europe in the field of industrial heritage, as highlighted in reports by TICCIIH. Its extensive network of technical museums, substantial body of scholarly literature, and systematic approaches to the revitalisation of post-industrial areas position Poland as an important reference point for understanding potential developmental trajectories in post-Yugoslav contexts (Dąbrowski & Walczak, 2022).

Taken together, these findings confirm a deeply rooted continuity in the marginalisation of industrial heritage across the region—driven by market pressures, ideological reinterpretations, and institutional passivity. Industrial sites today appear as fragmented, difficult-to-read, and often invisible elements of urban landscapes, their meanings stretched between nostalgia, negation, and commercial interests.

In this context, experimental and short-term pedagogical formats – such as workshops, field research, and projects like Sleeping Giants – emerge as rare yet vital spaces for experiential learning. They create opportunities for developing new educational models capable of responding to the complex and dissonant nature of industrial heritage, while also providing the conceptual groundwork for the pedagogical analysis that follows in the next section of the paper.

3 Learning Through Space: The Experimental Model of the Sleeping Giants Project

3.1 A Pedagogical Experiment: Learning Through Practice and Reflection

The Sleeping Giants: (Re)thinking Mutual Industrial Heritage project was conceived as a pedagogical experiment in architectural education, grounded in theories of experiential, reflective, and transformative learning. It emerged from the recognition that industrial heritage – particularly that of socialist Yugoslavia – remains a neglected and ideologically contested field in post-socialist societies. The project sought to activate this dissonant heritage through education, positioning it as both a pedagogical resource and a platform for critical reflection on the social, cultural, and spatial legacies of modernity.

At its core, the project sought to foster critical engagement through experience. Rather than treating heritage as a static repository of forms and narratives, Sleeping Giants approached it as a dynamic process of interpretation, participation, and re-creation. This approach aligns with Dewey's (1938) concept of learning through experience, in which knowledge emerges from the active transaction between the learner and the

environment, as well as with Schön's (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner, which foregrounds reflection-in-action as an essential mode of professional learning. Recent contributions to architectural pedagogy (Salama, 2015; Akcan, 2023; Gürel & Anthony, 2023) further reinforce this approach, demonstrating how participatory, place-based, and inclusive methods can generate more socially responsible forms of knowledge production. These insights position the Sleeping Giants project within contemporary global trends that emphasise transformative education and active citizenship in architectural learning.

Methodologically, the project was structured around four interconnected phases, combining research, creative practice, and public dissemination:

1. Peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange formed the theoretical and collaborative foundation of the project. Seminars led by partner institutions and European associates (ID20, Slovenia; Design Factory, Slovakia) introduced participants to interdisciplinary approaches in industrial heritage studies, adaptive reuse, and cultural production. This phase encouraged the development of shared conceptual frameworks and the co-construction of knowledge, resonating with Vygotsky's model of social learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice.

2. Research residencies in Novi Sad and Sarajevo constituted the experiential core of the project. Through participatory research and ethnographic fieldwork, participants engaged directly with both the physical and social dimensions of post-industrial sites and their surrounding communities. Encounters with former workers and residents enabled intergenerational dialogue, fostering an understanding of industrial heritage as lived experience and a site of collective memory. This situated and dialogic mode of inquiry reflects Freire's (1970) pedagogy of conscientisation, in which learning becomes an act of critical awareness and transformation.

3. Creative workshops translated research insights into tangible artistic, architectural, and curatorial outputs. These laboratories of collective experimentation encouraged students to test ideas through material and spatial practices, aligning with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. The workshops deliberately blurred disciplinary boundaries, promoting transdisciplinary collaboration as a method for reinterpreting industrial heritage.

4. Public presentation and reflection were realised through two major cultural platforms—the Days of Architecture Sarajevo and the Industrial Culture Festival Novi Sad. By integrating project outcomes into these festivals, student work was positioned within a broader public discourse, opening to critique, dialogue, and exchange. The festivals served as arenas for reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983), enabling participants to assess the social and cultural implications of their work in real-world contexts.

The project thus proposed an integrative pedagogical model in which learning unfolds through iterative cycles of doing, reflecting, and sharing. Rather than relying on linear knowledge transmission, it cultivated a collective

process of meaning-making that empowered learners to critically engage with their socio-historical environment. In this sense, the model reflects a broader shift in architectural pedagogy towards critical, participatory, and place-based education (Till, 2009; Salama, 2015), where architecture is understood not merely as a technical discipline but also as a cultural and ethical practice embedded in complex social realities.

Within this framework, industrial heritage emerges as a laboratory for experiential learning – a space in which the negotiation between past and present can be enacted through creative and critical practices. By combining empirical research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and public engagement, Sleeping Giants demonstrated how architectural education can contribute to the reactivation of marginalised cultural narratives. It further illustrates how reflective practice, grounded in lived experience and community interaction, can generate new forms of knowledge that are both academically rigorous and socially transformative.

3.2 Case Studies

3.2.1 "Energoinvest" - Sarajevo

Energoinvest represents one of the key symbolic and material complexes of socialist modernisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its development, initiated with the founding of Sarajevo Elektroprojekt in 1951 under the leadership of Emerik Blum, reflects the transformation of post-war Sarajevo from a war-devastated periphery within the Yugoslav economic and urban system into a major industrial and technological centre. By integrating design, production, and research capacities – ranging from Elektroporcelanka and the Machine Factory in Stup to the facilities in Alipašino Polje and the testing stations in Halilovići – Energoinvest by the late 1970s had evolved into a multinational industrial system employing tens of thousands of workers and delivering projects worldwide (Emerik Blum: monografija, 2002). This industrial infrastructure shaped not only the economy but also the urban fabric, social relations, and professional identities of generations of workers, engineers, and experts.

The post-1992 disintegration – driven by war, transitional privatisation, and technological obsolescence – led to the collapse of most production facilities, leaving contemporary Energoinvest as little more than a symbolic continuation of its former scale, with a reduced set of technical functions. Recent corporate documentation (Energoinvest, 2025) confirms this dramatic contraction. This tension between past expansion and present-day fragmentation positions Energoinvest as a paradigmatic example of dissonant industrial heritage in the post socialist context.

Within the Sleeping Giants project, the workshop held in Sarajevo was conceived as an intensive, short-format model of experiential learning that combined historical contextualisation, fieldwork, and reflective analysis. Throughout the programme, participants were introduced to the industrial genealogy of Energoinvest through introductory lectures and a visit to the Blum Lab, a contemporary research and development unit within the company that symbolically connects its industrial

legacy with current digital technologies. The pedagogical dimension of the workshop was further strengthened by the screening of the documentary *Blum – gospodar svoje budućnosti* (Blum – Master of His Own Future, 2023) by Jasmila Žbanić. The film served as a reflective framework for understanding the professional values, work ethics, and social ideals that shaped the development of Energoinvest.

The fieldwork component included visits to key sites - Stup, Alipašino Polje, Halilovići - where students documented spatial organisation, the condition of surviving structures, and traces of former production processes. Through a combination of visual documentation, morphological observation, and conversations with former employees, participants identified multiple layers of material and immaterial heritage while examining contemporary processes of erasure, fragmentation, and reinterpretation within post-industrial landscapes.

As in the case of the Beton complex in Novi Sad, the Sarajevo workshop approached industrial heritage as both an interpretative and didactic resource. Within this framework, Energoinvest served as a platform for critically exploring narratives of modernisation, postsocialist transformation, and urban memory. The case study illustrates how experiential and interdisciplinary approaches can help students develop sensitivity to complex and often overlooked industrial legacies, encouraging them to understand industrial sites as active fields of cultural and professional reflection.

3.2.2 “Beton” – Novi Sad

The workshop in Novi Sad focused on the former Beton concrete products industry, once a key driver of socialist industrialisation in Vojvodina. Founded in 1946 as the region's first state-owned construction company, Beton played a pioneering role in post-war reconstruction and industrial modernisation. Its development mirrored the broader evolution of the Yugoslav construction sector – from the early production of basic concrete elements to the adoption of advanced prefabrication systems such as IMS-Žeželj, RN, NS-71, and Premis. Through successive mergers and technological innovation, Beton eventually integrated into the large construction enterprise Neimar Novi Sad, which shaped the modern urban fabric of the city through its extensive housing, infrastructure, and public building projects. The rise and subsequent decline of this industrial complex thus encapsulates both the ambitions and contradictions of socialist modernity: collective progress, technological optimism, and the gradual erosion of industrial identities during post-socialist deindustrialisation (Andrić et al., 1995).

Within this historical and spatial framework, the Novi Sad workshop was conceived as an experiential learning laboratory, exploring how industrial heritage can be reactivated through direct engagement and critical reflection. It brought together students of architecture, art, and heritage studies to examine the Beton complex as a living document of post-war urban and industrial transformation.

The pedagogical process unfolded in several interrelated stages:

- Historical contextualisation: Participants were introduced to the history, technological development, and

urban role of the Beton factory through lectures, archival research, and engagement with primary sources.

- Field exploration: Students conducted on-site investigations of the abandoned factory complex, documenting its spatial organisation, material decay, and traces of production processes.

- Oral history and intergenerational dialogue: Through interviews with former workers and engineers, participants gained insight into the lived experiences of socialist industrial labour, including gender roles in production, and the broader meanings of work, progress, and community.

- Analytical reflection: The collected material – photographs, sketches, maps, testimonies, and archival data – formed the basis for collaborative interpretation. Students were encouraged to identify layers of both tangible and intangible heritage and to critically examine the shifting values attributed to industrial ruins in post-socialist contexts.

The workshop thus combined empirical research with reflective interpretation, foregrounding learning through immersion, dialogue, and creative analysis. By positioning the Beton factory as both a site of memory and a pedagogical environment, the exercise reframed students' understanding of industrial heritage – not as an obsolete physical remnant but as a catalyst for critical engagement with social history, material culture, and urban identity.

Through this process, participants not only acquired methodological skills in heritage documentation and participatory research, but also developed a heightened awareness of the ethical and emotional dimensions of working with contested heritage. The workshop demonstrated how experiential encounters with post-industrial landscapes can cultivate empathy, critical reflection, and professional responsibility – core competencies in contemporary architectural education.

4 Insights from the Workshops: Education as a Tool for Heritage Protection

The student reflections emerging from the Sleeping Giants workshops reveal a transformative learning process in which industrial heritage became a medium for understanding both material culture and collective memory. Working with sites such as the Beton factory in Novi Sad and Energoinvest in Sarajevo, participants engaged with abandoned spaces not as derelict remnants but as repositories of memory, identity, and social relations. Their reflections demonstrate how experiential learning redefined industrial ruins from inert vestiges of socialism into meaningful cultural texts that continue to shape urban and human landscapes.

The outputs of this process included analytical essays, visual documentation, and reflective accounts, through which students articulated their interpretations of industrial heritage, later presented through a curatorial concept and exhibition at the final festival in Novi Sad.

Across these essays, a recurring theme is the recognition of interdependence between city and industry. As one student observed, Novi Sad “grew out of its industry”; concrete and cement were understood not merely as materials but symbols of modernity and self-reliance.

Students thus came to see industrial heritage as a foundation to urban identity, linking processes of material production to the collective ethos that shaped the socialist city. In this sense, heritage education brought into focus the social dimension of architecture – the idea that space and community are co-constitutive and evolve together.

Another key insight concerns the ethics of memory and the politics of forgetting. Several students reflected on their generational distance from socialism, observing that post-socialist societies tend to suppress collective memories of solidarity, labour, and equality. By moving through abandoned industrial halls and engaging with former workers, students encountered embodied testimonies that challenged dominant narratives of decline and obsolescence. These encounters fostered a more empathic understanding and underscored that safeguarding heritage also entails preserving lived experience and affective geographies.

The reflections further position education as empowerment. Some participants emphasised that engaging with dissonant heritage equips young professionals to question entrenched urban paradigms. Rejecting reductive binaries such as demolition versus musealisation, they instead advocated for critical reuse, the integration of industrial heritage into academic curricula, and the recognition of its intangible dimensions, including knowledge systems, labour cultures, and social ideals. Such perspectives reflect the core ambitions of critical heritage pedagogy: to cultivate reflective practitioners capable of navigating the tensions between conservation, transformation, and public engagement.

Moreover, several students highlighted the importance of regional and transnational connections as intrinsic to understanding socialist industrial heritage. By tracing parallels between Sarajevo and Novi Sad, they identified a shared Yugoslav cultural and emotional landscape, illustrating how heritage education can transcend contemporary political boundaries and reopen spaces for dialogue across the former federation. In this sense, the workshop functioned not only as a learning environment but also as a platform for reconnection and shared belonging.

In sum, these student experiences show that education on dissonant heritage operates as an act of protection – not solely through preservation of physical form, but through the cultivation of meaning. By engaging critically

and affectively with contested pasts, learners reconstruct fragmented narratives and re-articulate forgotten values of solidarity, equality, and collective agency within the present. In doing so, educational practice becomes both a method of heritage safeguarding and a vehicle for social renewal.

5 Conclusion: Education as a Form of Protection and Reinterpretation of Industrial Heritage

This research has examined the position of industrial heritage within architectural education, situating it at the intersection of dissonant memory, post-socialist transformations, and contemporary pedagogical practices. The analysis shows that the marginalisation of industrial heritage in some post-Yugoslav societies cannot be attributed solely to material decay or economic restructuring. While Slovenia and Croatia exhibit more advanced and institutionalised approaches to industrial heritage, such practices remain uneven and fragmented elsewhere in the wider post-Yugoslav region. More fundamentally, this marginalisation reflects deeper epistemological and institutional discontinuities that shape how the socialist past is interpreted, silenced, decontextualised, or selectively valorised. Within this framework, architectural education emerges as a critical arena for interrogating these tensions and translating them into pedagogical practice.

The pedagogical experiment conducted within the Sleeping Giants project shows that experiential, spatially grounded models of learning can generate forms of knowledge largely absent from conventional curricula. Direct engagement with industrial sites enabled students to develop analytical sensitivity to complex socio-historical contexts, as well as to the intangible dimensions of industrial heritage. This approach confirms that practice-based learning can offer a meaningful response to institutional gaps and to the persistent marginalisation of industrial heritage within formal education. Recent scholarship further underscores the value of such approaches in advancing transformative and socially engaged architectural pedagogy (Salama, 2015; Akcan, 2023).

Table 1 Pedagogical principles tested and directions for their future integration in architectural education. Source: Plićanić & Draganić.

Pedagogical principles tested:	Directions for future application:
Experiential and field-based learning through direct engagement with sites.	Integrate industrial heritage modules into architectural curricula and design studios.
Reflective and dialogic processes linking theory and practice.	Promote reflective writing and collaborative research as standard learning outcomes.
Peer-to-peer and interdisciplinary collaboration.	Establish a multidisciplinary approach to studying industrial heritage from social, economic, political, and architectural perspectives.
Integration of community narratives and oral histories.	Develop cross-sectoral collaborations with museums and local archives.
Public dissemination as a means of civic participation.	Expand public presentation formats (exhibitions, digital archives, open lectures).

To clarify the project's pedagogical contribution and its potential for broader application, the following table synthesises the core principles tested alongside proposed directions for integration.

At the same time, several limitations must be acknowledged. The workshops were short and involved a relatively small cohort of participants, which inevitably constrains the wider generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the absence of sustained institutional support limits the long-term impact of such initiatives, underscoring the need for more stable collaboration between academia, cultural institutions, and local communities, as well as for a stronger multidisciplinary approach within academia.

Nevertheless, the insights presented here offer meaningful directions for future application. The pedagogical principles tested through this project can be adapted and incorporated into existing architectural curricula and related disciplines, particularly in contexts where industrial heritage education remains underrepresented. The methodological framework

– combining fieldwork, creative interpretation, and reflective analysis – may serve as a model for future educational, research, and community-based projects dealing with dissonant and marginalised spaces.

In practical terms, this implies the introduction of industrial heritage into both design studios and theoretical courses, the development of field-based and community-oriented learning formats, and the strengthening of interdisciplinary collaboration as a standard component of architectural education.

Ultimately, architectural education holds transformative potential not only as a means of knowledge transmission but as a vehicle for shaping cultural attitudes toward the past. Integrating industrial heritage into pedagogical practice opens up pathways for broader societal recognition and encourages context-sensitive approaches to its future interpretation and use. By clearly articulating and visualising its pedagogical framework, this study lays the foundation for future research, curriculum development, and regional collaboration in the field of industrial heritage education.

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I Love Delirious New York (or The Importance of Oswald Mathias Ungers in the Formation of Rem Koolhaas)

Volim Delirious New York
(ili važnost Oswalda Mathiasa Ungersa u obrazovanju Rema Koolhaasa)

Silvio Squizzardi

School of Architecture and Urbanism, Mackenzie Presbyterian University, Brazil
silvio@2smc.arq.br | orcid.org/0000-0002-3963-6255

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Abstract Over the years, Rem Koolhaas' early career and his seminal book *Delirious New York* have been widely discussed. One aspect that deserves closer attention, however, is Koolhaas' strong intellectual attraction to Oswald Mathias Ungers and the influence of their coexistence during Koolhaas' period at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1972, Koolhaas began researching New York City as the field for his theoretical investigation, marking the beginning of his engagement with urban morphology as a conceptual tool. The intellectual exchange with Ungers during this time proved decisive. Ungers' summer studios became an important source of inspiration. Within this context, Koolhaas' background in journalism found a productive outlet, and his collaboration with Ungers and their students led to the speculative project *City Within a City*, later published in *Lotus International* which helped to establish many of the conceptual and methodological foundations that would define his work throughout the following decade. This project helped establish the theoretical framework that would later inform *Delirious New York*, widely regarded as one of the most influential architectural books of the twentieth century. This article examines the mentorship dimension of their relationship by tracing Koolhaas' trajectory through the volumes of *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* and assessing their impact on his architectural thinking. Arguing that the ideas developed within this collaborative environment became deeply embedded in the conceptual structure of *Delirious New York*, revealing how Ungers' influence and their intellectual exchange shaped Koolhaas' early theoretical formation.

Keywords Rem Koolhaas; Oswald Mathias Ungers; *Delirious New York*.

Sažetak Tokom godina, rana karijera Rema Koolhaasa i njegova ključna knjiga *Delirious New York* bili su široko analizirani. Međutim, jedan aspekt koji zaslužuje pažljivije razmatranje jeste Koolhaasova snažna intelektualna fascinacija prema Oswald Mathias Ungersu i uticaj njihovog zajedničkog djelovanja tokom Koolhaasovog boravka na Cornell University u Ithaci, New York. Godine 1972. Koolhaas je započeo istraživanje New Yorka kao polja za svoju teorijsku analizu, čime je započeo njegovo bavljenje urbanom morfologijom kao konceptualnim alatom. Intelektualna razmjena s Ungersom u tom periodu pokazala se presudnom. Ungersovi ljetni studiji postali su važan izvor inspiracije. U tom kontekstu, Koolhaasova novinarska pozadina pronašla je produktivan izlaz, a njegova saradnja s Ungersom i njihovim studentima dovela je do spekulativnog projekta *City Within a City*, kasnije objavljenog u *Lotus International*, koji je pomogao uspostavljanju mnogih konceptualnih i metodoloških osnova koje će definisati njegov rad tokom naredne decenije. Ovaj projekat pomogao je u formiranju teorijskog okvira koji će kasnije oblikovati *Delirious New York*, danas smatran jednom od najuticajnijih arhitektonskih knjiga dvadesetog vijeka. Ovaj članak ispituje mentorsku dimenziju njihovog odnosa prateći Koolhaasovu putanju kroz tomove *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* i procjenjujući njihov uticaj na njegovo arhitektonsko mišljenje. Tekst tvrdi da su ideje razvijene unutar ovog saradničkog okruženja postale duboko ugrađene u konceptualnu strukturu knjige *Delirious New York*, otkrivajući kako su Ungersov uticaj i njihova intelektualna razmjena oblikovali Koolhaasovo rano teorijsko obrazovanje.

Ključne riječi Rem Koolhaas; Oswald Mathias Ungers; *Delirious New York*.

1 Historical Context: Travel, Perception, and the Grand Tour

Over the years, the early career of Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas (hereafter RK) and his seminal work “Delirious New York” (hereafter DNY) have been the subject of much discussion. The graphic reinterpretation shown in Figure 1¹ reflects the iconic status the book has acquired within architectural culture. However, one aspect that demands attention is RK’s deep attraction to the work of German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers (hereafter OMU) and the crucial influence of their coexistence during Koolhaas’s trip to Cornell, in Ithaca, New York.

Research into the origins of his career is relevant because this period marks the transition between journalism and architecture, a time when his references, his first conceptual formulations, and his engagement with the American academic context began to consolidate. This paper tells the story of a young architecture student’s encounter with the oppressive reality of the Berlin Wall, the discovery of the writings of one of the great German architects of the 20th century and the realization that architecture could, indeed, put historical and physical context first. It is a journey of mentorship, the writing of an important manifesto and the impact of the experience of the archetypal metropolis, New York. These elements, combined to his intellectual experience at Cornell and at IAUS - The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, allow us to understand how the university and cultural environment shaped his critical vision and served as basis for the development of one of the most significant careers in contemporary architecture.



Figure 1 Illustration: I LOVE DELIRIOUS NEW YORK.
Source: Illustration developed by the author, 2024.

¹ The image functions as a reinterpretation of the “I ♥ NY” logo, appropriating its universally recognizable visual structure to replace the original object of affection, the city of New York, with the book *Delirious New York*. This substitution suggests that Koolhaas’s work transcends its condition as a critical text to assume the status of a cultural icon, becoming one of the most influential representations of the metropolis’s imagined and architectural identity.



Figure 2 Ford River Rouge plant in Detroit by Albert Kahn.
Source: (Mendelsohn, 1929)

Throughout the 20th century, several European artists and architects looked to the United States as a model, seeing it as a version to the future. Fascinated by social and technological advances, they projected their desires and fears into the new. Young people travel across the Atlantic to discover New York, fascinated and frightened by the metropolis, and return transformed. One of the most notorious and important of these journeys was described by the books: “Amerika” from 1928 and “Russland Europa Amerika” from 1929, both written by Polish architect Erich Mendelsohn. Arriving in America in 1926, ten years before Le Corbusier, commissioned by the Berlin Newspaper Tageblatt and accompanied by Austrian filmmaker Fritz Lang, whose vision of the lights of New York would be immortalized in the 1927 film “Metropolis”, Mendelsohn translated this experience through photos in an expressionist way.

If for Le Corbusier drawing was a tool for appropriating the lived space, for the Pole, at least on this trip, his fascination was recorded through a series of photographs that conveyed the strength, dynamism, and mechanized atmosphere of the city.

During this period, the Grand Tours undertaken by young European architects and architecture students were increasingly redirected toward the United States, replacing the traditional destinations of the European cultural itinerary. Captivated by images of industrial facilities, grain silos, factories, and skyscrapers, they saw in the American landscape a tangible vision of the future. Buildings such as Ford River Rouge Plant in Detroit

(Figure 2) became powerful symbols of technological progress, industrial efficiency, and architectural scale. Through photographs and travel accounts, these structures helped shape a new architectural imagination, centered not on historical monuments but on the productive and metropolitan realities of modernity.

The photos that the young architect presents in his books demonstrate, through juxtapositions and unusual angles, the gigantism of the buildings, and the cumulative densification of the city. In a letter written to his wife, we can see his enthusiasm, which would stimulate his future speculations: “Fantastic Piranesi tubes, from which purely technical details suddenly emerge, like new births of the future” (Whittick, 1940, p. 83). Another aspect identified in Mendelsohn’s writings is the contrast between technological progress and social fragility, exposing the capitalist character of the metropolis.

A learning experience he would carry with him not only in other publications throughout the 1920’s, but one that would mark him profoundly throughout his career. In this sense, Mendelsohn’s journey can be understood as a precursor to RK own intellectual trajectory, in which travel operates not merely as observation but as a critical and projective instrument, later reframed through his engagement with OMU.

In 1972, RK began researching New York City, identifying it as his field of theoretical research which marked the beginning of his exploration of the importance of urban morphology studies. The synergy between RK and OMU during their five years together at Cornell played a crucial role. The publications edited by OMU on the summer studios he organized, although they generated low circulation, served as a rich source of inspiration for RK. His journalistic training found a voice, and his collaboration with Ungers and his students resulted in a highly speculative text: “The City Within a City”. Written in 1977 and published in *Lotus International* magazine in 1978, this work forms the theoretical basis for one of the projects presented in DNY, “The City of the Captive Globe.”

Here we explore the mentoring aspect of their relationship, tracing Koolhaas’s path, the dynamics of his relationship with OMU and the impact of these works on his architecture. Ultimately, we examine how these elements became intrinsically embedded in the essence of DNY, solidifying his collaborative legacy in architectural discourse on a journey of self-discovery and expanding horizons.

It should be remembered that individuals, when embarking on a journey, seek not only to discover new places, but also to explore different perspectives and approaches to understand the world around them. The importance of educational trips lies in the ability to stimulate individual interests, providing a unique learning experience that goes beyond the classroom.

By exposing themselves to new environments, cultures, and ways of thinking, students and young architects have the opportunity to develop a broader and more flexible mindset. The search for a new way of seeing the world not only enriches their cultural background, but also enables them to face challenges in and innovative way.

The intellectual exchange between OMU and RK, documented in the photograph shown in Figure 3, forms the central subject of this article and provides the framework for understanding the development of RK’s early theoretical thinking.



Figure 3 Photograph of Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas, 1982 by Dan Grogan. Source: (Schrijver, 2021)

2 Methodology

The methodology of this text is grounded in a qualitative, phenomenological approach that understands experience as a conscious manifestation situated in time and mediated by memories, images, and meanings, irreducible to objective measurement. In this sense, the comparison between trajectories is adopted as an interpretative strategy—rather than a procedure of empirical verification—conceiving the experience of travel as a singular, historical, and subjective phenomenon. Comparative analysis thus operates as a hermeneutic device aimed at organizing and articulating symbolic materials, such as accounts, graphic records, writings, and works, understood not as factual evidence but as expressions of lived experience. The aim, therefore, is to understand how the phenomenon of travel manifests itself to consciousness and is transformed, over time, into memory, repertoire, and architectural thought.

3 RK before Cornell: Berlin and the Architectural Object

The young Dutch architecture student, based in London, RK, on the recommendation of Aldo van Eyck (González, 2014), had been studying at the Architectural Association (AA) since 1968 in constant conflict with his professors, and outsider in the nest because of his concerns with formal issues and a constant irritation with the exaggeratedly social architecture produced there. Over the years many discussions between RK and the professors, especially with Peter Cook, took place because he did not align with the spirit of the time, his

interest went beyond the political sphere as a generator of architecture and aligned with a formal, morphological, and unusual quest for the time. His constant squabbles with “rice-eating hippie” students (Schrijver, 2021, p. 25) took him on a journey to Berlin. The young RK wanted to study the Wall built 10 years before and its impact on the city, approaching it as an architectural object detached from its sociopolitical meanings. Fascinated by the radical constructivist of Russian avant-garde architecture, Ginzburg, Leonidov, Tatlin and Malevich since his trip to the USSR in 1969, RK cultivated his reputation as boring, authoritarian, and fascist, which generated a lot of interest in his work. AA students and faculty looked upon his work with a mixture of fascination and contempt.

In Berlin, RK photographed the banality of horror, the daily life around the Wall, and the overwhelming presence of the structure that tore the city apart, separating families, and that would become the main symbol of an era. He wanted to study this construction that had a huge impact on urban morphology.

To produce the work called “The Berlin Wall as Architecture”, RK benefited from his cinematographic and journalistic training to see subliminal relationships and narrate a story that mixed reality, fantasy, and architecture as design research, in and approach analogous to the paranoid critical method of Catalan painter Salvador Dali, a characteristic of his intellectual production deeply linked to the book studied here. The surrealist-inspired method consisted of fabricating evidence for speculations that cannot be proven and then forcibly inserting this evidence into the world, so that a false fact illegally takes its place among the real ones. Moreover, his appreciation of the Wall and its “apparent absence of program” (Koolhaas, 1995, p. 222) anticipates the notion of programmatic instability that would become central to his architectural thinking in subsequent decades.

The research in Berlin served as the basis for the development of this last project in AA. “Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture”, which with constructivist influences and references to totalitarian projects by the Italian group Superstudio, contradicted the Peace and Love culture of the 1960s with a highly formalist and imposing architectural proposal.

Exodus presented a construction that overrode the will of people, they had to voluntarily surrender to a new way of life in society in order to enjoy their public spaces. A process of social reconfiguration under the protection of formal rigor. The project was developed inspired by the Wall and imposed its presence on London on an almost inhuman scale. Interestingly, the project includes a number of neat forms that may bring to mind some of the projects developed by OMU and his students.

Still in Berlin, around 1969, during his research, RK came into contact with the “Architecture Publications” (Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur), a series of publications edited by OMU as part of its design laboratories developed at TU Berlin between 1965 and 1969, which explored the unique characteristics of the city of West Berlin. These publications edited during his years as a professor of the School of Architecture demonstrated a latent tension between the city as

a whole and the separate elements that create it, a discourse that seems to predict the paths that would later be followed by both architects studied here. The small-circulation publications were the result of research laboratories in West Berlin. His themes were related to the city, treating it as an urban laboratory and exploring it divided into thematic clusters as Roads and Buildings, Living Along the Park or Traffic Lane Along the Spree. RK is fascinated by the publications, takes them back to London and begins to develop his final course works in AA, already instigated and influenced by OMU.

By the time RK arrived in Berlin, OMU was already on his way to Ithaca. Having taught at TU Berlin for five years, the young professor had grown weary of the political climate and of the attitudes of his students, who in December 1967 protested against an architecture conference he had organized. At the invitation of the English architectural historian Colin Rowe, OMU emigrated to the United States, where he joined the faculty of Cornell University's School of Architecture as a professor.

4 Cornell and the Influence of OMU

Before graduating, RK receives a two-year grant of Harkness Fellowship and decides to go to Cornell. In his letter of intent to apply for a place at the institution, RK cites OMU as the main reason for his interest in going to NY: “The appeal of this course would be the active presence of Prof. Ungers, whose work in Urban Planning at the University of Berlin I find very appealing and highly relevant” (Koolhaas, 1972, as cited in Schrijver, 2021, p. 24). In 2023, during a conversation with architect Richard Hall, RK states that his interest in OMU was never based on similarity, differences were a much greater incentive. He thought that was the fundamental possibility of collaboration, as his motivation was a compensation for something he didn't have. “In the case of Ungers, it was the simple recognition of the incredible speculative force that he was able to give to architecture” (Hall, 2024).

At Cornell, during his research, RK came into contact with two recently published books, “Los Angeles – The Architecture of Four Ecologies” by Reyner Banham published in 1971 and “Learning from Las Vegas” by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour, published in 1972. Both publications with casual texts, explored popular notions about two great American cities and theorize the metropolis of the 20th century based on them. The texts legitimized the use of metaphors, proposing them as a form of irony because they revealed some of the less admirable values of American society. Books filled with history and humor, which talked about the new and the old, celebrated vernacular architecture and opened the field of research to mundane sources in parallel with the usual academic bases. At this moment, RK realizes that one could no longer write architectural manifestos, but that he could write about cities as if they were manifestos themselves. In other words, he goes on to develop the concept of a ‘retroactive manifesto’ for New York.

In New York, RK also had direct contact with publications aligned with New Journalism², a literary style practiced by American media outlets in the 1960s and 1970s. Among these publications were magazines such as *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone*, *New York Magazine*, as well as alternative newspapers like the *Village Voice*. In this style, based on immersion, observation of urban life, and narrative construction of experience, the metropolis is understood not as an object of functionalist analysis but as a field of events, a set of scenes, tensions, and contradictions that require a narrative reading. This approach helps explain why RK describes New York less as a coherent system and more as an accumulation of episodes, myths, and operative fictions, a procedure analogous to New Journalism, which organizes reality through the assembly of lived fragments.

This is how RK found his space to think, write, and design in the relative calm of Ithaca, where formal issues were made explicit in the works and words of his mentor. An exchange relationship was established between OMU and RK, they participated in competitions together, set up seminar and Summer Studios. His ideas about architecture, free from the hippie spirit of AA, could begin to establish themselves within the sphere of influence of Rowe, OMU, and also the American architect Peter Eisenman, who directed the IAUS Foundation in New York. The IAUS, an institute with financial support from MoMA and Cornell University of New York, had as its principle to give scholarships to students so they could spend a year researching, designing, and writing. A model that in theory would bring them closer to the reality of architecture in New York. It was there that RK wrote DNY.

Not only who RK was with, but also where he was had a significant influence on his work, he saw something about the amnesia of New York, one of the central ideas of the book that describes a process in which the city continuously erases its own memory in order to reinvent itself, demolishing, replacing, and accumulating layers of urbanism without attachment to the past. This naïve pragmatism of American architecture allowed the city to prosper, in a process of constant replacement and accumulation of hybrid and vertical experiments.

He was fascinated by the way the city was built, without a traditional master plan and, when analyzing the results, he could speculate about the infinite potential of the city as it was, representing the result of building a metropolis without the weight of political manifestos that were being conceived in Europe. The various applications of architectural form – composition,

detailing, mass, materialization – were not part of a great ideology, but only instruments to be used.

In parallel to his research, RK partnered with Madelon Vriesendorp (his wife at the time), Elia and Zoe Zenghelis and Zaha Hadid (in addition to having OMU as a mentor/associate) in the first incarnation of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), so that, in November 1978, they inaugurated the exhibition “The Sparkling Metropolis”, installed on the top floor of the Guggenheim Museum in New York in which they presented projects and paintings of the works developed by them.

The exhibition served as a launch for the book, DNY had been completed by RK during his years between Cornell and the IAUS and it featured not only a “Retroactive Manifesto” of New York City, but also (and herein lies the true relationship between RK and OMU) a collection of projects for the city illustrated by Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis. It is almost impossible not to confuse the authorship or the meaning of the texts with that of the projects, the ‘manifesto’ proposed by RK feeds the design rhetoric and theory of a truly metropolitan architecture.

According to the OMU model, the projects were collaborative and their publication followed the model of the Architecture Publications, which were reemerging at Cornell, with projects and discussions from the Summer Studios. But its impact was gigantic. The book and the projects launched RK to the general public, was palpable to casual readers at the same time it fascinated architects and urbanists. OMA emerged as a vanguard office and the impacts of this moment could be felt throughout the 1980s and the 1990s.

OMU’s writings and works fall into a category of more traditional theoretical strategies, its authority was based on the classical notion of *uomo universale*, while the work of RK, twenty years younger, aspired to a more editorial and observational position, akin to a curator as a part of the architect’s identity. His work is a reflection of an innocent optimism, wishing to reinvent a plausible relationship between the formal and the social (suggesting in part the absence of such a relationship and its troubled nature), and the absolute refusal to use social issues as the basis for architectural form (Schrijver, 2021).

5 From “City Within a City” to “City of the Captive Globe”

To conclude this argument, two of works will be presented in this context that demonstrate how the OMU/RK partnership influenced the work presented in DNY and its affinity with OMU’s studies.

Dutch architect and researcher at the University of Antwerp, Lara Schrijver argues that the 1977 article “The City Within a City”, written by OMU and RK et al., developed as part of a Summer Studio in Berlin and the project presented as an appendix (or fictional conclusion) to DNY, “The City of the Captive Globe” (1978), written by RK and Zoe Zenghelis represent similar concepts at their core and are fundamental to addressing a changing metropolis.

² New Journalism broke with the traditional “who-what-when-where-how-why” reporting model and began to organize narratives through scenes, dialogues, and points of view. It was grounded in the journalist’s prolonged immersion in the observed universe, requiring intensive investigation and attention to the most ordinary details of everyday life. By incorporating fictional techniques such as narrative scenes, full dialogue, and focalization, it nevertheless maintained a rigorous commitment to factual accuracy, distinguishing itself from literature through its direct anchoring in experience and empirical observation. Key authors of New Journalism include Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Joan Didion, Truman Capote, Hunter S. Thompson, and Norman Mailer.

Both derive from an existing city, a real city, and model the features you see as most valuable or impressive. "The City Within a City" derives from the condition of Berlin as it was in the late 1960s, early 1970s: with areas and neighborhoods with pronounced and different identities, all within a larger metropolitan field. "The City of the Captive Globe" derives from a study of Manhattan, where, according to RK, the grid strength is so rigorous that each parcel itself can manifest a completely unique identity without destroying the conceptual coherence of the city's grid as a whole. Thus, both concepts are distilled from the unique and specific conditions of Berlin and Manhattan, and used as tools to reflect on the future of the metropolis of the 1970s, with its multiple centers increasingly fragmented. The remnants of the historic city are still present, but they are embedded within a newer area of urban expansion.

The first work, "The City Within a City" was the result of an 8-week Summer Studio, organized by OMU and Cornell's Building Systems and Housing Department in partnership with Künstlerhaus Bethanien Cultural Center in Berlin. The initial draft of the Berlin Manifesto consisted of 6 pages typed by RK between June and July 1977, when he visited the Studio. The draft sparked discussion between RK, OMU, and their assistants, who then made significant changes to the text, including its title. This text was originally presented at the exhibition organized by the students at the end of the Studio and a second revised version was published by OMU, along the lines of Architecture Publications and later in Lotus International #19, 1978.

The published text oscillates between a contemplative utopia and a strategic arsenal of arguments for a project developed for a specific city, in distinct circumstances: Berlin in the late 1970s. It describes 11 hypotheses about the city, which remodel it without destroying its pre-existing structure, considering the importance of its ruins after World War II, including the possibility that the city's population could decline in the next decade and presents solutions based on social condensing projects that organize the city as parts of a whole with specific problems and needs.

Berlin is described in the text as an archipelago, a group of islands situated in a sea that simultaneously unites and divides them. Each island is part of the whole composition, and they all work together. However, even in the complete separation of the islands, no formal center is identified and the absence of this center is something that draws the islands towards each other and, at the same time, keeps them distinct. As a result, this prevents the formation of a single mass and increases the relationship dynamics between the islands. "The City Within a City" proposed that the relationship between architecture and the city be based on fragments.

The fragmented reality of post-war Berlin provided OMU with a basis for interpreting the city as an entity that no longer depended on large scale urban planning but was composed by islands, each conceived as a micro-city, freeing the fragments from the falsehood of a unified urbanism. This notion of parts allows for the juxtaposition of fundamentally different areas within a larger whole. As a project, it neither depends on nor

allows for a single architectural or urban gesture, but instead offers a framework in which differences can exist and be cultivated.

This unusual text for the time had an enormous influence on the trajectory of these two important figures of contemporary architecture and can actually be read as the final result of the affinity that existed between them in this period. OMU returns to Berlin and RK publishes DNY.

The second work, "The City of the Captive Globe", as previously stated, is part of the book DNY and serves as part of the conclusion for his research on New York. RK's proposal is to put his ideas on paper, a fictitious conclusion, an interpretation of the hypotheses raised throughout the books, not through words, but in a series of architectural projects.

Manhattan's grid is presented as a dry archipelago, each block an island, and the heavy traffic of cars and people keeps them isolated. As a solid, unchanging urban condition, the grid allows maximum freedom for each individual condition within it. In fact, the individuality of each block reinforces the unity of the grid. RK argues that the horizontal constraint creates a free space in the vertical plane circumscribed by the boundaries of the block.

The project questions the direct and inevitable correlation between intention and outcome. Its images reflect a fascination with the materialization of these conditions in concrete and specific architectural forms, as well as the proliferation of different forms that do not submit to architectural coherence. The work draws on the mythical narrative of the city and the construction of various radical architectural proposals. Colorful representations of iconic projects, such as Le Corbusier's Voisin Plan or Malevich's suprematist models, are fundamental to understanding these spatial relationships. It is difficult to imagine its impact being so strong without the paintings by Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zengelis accompanying the text.

6 Discussion

The intellectual relationship between RK and OMU represents a decisive moment in the reformulation of architectural thinking during the 1970s, a period marked by the growing crisis of comprehensive modernist planning and the search for alternative conceptual frameworks capable of interpreting the contemporary metropolis. Rather than attempting to restore urban unity through totalizing planning strategies, both architects recognized fragmentation, difference, and discontinuity as structural conditions of modern urbanism and transformed them into operative design principles.

OMU's archipelago model and RK's interpretation of the Manhattan grid illustrate two complementary approaches to this condition. In OMU's work, fragmentation becomes a morphological framework composed of autonomous yet interrelated urban "islands," each capable of maintaining its identity while contributing to a broader metropolitan

structure. In RK's interpretation, the grid operates as a neutral ordering device whose rigidity paradoxically enables architectural freedom, allowing each block to develop independent formal and programmatic experiments without dissolving the coherence of the city as a whole. In both cases, the city is no longer conceived as a unified organism but as a structured multiplicity in which difference becomes a productive urban condition.

This convergence places their work within a broader theoretical shift that includes the typological reflections developed by Aldo Rossi and the compositional pluralism articulated by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter. However, RK and OMU move beyond purely analytical interpretations of the city by introducing a projective dimension in which urban theory becomes inseparable from speculative architectural design. RK's concept of the "retroactive manifesto" exemplifies this transition: the metropolis is interpreted not only through historical or morphological analysis but through narrative and projective imagination, transforming existing urban phenomena into architectural propositions.

7 Conclusion

Consequently, the collaboration between OMU and RK should be understood not merely as a pedagogical episode but as a formative intellectual exchange that contributed to redefining the role of architecture in the late twentieth century. By establishing fragmentation as a positive and operative condition rather than a problem to be resolved. Their work helped shift architectural discourse away from universal planning models toward a conception of the city as an open system composed of differentiated yet interconnected parts. The theoretical and pedagogical environment created through the Cornell studios, the Berlin research projects, and their collaborative publications thus played a decisive role in shaping the conceptual foundations that would later emerge in DNY and in the broader trajectory of contemporary metropolitan theory. Their intellectual exchange continues to resonate, particularly in approaches that embrace fragmentation, multiplicity, and narrative as fundamental tools for interpreting and designing the contemporary city.

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Circular Economy in Architectural Education: Pedagogical Approaches and a Proposed Framework

Cirkularna ekonomija u arhitektonskom obrazovanju:
Pedagoški pristupi i prijedlog okvira

Hatidža Čapkin

Department of Architecture, Istanbul Kultur University, Türkiye
h.Čapkin@iku.edu.tr | orcid.org/0000-0002-5793-6323

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Abstract The transition from linear to circular models is increasingly recognized as essential for reducing resource depletion and environmental impacts in the built environment. Because early design decisions shape the material, environmental, and lifecycle performance of buildings, architectural education plays a pivotal role in preparing future practitioners to support this shift. Yet despite the growing presence of circular economy (CE) frameworks in policy and practice, their integration into architectural curricula, particularly within design studios, remains fragmented and inconsistent. This paper addresses this gap by reviewing recent scholarship, analyzing emerging pedagogical models, and examining case studies that explore how circular thinking is taught in architecture programs worldwide. The findings reveal recurring challenges, including limited material literacy, insufficient life-cycle reasoning, and a lack of structured assessment methods capable of evaluating circular design outcomes. At the same time, the design studio emerges as a uniquely productive setting for cultivating systemic thinking, material awareness, and regenerative design skills through experiential, collaborative, and evidence-based learning. Building on the analysis, the paper proposes a pedagogical framework for Circular Design Studios (CDS) that operationalizes CE principles through lifecycle thinking, material traceability, systems mapping, and regenerative design strategies. By outlining transferable pedagogical strategies and competency-based assessment criteria, the study aims to support architectural schools in embedding circularity more systematically across curricula and to equip future designers with the skills necessary to contribute to a circular and sustainable built environment.

Keywords architectural education; circular economy; design studio.

Sažetak Prelazak sa linearnog na cirkularni model sve se više prepoznaje kao ključan za smanjenje iscrpljivanja resursa i negativnih uticaja na okoliš u izgrađenom okruženju. Budući da rane projektantske odluke oblikuju materijalne, okolišne i životnociklusne performanse zgrada, arhitektonsko obrazovanje ima važnu ulogu u pripremi budućih stručnjaka za podršku ovoj tranziciji. Međutim, uprkos sve većoj prisutnosti okvira cirkularne ekonomije (CE) u politikama i praksi, njihova integracija u nastavne planove arhitekture, posebno unutar projektantskih studija, i dalje je fragmentirana i nedosljedna. Ovaj rad razmatra navedeni jaz kroz pregled recentne literature, analizu novih pedagoških modela i analiziranje primjera koji istražuju na koji se način cirkularno razmišljanje podučava u arhitektonskim programima širom svijeta. Rezultati ukazuju na ponavljajuće izazove, uključujući ograničenu materijalnu pismenost, nedovoljno razumijevanje životnog ciklusa zgrada te nedostatak strukturiranih metoda evaluacije koje mogu procijeniti ishode cirkularnog dizajna. Istovremeno, predmet arhitektonsko projektovanje se pokazuje kao posebno produktivno okruženje za razvoj sistemskog razmišljanja, svijesti o materijalima i regenerativnih dizajnerskih vještina kroz iskustveno, kolaborativno i na dokazima zasnovano učenje. Na osnovu provedene analize, rad predlaže pedagoški okvir za Circular Design Studios (CDS), koji operacionalizira principe cirkularne ekonomije kroz razmišljanje o životnom ciklusu, mogućnost praćenje toka materijala, mapiranje sistema i regenerativne strategije projektovanja. Definiranjem prenosivih pedagoških strategija i kriterija evaluacije zasnovanih na kompetencijama, istraživanje nastoji podržati arhitektonske škole u sistematičnijem uključivanju cirkularnosti u nastavne planove te osposobiti buduće projektante vještinama potrebnim za doprinos cirkularnom i održivom izgrađenom okruženju.

Ključne riječi arhitektonsko obrazovanje; cirkularna ekonomija; arhitektonsko projektovanje.

1 Introduction

The growing urgency of climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation has intensified global interest in transitioning from linear production models toward regenerative, circular systems (Wöhler et al., 2024; UNEP, 2021). Within this global shift, the built environment holds a central role due to its substantial contribution to material extraction, waste generation, and both operational and embodied carbon emissions (Wöhler et al., 2024; Pierzchlewicz et al., 2025). Architecture, positioned at the intersection of spatial design, material use, and technological innovation, is uniquely responsible for mediating these impacts. Early design decisions profoundly influence a building's long-term environmental performance, its adaptability, and its capacity to reintegrate materials into future cycles (Pomponi & Moncaster, 2017; Motiei et al., 2024). As a result, the architectural discipline is increasingly called upon to adopt approaches that extend beyond traditional sustainability measures toward circular strategies capable of maintaining material value, reducing waste, and supporting ecosystem regeneration (Ghisellini et al., 2016; Durmisevic, 2016).

Despite the rapid evolution of circular economy (CE) frameworks in policy and practice, ranging from the EU Circular Economy Action Plan to emerging digital material-tracking infrastructures (European Commission, 2015; Przepiórkowska et al., 2025), the integration of CE principles into architectural education remains fragmented and uneven. Many architectural curricula continue to prioritize form-making, aesthetic exploration, and isolated technical considerations, leaving life-cycle thinking, material literacy, and multi-scalar systems analysis insufficiently addressed (Vergani et al., 2024; Stoiljković et al., 2023). At the same time, design studios, as the core pedagogical spaces within architectural programs, offer significant potential to cultivate the competencies, tools, and value systems needed for circular practice. Recent studies underline the studio's capacity to combine experiential learning, research-by-design, stakeholder collaboration, and digital workflows, enabling students to test circular strategies such as design for disassembly, adaptive reuse, modular construction, and evidence-based environmental assessment (Vrontissi et al., 2023; Patil et al., 2025; Çolakoğlu et al., 2023).

Given these developments, there is a growing need for coherent pedagogical frameworks that embed CE principles across architectural education through structured competencies, integrated teaching methodologies, and transparent assessment mechanisms (Ioannou & Klein, 2022; Schiano-Phan & Soares Gonçalves, 2022). Drawing on an extensive literature review and comparative analysis of global educational models, this paper examines how circular design thinking can be systematically embedded into architectural learning. It synthesizes insights from existing pedagogical approaches, emerging tools, and institutional practices to propose a comprehensive

framework for Circular Design Studios (CDS). By reframing studio-based education through lifecycle-oriented and regenerative principles, the study aims to support the development of architects capable of contributing meaningfully to the circular transition of the built environment.

2 Circular Economy in Architectural Practice

The circular economy (CE) offers a regenerative alternative to the linear “take-make-dispose” model by reducing resource use, waste, emissions, and energy losses through narrowing, slowing, and closing material loops (Wöhler et al., 2024). It aims to maintain material value over time, supported by frameworks such as the 10R hierarchy and models like ReSOLVE and the EU waste hierarchy (Pešta et al., 2023; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021; Soliu et al., 2024). The built environment is central to CE transitions, accounting for roughly one-third of global energy use, CO₂ emissions, and material consumption (UNEP, 2021; Wöhler et al., 2024). While aligned with sustainability, CE focuses more specifically on material circularity and value retention (Stoiljković et al., 2023), requiring strategies such as design for disassembly and adaptability, modular construction, and adaptive reuse, often supported by digital tools (Durmisevic, 2016; Timm et al., 2023; Motiei et al., 2024). At the policy level, CE is a key instrument for climate neutrality and resource efficiency, exemplified by the EU Circular Economy Action Plan and its integration with the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2015, 2020; Przepiórkowska et al., 2025; The Circular City Centre – C3, 2025). Global initiatives such as UNESCO, UNEP, OECD further stress the need to embed CE in education, linking it to SDGs and promoting systems thinking, lifecycle reasoning, and digital skills (UNESCO, 2022; OECD, 2023; Pierzchlewicz et al., 2025). In practice, CE in architecture involves rethinking buildings as multi-life-cycle systems, using approaches such as reversible design, material passports, and circular procurement, enabled by BIM, LCA/LCC, digital twins, IoT, and blockchain (Arup & Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021; Aral et al., 2024). However, integrating these concepts into architectural education remains challenging due to rigid curricula structures and diverse institutional contexts, prompting the need to examine existing pedagogical models, competencies, and assessment methods for preparing students for circular practice.

3 Architectural Education and the Need for Transformation

Architectural education plays a critical role in shaping future designers' environmental values, competencies, and approaches to design. However, prevailing pedagogical models often remain grounded in linear conceptions, prioritizing novelty,

form, and aesthetics over material performance, adaptability, and long-term value retention. Traditional studio culture has emphasized visual and conceptual creativity, while environmental and material considerations have typically been treated as secondary or technical concerns addressed later in the design process.

In response to escalating global challenges, architectural education has begun to shift toward sustainability, resilience, and climate adaptation. The UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (UNESCO & UIA, 2023) reflects this transformation, emphasizing the need for environmentally responsible, lifecycle-oriented, and interdisciplinary approaches. It acknowledges that the built environment is shaped by complex environmental, social, economic, and technological forces, and calls for architects to be equipped to address 21st-century societal demands. However, while the Charter establishes a strong foundation for sustainability, it does not explicitly address the integration of circular economy principles into architectural curricula.

Although many programs have introduced themes related to ecological design, energy performance, and social sustainability, these efforts often remain focused on efficiency and technological optimization rather than systemic resource circularity. As a result, current curricula frequently lack lifecycle and systems thinking, limiting students' understanding of how design decisions influence material flows, carbon emissions, and long-term resource use. In addition, limited engagement with disciplines such as environmental engineering, material science, and data analytics constrains the ability to address the complexity of the built environment. Consequently, few programs explicitly incorporate circular economy frameworks, leaving graduates underprepared for emerging professional demands.

Within this context, the architectural design studio offers significant transformative potential. As a microcosm of professional practice, the studio supports experiential, project-based, and collaborative learning. Integrating circular economy principles into studio teaching enables students to engage with strategies such as adaptive reuse, design for disassembly, and material lifecycle assessment through applied experimentation and critical reflection. Embedding these approaches within the studio environment, where design, making, and evaluation intersect, can foster the competencies required for a transition toward a regenerative and circular built environment.

These opportunities highlight the need to rethink not only curricular content but also pedagogical approaches. Advancing from fragmented sustainability topics toward an integrated, systems-oriented framework requires innovative teaching methods, interdisciplinary collaboration, and new assessment models. The following section therefore examines emerging pedagogical strategies for incorporating circular economy principles into architectural education.

4 Methodology

Building on the conceptual background discussed above, the study examines how CE principles are integrated into architectural education through a literature review, analysis of existing curricula, and exploration of educational case studies. The literature review was conducted across academic databases, Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect, focusing on publications from 2020 to 2025 that address the incorporation of circularity and circular economy strategies in architectural education.

The collected materials were analyzed using an analytical framework structured around the five key dimensions of: pedagogical approaches, competencies, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and institutional context. Based on these insights, the study proposes a conceptual framework to guide the integration of circular design thinking and regenerative approaches into architectural pedagogy, preparing future professionals to contribute effectively to a circular built environment.

5 Results

Below is a structured, comparative analysis of research articles using an analytical framework with five thematic categories: (1) pedagogical approaches, (2) targeted competencies, (3) teaching methods, (4) assessment strategies, and (5) institutional contexts. The analysis is presented in Table 1.

5.1 Pedagogical Approaches

Research literature stresses the need for a paradigmatic shift in architectural pedagogy. Integration of CE principles should move from a peripheral or elective status to a transversal, system-oriented orientation that reshapes course aims, studio pedagogy, and stakeholder relations (Ioannou & Klein, 2022; Vergani et al, 2024). Authors converge on several overlapping pedagogical orientations.

First, studio-centered, experiential learning is widely advocated. Patil, Butt, Rigoni, and Salama (2025) propose embedding CE into project-based studios using their 'Circular Commons Framework' to translate theory into practice through industry collaboration and real-world cases. Scott and Seddiki (2025) position a studio-centered, case-based reasoning approach grounded in scaffolded constructivism; they operationalize CE via six assessable criteria (design, materials, construction, life-cycle, disassembly, and biodiversity) to make sustainability legible in standard studio reviews. Vrontissi, Rinke, and Vandyck (2023) and the ERASMUS+ Crafting Circularity consortium push the didactic value of design-and-build workshops and "learning-through-making," arguing that hands-on fabrication, material harvesting, and full-scale mock-ups promote authentic learning about modularity, disassembly, and the logistical frictions of circular supply chains.

Second, situated and transdisciplinary learning is emphasized. Wandl, Balz, Qu, Furlan, Arciniegas & Hackauf, (2019) and the REPAiR project describe Peri-Urban Living Labs (PULLs) and collaborative studios where students engage communities and stakeholders, linking CE to urban metabolism and territorial design. Such situated labs are promoted as venues in which socio-spatial resource flows and governance constraints become legible and actionable (Wandl et al., 2019; Gajanayake & Iyer-Raniga, 2025).

Third, design-by-research and scenario-based learning feature as mechanisms for integrating theory and practice. Vergani et al. (2024) recommend design-by-research and scenario exercises (including village-scale projects) and identify gamification/serious games as effective pedagogies for systems thinking. Dabaieh and Lundgren (2025) demonstrate a pilot course that combines interdisciplinary project work with LCA/LCC, blurring research and design as an educational stance.

Fourth, lifelong learning and diversified formats are foregrounded by TU Delft's CBE Hub (Ioannou & Klein, 2022). The Hub advocates MOOCs, professional education, and short collaborative formats to disseminate technical knowledge while cultivating imaginaries of circular futures across professions and publics. This framing relocates universities as experimental safe spaces that co-produce knowledge with non-academic actors.

Fifth, teacher and tutor development is identified as essential: multiple authors stress that educators must, themselves be trained in CE frameworks, tools, and policy contexts to properly mentor students (Wandl et al., 2019; Vergani et al., 2024; Ioannou & Klein, 2022). Tiippana-Usvasalo et al. (2023) extend this to teacher-led, bottom-up rollouts across all education levels.

Finally, authors highlight institution-level pedagogical strategies, from curriculum mainstreaming to creation of "circular programs" that reuse student outputs (McGinley & Karlshøj, 2022), positioning pedagogy not as an isolated course matter but as an institutional trajectory requiring scaffolding across bachelor, master, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) tiers (Vergani et al., 2024; McGinley & Karlshøj, 2022).

5.2 Targeted Competencies

The literature defines multi-dimensional competency sets for implementing CE in the built environment, grouped into technical, digital/analytical, systemic, and socio-professional domains. Technical skills, such as LCA, design for disassembly, adaptive reuse, modular systems, industrial symbiosis, and material passports, are core, but must be embedded in studio practice rather than isolated in lectures to ensure practical integration (Çolakoğlu et al., 2023; Ryńska, 2020; Vrontissi et al., 2023). Digital competencies, including BIM, GIS, parametric design, AR/VR, IoT, big data, and AI-enabled tools, support material traceability, predictive modeling, and data-driven decision-making, reinforcing LCA literacy and cradle-to-cradle thinking (Çolakoğlu et al., 2023; Patil et al., 2025; Tabrizi et al., 2023). Systemic competencies emphasize systems thinking, urban metabolism, multi-scalar reasoning,

and scenario planning to understand lifecycle impacts across supply chains and urban contexts (Wandl et al., 2019; Vergani et al., 2024; Campbell et al., 2024). Socio-professional skills, including stakeholder engagement, participatory processes, policy literacy, and ethical reasoning—are equally critical, as CE practice requires collaboration with diverse actors beyond traditional architectural roles (Ioannou & Klein, 2022; Durán-Navarrete et al., 2024), alongside reflective and research-based practices that foster critical thinking, collaboration, and awareness of trade-offs in circular design processes (Vrontissi et al., 2023).

5.3 Teaching Methods

The literature identifies a range of teaching methods that support CE competency formation, with the design studio positioned as a central "living laboratory" integrating literature review, fieldwork, stakeholder engagement, and design development grounded in frameworks such as the 10R principles, as seen in projects like proximate briefs in Aberdeenshire and the "Circular Village" master level studio in Türkiye (Scott & Seddiki, 2025; Çolakoğlu et al., 2023). Complementary approaches include living labs and place-based projects that connect students with real contexts and external actors (Wandl et al., 2019; Gajanayake & Iyer-Raniga, 2025), and design-build or learning-by-making models using reclaimed materials, prototyping, and full-scale mock-ups to develop practical skills and expose logistical challenges (Vrontissi et al., 2023). Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaborations across fields such as engineering, management, and policy further reflect real-world CE complexity (Vergani et al., 2024; Salas et al., 2021; Bakırloğlu et al., 2021), while digital tools, including BIM, LCA platforms, and parametric modeling, enable evidence-based design and analysis of material flows (Patil et al., 2025; Dabaieh & Lundgren, 2025). Additional methods include gamification and scenario-based learning to support systems thinking (Vergani et al., 2024), workshops, field trips, and stakeholder co-production to address real constraints (Ryńska, 2020; Ioannou & Klein, 2022), and lifelong learning formats such as MOOCs and professional education programs that extend CE knowledge beyond academia and align it with practice and policy (Ioannou & Klein, 2022).

5.4 Assessment Strategies

Assessment remains one of the most contested and underdeveloped areas in CE education, combining emerging innovations with persistent gaps. Approaches include rubric-based studio assessment with explicit CE criteria. These include: six-dimensional frameworks covering design, materials, construction, life cycle, disassembly, and biodiversity, as well as metrics like disassembly potential, material inventories, and embodied carbon (Scott & Seddiki, 2025; Ryńska, 2020; Vrontissi et al., 2023). Evidence-based deliverables (e.g., LCA reports, adaptability diagrams, assembly sequences, and mock-ups) shift evaluation toward traceability and measurable

circular performance (Vrontissi et al., 2023; Dabaieh & Lundgren, 2025), while mixed-method models combine quantitative analysis with reflective writing and stakeholder-informed evaluations (Dabaieh & Lundgren, 2025; Çolakoğlu et al., 2023). Living labs and external collaborations introduce multi-actor assessment formats such as juries, stakeholder scoring, and public reviews (Wandl et al., 2019; Gajanayake & Iyer-Raniga, 2025), alongside portfolio-based and reflective methods capturing iterative learning and ethical reasoning (Kirchherr & Piscicelli, 2019). On a broader scale, programmatic and formative evaluation, exemplified by Finland's Sitra initiative and TU Delft relies on iterative feedback, surveys, and professional alignment rather than single-point exams (Tiippana-Usvasalo et al. 2023; Ioannou & Klein, 2022). Despite these developments, key challenges persist, including the lack of standardized benchmarks, limited integration of CE indicators into formal curricula, and insufficient assessment of social and digital competencies, prompting calls for competency-based frameworks aligned with accreditation and quality assurance systems (Patil et al., 2025; Faitani et al., 2025; Galle et al., 2022; Khajuria, 2025).

5.5 Institutional Contexts

Institutional configurations and external ecosystems play a key role in shaping circular economy (CE) uptake in architectural education, with diverse models including policy-led national roadmaps, NGO-driven pilots, and

STEM/industry-aligned programs across contexts such as the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands (TU Delft), Türkiye (Çolakoğlu et al., 2023), Poland (WUT), Argentina (Faitani et al., 2025), Australia (Gajanayake & Iyer-Raniga, 2025), and Latin America (Salas et al., 2021). Fragmented approaches are evident, for example in Sweden where CE is embedded within existing curricula but lacks systemic integration, limiting transversal skills (Vergani et al., 2024), while Finland's Sitra roadmap demonstrates how coordinated national policy, cross-sector funding, and lifelong learning strategies can accelerate capacity building (Tiippana-Usvasalo et al., 2023). Similarly, Latin American HEIs act as cultural change agents linking teaching, research, and local practice (Salas et al., 2021). Transformative models such as TU Delft's CBE Hub position universities as knowledge brokers through MOOCs, professional education, and collaborative platforms (Ioannou & Klein, 2022), while partnerships with industry, municipalities, and NGOs, seen in WUT studios and TU Delft regional initiatives enhance realism and expose students to practical constraints (Ryńska, 2020; Ioannou & Klein, 2022). Additionally, EU-funded and networked initiatives (e.g., ERASMUS+ Crafting Circularity, H2020 REPAIR) enable living labs and cross-national exchange beyond the capacity of single institutions (Vrontissi et al., 2023; Wandl et al., 2019), though accreditation frameworks, employability narratives, and uneven access to material labs, digital tools, and staff expertise continue to shape and often limit full CE integration (Campbell et al., 2024; Schiano-Phan & Soares Gonçalves, 2022).

Table 1 Analysis of CE in Architectural Education based on a structured framework. Source: Author, 2026.

Article	Pedagogical Approaches	Targeted Competencies	Teaching Methods	Assessment Strategies	Institutional Contexts
Ab Hamid et al. (2024)	Project-based, student-centered, constructivist, experiential	Project-based learning, active learning, problem-based tasks, serious games, case studies	Critical & creative thinking, LCA application, collaboration	Project deliverables, group work, reflective tasks	Global review of CE teaching
Campbell, Niblock, Flood, & Lappin (2024)	Studio-based, constructivist, embodied learning; systems thinking	Linked design projects across scales; expert workshops; live-build 1:1 making; precedent-based learning; critiques; peer feedback	Circular design literacy; systems thinking; design for disassembly; collaboration; cost awareness	Authentic assessment via critiques and presentations; teacher observations; marks logged	UK architecture program
Çolakoğlu et al. (2023)	Design-by-research; studio with digital integration	CE 10R strategies, digital fluency, socio-cultural sensitivity	Fieldwork, project-based learning, stakeholder engagement, BIM/GIS, AR/IoT	Artifact-based evaluation, 10R mapping	Istanbul Technical University, M.Arch studio with municipal links
Dabaieh and Lundgren (2025)	Interdisciplinary, project-based; design + analytics	Circular design, LCA/LCC, critical reflection	Lectures, workshops, site visits, modular shelter project	LCA/LCC reports, reflective essays, group presentations	Malmö University, undergrad program

Article	Pedagogical Approaches	Targeted Competencies	Teaching Methods	Assessment Strategies	Institutional Contexts
Duran-Navarrete et al. (2024)	Experience-based, design-integrated Design-studio approach; technology-mediated	BIM modeling, material circularity, reuse/recycle design BIM/Revit modeling, perception surveys, scenario comparison BIM-enabled circular design, material circularity evaluation, policy literacy	Hands-on BIM modeling, BIM-enabled circular design	Circularity scores, CDW reduction metrics Quantitative metrics	Chilean higher education aligned with EU directives
Faitani, Lopez de Munain, Bielsa (2025)	Non-formal, operational learning in a living lab; CE frameworks (ReSOLVE/ DISRUPT) reframed as governance/ operations pedagogy; scenario-based planning	Diagnose-index-compare-scenario cycle; equipment/ power audit; EMIce indicators (renewables, virtualization, automation, efficiency, structural retrofit, governance); future scenario design	CE operations literacy, indicator design, energy-efficiency planning, institutional stewardship, policy awareness, scenario building	Indicator-based benchmarking across time	Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (Argentina)
Gajanayake and Iyer Raniga (2025)	Flexible, context-sensitive, case-based Non-formal, participatory, community-based learning	Conceptual clarity, R-strategies, systemic thinking	Case studies, interactive exercises, co-learning, stakeholder engagement; problem framing; transdisciplinary teamwork	Formative assessments, reflective exercises Diagnostic surveys (conceptual understanding, behaviors); reflections	Global collaboration (RMIT, TERI SAS, AIT, AKSU)
Giannoccaro et al. (2021)	Outcome-based, Bloom's taxonomy; limited active learning	Technical (eco-design, LCA), managerial, analytical; social underrepresented	Lectures, flipped classroom, challenge-based learning	Knowledge checks, project design, application tasks	Italian universities; postgraduate programs
Haase et al. (2024)	Interdisciplinary, collaborative, transdisciplinary	Sustainability governance, CE management, financial modeling, stakeholder engagement	Project-based learning, interdisciplinary teamwork, guest lectures	Simulated board presentations, portfolio evaluation	Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Ioannou & Klein (2022)	Transdisciplinary, lifelong learning; constructivist approach fostering dialogue and communities of practice	Technical + transversal: systems thinking, collaboration, critical reflection; policy literacy	MOOCs for global awareness; ProfEd for sector-specific skills; PCPs for industry-driven learning	Formative assessment via peer feedback, project reviews, no standardized testing	TU Delft
Ioannou, Geldermans, Klein, & Wandl, (2020)	Transformative, systems / complexity-aware pedagogy; Scales-Aspects model; Circular Learning Objectives (CLO); research-and practice-based learning; connectivist ethos and ethical decision-making	Modular curriculum integration (plug-ins, MOOCs/ ProfEd), inter-department studios and living lab exchanges, program-wide alignment to CLOs	Systems thinking, CE vocabulary, multi-scalar reasoning, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration, accountability / ethics in design	CLO-aligned outcomes; evaluation of actionable knowledge and judgment under uncertainty; program-level synthesis across courses	TU Delft Faculty of Architecture & Built Environment; Circular Built Environment Hub

Article	Pedagogical Approaches	Targeted Competencies	Teaching Methods	Assessment Strategies	Institutional Contexts
Khajuria (2025)	CE as transversal, cross-curricular theme, Multi-level (K-12, VET, HE) CE integration, Place-based, policy-informed pedagogy	Systems thinking, Collaboration & problem-solving, Ethical reasoning & sustainability citizenship, Workforce-relevant CE skills in VET/HE	Project-based learning, Place-based and community engagement, Internships & industry partnerships, Micro-credentials and modular CE units	Authentic assessments (projects, portfolios), Competency-based evaluation, Context-specific assignments (e.g., place-based tasks)	National-level education systems (Finland, Greece, Vietnam)
Kirchherr & Piscicelli (2019)	Constructive alignment; problem-based learning; interactivity	CE foundations; eco-design & repair; industrial symbiosis; macro policy & rebound; critical reflection	7 interactive exercises (teardown, EIP simulation, policy design, futures) + 2 excursions; curated readings	In-class presentations with rubrics; module & final evaluations	Utrecht University,
McGinley and Karlshøj (2022)	System-level redesign; circular courses/programs	Process circularization, open BIM, coding for reuse	Multi-course integration, live design, tool development	Course evaluations + C0-C5 circularity rubric	Technical University of Denmark, UG & PG courses
Patil, Butt, Rigoni, & Salama (2025)	Systems-oriented, studio-based CE pedagogy, "Circular Commons" framework integrating technical + socio-cultural dimensions, Experiential, participatory, and transdisciplinary learning	Technical CE literacy (DfD, LCA, material loops), Community engagement & participatory design, Governance, equity, social-cultural competencies, Systems and multi-scalar thinking	Design studios & labs, Live-builds using reclaimed materials, Stakeholder workshops, role-play, systems mapping, Transdisciplinary teamwork with municipalities/NGOs	Combination of qualitative & quantitative evaluation, Use of simple circularity calculators, Peer review + stakeholder feedback, Reflective narratives to connect technical and social dimensions	Architecture schools with limited resources
Pradhananga & Elzomor (2023)	Combination learning (PBL + CMD)	Systems thinking, communication, CE principles	Group projects, concept maps, real-world problems	Pre/post surveys, Wilcoxon test, rubric	Florida International University
Renfors (2024)	Systems-integrative, co-learning with stakeholders	Resource management; systems thinking; circular design/LCA; business models; collaboration	Team-based, case-based, project-based, simulations	Assignments and presentations	European HEIs
Ryńska (2020)	Interdisciplinary studio, client-driven project-based learning (PBL), experiential workshops	Circular design, life-cycle awareness, teamwork	Client kick-offs; site analysis; expert critics; performance simulations	Critiques and client presentations	Warsaw University of Technology (WUT)
Sadowski (2021)	Design studio + RTD	Technical sustainability, LCA, optimization	Expert lectures, iterative design, digital tools	Quantitative indicators, radar charts, surveys	Wrocław University of Science and Technology
Salas, Criollo & Ramirez (2021)	HEIs as cultural change agents; bibliometric + narrative synthesis	CE policy/business literacy; inclusive engagement with informal sectors; technology transfer; localized CE framing	Campus living labs, outreach, frugal innovation, stakeholder co-design	Bibliometric indicators; mapping drivers/barriers; call for evaluating inclusion, rebound, and limits to circularity	Latin America; Brazil-led outputs
Scott & Seddiki (2025)	Studio-centered, project-based and case-based reasoning (CBR); constructivism and scaffolding aligned with Zone of Proximal Development	Systems thinking for circular design; life-cycle and embodied-carbon literacy; design for adaptability/disassembly	Real sites and briefs in coastal Aberdeenshire; iterative project reviews; use of BIM, IES, OneClick LCA; independent study and peer knowledge sharing	Thematic coding of student outputs into six CE criteria (Design, Material, Construction, Life-cycle, Disassembly, Biodiversity); reflective feedback from stakeholders	Undergraduate Architectural Technology program at Robert Gordon University; embedded in UKGBC frameworks and regional needs

Article	Pedagogical Approaches	Targeted Competencies	Teaching Methods	Assessment Strategies	Institutional Contexts
Shooshtarian, Caldera, Ryley, Maqsood, Zaman, & Wong (2022)	Sectoral training taxonomy; program evaluation framework (logic models; staged evaluation)	Waste minimization; resource recovery; site operations & compliance; design for circularity	VET Certificates II-IV; HE courses; CPD by GBCA/ISC; industry platforms (EduPortal, Greenius); government programmes (ecologiQ, SESA, Circular360)	external evaluation, indicators, pilots, accreditation	Australia
Tabrizi, Gocer, Sadrieh, Globa, (2023).	Theoretical, tool-mediated pedagogy using AI (KBS + LLM)	AI tool for LCA-lite (automation, prediction, optimization, visualization); planned short workshops	LCA literacy; cradle-to-cradle thinking; data-driven decision-making; environmental performance optimization	Planned evaluation post-pilot; currently conceptual	University of Sydney
Taraszkiewicz & Taraszkiewicz (2024)	Experiential, NEB-based	Sustainability, social inclusion, aesthetics	Lectures, design exercises, surveys	Qualitative survey analysis	Gdańsk University of Technology
Tiippana-Uusvasalo, et al. (2023).	National curriculum integration; "learning by doing" for teachers; bottom-up teacher-led development; lifelong learning emphasis	CE mindset across society; policy and business model literacy; capacity to identify drivers/barriers; sector-specific CE skills	Country-wide teacher workshops; 21 funded consortia; university lectures	Qualitative analysis of open-ended student responses; programmatic validation via nationwide roll-out steps and iterative feedback	Finland's national CE roadmap (Sitra); UBC & Aalto examples; cross-sector coverage from pre-school to adult education
Trevisan et al. (2025)	Competency-based, multimethod Skills-backward curriculum design; competency-based	Technical, digital, and soft skills for CE Mixed methods: design studios, AR/VR, digital twin labs, data-driven exercises	Lectures + recommended digital labs, industry collaboration	Resilience soft skills (communication, negotiation), digital skills (data analytics, robotics), technical CE skills	European Higher Education & VET
Vergani et al. (2024)	Traditional, discipline-based studio	Technical: LCA, DfD, material reuse; limited transversal skills.	Lectures, limited project work; few participatory workshops or living labs.	Mostly implicit; CE rarely formalized as learning outcomes.	Five HEIs under Swedish Universities of the Built Environment
Vrontissi et al. (2023)	Learning-through-making; availability-based design; design-and-build	Disassembly, adaptability, resource-framed thinking, collaboration	Full-scale mock-ups; site visits; public exhibitions; local studios	Public reviews/exhibitions; reflective critique	ERASMUS+ consortium (5 universities)
Wandl, Balz, Qu, Furlan, Arciniegas, Hackauf (2019)	Situated learning within Living Labs; research-education integration; transdisciplinary studio	Spatial metabolism literacy; ability to model resource flows at multiple scales; collaborative problem framing; eco-innovation design	Workshops on urban metabolism, multi-scale assessment; stakeholder co-reviews	Mid-term and final juries with stakeholders; external surveys rating poster reviews	TU Delft (Faculty of Architecture); Horizon 2020 REPAiR project; Amsterdam Metropolitan Area case with living labs
World Green Building Council (2023)	Experiential and problem-based learning; emphasizes real-world case studies and collaborative design challenges	Technical + socio-economic: circular business models, material passports, stakeholder engagement.	Case-based learning, simulation tools, design studios; promotes industry-academia collaboration.	Suggests performance-based metrics (e.g., circularity indicators) but not formalized academically.	Global network of Green Building Councils

6 Towards a Framework for Circular Design Studios

Building on the comparative analysis in Section 3, this section proposes an integrated framework for embedding CE principles into architectural design studios. This framework proposes Circular Design Studios (CDS) as the core pedagogical engine for embedding CE logics across architectural education, translating systemic, lifecycle-oriented thinking into auditable design practice. A CDS proposes reframing the studio from producing one-off proposals to designing for multiple service lives, future recoverability, and value retention across materials, components, buildings, and urban systems.

6.1 Practical Implications

Across the five thematic areas, the following conclusions and practical implications emerge from the analyzed literature:

1. CE should be embedded as a transversal curricular scaffold – research literature advocates moving CE out of elective silos into vertical and horizontal curricular integration across studios, technical modules, and professional practice. Doing so supports longer-term competency formation and prevents superficial exposure.
2. CE should be operationalized through evidence, tools, and rubrics. To make circular intentions teachable and assessable, studios should require quantifiable evidence, material inventories, LCA outputs, adaptability diagrams, assembly sequences, and use explicit rubrics.
3. The integration of CE should be scaled through situated, networked learning and staff development. Where large grants or national strategies are unavailable, lightweight situated methods, such as structured

stakeholder workshops, mid-semester external reviews, design-and-build intensives, can replicate many living lab benefits. Vertical pathways (micro-credentials, staff development, MOOCs) help build institutional memory and scale CE literacy beyond pilot studios.

These implications also highlight persistent research and practice gaps such as: lack of standardized assessment frameworks, systematic evaluation of social and digital competencies, and institutional strategies for sustaining living labs and cross-faculty collaboration.

6.2 Core Principles

The framework builds upon four interrelated principles that translate CE concepts into pedagogical terms. Each principle aims to cultivate specific competencies and design sensibilities relevant to circularity.

a. Lifecycle Thinking: Students are encouraged to evaluate buildings as dynamic systems that evolve over time rather than as static artifacts. Design projects should incorporate the full material and operational life cycle, from sourcing and assembly to disassembly, reuse, and regeneration. This approach promotes long-term thinking and accountability for design consequences beyond project completion.

b. Material Awareness: Circular design education requires a shift from abstract form-making to material intelligence. Students should engage directly with materials, understanding their origins, transformation processes, and potential for reuse. Incorporating material passports, digital databases, or physical reuse libraries can strengthen this awareness and encourage decisions based on traceability and embodied value.

c. Systems and Feedback Thinking: Circularity demands comprehension of complex interdependencies among design, construction, and urban systems. The studio becomes a space for simulating these interactions through

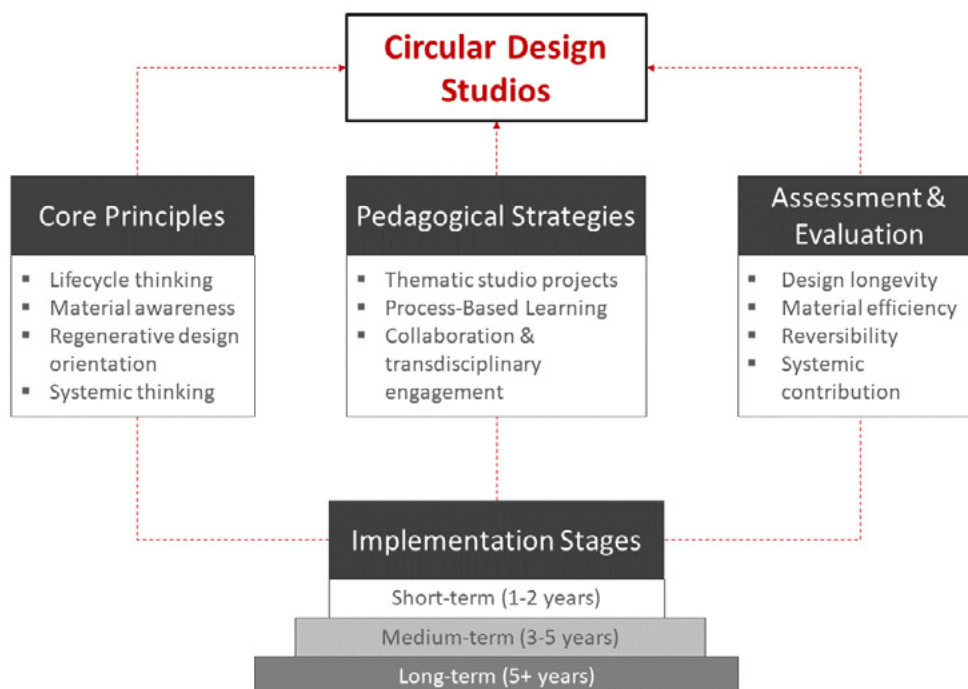


Figure 1 Diagram of a proposed framework for Circular Design Studios. Source: Author, 2026.

interdisciplinary collaboration and digital modeling (e.g., BIM integrated with LCA tools). Students should learn to map resource flows, anticipate feedback loops, and design interventions that minimize waste and energy losses.

d. Regenerative Design Orientation: Beyond minimizing harm, circular design education should foster a regenerative mindset that restores ecological and social systems. Studio projects can incorporate strategies such as designing for biodiversity, ecosystem repair, or social reuse of spaces. This principle expands the scope of circularity toward positive contribution rather than mere efficiency.

6.3 Pedagogical Strategies

To operationalize these principles, the framework integrates circular design into studio teaching through three complementary strategies:

a. Thematic Studio Projects: Studio briefs should be framed around circular challenges such as adaptive reuse, urban mining, or material cycles. For instance, students may redesign an existing structure for disassembly or explore modular housing concepts that enable flexibility and reuse. Real-world contexts and partnerships with local industries can enhance relevance.

b. Process-Based Learning: The design process should be structured to include research, material experimentation, and iterative prototyping. Students should use circular metrics, such as material recovery potential, design adaptability index, or embodied carbon reduction, to guide design decisions.

c. Collaborative and Transdisciplinary Engagement: Circularity requires breaking disciplinary silos. Studios can integrate inputs from engineering, environmental sciences, or business students to explore life-cycle implications and economic models. Collaboration fosters systems thinking and aligns educational practices with real-world circular construction processes.

6.4 Assessment and Evaluation

To reinforce learning outcomes, evaluation criteria should evolve from purely formal or representational qualities toward circular performance indicators. These may include:

- Design longevity (capacity for adaptation and reuse)
- Material efficiency (use of reclaimed or low-impact resources)
- Reversibility (ease of disassembly or reconfiguration)
- Systemic contribution (integration with local material and energy cycles)

Assessment can combine qualitative reflection (design narratives) with quantitative analysis (LCA metrics or circularity indices). This dual approach can foster critical thinking while maintaining creative freedom.

6.5 Implementation Roadmap

Integrating circularity into architectural education requires institutional support and gradual adaptation. The proposed framework suggests gradual implementation in the following stages:

Table 2 Proposed CE implementation Roadmap.
Source: Author, 2026.

Phase	Focus	Actions
Short-term (1–2 years)	Pilot studios and educator training	Development of elective or experimental studios focused on circular design; providing workshops on CE principles for teaching staff.
Medium-term (3–5 years)	Curriculum integration and resource development	Embedding CE themes across design levels; establishing digital/material reuse databases; creating interdepartmental collaborations.
Long-term (5+ years)	Institutional transformation	Aligning accreditation standards with CE competencies; formation of industry partnerships for circular construction research and practice.

This approach allows gradual cultural change within schools while building educator capacity and institutional infrastructure.

6.6 Expected Learning Outcomes

By implementing this framework, students are expected to develop:

- Systemic and lifecycle awareness – understanding the interrelations of materials, design decisions, and environmental impacts.
- Material literacy – ability to select, evaluate, and design with circular materials.
- Adaptive design competences – capacity to create flexible, reversible, and regenerative architectural solutions.
- Collaborative problem-solving – experience working across disciplines and with real stakeholders.

These competencies position graduates to act as agents of circular transition in professional and societal contexts.

6.7 Contribution of the Framework

By embedding circular principles into design pedagogy, architectural education can move beyond sustainability rhetoric toward actionable frameworks that prepare future architects to design for a regenerative and circular future. The proposed framework contributes to the discourse on architectural education by:

- Providing a structured pedagogical model that connects CE theory with studio practice.
- Offering transferable strategies adaptable to different institutional contexts.
- Highlighting the design studio's transformative potential as a testbed for systemic change in the built environment.

7 Conclusion

The transition toward a circular built environment necessitates a fundamental transformation of architectural education, extending beyond incremental sustainability measures to embrace systemic, lifecycle-oriented, and regenerative modes of design. This study demonstrates that, while circular economy principles are increasingly prominent within policy agendas and professional practice, their integration into architectural curricula remains limited, inconsistent, or reliant on isolated pilot initiatives. Through a review of pedagogical literature and comparative evaluation of emerging models, this paper identifies the need for cohesive approaches that align CE competencies, studio methodologies, and institutional structures.

The proposed Circular Design Studio (CDS) framework responds to this need by positioning the design studio as the central engine for cultivating material literacy, systems thinking, evidence-based decision-making, and adaptive design competences. By embedding lifecycle thinking, material awareness, feedback loops, and regenerative design orientation into iterative studio processes, the CDS model translates abstract circular principles into auditable design practices. It also foregrounds the importance of assessment strategies

that integrate qualitative reflection with quantitative performance indicators, ensuring that circularity is not reduced to rhetorical intentions but becomes measurable and comparable across contexts.

At the institutional level, the study emphasizes the importance of multi-scalar strategies, ranging from staff development and micro-credentials to cross-department collaborations and industry partnerships, to sustain curricular transformation over time. Implementing CE principles requires not only pedagogical innovation but also organizational alignment, resource investment, and long-term cultural change within architectural schools.

By providing a structured and adaptable framework, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on how architectural education can equip future practitioners to act as resource stewards and agents of systemic change. Future work should focus on empirical validation of the proposed rubrics across diverse educational settings, alignment with accreditation bodies, and the development of feedback mechanisms that link design education with post-occupancy and material-flow outcomes. Ultimately, embedding circularity within architectural pedagogy offers a pathway not only toward minimizing environmental impacts but also toward fostering regenerative, resilient, and equitable built environments for future generations.

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Unity without Uniformity: A Comparative Study of the Great Mosque of Xi'an and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko

Jedinstvo bez uniformnosti:
Komparativna studija Velike džamije u Xi'anu i Tabačke džamije u Visokom

Chen Shen¹, Melika Konjicanin²

1: Department of Architecture, ETHz, Switzerland
shen@arch.ethz.ch | orcid.org/0009-0002-6871-8003

2: Department of Architecture, ETHz, Switzerland
konjicanin@arch.ethz.ch | orcid.org/0009-0004-5756-9596

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Abstract This article presents a comparative architectural and urban analysis of mosque traditions in China and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It argues that mosques in these two regions should not be interpreted as peripheral or simplified variations of a presumed Middle Eastern archetype, but as historically grounded Islamic spatial traditions shaped by regional adaptation, socio-political negotiation, and material translation. The paper shifts the discussion from a form-based definition of the mosque to a focus on ritual and spatial understandings of mosque architecture. Using selected case studies—the Huajue Lane Great Mosque in Xi'an and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko—the article examines dimensions of construction, material systems, spatial sequences, orientation strategies, and urban embedding. Drawing on the principles of critical regionalism, the analysis demonstrates that Chinese and Bosnian mosques each reconfigure Islamic religious space through distinctive local traditions, including timber or masonry construction cultures, climate adaptations, and institutional histories. By bridging two contexts, the paper contributes to a decentralized historiography of Islamic architecture and advocates a broader framework for conceptualizing the mosque as a plural, regionally produced, and historically evolving architectural form.

Keywords critical regionalism; comparative study; mosque architecture; the Great Mosque of Xi'an; the Tabačka Mosque.

Sažetak Ovaj rad predstavlja komparativnu arhitektonsku i urbanističku analizu tradicije džamija u Kini i Bosni i Hercegovini. Autori zastupaju tezu da se džamije u ovim regijama ne bi trebale interpretirati kao periferne ili pojednostavljene varijacije pretpostavljenog bliskoistočnog arhetipa, već kao historijski utemeljene islamske prostorne tradicije oblikovane regionalnom adaptacijom, društveno-političkim pregovaranjem i transformacijom izvornih arhitektonskih formi i materijala. Rad preusmjerava fokus sa definicije džamije zasnovane isključivo na formi ka razumijevanju njenog ritualnog i prostornog karaktera. Kroz odabrane studije slučaja „Huajue Lane Velike džamije” u Xi'anu i „Tabačke džamije” u Visokom istraživački rad ispituje dimenzije konstrukcije, sisteme materijala, prostorne sekvence, strategije orijentacije i urbanu integraciju. Oslanjajući se na principe kritičkog regionalizma, analiza pokazuje da kineske i bosanskohercegovačke džamije oblikuju islamski sakralni prostor kroz prepoznatljive lokalne tradicije, uključujući kulture građenja u drvetu ili zidanim konstrukcijama, prilagodbu klimatskim uslovima i specifične institucionalne historije. Povezujući ova dva konteksta, rad doprinosi decentralizovanoj historiografiji islamske arhitekture te zagovara širi okvir za konceptualizaciju džamije kao pluralne, regionalno oblikovane i historijski promjenjive arhitektonske forme.

Ključne riječi kritički regionalizam; komparativna studija; arhitektura džamije; Velika džamija u Xi'anu; Tabačka džamija.

1 Introduction

The discussion of Islamic architecture has historically been framed within an implicit hierarchy centered on canonical forms (Cevik, 2023). Architectural historians often treat the Arabian Peninsula as both the spiritual and formal origin of the mosque typology, and the monumental forms, most notably the domed prayer hall and the minaret, are often researched and compared as the normative reference. Within this analytical paradigm, mosque architecture, as the most representative form of Islamic architecture, is evaluated in terms of its proximity to the assumed canonical model, and variation is interpreted as deviation or adaptation. However, this center-periphery framework simplifies the historical development of non-Middle Eastern mosque architecture and obscures the spatial, structural, and material plurality of the global Islamic architectural.

This study proposes a critical regionalist perspective to address this problem and challenges the prevailing normative-variational analytical framework. Critical regionalism, as articulated by Kenneth Frampton, emphasizes the mediation between universal systems and local material cultures. Rather than privileging stylistic resemblance, it shifted attention to the logic of construction, spatial sequencing, and tectonic articulation. This study, therefore, addresses three research questions: 1) What structural and spatial differences characterize traditional Chinese and Bosnian and Herzegovinian Mosques? 2) How do regional construction traditions mediate the architectural realization of shared Islamic ritual principles? 3) In what ways can a critical regionalist framework reinterpret mosque architecture beyond a center-periphery framework?

To examine this, the study places the Huajue Lane Great Mosque in Xi'an, China and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina in comparative dialogue. It argues that both mosques should not be regarded as peripheral variants of the Middle Eastern Islamic architectural archetype, but as regionally specific architectural systems shaped by distinct tectonic and socio-cultural traditions. Through the critical regionalist perspective, mosque architecture is reconsidered as a decentralized spatial framework capable of inhabiting multiple tectonic worlds. These two regions, although geographically distinct, are both significant nodes in the spread history of the Islamic world. Historical Chinese mosques often adopt a timber post-and-beam structure system and courtyard-based spatial sequences from traditional Chinese architectural culture, and the qibla orientation is accommodated through the axial reconfiguration. This context facilitated a shift toward Ottoman architectural expression, where masonry and timber construction, centralized prayer halls, and slender minarets became standardized symbols of Islamic institutional identity in the region.

Applied to the study of mosque architecture, this lens shifts the question from whether a mosque resembles an assumed archetype to how Islamic ritual is structurally embedded within a given tectonic environment. This research is organized as follows. Section 2 outlines the

theoretical framework grounded in critical regionalism and tectonic analysis. Section 3 develops the comparative analytical research framework for case studies. Section 4 discusses the Huajue Lane Great Mosque in Xi'an. Section 5 analyzes the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko. In section 6, the two cases are compared, and section 7 concludes with an outlook that redefines mosque architecture as a decentralized, adaptable system.

2 Universality and Mediation: Critical Regionalism in the Study of Mosque Architecture

2.1 Typological Dominance in Mosque Historiography

The historiography of mosque architecture has largely relied on typological and chronological classification. The foundational surveys identify dominant spatial configurations—such as hypostyle halls, four-iwan planning, and centralized domed structures—as primary categories through which mosque architecture is organized and compared (Bloom & Blair, 2009; Hillenbrand, 1994). These typologies have provided indispensable descriptive clarity and historical mapping across the Islamic world.

However, typological analysis often privileges visual forms, such as domes, minarets, and façades, as the primary indicators of architectural identity (Hillenbrand, 1994). And such emphasis tends to naturalize certain regional developments, especially those associated with the central Islamic lands and the Ottoman or Safavid empires, as normative reference points. Architectural variation in other regions is often interpreted through deviation, adaptation, or diffusion from these perceived centers.

Recent scholarship has problematized this canonical framing. Necipoğlu argues that the category of Islamic art emerged within specific historiographical constructions that privilege imperial and courtly production, and emphasizes that this category should be interrogated alongside inherited narratives that privilege canonical lineages (Junod et al., 2013, pp. 57–76). Flood similarly critiques the linear and geographically centralized narrative that obscures the multiplicity of architectural practices across the Islamic world (Mansfield, 2014, pp. 31–53). Yet even with the revisionist lens, academic analysis often remains at the level of formal variation. While diversity is acknowledged, the mechanism through which invariant ritual principles are materially embedded within regionally distinct construction systems remains insufficiently theorized. The focus on typology thus risks overlooking the tectonic dimensions of mosque architecture, specifically, those forms of structural articulation through which ritual order is stabilized in different material cultures.

A shift from typology to tectonics is therefore necessary, requiring not only theoretical repositioning but also empirical demonstration. The critique of canonical mosque historiography should be examined through cases that expose the limits of formal classification.

2.2 Critical Regionalism and the Problem of Uniformity

Critical regionalism emerged as a theoretical response to the homogenizing tendencies of late-twentieth-century global modernism in architecture discourse. First articulated by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, this theory was subsequently elaborated by Kenneth Frampton, who argued that the core claim of architecture is mediation, which should negotiate between universal civilizational forces and territorial conditions rather than a return to vernacular nostalgia (Docherty, 2016; Frampton, 1993, pp. 268–280; Tzonis & Lefaivre, 2016, pp. 123–130). In Frampton's formulation, tectonics is the privileged medium of this mediation, which should not be understood as a synonym for structural efficiency but as a tectonic expression of architecture, focusing on structural mode, material assembly, and spatial sequencing, producing architectural presence (Frampton, 1993, p. 276).

Although developed within modern architectural discourse, critical regionalism is applicable to traditional architectures shaped by transregional systems. Mosque architecture offers a productive research terrain because it is structured by a transregional religious order yet realized through locally specific construction cultures. Mosque historiography often defaults to what Frampton characterizes as a split between optimized “universal technique” and a compensatory scenographic surface, a condition that encourages reading architecture through typological images rather than through constructive logic. A tectonic reading resists this tendency by treating architecture as a poetics of construction, where meanings are produced through the interplay of topos, typos, and tectonics, rather than through universal formal discourse. Mosque architecture exemplifies this condition—Islam establishes shared ritual requirements such as orientation toward Mecca and hierarchical prayer organizations (Petersen, 1999), yet as Grabar argues, the mosque developed as a “standard with variations,” a type constituted by functional needs and symbolic elements rather than a predetermined or fixed architectural form (Grabar, 1973, p. 40,150). The architectural manifestation of these ritual requirements is thus inevitably mediated through local construction cultures. On this basis, critical regionalism is mobilized here not as an abstract interpretive stance but as an operational comparative method. The mechanism of mediation can be specified only by comparing mosques that share ritual invariants but differ radically in tectonic culture.

3 Methodology: Comparative Design and Analytical Framework

3.1 Case Selection as Method: China and Bosnia and Herzegovina in a Most-Different Systems Design

Chinese and Bosnian and Herzegovinian mosques offer a controlled setting for comparative analysis. The study chooses Huajue Lane Great Mosque in Xi'an, China

(Figure 1), and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 2) as the main research sites. In both regions, mosque architecture developed within mature, highly differentiated construction traditions—timber post-and-beam systems in China and composite masonry and timber-framed systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina—while accommodating the same invariant ritual principles of orientation and congregational organization (Steinhardt, 2018). This combination produces a very different system configuration, in which the ritual problems are held constant while the tectonic and material presentations vary.

Methodologically, this contrast allows the study to specify mediation as a constructive process rather than treating regional difference as stylistic variation. The analytical aim is not to rank the two traditions against each other, but to examine how universal ritual order is materially stabilized through divergent structural logic.

The tectonic divergence and shared liturgical structure make the two cases suitable for examining how universal Islamic ritual is materially translated into regionally specific architectural systems. By placing these two cases within a shared framework, the study operationalizes critical regionalism not as an abstract theory but as a comparative method that decenters typological hierarchies and foregrounds tectonic mediation.

3.2 Comparative Strategy and Research Framework

This study operationalizes critical regionalism through a comparative analytical framework that treats ritual invariants as constant and tectonic mediation as the primary variable. The comparison holds qibla orientation and the spatial organization of congregational prayer constant, while examining how each case stabilizes these requirements through distinct construction cultures and urban contexts. To ensure comparability, both the Huajue Lane Great Mosque of Xi'an and the Tabačka Mosque are analyzed using four shared dimensions. First, the structural system analysis examines the dominant load-bearing structural mode and material assembly, and assesses how structural logic constrains spatial form. Second, the spatial sequencing analysis examines approach, thresholds, and hierarchical transitions from public access to the prayer hall, focusing on how spirituality is staged through movement and enclosure. Third, the orientation strategy investigates how qibla alignment is negotiated relative to the site and urban grids, distinguishing between direct alignment, compound rotation, and localized internal correction and identifying architectural markers and prayer-line geometry. Fourth, the urban embedding situates the mosque within the urban context by examining its access routes, street adjacencies, and, most importantly, its associated institutions. These dimensions replace the purely typological study of Mosque architecture with a replicable protocol for specifying how a shared ritual order is materially translated into regionally distinct architectures, and thereby foregrounding tectonic mediation rather than canonical form. The discussion section extends this framework by interpreting these dimensions through the socio-political context and phenomenological experience.



Figure 1 Site map, Huajue Lane Great Mosque of Xi'an. Source: Authors, 2026.



Figure 2 Site map, the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko. Source: Authors, 2026.

4 The Great Mosque in Xi'an: Ritual Invariants Stabilized through a Timber-Courtyard System

4.1 Historical and Urban Context of the Great Mosque of Xi'an

Islam entered China through a long process of contact rather than a single founding moment. Several studies treat the Tang period as the key starting point, because diplomatic contact and merchant mobility created stable Muslim presences in ancient Chinese cities (Shi, 2023, p. 16; Xu, 2022, pp. 12–13). There were two main transmission corridors—one followed the overland Silk Road into Chang'an, the current Xi'an, and another followed the maritime spice route into southeastern port cities (Tang & Sun, 2010).

Against this background, the Great Mosque of Xi'an, also known as Huajue Lane Mosque, is a strategic inland case. Xi'an's historical identity as Chang'an matters here, not only because of its political position as the capital of the Tang dynasty, but also because of its economically important role in overland trade, and scholars often treat this city as a key inland anchor for the institutionalization of Islam in northwestern China. The Great Mosque of Xi'an is located in the historic Muslim residential area near the Drum Tower, and it remains embedded in a dense urban area of lanes and shops rather than standing as an isolated monument. Unlike Xi'an's original north-to-south layout, this mosque was built on a narrow plot measuring about 47.6 meters wide and 245.7 meters long, which features an enclosed area with five courtyards arranged along a very long east-to-west axis, with the mihrab located at the western end.

The chronological research on the Great Mosque of Xi'an is also important for framing later analysis, because it shows how “origins” and “presents” diverge. Before the Great Mosque of Xi'an, a religious complex named Tanmingsi was constructed on the site in 742, and later was rebuilt as a mosque between 1260 and 1263. 1392 marked the start point of a major construction episode that finally became the well-known mosque discussed in this paper (Steinhardt, 2018, p. 121). Chinese scholars conclude that there were twelve major construction and restoration campaigns during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and explained how repeated rebuilding progressively produced the compound's layered courtyard system (Song et al., 2022). This evidence supports the analytical stance that the Great Mosque of Xi'an should be treated less as a single-period construction and more as an accumulated tectonic and spatial system—one that stabilized Islamic ritual practice through successive architectural adjustments within a Chinese local construction culture.

4.2 Structural System and Material Grammar

The Great Mosque of Xi'an is fundamentally a timber-framed compound, the most used structural system in China, and this compound uses blue-brick enclosure walls to define the precinct boundary. The mosque architecture, therefore, combines a light skeletal frame with a heavy perimeter envelope, in which the timber frame carries the primary structural load, while the brick wall primarily stabilizes the edge conditions and produces an inward spatial field. This combination establishes a material grammar that differs from that of a masonry mosque envelope, but it still supports Islamic ritual space.

The timber system also produces a repeatable modular logic across the compound. The compound has multiple halls, pavilions, and gateways as units, which are distributed along a long axial sequence rather than concentrated in a single volume. The prayer hall demonstrates how the timber grammar scales up when the ritual activities demand a large space. The prayer hall of the Great Mosque of Xi'an in the fifth courtyard, with seven bays in width and nine bays in depth, adopts a “convex” (凸字形) plan with an articulated sequence of platforms and interior parts. The hall can accommodate almost a thousand worshippers, demonstrating that the timber system is not limited to small-scale spaces. The roof systems, as shown in Figure 3, enable an enlarged timber space without producing a single over-dominant mass. The prayer hall uses a “linked-roof” (勾搭连) configuration, in which multiple roof sections are connected while the interior spaces remain a single continuous space. This connected roof makes the prayer hall hierarchically distinct from other prayer spaces in the compound and can also guide attention to the most important ritual space at the end of the sequence.

The research on the structural system and material grammar of the Great Mosque of Xi'an, therefore, frames tectonic expression as more than structural efficiency, which at the same time supports the next subsection's discussion because the same timber-brick system also enables the long threshold sequence that gradually converts the everyday approach into a ritual space.

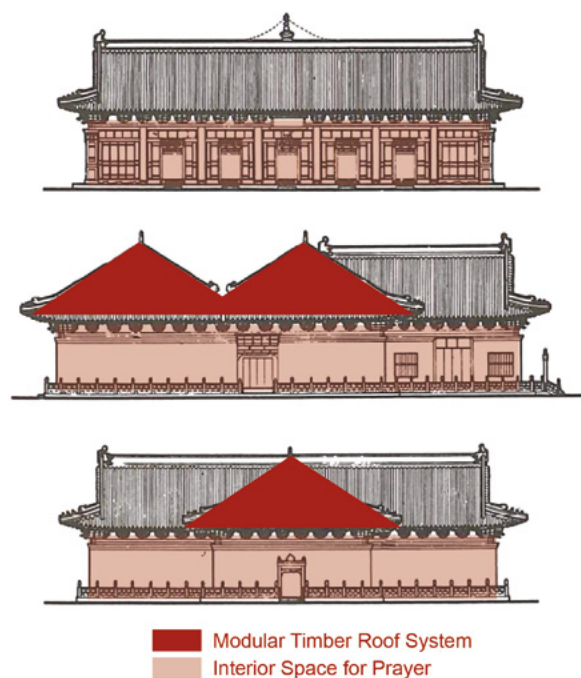


Figure 3 Modular timber roof system. Diagram reproduced by authors, 2026. Source: Zhang, 1982

4.3 Spatial Sequencing and Threshold Logic

The Great Mosque of Xi'an establishes a ceremonial environment by organizing a series of architectural elements in a continuous sequence (Figure 4). The site comprises five rectangular courtyards aligned along an east-west axis, with walls and gate structures functioning as thresholds rather than simple facades, thereby delineating each courtyard. The mosque uses the axis to stage a calibrated transition from everyday life to ritual interior.

The first courtyard begins with the Wall of Mirrors (照壁) and a tall Wooden Pailou (木牌楼), which together create a defined entrance space that elevates ordinary urban activities to a more controlled and ceremonial space. Wujian Lou (五间楼), the five-bay building, serves as the primary gate, signaling the entrance of the Mosque. After this building, the second courtyard then tightens the moral and institutional register through a central Stone Paifang (石牌坊), the Stone Gateway, inscribed “天监在兹” which means “heaven keeps watch here”. The second courtyard was historically used as a space for gathering and cleaning before entering the subsequent space. The third courtyard serves as a transition from an outward-facing passage to an internal religious area, designated for daily activities and preparations before prayer. At the entrance is Chixiu Dian (敕修殿), and at the courtyard's core is Shengxin Lou (省心楼), the minaret of the Great Mosque of Xi'an, which is a three-story octagonal structure constructed in the traditional Chinese wooden style and is notably lower than the towering minarets of the Middle Eastern mosques. The fourth courtyard intensifies the transition from preparation of prayer by combining directional clarity

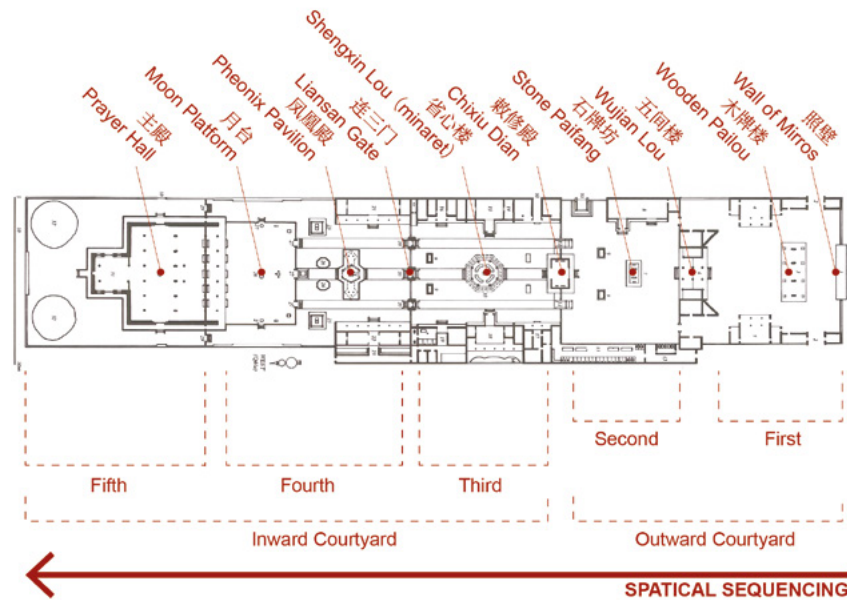


Figure 4 Spatial sequencing of the Great Mosque of Xi'an. Diagram reproduced by authors, 2026. Source: Liu, 2011.

with controlled sensory compression. The compound places Liansan Gate (连三门) at the threshold between the third and fourth courtyards, and it frames the next movement as a short yet deliberate approach toward the ritual core—the Phoenix Pavilion (凤凰亭), also known as Yizhen Pavilion (一真亭)—before the final ascent. The Phoenix Pavilion's hybrid architectural form, which fuses the logic of a wooden paifang with that of a pavilion, creates a visible pause point in the sequence and signals that the fourth courtyard is a space approaching an event place. The courtyard also ensures the ritual tightening through its internal paths and landscape density. The spatial system here offers three direct routes leading to the Moon Platform (月台), and the condensed planting reinforces a controlled corridor-like path to the fifth courtyard rather than an open-courtyard wandering. The sequence in the fourth courtyard starts with the final gate, the Liansan Men, and then arrives at the Moon Platform. The fourth courtyard completes the transition by shifting the body onto an elevated base, the Moon Platform, and fixing attention to the prayer hall as the spatial and ritual terminus. The raised platform does not serve as a decorative stage but as a tectonic device that protects the timber prayer

hall from dampness and rainwater splashing. It also creates a measured separation between the courtyard ground and the final prayer space. At this point, the courtyard sequence reaches its functional climax. The fifth courtyard of the mosque is to the west of the prayer hall at the end of the sequence, which was and still is the place to observe the moon.

The Great Mosque of Xi'an accomplishes the transformation from public entry to ritual readiness through a deliberate axial-courtyard sequence. By the time one reaches the inner courtyards, the outer three courtyards have already absorbed reception, circulation management, and bodily preparation. The inner courtyard, therefore, functions less as a social forecourt and more as the immediate spatial infrastructure of worship. The fourth and fifth courtyards do not merely extend the earlier spatial layers in a linear order, but intensify and finalize the shift of the prayer's bodily orientation and attentional focus by a set of architectural operations—axis, controlled enclosure with compressed planting densities, and most importantly, the elevation of the Moon Platform. In this way, the courtyard sequence of the Great Mosque of Xi'an creates a graduated

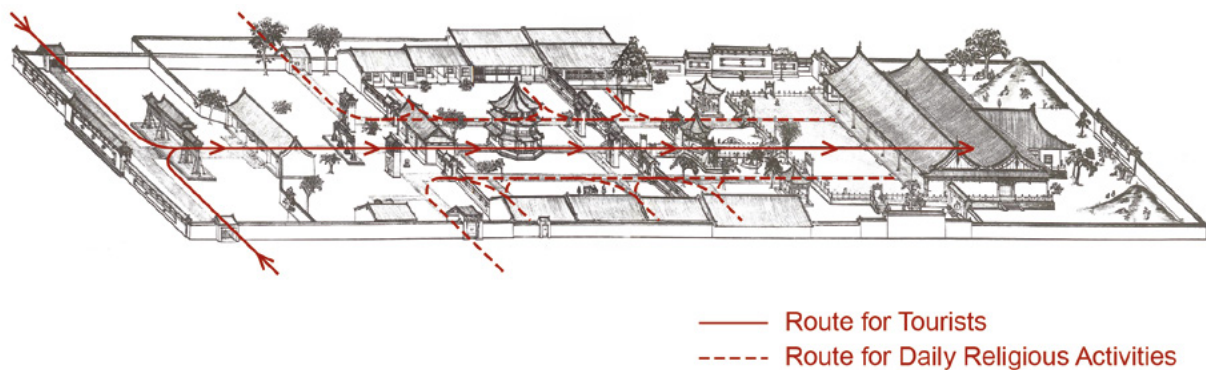


Figure 5 Orientation strategy of the Great Mosque of Xi'an. Diagram reproduced by authors, 2026. Source: Zhang, 1982.

conversion apparatus, translating the ordinary urban entry into a fully ritualized condition through spatial hierarchy rather than iconic forms.

4.4 Orientation Strategy: Qibla within an Axial Courtyard System

The Great Mosque of Xi'an stabilized qibla orientation by aligning the entire compound on the east-west axis. The compound places the mihrab as the western terminus of a long straight line that begins at the eastern entrance, and the plan therefore treats the orientation as a compound-scale ordering principle rather than an isolated interior adjustment. This orientation strategy is historically significant in the Chinese urban context because it departs from the standard south-facing orientation of common ritual and secular architecture complexes.

As discussed in 4.3, the mosque makes this orientational alignment legible through both movement and architectural markers. As shown in Figure 5, the first courtyard is defined by the Wall of Mirrors, side gates, and Wujian Lou, which regulate entry and orient visitors before they proceed to the main axis. The following courtyards then reinforce the orientation through repeated axial framing devices—gates, pavilions, and finally the prayer hall—so that the orientation is experienced as a progressive tightening of the ritual path. The prayer hall most clearly indicates the qibla through the west wall, which aligns with the wall of the Kaaba. Scholars describe the prayer hall's west wall as the qibla wall and note that it is divided into three parts, with a pointed-arch mihrab at the center. This wall provides the congregation with an unambiguous directional cue in the hall and anchors the prayer space without relying on external topological markers, such as a dome.

This case, therefore, treats qibla as an architectural operation embedded in an axial courtyard system. The mosque does not solve orientation through a single act of imitating the form, but through compound-scale alignment, repeated threshold framing, and a highly explicit qibla wall inside the prayer hall. This orientation strategy also prepares the final subsection, as the similar inward axis and boundary system shape how the mosque embeds itself within Xi'an's dense urban fabric.

4.5 Urban Embedding: Interface, Visibility, and Community Infrastructure

The Great Mosque of Xi'an sits inside the Hui residential community near the Drum Tower in downtown Xi'an. The mosque uses continuous boundary walls, gate buildings, and inward-facing courtyards to separate ritual order from street intensity while remaining accessible for daily activities. In addition to these approaches, the mosque also uses the traditional Chinese timber system to prevent the open monumental space from being exposed to the city.

The outer courtyards serve as an urban buffer, accommodating public functions before worship begins. The first and second courtyards host

reception, display, and administrative activities in rooms along their edges. The compound also supports small-scale commercial and service activities at the mosque's edge, connecting the mosque to the neighborhood economy without allowing the street life to penetrate the sacred core. This spatial distribution makes publicness inward rather than outward. The public interfaces appear as controlled access points, and the ritual space only becomes visible after passing through layers of hierarchical spaces. The mosque compound also adapts to the time discipline of Islamic practice in a dense city. The mosque offers multiple gates through which worshippers can access the prayer hall via a shorter route through doors other than the main entrance (Figure 5). This design approach provides an important urban logic: that the mosque does not enforce a single ceremonial entry for all users but allows faster internal access for high-frequency daily prayer, while the axial route remains available as the full ritual approach.

The mosque also mediates its urban presence through massing control with the connected roof system. The prayer hall has a high interior capacity, but it does not present itself to the city as a single large roof volume—the exterior mass is visually broken into several roof segments. This roof logic reduces perceived height, disperses scale, and prevents the ritual core from appearing as a singular monumental block within the surrounding lane-and-shop fabric. In this sense, the east-west axis of the mosque remains a strong ordering device inside the compound, but it does not translate into a dominant axial façade in the streetscape. The long courtyard chain distributes architectural bulk across depth, and the connected roof further dissolves the axis's intensity at the level of urban visibility.

This embedded configuration aligns with a broader Chinese neighborhood logic that Chinese scholarship summarizes as “one mosque, one neighborhood”, where the mosque anchors a local community unit through daily access rather than through visibility (Song et al., 2022). In this way, the mosque remains infrastructural and accessible, maintaining a rigorous gradient from the public interface to the sacred interior through enclosure, routing, and layered courtyards.

5 Tabačka Mosque in Visoko: Ritual embraced through locally rooted craftsmanship

5.1 Historical and Urban Context of the Tabačka Mosque

Religious architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina developed in close relation to the political regimes under which it operated. Islamic architecture was introduced to this territory with the Ottoman conquest, which lasted from 1463/1482 until 1908 (Jahić, 2022). During this long period of rule, new urban centers were established along trade routes and within networks of

connectivity to other important cities of the empire. The development of Visoko followed these Ottoman principles, transitioning from its medieval roots as a Bosnian imperial seat into a decentralized trading town traditionally known as a *kasaba*. To catalyze this growth, the Ottoman administration introduced the *waqf* (*vakuf*)—a state-supervised religious endowment that provided the legal and administrative framework for urban growth (Tufek-Memišević, 2014).

When the Ottomans arrived, Visoko already possessed a solid urban foundation of approximately 220 households. By 1477, the first public buildings—including hamams, shops, and bridges—were established through *waqf* endowments. Some of the first written evidence state that the city's growth was clearly dictated by the traditional Ottoman urban logic consisting of the *čaršija* (commercial core) and the *mahala* (residential neighborhood) (Husić, 2012). In this way, the city expanded around both the mosque and the central market district, forming a pattern of concentric neighborhoods that functioned semi-independently with their own sets of religious, social, economic, and administrative services. In terms of urban morphology, this structure prioritized privacy and adapted closely to the natural topography. Mosques were not placed at the ends of axial streets as monumental landmarks, in contrast to many contemporary Western planning models. Instead, the minaret served as the primary vertical and visual marker, indicating the neighborhood's center and providing an orientation point. The mosque-centered urban typology has shown how a single religious institution can serve as a space for social interaction, structuring both the local community and the surrounding urban morphology.

Visoko's specific evolution within this framework was further defined by its unique geographical and topographical characteristics. Its situation at the confluence of the Bosna and Fojnica rivers fundamentally steered its evolution toward a specialized industrial and craftsmanship center. While the upper elevations were reserved for residential mahalas, the riverbanks became the epicenter of the town's most vital industry: leather tanning. Because of this concentrated economic power, Visoko's urban fabric was shaped less by imperial decree and more by the socio-economic influence of guilds. The Tabaci (leather tanners) emerged as one of the city's most influential social classes. Their craft required constant access to running water, leading them to settle predominantly along the left bank of the Fojnica River. This specialized "production zone" eventually evolved into a self-contained urban entity, necessitating its own spiritual and social center.

The Tabačka Mosque was established as a direct result of this urban expansion, founded through the collective *waqf* of the tanners' guild. Serving as the focal point of the Tabaci mahala, the mosque represents a departure from the monumental imperial style found in administrative centers like Sarajevo. Instead, it emerged as an expression of vernacular architecture found in small towns and villages around Bosnia and Herzegovina. More than a place of worship, the mosque stood as a symbol of the tanners' autonomy and their integral role in the economic life of Visoko, reflecting an architectural system born from the specific needs of an industrial-craft community.

5.2 Structural System Rooted in the Local Tradition

Unlike the monumental masonry of Ottoman imperial mosques, typically designed by centralized architects, the Tabačka Mosque emerged as a bottom-up architectural expression. It represents a "built-by-the-people" paradigm, in which construction was guided by local knowledge and indigenous material cycles. Consequently, the mosque's morphology is not an imitation of imperial style, but a reflection of the tectonic identity of the Tabaci guild. By prioritizing local knowledge over the standardized aesthetic of the empire, the mosque serves as a primary example of how social structures can manifest as distinct architectural forms.

The structural logic of the mosque is defined by a composite system, characterized by a functional dualism between load-bearing mass and flexible framing. The lower wall integrates rubble stone, or quarry-faced masonry, in its natural, irregular state. This provides the necessary compressive mass and protection against the hydraulic forces of the nearby Fojnica River. Upper walls transition to adobe—a mixture of sun-dried clay and straw—which serves as the prayer hall's thermal insulation. This masonry is integrated into a timber framework. This system functions as a seismic buffer; the timber provides the tensile strength and elasticity that stone lacks, resulting in a resilient structure specifically adapted to the Bosnian landscape (Figure 6a).

This hybrid structure extends into the mosque's spatial program, particularly in the transition from the interior prayer hall to the external wooden veranda. While the main volume relies on the mass of its walls, the veranda introduces a post-and-beam logic (Figure 6a). The wooden pillars and broad arched openings act as an entry space, a threshold between the public commercial zone and the sacred interior. This specific Balkan interpretation of Ottoman architecture replaces the monumental scale of the stone dome with a more intimate "human scale." In this hybrid approach, the walls provide gravity-based stability, while the timber provides flexibility and lightweight decorative elements that define the building's facade.

The mosque's history is defined by a narrative of vernacular resilience, marked by a cycle of destruction and reconstruction following floods, fires, and conflict. The constant reconstruction using identical traditional methods and materials led to its official recognition as a National Monument in 2003. Its authenticity is not found in the preservation of the original structure as such, but in the continuous application of traditional craft knowledge and locally rooted resources. This continuity ensures that the mosque remains a symbol of the guild's autonomy and its role in the industrial and spiritual life of Visoko.

The peak of Bosnian Islamic Orientalism is most legible in the surface tectonics of the woodwork, which showcases the intricate hand-hewing markings. These tool marks function as a material archive of local craftsmanship, contrasting the heavy masonry and polished architecture of imperial Ottoman centers like Istanbul. By using four-sided hipped shingle roofs and simple timber minarets, the Tabačka Mosque prioritizes tactile, regional honesty over distant symbolic monumentality. This structural logic results in a building that is not only abundant in character but fundamentally more resilient to the region's unique seismic activity and climatic demands.

5.3 Non-Linear Ritual Spatial Organization

The spatial organization of the Tabačka Mosque suggests a ritual-based typology; not a strictly linear or sequential system, but one embedded in an integrated spatial cluster where ritual zones operate in close proximity. Historically, the transition between Visoko's main pedestrian street and the mosque's sacred interior was mediated by the wooden veranda. Unlike in many Ottoman mosques with a central axial entry point, this veranda was accessed from two sides, the riverbank on the west and the commercial zone on the east, serving as a critical threshold between the two. Functioning as a buffer, the stone flooring identifies the veranda as a transitional zone. This space, surfaced in traditional kaldrma, provides the necessary area for practitioners to remove their shoes prior to entering the prayer hall (Figure 6b).

Following the Bosnian War in the 1990s, the mosque's spatial logic underwent evolution with the addition of a frontal courtyard enclosed by masonry walls. This intervention redefined the "spiritual zone," insulating the mosque from direct exposure to the modernizing main street. Within this newly defined enclosure, a fountain was installed to serve as an ablution station, situating the ritual of purification at the entry point. Furthermore, the integration of a public library into the courtyard walls and the addition of classrooms for religious education have expanded the mosque's program. These changes shift the building's identity from strictly religious activity to a multifunctional community space, bridging religious practice and public life.

The main prayer hall remains the structural and spiritual center of the condensed complex, serving as a private, column-free volume that fosters an intimate atmosphere for worship. It contains a wooden balcony, the traditional elevated space designated for female practitioners. Behind the mosque, to the south, is a harem (graveyard), a green space that anchors the building in its historical context (Figure 6b).

The analysis of the Tabačka Mosque reveals that while a ritual sequence is implied, it is not linearly defined. Instead, it functions as a consolidation of ritual practices organized around the presence of water, varying degrees of enclosure, and the negotiation between public and private realms. The courtyard now serves as a central transitional node where movement, gathering, and preparation converge. The transitions between the ablution space, the veranda, and the prayer hall are subtle, following a symbolic and functional logic rather than a rigid corridor-like order. Thus, the mosque exists as a unified architectural whole in which sacred functional components coexist within a fluid, non-linear hierarchy.

5.4 Qibla Orientation: Divergence from Urban Fabric

The orientation of the Tabačka Mosque follows the canonical principle of mosque architecture, aligned toward the qibla in Mecca (Figure 6c). A bird's-eye view of Visoko shows that the mosque stands out in its orientation relative to the surrounding natural and urban fabric. While the surrounding development follows a combination of a grid pattern adjacent to the river and organic road/street networks (?) shaped by

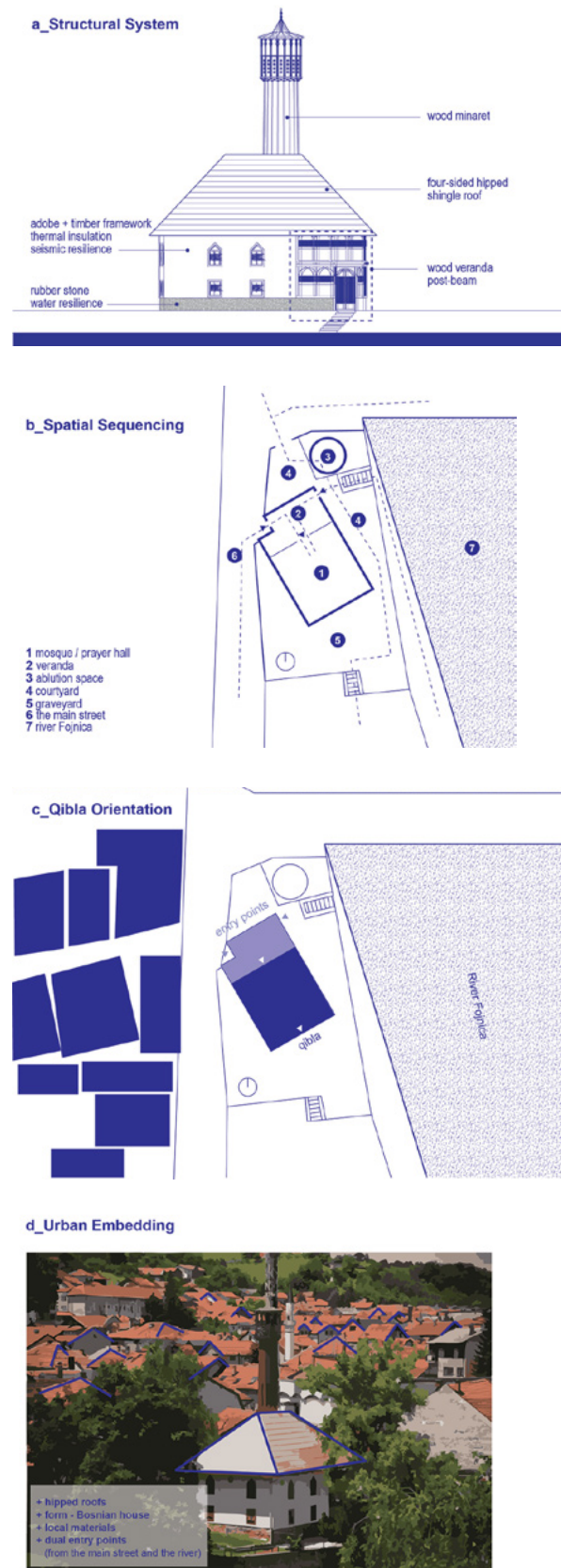


Figure 6 Analysis of the Tabačka Mosque, based on methodological parameters. Diagram: 6a Structural System, 6b Spatial Sequencing Analysis, 6c Qibla Orientation Strategy Analysis, 6d Urban Embedding Analysis. Source: Authors, 2026..

the hills, the mosque's orientation is determined solely by Islamic religious practice. Specifically, the main building—which encompasses the indoor prayer area—is oriented toward the qibla. In contrast, the secondary spaces, such as the ablution area, the courtyard, and other spaces, do not follow this strict logic.

This creates a shift between the mosque and the street. However, this misalignment is not immediately noticeable because the mosque sits adjacent to the river and is separated from other buildings. In this way, the mosque sits on its own as a unique territory. To those walking along the main pedestrian street, the mosque acts as a public anchor and a monument. Despite its different orientation, the mosque's scale, form, and materials help it merge with the town's context.

When comparing this mosque to the monumental stone-domed mosques of the Ottoman Empire, there is a significant architectural difference. In those imperial mosques, the entry to the main prayer space is typically aligned with the qibla axis. However, the Tabačka Mosque does not follow this principle. Instead, the entries to the prayer space are located on the east and west sides, aligning completely with the urban context. One entry faces the river, connecting the former working spaces of leather tanners, while the other entry faces the commercial and residential zone. Symbolically, this creates a bridge between the working spaces and homes, showing how the ritual of the mosque was integrated into the daily movement of its community.

5.5 Morphological Urban Embedding

The Tabačka Mosque was intentionally positioned between the industrial and residential zones as a direct response to the needs of its community. Because it was

built by and for leather tanners, whose craft required constant access to the river, the mosque's location represents a purely functional and practical logic. It was situated at the intersection of labor and domestic life, serving as the physical link between them.

A second aspect of this urban embedding is found in the traditional mahala-based system of Ottoman cities. In this structure, neighborhoods develop organically around the mosque, which serves as the social and spatial centerpiece. In Visoko, the Tabačka Mosque functioned as the heart of its neighborhood, consolidating the residential and working areas into a single, unified entity (Figure 6d). The mosque's entry points further integrate the public. This encourages a convergence of working, living, and spirituality, making the mosque's functionality an integral part of everyday civic life.

The final aspect of urban embedding is expressed through the form of the building itself. The mosque reflects the traditional Bosnian house typology, specifically through its square plan and hipped roof (Figure 6d). This proves that the mosque followed the same logic as the region's traditional residential construction. A unique feature of this regionalism is the position of the minaret. In standard Ottoman architecture, the minaret is an external stone tower attached to the side of the building. However, in the Tabačka Mosque, the minaret rises directly from the roof, resembling a large chimney.

This design choice shows that local construction knowledge was translated into the sacred space of the mosque. The use of local materials and familiar domestic forms provided a new interpretation of Islamic architecture—one that was deeply rooted in the regionalism of the Bosnian context rather than the imperial standards of the capital.

Table 1 Overview of research comparative analysis between two mosques. Source: Authors, 2026.

	The Great Mosque of Xi'an, China	The Tabačka Mosque of Visoko, B&H
Structural System	- Timber post-beam tectonic system with modular spatial logic - Structural contrast articulates indoor and outdoor spatial hierarchy and program - Tectonic system as architectural language	- Composite system of load-bearing walls (rubble stone and sun-dried mud) and flexible framing (wood) - Canonical Islamic architectural elements, tectonically and materially contextualized - Tectonic system as environmental resilience
Spatial Sequencing	- Ritual sequence structured through layered courtyards - Spatial hierarchy transitions from everyday space to prayer space - Courtyards as active mediators of movement and visibility - Ritual experience based on spatial sequencing, repetition, and gradation rather than monumentality	- Ritual sequence dispersed around the courtyard - Spatial sequence implied but not defined by linear progression - Courtyard as the primary indicator of interaction - Ritual experience based on spatial hierarchy and function
Orientational Strategy	- Qibla orientation negotiates the inherited city's axis (north-south) with courtyard-based spatial system - Redirection towards qibla within the interior space using architectural elements	- Mosque's orientation toward the qibla contrasts with the urban fabric alignment - The veranda serves as a threshold that mediates between the urban context and the prayer hall's strict qibla-orientation
Urban Embedding	- Inward-oriented publicness with strong spatial boundaries toward the street - Walls, gates, and transitional zones create gradients of accessibility - Religious practice integrated into high-density urban fabric without monumental exterior exposure - Double-slope roof mediates scale and reduces visual dominance of the prayer hall within the surrounding context	- Positioned as a direct link between the former tanning work zones (river) and residential mahalas to serve community needs - Acts as a central node where dual entry points integrate the commercial/residential zone, and the riverbank, with spiritual life - Adopts the scale, square plan, and hipped roof of the traditional Bosnian house, rejecting imperial monumental standards

6 Comparative Analysis and Discussion

The comparative study of the Great Mosque of Xi'an, China, and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, is particularly relevant because it enables a comparison between two geographically distant sites, each embracing different tectonic languages, while maintaining the same Islamic ritual principles. Unlike Middle Eastern regions where Islam first emerged, both research sites encountered Islam through historical events, such as trade, migration, and political expansion. Although two mosques may initially seem unrelated, they provide a productive basis for examining how universal Islamic rituals far from their Middle Eastern contextual origins are tectonically translated into regionally specific architectural systems.

Table 1 below summarizes the comparative analysis of the Great Mosque of Xi'an, China, and the Tabačka Mosque, Bosnia and Herzegovina, through four methodological parameters: structural system, spatial sequencing, orientational strategy, and urban embedding.

At the tectonic level, the comparison between the Great Mosque of Xi'an and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko demonstrates how shared ritual order is materialized through different constructive grammars. Following Frampton's interpretation of tectonic as an expressive potential of construction (Frampton & Cava, 1995, p. 2), the timber post-and-beam system of the Great Mosque of Xi'an articulates modular proportion and a layered spatial sequence, in which repeated halls, gateways, and courtyards structure the movement towards prayer. By contrast, the Tabačka Mosque relies on the hybrid composite system, characterized by load-bearing mass walls and flexible wood frames, which supports spatial flexibility and climate resilience. In this sense, the comparison shows that mosque architecture should not be understood through formal imitation of a canonical type, but through the ways in which ritual requirements are resolved within materially distinct tectonic cultures.

These tectonic differences, however, were not produced by construction culture alone. They were also shaped by distinct socio-political conditions that determined how mosque space could be established, financed, transformed, and embedded in everyday urban life. In Xi'an, the mosque emerged through long-term diplomatic exchange and merchant mobility and was inserted into an already established urban fabric. Its inward-facing compound and layered courtyard sequence, therefore, reflect a process of contextual integration rather than urban dominance. The Tabačka Mosque developed within the framework of Ottoman urbanization, yet its specific character was shaped by the collective waqf of the tanners' guild, the river-based production zone, and the mahala structure of local community life. In this sense, the two mosques should be understood not only as products of different tectonic systems but also as outcomes of different regimes of spatial production.

This socio-spatial dimension shaped not only the initial formation of each mosque but also its later transformation. In Xi'an, repeated reconstruction

campaigns preserved ritual continuity through incremental spatial adaptation, gradually producing the compound's current layered system. In Visoko, the post-1990s addition of the enclosed courtyard, fountain, library, and classroom expanded the mosque's role as a community institution and redefined its relationship to the street and neighborhood. These later changes show that mosque architecture is not a fixed container of ritual, but an evolving social space continuously reworked by shifting political, communal, and urban conditions.

The spatial sequencing of the two mosques also reveals different modes of ritual experience. As argued by Christian Norberg-Schulz, architectural meaning extends through the experiential progression of movement across different environments, thereby revealing the character and atmosphere of a place (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). In the Great Mosque of Xi'an, sacredness is produced through anticipation, delay, and gradual bodily preparation. The repeated passage through gates, courtyards, and elevated thresholds shows movement and intensifies the transition from everyday life to prayer. The body is progressively reoriented, and the ritual sequence unfolds as an experience structured by axis, enclosure, and repetition. In contrast, the Tabačka Mosque organizes ritual spaces non-linearly within the condensed public space, where spatial hierarchy becomes visible through differences in scale, massing, and spatial configuration. The courtyard, veranda, ablution area, and prayer hall remain in close proximity, allowing greater movement among preparation, gathering, and worship. Here, the sacredness is not built through a long axis, but through condensed spatial relations, threshold negotiation, and the overlap between communal and ritual use. These differences show that ritual experience emerges through locally embedded spatial practices rather than a universal mosque type. Therefore, the spatial organization of the mosque can be theoretically described by Lefebvre's statement: "(Social) space is a (social) product," where the spatial system derives from the interaction between social practices, cultural relations, and the built environment (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 26–33).

The two mosques demonstrate distinct approaches to implementing qibla orientation within the urban fabric. In the Great Mosque of Xi'an, the orientation is resolved through internal redirection using architectural elements. In this way, the building's form respects and is integrated into the city's historical north-south axis. In contrast, the Tabačka Mosque follows the qibla orientation directly, acting as an independent entity within its urban context. These strategies imply that mosque orientation can still follow Islamic principles without necessitating urban restructuring or dominance over the existing urban fabric.

Lastly, Frampton argues that regional architecture mediates between universal civilization and local culture (Frampton, 1993, p. 21). The Great Mosque of Xi'an reflects a humble, restrained exterior, where monumentality is primarily visible only upon entering the courtyard. In contrast, the Tabačka Mosque achieves monumentality through its prominent

position within the urban context. However, it remains humble in scale and form. It reflects the traditional Bosnian house, a common typology found in the surrounding area. Both mosques integrate into the urban fabric through materiality that mimics their surrounding contexts. This approach resonates with the concept of critical regionalism, where universal cultural forms (Islamic architecture) are mediated through the spatial, climatic, and material conditions of the region (Frampton, 1993, pp. 20–23).

7 Conclusion and Outlook

This paper compared the Great Mosque of Xi'an, China, and the Tabačka Mosque in Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, to argue that mosque architecture should not be read as a peripheral variation of a presumed Middle Eastern archetype. Instead, the two cases show that mosque architecture operates as a spatial system in which shared ritual invariants are materialized through regionally specific tectonic, urban, and socio-political conditions. The study, therefore, shifts the discussion from formal resemblance to the ways in which Islamic ritual is spatially translated, historically embedded, and architecturally mediated in different regional contexts.

Methodologically, this research uses critical regionalism through a comparative protocol that holds ritual invariants constant while varying tectonic culture and urban morphology. The four-dimensional

framework offers a replicable approach for cross-regional comparison without defaulting to center-periphery thinking. The findings become clearer when researching both mosques through these dimensions. Architectural elements, such as the prayer hall, ablution space, minaret, and qibla orientation, remain consistent; their architectural articulation varies according to regional tectonic systems, material resources, and urban morphology. The comparison, therefore, illustrates how shared ritual principles can be translated into distinct architectural forms. Both mosques demonstrate the relevance of critical regionalism, proving how universal religious practices are mediated through the spatial, material, and cultural conditions of different places.

Further research can extend this approach in three directions. First, researching additional cases from other “peripheral” regions of Islamic architectural geography to evaluate the robustness of tectonic mediation across different climates, cultures, and urban contexts. Second, finer detail tectonic analysis on the joinery, construction sequence, and structural detailing to strengthen the link between ritual invariants and material grammars, specifically in the lens of critical regionalism. Third, future research can track how mosques evolve and are protected under heritage regimes or under changing community practices while maintaining ritual continuity. Overall, this research argues for unity without uniformity: mosques persist through shared ritual order, and they become distinct architectures through place-specific tectonic, urban, and socio-political mediation.

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Disprogramming the Syllabus: Embracing Non-Utility in Architectural Design

Disprogramiranje nastavnog plana:
Prihvatanje neutilitarnosti u arhitektonskom projektovanju

Višnja Žugić¹, Bojan Stojković², Petar Mitrović³

1: Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
zugic.visnja@uns.ac.rs | orcid.org/0000-0002-4677-7355

2: Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
bojan.d.stojkovic@uns.ac.rs | orcid.org/0000-0003-1264-3575

3: Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
petarmitrovic@uns.ac.rs | orcid.org/0009-0002-1291-6924

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Abstract This paper traces the challenges and outcomes in rethinking the pedagogy of a course in Architectural Technologies at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning in Novi Sad, Serbia, which evolved from earlier iterations of Architectural Constructions. Traditionally, the course was dedicated to learning the logic of construction through generic building structures, often without creative input from students, resulting in limited functional knowledge in subsequent years of study. The syllabus was thus reframed to focus on exploring the relationships between the design process, spatial organisation, and ambience on one side, and morphology, materialisation, and structural elements on the other. By bridging the gap between technical knowledge and design thinking, this shift allowed students to engage critically with the interplay between design intentions and technical realities, fostering a deeper understanding of the design process itself. The analysis focuses on two consecutive academic years, during which students participated in international design competitions: The Home of Shadows in 2024 and The Architect's Stair in 2025. In both cases, the tasks encouraged a departure from conventional, utilitarian functions of architecture. Focusing on the students' results, the paper explores the potential of this intentional embrace of non-utility: the qualities it generates in understanding the design process and possible architectural outcomes. In particular, the paper examines how such an approach can disprogramme the conventions of a syllabus dedicated to building structures, moving beyond purely technical concerns towards a more creative and critical understanding of the roles and functions of structures within their physical and social contexts.

Keywords architectural technologies; design process; non-utility; disprogramming; teaching process.

Sažetak Ovaj rad prati izazove i rezultate preispitivanja pedagogije predmeta Arhitektonske tehnologije na Departmanu za arhitekturu i urbanizam u Novom Sadu, Srbija, koji je nastao iz ranijih verzija predmeta Arhitektonske konstrukcije. Tradicionalno, predmet je bio posvećen učenju logike građenja kroz generičke građevinske strukture, često bez kreativnog doprinosa studenata, što je u kasnijim godinama studija rezultiralo ograničenim funkcionalnim znanjem. Zbog toga je nastavni plan preoblikovan tako da se usredsredi na istraživanje odnosa između procesa projektovanja, prostorne organizacije i ambijenta s jedne strane, te morfologije, materijalizacije i konstruktivnih elemenata s druge. Premošćavanjem jaza između tehničkog znanja i projektantskog mišljenja, ova promena omogućila je studentima da kritički sagledaju međusobno delovanje projektantskih namera i tehničkih realnosti, podstičući dublje razumevanje samog procesa projektovanja. Analiza se fokusira na dve uzastopne akademske godine, tokom kojih su studenti učestvovali na međunarodnim arhitektonskim konkursima: The Home of Shadows 2024. godine i The Architect's Stair 2025. godine. U oba slučaja, zadaci su podsticali otklon od konvencionalnih, utilitarnih funkcija arhitekture. Polazeći od studentskih rezultata, rad istražuje potencijal ovog namernog prihvatanja neutilitarnosti: kvalitete koje ono generiše u razumevanju procesa projektovanja i mogućih arhitektonskih ishoda. Posebna pažnja posvećena je ispitivanju načina na koji ovakav pristup može da disprogramira konvencije nastavnog plana posvećenog građevinskim konstrukcijama, pomerajući fokus sa isključivo tehničkih pitanja ka kreativnijem i kritičkijem razumevanju uloga i funkcija konstrukcija u njihovim fizičkim i društvenim kontekstima.

Ključne riječi arhitektonske tehnologije; proces projektovanja; neutilitarnost; disprogramiranje; nastavni proces.

1 Introduction

Architectural education has long struggled with balancing technical knowledge and creative design. Students are often taught structural systems, materials, and construction methods in isolation, as discrete bodies of knowledge separate from the conceptual and programmatic aspects of design. While this approach ensures technical competence, it can inadvertently constrain creativity, limiting students' ability to exploit the full potential of structural elements in shaping spatial experience, atmosphere, and meaning.

This study investigates how the teaching of construction systems can be reimagined to foster both technical rigour and creative exploration. It examines the design and implementation of a new syllabus for the course Architectural Technologies – Design Process, which situates structural thinking directly within the design process. The main research question guiding this study concerns how to bridge the gap between teaching the technical knowledge of building structures and fostering an understanding of their functional and programmatic potentials—knowledge that can be applied seamlessly in subsequent years of architectural studies. How can learning about the constraints and logic of structural systems be made more creative? How can the principles of construction be taught in a way that is fully integrated into the design process, rather than treated as a separate, technical layer? And how can students be guided to explore both the limits and potentials of structural systems while simultaneously developing architectural concepts and programmes?

In the following sections, we first examine the challenges inherent in traditional teaching of structural systems and the methodologies adopted to overcome them. We then analyse selected student projects that exemplify the integration of structural logic with conceptual and programmatic exploration, highlighting the emergence of secondary functions and the pedagogical potentials of non-utility. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for architectural education, showing how the deliberate integration of construction thinking within the design process can foster both creativity and technical rigour.

2 Challenges

Historically, the course Architectural Technologies – Design Process evolved from the course Architectural Constructions,¹ which, since its introduction into the study programme, had been delivered in the 4th semester to second-year architecture students. The course focused on the materialisation and construction of high-rise

building structures employing reinforced-concrete frame systems (both cast in situ and prefabricated), as well as timber, steel, and load-bearing masonry structural systems. One of its central objectives has always been to apply the acquired knowledge to the understanding and further advancement of students' competencies in other specialised courses (such as Architectural Design). The course topics were traditionally explored through a series of practical tasks—drawings dedicated to each specific theme. The examples of buildings and structures used to introduce students to the rules and limitations of individual structural systems were most often idealised, generic floor plans that represented the most optimal configuration for each system type. Although this course has long been considered one of the most complex and demanding within the programme, even after completing all practical assignments and the final examination, students often encountered difficulties in the third year, when the Architectural Design course on public buildings required them to apply the knowledge previously acquired.

Drawing on many years of experience working with third-year students in the Architectural Design course, we identified two principal approaches in which the inadequate application of construction technologies became most evident:

Approach 1a: “Anything goes” in reinforced concrete: Within this approach, students would often devote substantial time to developing the building's functional organisation first, working extensively on the floor plan while neglecting considerations of three-dimensional space and the optimisation of the structural system. Once the functional layout was resolved, they would begin to consider the structure: materials, structural logic, spans, elements, and so forth. This sequence frequently resulted in the inadequate application of reinforced-concrete structural systems, producing compromises on two levels: the functioning of the designed spaces and the suboptimal use of the frame structure, due to the absence of its logic in the early stages of the process. In this approach, construction elements are perceived as a layer in the design process that, unfortunately, “must be applied” later on in the process.

Approach 1b: “Anything goes” in steel: Similar to the first variation, the design process begins with a strong emphasis on developing the floor plan and its functional processes. The steel structure is introduced subsequently, spanning the entire building, particularly when the floor plan is complex and lacks a clear rhythm that could otherwise inform a column grid. In such cases, relying on the fact that steel structures can achieve larger spans, columns are often placed at the outer edges of the plan, while load-bearing steel trusses are introduced as the structural solution. Although this approach can lead to structures that are physically feasible, they are often insufficiently considered, structurally non-optimal, and rarely cost-effective in relation to the programme.

In both variations of the “anything goes” approach, structure is developed as an afterthought, and the projects typically lack an inherent consideration of the potentials and constraints of construction during the conceptual phase of the design process.

¹ In 2013, the course was renamed Architectural Technologies, and since 2020, it has been transformed into an elective course with two possibilities. Students can choose whether to learn construction logic through practical, generic applications or pursue a course that connects theoretical knowledge to the actual design process.

Approach 2: Hyper-constraining rules: The generic approach to teaching construction rules and constraints often focuses on ideal and optimal geometries and spans, for example, those used in reinforced-concrete frame systems. When applying these rules in later years of study, students tend to interpret such idealised scenarios as the only possible solutions, thereby constraining their own creative thinking about structural systems. In the design process, this manifests as an early and rigid decision regarding the construction system and its maximum spans (e.g., the familiar 6 × 6 metre grid), into which the functional scheme is subsequently forced. This frequently leads to spatial problems, as the imposed grid may not be appropriate for organising the programme or supporting its inherent logic.

In all of these cases (1a, 1b, and 2)—although they represent opposite extremes in approaching construction systems—one issue remains consistent: construction is rarely considered simultaneously with the exploration of the programme, spatial organisation, or conceptual framework of the design. This highlights a broader challenge within architectural education, particularly during the early stages of study: the difficulty students experience in establishing functional connections between courses.

One of the main goals of the new syllabus was to bridge the gap between learning the constraints, rules, and logic of different construction systems and creatively engaging with them during the design process, particularly by emphasising the integration of conceptual development with structural thinking. The central aim was to design a course that would help students understand the role of structural thinking within the design process; namely, that these aspects must be developed concurrently and are mutually dependent.

The second goal was to reframe how students perceive necessary constraints: rather than viewing them as limitations on creativity, the course encouraged them to explore the multiple potentials and roles of construction elements beyond their primary load-bearing function. To support this, we introduced the concept of construction systems' multiple functions, linking it directly to the Theory of Functions in Architecture.

3 Influences from Architectural Theories

As part of a teaching team with long-standing involvement in the third-year Architectural Design course, we have continuously explored and developed the Theory of Functions in Architecture, which occupies a particularly prominent place within our school of architecture.² The theory treats function as a plural phenomenon, actively explored across multiple courses and study levels (Dinulović, 2012; Zeković et al., 2018). It examines the diverse functions that architecture and space can realise within their physical and social contexts, emphasising that the utilitarian function is only one among many and not necessarily the most prominent. Although initially there were no explicit

links to Umberto Eco, the theory aligns with his notion of secondary functions in architecture,³ marking them as an open and changeable system (Eco, 1997). In this sense, the Theory of Functions in Architecture treats the list of potential functions as ever-expanding, asserting that all functions exist simultaneously—as dominant, latent, or emerging—regardless of our awareness of them or our ability to mobilise them in the design process. Thus, the theory can be understood as a specific lens through which to approach design, offering a compelling methodological framework: the design process becomes a process of articulating a hierarchy of functions for each project or design task. This hierarchy emerges from a complex system of intentions articulated through the building's programme. Accordingly, a space may be designed with the utilitarian function as the most prominent; however, this dominant position may also be assumed by the ideological function (Dinulović, 2012), the ethical function (Harries, 2000), the symbolic function (e.g., what kind of symbolism architectural form reflects), the urban function (e.g., its capacity to generate new public spaces), the textual function (e.g., how the building embeds or reflects particular narratives), or the scenic function (e.g., the ways in which it constitutes scenes within its context or contributes to the urban landscape)—to name only a few. Thus, the theory reframes architectural design as an act of negotiating and staging multiple, simultaneously operative functions, each embedded within a broader cultural, spatial, and programmatic system.

Being aware of the possibilities that this mode of thinking about architectural space can open (especially as a pedagogical tool) in the new syllabus for Architectural Technologies – Design Process, we sought to apply the logic of the Theory of Functions in Architecture to rethinking the roles of construction systems. In particular, throughout the semester, we focus on two additional functions of construction elements (beyond their load-bearing role and the inherent constraints and logic of each structural system):

1. Exploring the ambient function: What roles can construction systems play in generating specific ambiances within architecture? What is the relationship between spatial atmosphere, character, and the load-bearing elements employed? How can the components of a primary structural system simultaneously define the ambience and shape the character of a space?

2. Exploring the conceptual function: What relationship exists between the conceptual idea underlying a design project and its structural system? How can a load-bearing element become a materialisation of complex conceptual intentions? What is the role of construction systems in generating different conceptual frameworks for a design problem?

³ Umberto Eco marks the utilitarian function as primary, and all the other functions as secondary. Since this distinction can be easily misunderstood as functions that are more and less important, the terms 'primary' and 'secondary' are not applied within the theory developed at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning (Novi Sad), even though the essence of Eco's theory is of key importance in understanding the idea of multiple functions of architecture.

² Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia.

With these two functions, our main aim was to expand the ways in which students consider structural elements within the design process. However, over several years of implementing this methodology, particularly while introducing students to the typology of public buildings, we realised that even the simplest programmes could overwhelm students and distract them from considering the functions of space beyond the purely utilitarian. This led us to more consciously implement a shift from a strictly utilitarian perspective towards broader considerations of architectural structures, maintaining utility as secondary within the hierarchy of functions.

This approach opened the possibility of introducing students to the concept of non-utility: not as dysfunctional space or purely formalist architecture, but as architecture that achieves utility on a more complex, subtle, or abstract level, beyond its immediate functional use. While a building's primary function may still be present, its position within the hierarchy of functions is not dominant. Writing about the Eiffel Tower, Roland Barthes addresses this phenomenon and its significance. In this case, "the utilitarian excuses, however ennobled they may be by the myth of Science, are nothing in comparison to the great imaginary function" (Barthes, 1997, p. 166); the tower emerged "from a great human dream in which movable and infinite meanings are mingled: it has reconquered the basic uselessness which makes it live in men's imagination" (Barthes, 1997, p. 167).

By treating basic utility as secondary, or even non-existent, students are able to examine other architectural functions in greater depth. Architecture that consciously embraces non-utility is thus simultaneously multi-functional. This perspective resonates with ideas of architecture as meaningful when non-instrumental (Hollier, 1992), autonomous over temporary utility (Rosi, n.d.), intentionally useless to be critical (Aureli, 2011), or deliberately indeterminate (Tschumi, 1994). These concepts underpin our approach to rethinking the course.

4 New Methodologies – The Structure of the Syllabus

In the 2020/21 academic year, the first edition of the course Architectural Technologies – Design Process was launched. The programme of the course is dedicated to expanding previously acquired knowledge on architectural structures, with a particular focus on understanding the relationships between the programmatic and physical structure of designed spaces. On the one hand, the course addresses the interdependence between the design process, spatial and functional organisation, and the ambience and character of architecture, and on the other, its morphology, materialisation, spatial compositions, and structural elements. These topics are explored through several assignments carried out during the semester. The exercises are organised into two methodological units: one predominantly analytical, and the other dedicated to the implementation of construction technologies within individual design tasks.

The first exercise focuses on analysing examples of existing, built, iconic architecture in order to understand the interdependence of their programmatic and physical structures. The case studies are selected from mid-scale public buildings, either for their visible and expressive structural elements or for their particularly compelling conceptual frameworks. The main objective of this exercise is to conduct a thorough case-study analysis of all aspects of these buildings: from understanding their programme, physical structure, and the conceptual logic of construction and load-bearing systems, to examining their specific ambiances, conceptual ideas, and the dynamic interrelations among these components.

The subsequent exercises are design-oriented and focus on the application of different structural systems, including load-bearing masonry and frame structures in reinforced concrete or steel. These design tasks emphasise applying each system while accounting for its inherent limitations and potentials, with the goal of producing well-considered architectural projects. At the programmatic level, the exercises are oriented towards less complex public-building typologies. While the primary focus of the course is not on the programmatic complexities of architectural design, it was intentionally designed to provide an introduction to public-building typologies, thereby facilitating a smoother transition into the third-year Architectural Design course.

Building on this foundation, the final exercise of the semester, unlike the previous design-based tasks, is structured as a team-based project. It allows students to apply any construction technology to a problem set in a small-scale architectural competition, encouraging creative exploration while reinforcing the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the course.

This study is based on three consecutive academic years of implementation of the revised syllabus, with case studies drawn from the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. The selected projects were those that achieved the highest level of recognition in international competitions (shortlisted or awarded entries), and were also considered exemplary within the pedagogical framework of the course. The course is elective, with students choosing between this module and an alternative Architectural Technologies course that follows a more traditional, technically oriented syllabus. Enrolment varies annually, with approximately 117 students in 2022/23, 24 students in 2023/24, and around 100 students in 2024/25. Teams for the final assignment typically consist of three to four students.

The analysed projects are evaluated through the theoretical framework of the Theory of Functions in Architecture, with a specific focus on the expanded roles of structural elements. Methodologically, the research is framed as pedagogical action research informed by a comparative case-study approach.

Comparable tendencies in contemporary European architectural education can be identified in several pedagogical models that seek to integrate structural thinking with the design process. Design-build studios, such as those at the Vienna University of Technology or the CoCoon – Contextual Construction research

studio at the Technical University of Berlin, emphasise the continuity between design development and physical realisation.

Experimental structural studios, including programmes such as the Design and Make initiative at the Architectural Association in London or Studio in the Woods, combine digital fabrication, material experimentation, and structural investigation, positioning material behaviour as a generative design driver.

Interdisciplinary and competition-based pedagogies, on the other hand, integrate external briefs, real or speculative competitions, and collaborative formats involving stakeholders beyond academia. These approaches often prioritise intensive workshop structures and external engagement as a means of situating architectural education within broader socio-cultural contexts.

The methodology of the course Architectural Technologies – Design Process does not rely solely on competition-based learning, but rather on the integration of structural technologies, the Theory of Functions in Architecture, and the concept of non-utility as a methodological device within an elective technical course. In this sense, it positions “disprogramming” not as an external pedagogical format, but as an internal transformation of the structural technology curriculum itself.

5 The Final Task – – The International Competition

The final task of the semester allows students to select the structural systems that best suit the concepts and purposes of their individual designs, enabling the free selection and implementation of previously acquired knowledge. To achieve this, the semester concludes each year with students participating in an international architectural competition, not as an extracurricular activity, but an integral part of their tasks within the semester. Each competition is carefully chosen to align with the time constraints of the academic year and semester, as well as with the level of complexity appropriate for second-year architecture students.

Since the competition brief is integrated into the syllabus of the course on architectural technologies, and the submitted projects serve both as competition entries and as the final exercises of the course, the tasks are often adapted to reflect the pedagogical objectives of the syllabus. In this context, regardless of the focus of the competition brief, an additional requirement is imposed: students must implement construction elements that not only support the conceptual idea of the design but also actively shape the atmosphere of the spaces created. Furthermore, students are encouraged to combine different materials in conceiving the structural system, provided that these choices align with the conceptual framework and overall intentions of the project.

In the following chapters, we will analyse the outcomes of two consecutive academic years and the final projects submitted to the respective architectural competitions.

5.1 The Home of Shadows #2

In the 2023/24 academic year, the final task of the semester was based on the competition The Home of Shadows #2. The competition was organised by Buildner, a portal with a long-standing tradition of hosting architecture competitions for students and young architects. The second edition of The Home of Shadows took place in 2024 with the brief: “to design a home for a hypothetical couple with just one rule—there can be no artificial light within the home.” (Architecture Competitions, n.d.-b) Despite its simplicity, this restriction posed a significant challenge, as the competition was specifically focused on exploring the atmosphere of residential spaces. As stated in the brief: “shadow plays as much a role in influencing the feel of a space as light. The harmony between light and shadow allows architects and designers to create spaces with depth and texture, generating different moods for different purposes.” (Architecture Competitions, n.d.-b) This focus was particularly relevant for the context of the course within which the competition was introduced, exploring how various structural elements in architecture can play a decisive role in shaping spatial atmosphere, particularly in dialogue with light and shadow.

5.1.1 Analysis: Shamash - The Shade of the Sun

The team of students⁴ behind the project Shamash - The Shade of the Sun chose a location in the territory of the former Mesopotamia, which served as the primary inspiration for their conception of the home of shadows. In their official project description, the students explain:

“In the center of the Sun’s path, everything begins. In a manner of concentric circles living is formed so that constant synchronization between the Sun movement and the flow of life, bared by the inhabitants of the house, is obtained - in a way the position of the Sun now dictates, like a clockwork, the rhythm of life. A somewhat temple-like ambient flourishes, carefully placing pierced openings in the membrane walls of each room enabling the filtered presence of the Sun.” (Đorić, et al., 2024)

The form of the house draws inspiration from the maze-like structures characteristic of Mesopotamian architecture, while the logic of the structure is expressed through a circular floor plan that develops via the carefully considered overlap of radial and concentric directions (Figure 1d). This plan is materialised as a load-bearing masonry system, creatively employing the principle of “pauses”. Pauses are introduced at the intersections of different geometries at the floor plan level, but they also play a crucial role in allowing sunlight to enter the spaces, generating varying shadows throughout the house (Figure 1a). This effect is achieved through the strategic placement of gaps between structural elements, openings in both vertical and horizontal planes, and pauses between conflicting geometries of the floor plan. These gaps function as specific highlights within the atmosphere or as functional and directional cues for the organisation of utilitarian zones within the house.

⁴ The authors of the Shamash - The Shade of the Sun project: Mladenka Đorić, Miroslav Lukić, Kristina Pajić and Aleksandar Tešić, second-year architecture students. The project won the 3rd prize at the competition The Home of Shadows #2, 2024.



Figure 1 (a) Shamash - The Shade of the Sun: visual of an interior, which shows the principle of the pause and the effect of light on a textured wall. (b) and (c) Shamash - The Shade of the Sun: interior spaces and ambiances: the strategic use of gaps, openings and pauses between structural elements of the house, in order to create specific interplay between light, shadow, and architecture. (d) Shamash - The Shade of the Sun: floor plan. Source: Mladenka Đorić, Miroslav Lukić, Kristina Pajić and Aleksandar Tešić, 2024.

Following the movement of the Sun, the spaces of the house are arranged in circular layers, allowing light to interact with varying depths, textures, and materials throughout the day, creating unique spatial experiences. In this way, the masonry wall system functions not merely as a structural framework but as an active device that supports and enables the materialisation of the spatial concept, co-creating the distinctive atmosphere of the spaces through its interplay with light and shadow (Figure 1b, 1c).

5.1.2 Analysis: Garden Retreat

The second project developed in response to the Home of Shadows competition is titled Garden Retreat.⁵ Its concept focuses on the symbiosis between humans and nature by blurring the boundary between inside and outside. The authors of Garden Retreat explain the spatial logic of the project:

“Like desert rocks, the cubes of the structure provide shade and coolness to its user, without intervening in the natural relationship of climate and temperature, thereby creating a space that will always adapt to the climate” (...) “Sunlight cast across rooms used for daily activities creates a “spotlight” effect, directing the observer’s gaze to the center of activity. In contrast, shadows are reserved for private areas, creating a non-physical barrier between what should and should not be seen.

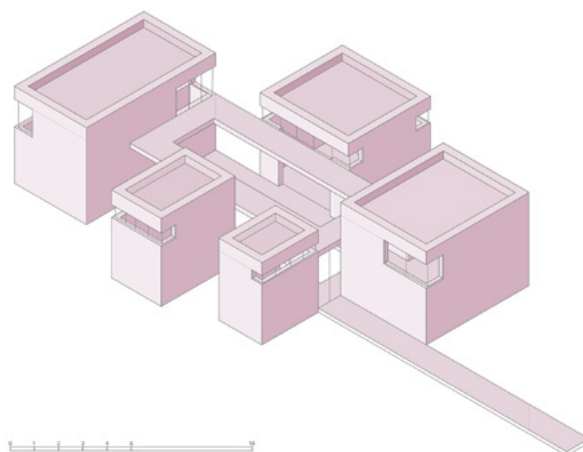


Figure 2 Garden Retreat—axonometric projection that shows the spatial assembly of the group form of the house. Source: Nikolina Paldrmić, Aleksa Čuljak, Aleksa Marinkov, Dragana Kitanović, 2024.



Figure 3 (a) and (b) Garden Retreat—interior spaces and their ambiances, achieved by the interplay between inner and outer spaces, through their overlapping and layering in depth, with strategically placed openings for letting light in. Source: Nikolina Paldrmić, Aleksa Čuljak, Aleksa Marinkov, Dragana Kitanović, 2024.

⁵ Authors of the Garden Retreat project: Nikolina Paldrmić, Aleksa Čuljak, Aleksa Marinkov, Dragana Kitanović, second-year architecture students. The project was shortlisted at the competition Home of Shadows #2, 2024.

In this way, shadows simultaneously awaken a sense of curiosity, drawing us deeper into the shaded areas of the space.” (Paldrmić, et al., 2024)

The structure is conceived as a group of interconnected forms. Five individual cubical structures, each varying in proportion, are arranged around a central connecting space—the inner garden (Figure 2). This garden serves as the nucleus of the house, resulting in a primarily introverted layout: all interior spaces are oriented towards this central courtyard, while the exterior façades open strategically towards the light, through high horizontal strips of windows. Serving as the main visual feature of each cube, these windows vary in size, proportion, and position, with their dimensions and orientation carefully tailored to the primary function of each space.

The extensive openings oriented towards the inner garden enable a visual layering of spaces in depth: the eye moves from interior areas, through the openings, across the garden, and into adjacent cubes or the exterior environment, creating a distinctive ambient quality within the house (Figure 3). This arrangement realises the conceptual idea of dual spaces, in which interior and exterior realms overlap and merge without clear boundaries. The clear zoning of residential sub-functions is established through the use of load-bearing reinforced concrete walls, while the visual, functional, and perceptual layering of spaces is achieved through the careful placement, orientation, and sizing of the openings within the cubes.

5.2 The Architect's Stair #2

In the 2024/25 academic year, the final task of the semester focused on another competition organised by Buildner, titled *The Architect's Stair #2*. The competition brief centred on a singular architectural element—a staircase—as inspiration for a wide range of spatial explorations, from concrete, constructible designs to utopian and highly conceptual proposals. The brief emphasised the dramaturgical and experiential potential of the staircase as an architectural element:

“It is a structure in motion—a connector of levels, a sculptural form, a spatial sequence, and a symbol of ascent, descent, and transition. It guides the body and engages the mind. It is at once practical and poetic. (...) It punctuates the rhythm of space, dictates circulation, and often becomes a central visual and emotional anchor in architectural composition. It holds narrative power—inviting pause, procession, and perception.” (Architecture Competitions, n.d.-a)

The competition explicitly invited participants to reflect on the various qualities of the staircase: “its symbolism, geometry, movement, and potential—free from constraints of program, material, or scale”, to explore the element as a pure expression of architectural language and design philosophy. Participants were encouraged to consider questions such as: “How can a stair tell a story? How can it embody spatial ideas, emotions, ideologies, or atmospheres? How can it become a metaphor, a movement, a manifesto?” (Architecture Competitions, n.d.-a)

Integrating such a free and conceptual brief into a course dedicated to architectural technologies required

an additional specification to meet the pedagogical objectives. One non-negotiable requirement was that the final structure must be precisely defined in terms of materiality, the logic of construction elements, and the implementation of structural systems with clear intention. At the same time, the initial freedom of the competition brief was preserved by embracing the lack of a predefined programme for the structure. In fact, the task was intentionally framed around this absence of utilitarian function. Instead, students were guided by the Theory of Functions in Architecture as the main methodological approach for designing the stair. The absence of a strictly utilitarian function did not imply that the structure would remain devoid of multiple potential functions. The main task was to explore two obligatory functions of the space: the dramaturgical function of the stair, as an element that invites movement and experience, and the ambient function of the structure, to examine how the structural elements simultaneously define and enhance the spatial atmosphere. In addition to these two functions, students were invited to select a third function of their choice, while still operating without a clearly defined utilitarian programme.

5.2.1 Analysis: The Observer

The summer semester of 2025 occurred amidst ongoing political and social unrest in Serbia, triggered by the collapse of the Railway Station canopy in November 2024.⁶ It was therefore inevitable that some students would seek to engage with this context through their responses to the competition brief.

One such project, titled *The Observer*, was situated in front of the Primary Court in Novi Sad, a focal point of intense protests and public gatherings during the summer of 2025. Responding to the polarised societal climate and the frustration generated by the presence of so-called “politically neutral” individuals, the students identified a common pathway taken by such individuals: a route that bypasses the focal point of the protests. This very route became the location of their architectural intervention.

The structure was designed as a linear pathway, with a clearly defined beginning and end (Figure 4). The starting point was chosen to align with the usual bypassing route, while the culmination directed users straight towards the main entrance of the Court. Through multiple changes in level and direction, the structure acquired a distinctly subversive quality: what initially appears as a shortcut or a step away from social turbulence ultimately becomes the most direct confrontation with it. The student authors⁷ describe the project as follows:

“The installation, placed opposite the court, exposes the thin line between neutrality and duty. It appears as an exit—an underground corridor, a tempting refuge

⁶ The tragedy led to the loss of 16 lives and severe injury to one person. This triggered the biggest student-led protests in the history of Serbia, which transformed into a general movement asking for a corruption-free society and fair institutions.

⁷ Authors of the project *The Observer*: Barbara Vegše, Đurđina Kukolj, Isidora Labus, second-year architecture students. The project was shortlisted in the *The Architect's Stair #2* competition in 2025.

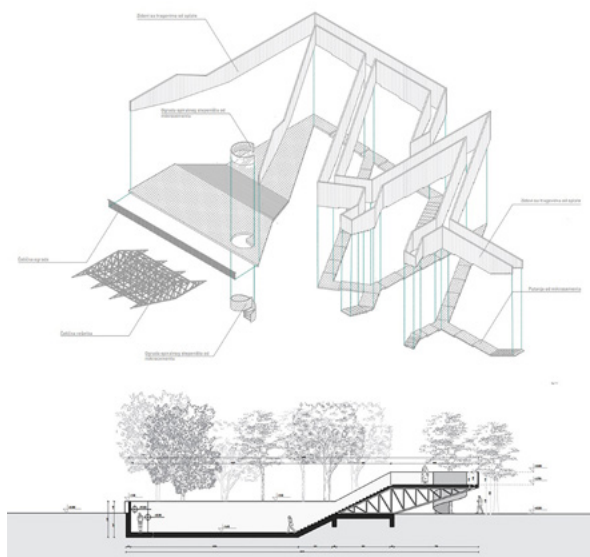


Figure 4 The Observer—the structural axonometric drawing of the paths and platforms that build the dramaturgy of the movement, from the initial idea of bypassing the protests, to inevitable confrontation with the situation (top), and the section through the platform at the end of the path (bottom). Source: Barbara Vegše, Đurđina Kukolj, Isidora Labus, 2025.

from protests. Yet the passage deceives: blind turns and dead ends trap visitors in the illusion of choice. The more one tries to escape, the more meaningless the attempt becomes.” (...) “the path does not lead to liberation but to revelation: a raised steel platform aligned with the court façade forces the observer to face the protests. The message is clear—there is no neutrality, no refuge, no freedom in silence.” (Vegše, et al., 2025)

The structure integrates with the surrounding greenery, avoiding the destruction of existing trees (Figure 5a), and functions almost as urban furniture from the ground level (Figure 5b). The “interior” of the installation forms a sunken space, painted in a striking teal, comprising a network of ascents, descents, and pathways that guide the user to the end of the route (Figure 5c). The materialisation combines reinforced concrete for the semi-underground passageways with lighter steel trusses forming the elevated platform from which the observer confronts the Court.

This project responds to a highly sensitive social and political context in a subversive, and at times, even humorous manner, while simultaneously achieving a powerful effect in confronting so-called ‘neutral’ individuals with a situation of profound societal urgency. All of this is accomplished through the design of the architectural elements themselves, embracing the lack of utilitarian function in the very concept of the structure: “This staircase was not designed for use, but for confrontation.” (Vegše, et al., 2025)

5.3 The Synthesis

The analysis of projects developed over two consecutive school years within the course Architectural Technologies – Design Process reveals both the spatial qualities achieved and the expanded roles of



Figure 5 The structure of The Observer (a) the starting point of the path, (b) the view of the structure within its context, (c) the final ascent towards the platform that aligns the user with the main entrance to the Primal Court. Source: Barbara Vegše, Đurđina Kukolj, Isidora Labus, 2025.

construction elements. By focusing on the additional functions that structural elements can assume within the designed spaces, the case studies demonstrate the emergence of the following functions:

1. The ambient function of construction elements—particularly evident in Shamash, where the deliberate placement of gaps and pauses between structural elements produces distinct articulations of texture, light, and shadow. The ambient function relates to the notion of atmosphere and, in the analysed projects, examines how architectural elements in general, and structural elements in particular, contribute to the formation of specific spatial ambiances.

2. The scenic function of construction elements—highlighted in Garden Retreat, achieved through the interplay between open and enclosed spaces, inside and outside, and the visual layering of spaces through the depth of the inhabitant's gaze. The scenic function relates to capacity of architecture to constitute a scene—a specific point of interest and a composed visual condition that can be perceived from a defined viewpoint. In the Garden Retreat project, this is achieved in particular through the deliberate use of framing as a tool: carefully designed openings in the walls create architectural frames that transform spatial relationships into perceptible compositions.

3. The dramaturgical function of construction elements—present in all three projects, but most prominently explored in The Observer. This function describes how spatial sequences articulated through

structural elements guide movement, direct perception, and shape user engagement. It foregrounds action, describing the ways in which architecture generates and modulates gestures, trajectories, and forms of occupation. It therefore presupposes movement and an active bodily condition, in which users are immersed within space.

4. The subversive function of spaces and their construction elements—particularly pronounced in *The Observer*, illustrating the capacity of architecture and its structural elements to embody the intentions of the designer and challenge problematic social systems, using the very tools of those systems against them.

5. The textual function (narrative and/or performative)—highlighting how architecture and its structural elements can serve as explicit political statements or generate multiple meanings and narratives, ranging from residential contexts and the textuality of dwelling within specific constraints to broader political and social commentary. The textual, narrative, and performative functions are closely interrelated yet conceptually distinct: textual refers to the inherent textuality of any built form and operates as an overarching function, while narrative and performative emerge as its subcategories, demonstrating architecture's capacity to reflect meanings and to actively produce them. In the analysed examples, architectural textuality is approached through varying modalities, from relatively passive symbolic reflection to the active production of meanings and effects in relation to users.

As a counterpoint to these case studies, it is useful to consider the typical outcome of the traditional syllabus prior to its transformation. One of the key exercises aimed to connect students' previously developed single-family house designs with the Architectural Technologies course through the application of a load-bearing masonry system and its associated constraints. In practice, this meant that designs completed in an earlier semester were retroactively adapted to meet structural requirements.

This process revealed several limitations. Since the original designs were not developed with structural constraints in mind, the subsequent application of a load-bearing system, often combined with the requirement of pitched wooden roofs, meant that significant modifications were needed. As a result, the design process and the development of construction logic remained sequential rather than integrated. While the exercise often achieved technical correctness, it frequently led to compromised architectural quality, as students were required to substantially alter their initial concepts. Consequently, the intended integration between courses was not fully realised.

For a clearer overview of the analysed examples, their construction systems, and associated functions, alongside a comparison with a typical representative of the traditional syllabus, a comparative table is presented below.

The comparison illustrates a fundamental difference between the two pedagogical approaches. In the traditional syllabus, the emphasis on predefined technical constraints often resulted in forced adaptations of the design, sometimes at the expense of its conceptual and spatial coherence. Although these projects demonstrated a degree of technical competence, they rarely engaged with the broader functional potentials of structural systems, such as ambient, scenic, or narrative roles. Moreover, students frequently struggled to preserve the integrity of their initial design intentions.

In contrast, the revised syllabus promotes the simultaneous development of structural, conceptual, and spatial thinking. Rather than treating construction as a subsequent layer, it positions structural systems as active generators of architectural meaning. This shift enables a broader functional plurality, in which technical knowledge is not only applied correctly but also mobilised creatively within the design process.

Table 1 Comparative view of functions achieved by structural systems in the analysed projects and their relation to specific task constraints, including a comparison with a typical representative of the traditional syllabus. Source: The authors, 2025.

	Shamash	Garden Retreat	The Observer	A typical representative of the traditional syllabus
Structural system	Load-bearing masonry walls	Load-bearing masonry walls	Combination of reinforced concrete and steel	Load-bearing masonry walls
Programme	Residential	Residential	None/Confrontation	Residential
Specific restrictions	No artificial light	No artificial light	The lack of programmatic determination of the structure, in terms of utilitarian function	Standard technical constraints
Functions of the structural elements	Ambient function; Demarcation; Dramaturgical function; Load bearing.	Scenic function (framing of views, layering of spaces); Defining spatial zones within the floor plan; Ambient function; Load bearing.	Subversive function; Dramaturgical function; Scenic function; Performative function; Load bearing.	Load-bearing; Demarcation

6 The Unexpected Result – Potentials of Non-Utility

Although the course did not initially aim to explore the potentials of non-utility in architectural design, after several years of implementation and reflection on the most successful student projects, it became evident that the most creative and diverse outcomes emerged when tasks incorporated conditions of reduced or suspended utility. In the case of the Home of Shadows, the restriction on artificial light, while not directly negating the functional logic of domestic space, introduced an extreme condition within the context of contemporary residential architecture. In conventional terms, such a constraint can be understood as potentially undermining standard notions of habitability.

Similarly, The Architect's Stair, with its focus on narrative and experiential qualities, inspired a more explicit exploration of functions of space beyond the purely utilitarian. This observation can be seen as a validation of theoretical claims that secondary functions in architecture become particularly prominent when the primary (utilitarian) function is either questioned or absent (Barthes, 1997, p. 166).

Within this framework, non-utility emerges as a productive pedagogical instrument for foregrounding the multiplicity of architectural functions and the expanded role of structural elements. Rather than being understood as the absence of function, non-utility operates as a temporary methodological condition that shifts attention away from immediate programmatic resolution towards latent, secondary, and emergent functions of architecture.

In pedagogical terms, this shift has two main implications. First, the reduction of complex utilitarian constraints enables greater freedom in structural and spatial experimentation, particularly in the early stages of architectural education. Second, it enhances students' awareness of secondary functions as integral components of architectural production, making their intentional deployment more explicit and legible within the design process.

When articulated with clear intention, these functional layers contribute to a more complex understanding of architectural programmes as systems of interrelated spatial, conceptual, and structural operations. In this context, students are able to integrate structural thinking more consistently across different stages of design development.

While the findings presented here are grounded in several years of teaching practice and reflect the perspective of the teaching team, they also indicate directions for further research, particularly regarding the long-term influence of this methodology on students' subsequent design approaches in later stages of their studies.

Within this research, non-utility functions as a methodological device applied selectively within specific design exercises to reveal latent architectural potentials. Its aim is not to negate or replace utilitarian concerns, but rather to complement them by strengthening students' capacity to engage with complex, multi-layered design problems in later, functionally driven contexts.

7 Conclusion

The introduction of theoretical models for thinking about architectural design, specifically, the Theory of Functions in Architecture, combined with the intentional embrace of non-utility as an extreme condition that encourages more creative responses, constitutes a form of "disprogramming" within a course dedicated to structural systems and their logic. This approach aligns with Bernard Tschumi's concepts of cross-programming, trans-programming, and disprogramming (Tschumi, 1994), in which unexpected events or functions are introduced into spaces not originally intended to accommodate them, allowing new qualities and intensities of space to emerge.

Applied to a curriculum design, this disprogramming operates through the integration of themes not typically associated with courses on structural systems—such as secondary functions, dramaturgical or ambient roles of architecture—into the study of structural logic itself. This method allows for the specific qualities and potentials of construction elements to emerge, revealing a deliberate intentionality behind their implementation. Ultimately, the principal aim of the course was to cultivate an understanding of structural systems not only as technical frameworks, but also as active contributors to architectural experience, conceptual development, and spatial expression.

This paper presents, analyses, and evaluates a replicable pedagogical model for integrating structural technologies, conceptual design, and secondary architectural functions through syllabus disprogramming. Based on several consecutive years of implementation, it positions non-utility as both a pedagogical device and an extension of the Theory of Functions in Architecture within technical education. The findings suggest that non-utility can serve as a productive methodological condition for bridging structural thinking and design processes in architectural education.

Potential drawbacks of this approach lie primarily in the risk of overemphasising conceptual experimentation at the expense of technical rigour. However, the curriculum was deliberately structured to maintain a balance between technically rigorous assignments and conceptually driven tasks, particularly through competition-based exercises. The pedagogical issue initially identified by the teaching team—the insufficient integration of structural knowledge into the design process during third-year studies—was addressed on two levels. First, the syllabus transformation itself was conceived as the active integration of structural, conceptual, and programmatic thinking within a single curriculum, rather than assuming such integration would occur naturally across separate courses. Second, the application of previously acquired knowledge was explicitly examined through the semester's final exercise: participation in an international architectural competition.

Although the teaching team no longer directly supervises third-year design studios and therefore could not measure the long-term effects on subsequent student performance, the final exercise served as an evaluative framework for assessing transferability. As

an open-ended brief allowing the use of any structural system or combination thereof, it tested students' ability to synthesise structural knowledge with design thinking. Through comparative observation across cohorts, students demonstrated increased capacity for structural integration, with projects exhibiting stronger structural intentionality and expanded functional awareness. Compared with earlier approaches characterised by generic or hyper-constrained applications of structural systems, these outcomes suggest improved preparedness for more complex design tasks.

While the long-term impact on third-year studio performance remains an open question for future research, the results presented here do not claim to constitute a complete pedagogical solution. Rather, the paper proposes and preliminarily validates a transferable pedagogical model for addressing similar challenges in architectural education, particularly in contexts where structural and design-based knowledge remain insufficiently integrated.

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EDUTOPIA – New Methods for the Design Studio

EDUTOPIA - Nove metode za projektni studio

Jana Čulek

Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, Croatia
jculek@arhitekt.hr | orcid.org/0009-0009-2212-2758

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Abstract Situating itself within the theoretical and methodological framework of the ongoing “EDUTOPIA – Utopia as Educational Practice in Architecture: New Methods for Envisioning Transformational Change” research project, the paper builds on the hypothesis that architectural and spatial education can and must move beyond technical and product-focused training towards the development of transversal and critical thinking. It suggests that this should be done predominantly by employing speculative and utopian modes of thinking and methods of practice. Taking as a broader aim the need to equip future practitioners with the means of not only producing built space but also addressing and engaging with urgent social and spatial challenges, the methods developed for the design studio within the scope of the project aim to integrate insights and approaches from architecture and urbanism with those of the humanities fields. Developing a framework for experimental design studio assignments, the project brings together creative methods from utopia, fiction, and other speculative and narrative-based forms.

This paper brings forth both the methodological structure of the project, some of the initial findings as well as some ongoing outputs from the design studio. Exploring the discursive and speculative potential of the architectural discipline and placing focus on its potential to actively engage with a larger array of both spatial and societal topics, EDUTOPIA treats the design studio as a space for critical inquiry and imaginative world-building – a place for problematizing, and not merely problem-solving. Focusing more on systems, processes, and interconnections, rather than finalized and embodied products the methods and approaches developed through the design studio assignments aim to challenge conventional pedagogies and expand the role of spatial education in preparing students for spatial practice as a form of societal and cultural engagement and transformation.

Keywords spatial education; utopia as critical method; utopian pedagogy; speculative design; design studio.

Sažetak Situiraajući se unutar teorijskog i metodološkog okvira istraživačkog projekta „EDUTOPIA – Utopia as Educational Practice in Architecture: New Methods for Envisioning Transformational Change“, rad polazi od pretpostavke da arhitektonsko i prostorno obrazovanje može i mora nadići tehnički usmjerenu nastavu i fokus na izgrađenu formu kao krajnji rezultat te se usmjeriti prema razvoju transverzalnog i kritičkog mišljenja. Predlaže to prvenstveno ostvariti primjenom spekulativnih i utopijskih načina promišljanja te odgovarajućih metoda rada. Polazeći od šireg cilja osposobljavanja budućih stručnjaka ne samo za oblikovanje izgrađenog prostora nego i za suočavanje s gorućim društvenim i prostornim izazovima te aktivno uključivanje u njihovo rješavanje, metode razvijene za projektni studio u okviru istraživanja nastoje povezati spoznaje i pristupe arhitekture i urbanizma s onima iz humanističkih disciplina. Razvijajući okvir za eksperimentalne zadatke u projektnih studija, Edutopia objedinjuje kreativne metode preuzete iz utopije, fikcije te drugih spekulativnih i narativnih formi.

Tekst koji proizlazi iz inicijalnih faza ovog istraživanja predstavlja metodološku strukturu projekta, neke od njegovih početnih nalaza te pojedine rezultate koji nastaju u okviru projektnog studija. Istražujući diskurzivni i spekulativni potencijal arhitektonske discipline te naglašavajući njezinu sposobnost aktivnog uključivanja u širi spektar prostornih i društvenih tema, Edutopia promatra projektni studio kao prostor kritičkog propitivanja i imaginativnog oblikovanja mogućih svjetova – mjesto za problematizaciju, a ne samo za rješavanje već definiranih problema. Fokusirajući se prije svega na sustave, procese i međusobne povezanosti, a manje na dovršene i materijalizirane forme, metode i pristupi razvijeni kroz zadatke projektnog studija nastoje dovesti u pitanje konvencionalne pedagoške modele te proširiti ulogu arhitektonskog obrazovanja s ciljem pripreme studenata za prostornu praksu shvaćenu kao oblik društvenog i kulturnog angažmana i transformacije.

Ključne riječi prostorno obrazovanje; utopija kao kritička metoda; utopijska pedagogija; spekulativni dizajn; projektantski studio.

1 Introduction – Architecture as a Critical and Discursive Practice

Within the contemporary context architecture – as a spatial discipline which focuses predominantly on the production and innovation of built forms – is being increasingly recognized as a field which exerts a significant effect on our overall environment. And while the engagement of architectural discipline in the efforts to mitigate the effects of climate crisis and to address some of the most relevant socio-spatial issues of today is steadily increasing, the focus is often geared only towards employing architecture's technical side by developing more sustainable building practices. This is done either through the reuse of existing building stock and materials, by designing carbon neutral or even carbon negative structures, or through designing smart buildings and cities which develop and integrate innovative technologies aimed at optimizing various aspects of utilities consumption, infrastructure, and mobility. And while these goals and attempts are noteworthy, by focusing on and employing predominantly the engineering aspect of architecture, these approaches often neglect the potential of the discipline's social, political, cultural, and economic role, as well as its discursive, artistic and transdisciplinary side. They therefore fail to employ architecture's potential to act as a discipline for critical and reflective spatial and societal visioning through imagining and proposing new futures and ways of living for our (built) environment and its inhabitants – human or other.

Although architecture, as a creative spatial discipline, is often broadly perceived as inherently “utopian” due to its projective nature, future oriented outlook, and its assumed intention to create an improved condition, it lacks some of the main utopian attributes. Within practice, the majority of architectural production operates within existing regulatory, economic, and cultural constraints, more often engaging in incremental adaptation rather than the critical rehaul and reimagination of socio-spatial conditions. In many cases, especially in the case of large-scale projects which are often described as “visionary” or even “utopian”, architecture often does not question or challenge the status quo. Rather, it tends to operate as another layer which enforces and solidifies already existing systems of power. In that sense, utopia is less an intrinsic quality of architecture as a discipline, but more a specific and intentional mode of inquiry that must be deliberately activated. From an educational perspective, most architectural schools – especially those which are more technically focused – base their curriculum on developing problem-solving, rather than problematizing skills, teaching students how to solve specific predetermined briefs and assignments, with little room left for questioning or reflection.

Focusing precisely on this experimental and speculative – utopian – side and potential of the architectural discipline, the ongoing research project “EDUTOPIA – Utopia as Educational Practice in Architecture: New Methods for Envisioning Transformational Change”¹ aims to develop and test novel ways of re-establishing the critical and discursive role of architecture in

imagining the futures for our (built) environment(s). Situating the research within architectural and spatial education, the project builds on the hypothesis that education can and must move beyond technical and product-focused training towards the development of transversal and critical thinking, predominantly by employing speculative and utopian modes of thought and methods of practice. Taking as a broader aim the need to equip future practitioners with the means to not only produce built space, but to also address and engage with urgent social and spatial challenges, the methods developed for the design studio within the scope of the project integrate insights and approaches from architecture and urbanism with those of the humanities fields. Developing a framework for experimental design studio assignments, the project aims to bring together creative methods from utopia, fiction, and other speculative and narrative-based forms. Exploring the discursive and speculative potential of the architectural discipline and placing focus on actively engaging with a larger array of spatial and societal topics, EDUTOPIA treats the design studio as a space for critical inquiry and imaginative world-building – a place for problematizing, and not merely problem-solving. Focusing on systems, processes, and interconnections, rather than finalized and embodied products the methods and approaches developed through the design studio assignments aim to challenge conventional pedagogies and expand the role of spatial education in preparing students for spatial practice as a form of societal and cultural engagement and transformation.

As a research project, EDUTOPIA operates on two distinct yet interconnected levels: it explores how utopian thinking can inform the pedagogical structure of architectural and spatial education, while also developing concrete ways of teaching students to actively employ utopia as a critical method of thinking and imagining within their own spatial disciplines. Instead of approaching utopia as merely an idealized model of a distant future, the project engages with it as a methodological framework within which students learn to speculate, narrate, and critically reimagine socio-spatial conditions which they encounter or are confronted with. Our central question therefore is not how to design an ideal future (city), but rather how to teach students the methods to imagine and develop critical utopian narratives of alternative socio-spatial realities, which move beyond the obvious and probable, but still remain attentive to the conditions of their present context. While the EDUTOPIA project is now only in its initial stages, the aim of this paper is to establish some of its benchmarks and starting points.

The paper builds on the concept of utopia, which in the framework of the research is not seen as an individual fancy, but as a critical method for reflecting on our own past and present with the aim of envisioning a better or

¹ EDUTOPIA – Utopia as Educational Practice in Architecture: New Methods for Envisioning Transformational Change is a post-doctoral research project led by dr.sc. Jana Čulek at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. The project is funded through the DIGIT Seal of Excellence under the Synergies Program of the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education, and Youth and the World Bank (DIGIT.2.2.01.001.)

different future. After creating a framework for defining utopia as a critical method, the paper examines it within the context of (architectural) pedagogy. Observing utopian pedagogy as an approach which often appears outside of architectural education and situates itself more commonly within the humanities and social sciences fields, the paper speculates on potential ways in which some of these approaches and methods could be translated into architectural and spatial education, and through which means. This process is structured through the reflection on some of the main approaches and methods developed for the EDUTOPIA project. Lastly, the paper lays out the initial and ongoing design studio assignment within the scope of the project – Utopian Laboratory Ilica - reflecting on the structure and aims of the course, as well as some of the early student outcomes.

2 Developing Utopian Pedagogy

2.1 Defining Utopia as a Critical Method

Approaching the topic of architectural and spatial education through the framework of utopia as a critical method, requires a short reflection on how utopia as a concept is understood within the framework of the EDUTOPIA research and this paper. When examining the utopian impulse to envision a society and space which is in some way better than our own, we see that it can be dated as far back as Plato's Republic (Mumford, 1922; Manuel, Manuel, 1997). The name of this impulse, however, at least in the scope that we recognize it in today, was first established through the 1516. literary work of Thomas More which describes the imaginary island Utopia (Manuel, Manuel, 1997). As a creative, critical, and speculative form utopia has developed predominantly within literature, but has also appeared in other creative disciplines such as architecture, art, and more recently – film and the graphic novel. The name itself – utopia – deriving from the ancient Greek topos, meaning “place”, and the prefix ouk meaning “not”, automatically defines it in spatial terms as “a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial” (Viera, 2010,4). In addition to utopia as a concept describing a more perfect place outside of our own, several other correlated concepts have appeared in the last several centuries such as that of dystopias, anti-utopias, critical utopias (James, 2003; Vieira, 2010), and heterotopias (Foucault, 1967). And while the depictions of these other ‘topias’ and the alternative worlds they envision differ from the ideal utopian image, the majority of them is based on the same intention – to pose a critical reflection on a specific historical and spatial context, its social and spatial forms² (Čulek, 2022), with the aim of depicting an alternative futurescape.

Throughout centuries, utopias have offered some of the most innovative, thought-provoking and critical solutions which, albeit mostly not indented for immediate realization, created a much-needed trigger and inspiration for long term transformational change.

However, proposing a fixed and encompassing definition for utopia as a form presents itself as difficult, given that what constitutes a utopia often varies according to the creative field within which it emerges, but also the historical period in which it is created. Within recent decades there have been various attempts to frame it within the architectural field (Coleman, 2005; Choay, 1997), critical theory (Jameson, 2005; Marin, 1984) and within literature (Claeys, 2020; Vieira, 2010; Levitas, 1990, 2013; Suvin, 1979).

Building on these insights, within the context of the EDUTOPIA project, utopia is therefore defined not as a finished product or an idealized image of a perfect world, but as a critical method which simultaneously reflects on, and opens up, the context within which it is situated, while proposing an alternative for it. Through the topics it addresses and the social and spatial forms it develops, utopia becomes bound to the socio-spatial and historical context from which it emerges. Actively addressing this context utopia becomes a tool for rethinking our (built) environment and societies with the aim of creating a critical reflection on their past and present and offering a speculative alternative for their future. Avoiding focusing on only isolated aspects and processes of the built environment, utopias employ their critical and creative capacity to encompass a much wider array of spatial and societal implications and forms which they often address through the combined use of textual and visual narratives – making them a valuable tool in addressing today's context of complex poly-crises. Acknowledging the complexity, multifacetedness, and diversity ingrained in today's society, as well as all the negative repercussions and connotations tied to the production of totalizing narratives, this paper argues that novel ways of employing utopia as a critical method within spatial practice still can and need to be researched, developed, and evaluated.

2.2 Utopian Pedagogy

Acknowledging utopia's capacity for addressing complex socio-spatial issues and its value as a tool and method in various creative practices, it is also relevant to address its potential as an educational model. When examining today's approaches in architectural education, we can detect two main avenues based on the focus of the institution itself: the first, in

2 The concepts of social and spatial forms build upon both the concepts of form from architecture as well as those from comparative literature – specifically those of Caroline Levine (2015) who proposes to “broaden our definition of form to include social arrangements”. They therefore include all manners, configurations, organization principles, and repetitive patterns of the behavior of humans or other living things, and as such do not generally have a tangible spatial manifestation. They also include cyclical and other rhythms, societal and other hierarchies, political, educational, health and other systems and groups, as well as theoretical concepts which describe or refer to human behavior such as industrialization, alienation, mass production, religion, and others. Conversely, spatial forms include all types, scales, and manners of forms which have a physical manifestation in space such as buildings, cities, infrastructure, structural systems, geography, planets, objects, etc. (Čulek, 2020, 2022, 2023).

which employs a [1] “problem solving (application)” approach that relies more precisely on methods which provide solutions for specific predefined problems and are more akin to “hard science disciplines”, and the [2] “problem framing (development)” approach which focuses more on investigating abstract problems which rely more on a “hunch” instead of relating “to an existing or established field of knowledge and methods” (Helmersen, 2021). The first is more akin to a client brief and prepares students for the practical side of building-based architectural practice. By offering a set of defined spatial requirements intended for a specific function at a predefined location as an assignment, this approach teaches students practical design skills and the implementation of standards, norms, and defined technical solutions. Conversely, the second approach is often based on abstract philosophical notions and – in some cases – does not even require a spatial solution from the students, but merely a theoretical and conceptual speculation or scenario. These types of assignments are often nominally aimed at the development of research skills, critical thinking, and creativity, but sometimes fail at providing students with methods of implementing these new skills and knowledge within the “real world”. And while both sets of skills are of utmost importance for the future spatial practitioner, it is in fact the overlap and simultaneous use of these two approaches within the framework of the design studio which is often lacking. This convergence of speculation and critical examination with the envisioning of concrete and possibly implementable solutions and strategies is precisely that which could educate and equip future experts and practitioners to actively envision and create positive transformational change within the global environment.

2.2.1 Utopia as Process or Destination

When examining utopian pedagogy³ as a specific field, especially within the context of the last several decades, two distinct forms of utopian teaching appear – one which focuses on the methodological aspects of utopia and what it affords as a form, and the other focusing on the prescriptive outcomes it depicts. The two often have many names, depending on the author which discusses them. But this paper will focus on two perhaps most illustrative opposing nomenclatures, namely “utopia as process” versus “utopia as system” (Webb, 2013 based on Levitas, 2007) and “utopian archaeology” versus “utopian architecture”⁴ (Webb, 2017). Webb describes “utopia as process” as “open-ended”, “fluid and partial”, “exploratory”, “playful”, and “critical” with its main aim being that of “critical demystification – uncovering, unveiling, unmasking

the operation of power so that new, open partial, fluid, spaces of possibility can emerge” (Webb, 2013, 282). Similarly, the concept of “utopian archaeology”, derived from the works of Frederic Jameson (2005) and Ruth Levitas (2013) also focuses on the process of uncovering and unearthing what is already there – making things and connections evident, to provide them a space of becoming. “Utopia as system” is conversely described as “representational”, “totalistic”, “normative”, “prescriptive”, and “instrumental” (Webb, 2013, 281) and often alluded to as problematic or “bad”, due to its seemingly prescriptive nature and content which aims to propose actual alternatives to its contextual social and spatial forms, practicing thus the “indignity of speaking for others” (Webb, 2013, 283).

In today’s architectural context, the “utopia as system” or “utopia as architecture” is most commonly addressed through pejorative terms, abandoned as a method or approach due to its seeming totalitarian, rigid, and prescriptive overtones. The utopian has, as Webb proposes in the terms of Jameson, “shifted away from the ‘utopian form’ and towards the ‘utopian wish’”, and is “no longer concerned with constructing systems and programs but seeks to uncover the diffuse, varied and ambiguous utopian impulse to be found in subjective human experience” (Webb, 2017, 553; Jameson, 2005). An alternative path to uncovering potential reasons for this shift away from a more prescriptive form of utopian narratives, aside from the most common interpretation which links it to the disillusionment and failure of the modern movement and utopia following the atrocities of the Second World War, is offered by Ford and Svensson (2024). Reflecting on a contemporary return to the topic of utopia “in scholarship across the political spectrum” (Ford, Svensson, 2024, 562), they link the gravitation towards the “utopia as archaeology” and “utopia as process” – or what they critically term as “good utopias” with the capitalist condition of the perpetual present and “the prison of the now” (Ford, Svensson, 2024, 574) in which the goal is one of constant reinvention and replication of the present. But similarly to Webb, who calls for a combination of both approaches if we are to see or envision any actual change, Ford and Svensson also state that “to reclaim the essence of utopia, education must combine imagination and action, and openness with direction, imagination, and struggle [...] sinking head-first into the dialectical tension between denouncing and announcing” (Ford, Svensson, 2024, 568).

Utopia as Process		Utopia as System
Utopia as Archaeology		Utopia as Architecture
“Good” Utopia		“Bad” Utopia
Open-ended		Representational
Fluid and Partial	vs	Totalistic
Exploratory		Normative
Playful		Prescriptive
Critical		Instrumental
Unveiling		Blueprint

Figure 1 Comparison of Utopian Concepts, Source: Jana Čulek, 2025.

³ The term utopian pedagogy was coined by Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (Webb, 2013).

⁴ It is important to note that the concept of “utopian architecture” which Webb refers to is not related to the field of production, but rather the process of its creation. When discussing “utopian architecture” Webb discusses a process of utopian pedagogy which focuses not on the process of uncovering and problematizing, but one which offers concrete solutions or “blueprints”.

2.2.2 Approaching Architectural Education

Considering that most scholarship on utopian pedagogies does not stem from the architectural field and is therefore more focused on developing approaches for teaching and for designing curricula, it is important, within the framework of this paper and the context of the EDUTOPIA research project, to re-situate this topic within the context of the architectural discipline. Given the specificity of the architectural teaching process – one which requires transferring to students a combination of critical and imaginative as well as practical skills, the question arises: is it really possible to address spatial and architectural education within the context of utopian pedagogy without employing the approaches of both “utopia as process” and “utopia as system”? The answer of course, which also aligns with what Webb, as well as Ford and Svensson call for, is – no. One of the main goals of “utopia as process” and “archaeology” is to untangle and open-up one’s context, allowing for new things to occur within it just through making them evident as a possibility. But how do these possibilities play out if one does not propose, at the very least, a type of framework or direction? As Webb also concludes, within the process of opening up and “creating space”, it often occurs that “one seems to be left with is the practice of creating spaces devoid of content (‘radically open’) and lacking direction (‘always in process’), urging us to pose the question: “what actually happens in these spaces?” (Webb, 2017, 559).

Drawing a parallel between “utopia as system” – sometimes also “blueprint utopia” – Webb addresses one of the perhaps most common misconceptions about these types of utopias: namely that they are created as set instructions which impose the will of an individual onto the many. Noting that “architectural blueprints [...] do not arrive as an authoritarian imposition from above” but that they are rather “the outcome of a long iterative process of consultation and collaboration”, he proposes that – within this framework – the “role of the utopian pedagogue is guiding and directing this iterative process” (Webb, 2017, 560). As a method of doing this, he proposes the process of “convoking⁵ the radical imagination, animating, enlivening, drawing together, and building on the inchoate utopian imaginings” (Webb, 2017, 561). And as a method for this process, he proposes the construction of narratives and storytelling stating that “the issue is not simply to exhume what has been buried – it is how to take dreams, desires, hopes and fears and tie them together to construct a narrative that resonates, motivates and guides” (Webb, 2017, 562). Combining both the process of questioning, uncovering, “denouncing and announcing”, projecting, and visioning, he proposes to: “...call this vivid image a blueprint and let us say that the role of utopian pedagogy is to guide and direct a collective and collaborative process of memory- and story-making, pulling together – through a process of convocation and extrapolation – disparate inchoate dreams and yearnings in order to produce something

new; a substantive utopian vision.” (Webb, 2017, 562)

Reintroducing storytelling and narrative as both a practical and creative method into the process of architectural education and the design studio, therefore, also allows us to more productively access utopia as a critical and creative tool and method. But aside from its utopian potentials, storytelling as a method employed within architectural and spatial education has great potential. It is multifaceted and makes use of “creativity” through the development of “content”, “communication” through the “expression” of the story itself (verbally, visually, or textually), and “reflection” which occurs through the “interaction with others” (Lee et.al, 2023, 3). And while storytelling has been increasingly used in recent years as a method within architectural and urban design studios, it is still most commonly employed as a way of representing the student’s work which was developed in response to a set brief, as a way of summarizing the research and analysis process preceding the design, or as a method of justifying one’s design decisions. But, as is evident from its potential within utopian pedagogy, storytelling and narrative as design methods also have numerous benefits for students, including the improvement of their “creativity and communication skills”, allowing them to “develop unique design approaches and methods in a coherent manner”, enabling them to “emphasize spatial sequence and spatial experience rather than form-oriented architecture”, while also improving their “decision-making and problem-solving abilities” (Lee et.al., 2023, 2). As the EDUTOPIA project hopes to demonstrate, storytelling and narratives – especially when conceived through the critical utopian format – in the context of architectural and spatial education also enables students to imagine and construct more complex systems of ideas, introduce topics and methods from other disciplines, while allowing them to develop overall more responsive and critically positioned proposals.

2.2.3 Developing Pedagogical Instruments

Learning from both the insights of utopian pedagogy, as well as a broader understanding of utopia as a critical method, the EDUTOPIA project evolves through developing and employing an array of interrelated pedagogical and design instruments whose aim is to operationalize utopian thinking as both a critical and projective practice – embodying both the “archaeology” and the “architecture”, the “process” and the “project”. By developing novel pedagogical approaches and design methods, the research aims to position itself as different from standard architectural and design pedagogy and practice, which mostly prioritize problem-solving, and often depart from a clear and well-defined designed task. The courses developed within the scope of the EDUTOPIA project, while aiming to depart from specific real-world sites and conditions, will however not begin with specific problems, programs, or end-goals in mind. Rather, these will also be uncovered and defined through the process of both critical reading and speculation together with the various speculative scenarios.

Through a series of planned design studio courses and workshops, the project will develop and employ both site-

⁵ Webb defines ‘convoking’ through the work of Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) as a process of “call[ing] something which is not yet fully present into being” (Webb, 2017, 561).

based analytical exercises as well as narrative and design techniques which will prompt students to iteratively move between the process of diagnosis and uncovering, and that of speculation and design. Additionally, the project will aim to establish a continuous feedback process which will encourage the students to continually reframe and question both the problems and contexts they are dealing with and the proposals they devise – to both problematize and problem-solve. Guided to think and act utopically through a staged and iterative process of critical reading and speculative strategizing, instead of merely creating abstract and idealistic design projection, the project will teach students that design speculation and critical inquiry function as a complex, intentional, and iterative entanglement through which we simultaneously reflect on our present socio-spatial conditions, and imagine scenarios for different emergent futures.

3 Utopian Laboratory Ilica

Building on the concept of utopia as a critical method, but with the consideration that criticality and the process of “opening up”, questioning, and making evident should not be considered the final results of any utopian pedagogical exercise, and that these should in fact require some format of visioning and a proposition of a better future, this paper reflects on the initial design studio assignment which took place within the framework of the EDUTOPIA project. The design studio titled “Utopian Laboratory Ilica” was held together with prof.dr.sc. Mia Roth Čerina at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb, with students of the third semester of the Master program and within the format of the “Istraživanje, seminari, projekti: Arhitektura” [Research, Seminars, Projects: Architecture] course. The overall course which the “Utopian Laboratory Ilica” is part of is conceived as a collection of design and research studios which vary in topic and scope, each developed individually by a member of the teaching staff, with students freely choosing a group based on their own interests and available topics. With its relatively open format, this course presented itself as an ideal initial testing ground in which some of the starting hypothesis of the EDUTOPIA project could be tested within the standard format of architectural education, but without the need to conform to already predetermined programmatic assignments. It is important to note, however, that at the time of writing this paper, while the course has been finalized, the process of reflection and evaluation is still ongoing. This paper therefore offers only an initial reflection on its results and successfulness in conveying utopia as a critical method and as a pedagogical approach in architectural and spatial education.

The locus of the first iteration of this design studio was the Ilica street in Zagreb which was chosen for several reasons. Namely, as one of the longest streets in the city of Zagreb, it was given as a location due to its size, relevance, and heterogeneity. Spreading from the city center – its main square – all the way to its western periphery, it encompasses an array of scales and typologies varying from historical inner-city blocks, through large public spaces, parks, more contemporary housing, various public buildings and institution, to

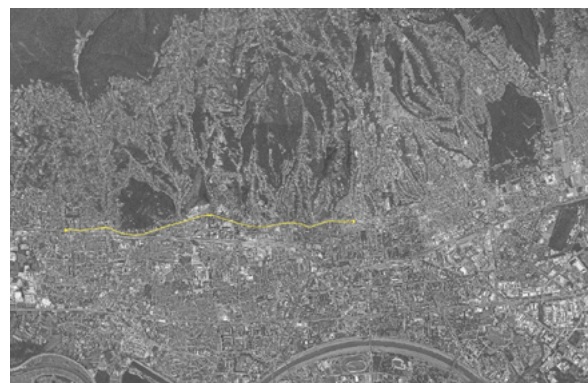


Figure 2 Map of Zagreb with the Indication of Ilica street, Jana Čulek, 2026.

functioning or abandoned industrial sites, single-family dwellings, unbuilt areas, and large infrastructural surfaces. Additionally, it forms perhaps the clearest border between the lower and flat part of the city and its hilly and mountainous area, together with its parks, forests, and green recreational zones. In other words, the street is rich enough in content to provide the students with an array of possible avenues for research and design without offering any obvious or predetermined paths. While it provided students with a concrete location from which they can begin their inquiry, it also became merely a location which is heterogenous enough to bring onto itself any type of topic and explore an array of utopian avenues which could theoretically also be transposed to other parts of the city or other urban environments.

3.1 Defining Utopian Topics

Within the framework of the course, the students were divided into four self-formed groups, each focusing on one of four predetermined overarching topics. The topics – Habitat, Process, System, and Care – were defined as a continuation of a set of findings from my doctoral dissertation which examined a set of 20th century architectural and literary utopias. They were derived from the topics of housing, production, technology, and governance,⁶ which were identified through the research as four overarching topics of the majority of utopian narratives (Čulek, 2023). But considering that in today's context we are much more aware of our connection and interdependence with all manners of living beings, as well as non-living systems, within the context of the course and the EDUTOPIA research project these four themes are conceptually expanded to include today's broader and more complex understanding of our world.

Housing therefore expands to the concept of [1] Habitat, including within its scope not just the space of human habitation, but that which is inhabited by other living

⁶ These initial four topics have already been used as a framework for two separate iterations of short design-based workshops with interdisciplinary students from the Urban Studies postmaster specialist program of the Deltalab Center of the University of Rijeka. The results of one of the workshops have been published in the special issue of the *Sociology and Space* journal (Čulek, 2025).

beings. The concept also considers that different species and lifeforms require each a specific set conditions in order to sustain themselves. These conditions – unlike the often spatially focused ones developed through housing – provide not only the physical possibilities of life and inhabitation, but also societal and institutional ones.

Production becomes [2] Process, which widens the concept of work and production from those exclusively creating new, useful, and consumable results, to also include their byproducts. Through the scope of Process, surplus, and waste, as well as other – perhaps non-physical – byproducts of work and production such as speculation, or debt are investigated and speculated upon, considering both their effect and potential within the (built) environment.

Technology, which is widened to the concept of infrastructural [3] Systems, stems from the contemporary change in the scale and use of different aspects of technological innovation. Developing as a broadening of the concept of technology – which is here seen as a basic building block of every infrastructural system – this topic takes into consideration not just individual objects or products of innovation and innovative technologies, but how they work together – observing technology as something which is often developed precisely in service-of and for the need of supporting or creating larger infrastructural systems. In other words, innovation today is no longer geared towards individual objects or technologies, but rather occurs in the scale of systems, through which it is also implemented.

And lastly governance was expanded to the concept of [4] Care which, starting from an entirely different power-relation, seeks to give agency to and include within a collective system those commonly overlooked, marginalized, or underrepresented.

Although by the end of the semester, each group of students developed a final speculative scenario based on their own sub-themes which were closely related to the spatial and social context of the space and time from

which the projects arose, these were elucidated from the four assigned overarching topics. In this way, the framework of the topics develops as a methodological approach which could potentially be reused in other formats and design studios, and generate a different set of results, depending on the investigated site, as well as the proclivities and interests of the involved students.

3.2 Course Structure

3.2.1 Critical Contextual Reading

The Utopian Laboratory Ilica course was structured in three thematic parts – Context, Methodology, and Imagination – each lasting roughly a third of the semester. All three parts were observed and developed through one of the four overarching topics, where each topic was investigated by one group of students. In the first part of the course – titled Context – the students were introduced both to the physical context they would be working in, as well as the theoretical and conceptual global context through which they would frame their speculative interventions. They were introduced to utopia as a critical method and to a theoretical framework of today's complex socio-political, ecological, and spatial context through a given set of readings which they were asked to reflect upon through both text and diagrammatic drawings. Through the readings they were introduced to concepts such as “subnature” (Gissen, 2009), “third landscape” (Clement, 2004), “chthulucene” (Haraway, 2016), “critical zone” (Latour, 2020), “broken world thinking” (Jackson, 2014), “infrastructure space” (Easterling, 2014) – which aided them in understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of today's local and global context. Within this format, the students adopted contemporary theoretical and spatial concepts that helped them observe, map, and analyse the given location (in this instance the Ilica street), its occurring social and spatial forms, stories, living, non-living, human, and non-human inhabitants and protagonists, its present, past, and unrealized futures. It is important to note that within this analytical process, the students were encouraged to switch their primary focus from a typical architectural form-based analysis of the assigned location, and focus rather on phenomena, conditions, and patterns which



Figure 3 Diagram of the Utopian Topics, Jana Čulek, 2025.

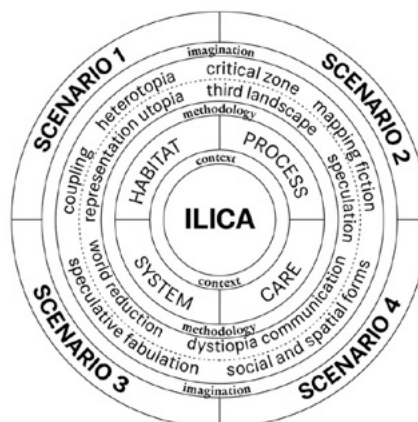


Figure 4 Diagram of the Course Structure, Jana Čulek, 2025.

are commonly overlooked in architectural research, but are made more evident through the application of the learned theoretical concepts. While working within their smaller groups, students were assigned to deal with segments of the location, which they choose themselves based on their overarching themes and the theoretical concepts they adopted through the reading. On the level of the entire cohort, they were also required to create a collective analytical drawing of the investigated space based on their research and observations which would later be used as a base for the development and depiction of their speculative scenarios.

3.2.2 Developing Utopian Methodology

The second part of the design studio – titled Methodology – built on the knowledge and concepts from the first block with the aim of setting up the main conceptual and methodological framework for the students' speculative scenarios. Structured similarly as the first block and consisting of both a set of reading assignments paired with practical and design-based group-work, this part of the semester was aimed at creating the initial speculative scenario proposal, together with a preliminary methodological approach which took into consideration the already acquired knowledge from the first part of the course. Within this block, the students worked in the space of Ilica by employing various utopian, narrative-based, and speculative research-based design approaches stemming not only from the architectural field, but also from literature and other creative disciplines. From their assigned readings they learned about methods such as “world reduction” (Jameson, 2005), “coupling” (Lateral Office, 2011), “medium design” (Easterling, 2018), “speculative fabulation” (Haraway, 2016), “critical design” (Dunne, Raby, 2013), and “speculative mapping” (Ait-Youati et.al., 2022). Seen as the intermezzo moment of the design studio, this part intended to bridge the acquired theoretical knowledge and spatial and conceptual analysis with the students' design ambitions and intentions through devising the most appropriate and productive design approach for both developing and representing their speculative scenarios. After finalizing their critical reading of Ilica and identifying the topics and phenomena of interest, they continued through a process of “diagnosing” and “reconstructing” (Shor, 1977) and of “denouncing and announcing” (Webb, 2017, 568) both found and new social and spatial forms. By offering students an array of utopian creative approaches, many of which also dealt with similar theoretical concepts that they have already been investigating, this section of the course aimed to create productive pairs of “concept-and-method” which would aid them in the further development of the speculative scenarios.

3.2.3 Imagining Speculative Scenarios

The third and final segment of the course – titled Imagination – dealt with the development and refinement of the four theme-based speculative utopian design scenarios. Employing the learned and developed utopian and narrative-based design approaches, the students created four speculative scenarios, each of

which was situated within one of the four predetermined utopian topics – Habitat, Process, System, and Care. The developed scenarios needed to consider their own potential social and spatial impacts, both on the given context, its wider environment, and its current and future inhabitants, visitors, and users. Developed as a continuation of their collective analytical drawing, the students also depicted the potential spatial implications of their speculative scenarios on the collective drawing, considering the various potential interrelationships of their proposals, their overlaps, connections, or collaborations. Arising from the four assigned utopian topics and based on the observed and analyzed elements of the socio-spatial context and forms of Ilica, the students created an alternative utopian narrative of the street's potential future through visual and textual storytelling – employing thus throughout the process both the aspects of “utopia as process” and “utopia as system”. By creating this parallel future, the students observed the space of Ilica through different scales, through the perspectives of different protagonists and users, and speculated about the development of the proposed interventions and scenarios over time. Their end results – the speculative utopian scenarios – although based within a real physical location – did not need to be designed exclusively in the format of a (new) building or built space. Rather, they were encouraged to also consider new ways of using existing spaces, propose new types of spatial, social, or infrastructural system, or merely propose novel interrelationships of already existing social and spatial forms. This continuous correlation of both social and spatial forms therefore became necessary in speculating upon possible futures and allowed students to continuously remain aware of the correlations and potentials of architecture with the social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological context in which it is situated.

3.3 Approach to Evaluating Outcome

While the Utopian Laboratory Ilica was just the first iteration of a design studio format which was developed during the entire course of the EDUTOPIA project, the student results coming out of the course will serve as analytical material to address and evaluate the potential of using specific utopian methods within the format of architectural and spatial education. The outcomes and student reflections for each design studio will therefore also be assessed, and the subsequent iterations will be modified according to results of the analytical reflections performed after each course. The outcomes of the studios will be approached through a comparative qualitative analysis. The first analysis and reflection on the overarching methodology and its success in conveying critical utopian methods and approaches will focus on the first iteration of Utopian Laboratory Ilica and the four speculative scenarios created by the four student groups. The analysis will evaluate both the process of the design studio with its sequential assignments, as well as the students' final output which included drawings and texts of the speculative scenarios and reflections on theoretical and methodological readings.

Through the qualitative analytical process, each speculative scenario will be treated as a situated experiment in utopian thinking and design. They will be evaluated in relation to how the student group critically read and interrogated the Ilica street as a complex socio-spatial context, as well as how they positioned themselves in regard to this reading through their speculative scenarios. The comparison, which will subsequently be performed on student outcomes, will be structured through four main criteria, namely (1) the manner in which each group constructed a critical reading of the given site, and how they understood it as an interplay between social and spatial forms occurring and manifesting across past and present; (2) the extent to which their critical readings were informed and integrated with the theoretical concepts and themes they were introduced to through their reading assignments, and how they mobilized these concepts to expand the scope through which they interpreted the space of Ilica. The evaluation will also consider (3) the extent and nature of speculative reasoning which the students performed, which will be examined through the narratives and scopes each group has developed, and the extent to which these narratives remain either grounded or productively depart from the identified present conditions. Lastly, the works will be assessed by (4) identifying the capacity in which each group moved away from mere critical interrogation towards speculative articulation, focusing specifically on how the groups translated their analysis into specific socio-spatial scenarios through scales of intervention, the use of new or modified social and spatial forms, and by establishing a precise spatio-temporal relationship with the present state of the context.

The measured outcomes will thus not be relatable to a standard measure of academic “success”. Rather, what will be evaluated is the degree to which each project produced a coherent shift in analytical and projective perspective, expanding with it the horizon of possible socio-spatial interventions. Serving as qualitative indicators, the analyses of the student outcomes will allow for a comparative reading of how the different student groups operationalized utopia as a critical and projective design method.

4 Preliminary Outcomes – Employing Utopia as a Method for Critical Reading

While the course was finalized in the process of writing and editing this paper, and the students have already finalized their speculative scenarios, the following section of the paper will reflect only on the first segment of the design studio. In this segment, which focused on the critical reading of Ilica street through the lens of their chosen utopian topics, the students began to develop the concepts and methodological approaches for their speculative scenarios. Consequently, the following section of the paper will provide a short reflection on some of the topics the students engaged with within the scope of their groups, based on the provided readings and the on-site analysis, as well as how they employed this new knowledge and insight in developing their speculative design scenarios. The four groups, working under the

utopian topics of Habitat, Process, System, and Care, consisted out of three or four students respectively, with all the course deliverables being assigned on the level of the groups. This way, collective work and conversation between students was encouraged from the very beginning, which assisted them in navigating both the assigned readings as well as the analytical and design work. Additionally, the collective analytical drawing of the chosen sites served as an additional layer of negotiation on the level of the entire student group, urging them to discuss both spatial and conceptual overlaps, interferences, and complementarities of their work.

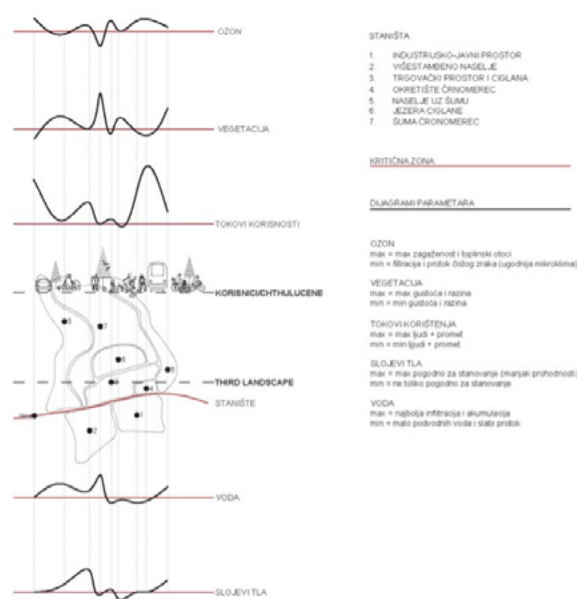


Figure 5 Diagram of the Critical Zone of Črnomerec, Source: group Habitat.

4.1 Engaging with Utopian Topics

4.1.1 Six Habitats of Črnomerec

Choosing to engage with the area of Ilica street which unfolds around the end of the Črnomerec tram line, the Habitat group⁷ developed their analytical narrative around six identified coexisting habitats, ranging from forest and artificial lakes, through industrial and infrastructural areas, to housing. Reading the space through the combination of three theoretical concepts, namely that of “critical zones” (Latour, Wiebel, 2020), “third landscape” (Clement, 2004), and the “chthulucene” (Haraway, 2016), the group engaged in mapping the different socio-spatial, as well as temporal layers of the identified habitats [Figure 5]. Including the temporal aspect – or rather the layers of site-specific socio-spatial history, such as shifts in use and ownership, major construction works, earthquakes and other – they employed an innovative way of interpreting the concept of the “critical zone” which included elements that are perhaps no longer evident, but have had a major influence of the current condition of the site.

⁷ The Habitat group consisted of students: Marija Mazotan, Ema Šibila, Leon Antun Slivar, and Sara Bukvić.

Acknowledging this multiplicity of coexisting and neighboring habitats as a positive hallmark of space and identifying it as a relatively unique condition in the wider city area, the group continued to develop the concept and methodology for their speculative scenario in line with this found heterogeneity. Their intent was to find ways of fostering this diversity and perhaps allowing it to occur in other areas of the city, which, at the moment, are much more homogenous regarding the divergence of their socio-spatial conditions and inhabitants.

4.1.2 Mapping Invisible Byproducts

Examining one of the more centrally located parts of Ilica street, the Process group⁸ relied in their critical reading on the concepts of “subnature” (Gissen, 2009) and “hyperobject” (Morton, 2013) – both of which steered them into examining the more intangible and often overseen aspects of space – namely the olfactory and auditory byproducts of our daily lives and cycles of production. The group developed a highly detailed identification and categorization system for the numerous sounds and smells occurring in the area around the British square. They visually mapped these sensations and experiences within the collective drawing and provided further categorization for numerous aspects: the sources of the sounds and smells, their areas of their influence, the nature of their occurrence as either anthropogenic or biogenic, and even assigned values of pleasantness or discomfort which they cause. Through the process of mapping these byproducts on-site, they managed to produce an intricate depiction of the space and identify areas with different ranges of interest and comfort [Figure 6].

As they explained in their text, “reading the space through the concepts of Gissen and Morton implies the abandonment the concept of the image of the

city as an aesthetic object, and the acceptance of its invisible, uncomfortable, and non-human layers”, further defining that while “subnatures teach us that architecture and urbanism must acknowledge the value of that which is suppressed and foul [and that] hyperobjects reveal to us that the Ilica street is just one part of the enormous network of material and temporal relations which go beyond the human scale” (Process group, 2025) – offering thus through their analysis a potentially replicable analytical method for observing the non-spatial aspects of urban environments and how they emerge from temporal cycles of use. The group continued to develop their speculative scenario through the use of small-scale physical interventions whose role was to either intensify or disrupt some of the auditory or olfactory sensations which they identified in the area.

4.1.3 Tracing Information Systems

The Systems group⁹ chose to investigate the intricate system of information flows within public spaces. Focusing predominantly on Keller Easterling’s concepts of “spatial software” and “active forms” (Easterling, 2014), they identified these flows as important political and social actors, hypothesizing the connection of how information is transmitted with both the configuration and programming of a specific public space. Identifying the Ilica street as both an “infrastructural spine” as well as an “urban element which connects some of the city’s most relevant public spaces” (Systems group, 2025), they observed the spread and delivery methods of various types of information within the urban fabric and how vary across different forms of public space. As examples of two radically different yet similarly concentrated information zones they chose two squares which connect to the Ilica street – the Ban Jelačić square and the Franjo Tuđman square. In the first, the individual was identified as having the role of an information receptor – solely receiving a curated set of information, while in the second, the individual takes on the role of the transmitter of information through participating more actively in various activities in the space itself.

Through their critical reading, public space became a type of information hub in which collective perception is shaped through a combination of media, advertising and sensory stimuli. In it, the Ilica street begins to act as an infrastructural information channel connecting the different public spaces and creating a network of invisible interactions. As they explain, the “facades become advertisements of simplified binary code, its recognizable spatial accents become the image of foreign rhetoric and its ground becomes a network of a complex infrastructural system which, over time, generates spatial changes in which people play the role of both recipients and transmitters of carefully controlled information” (Systems group, 2025). Within their speculative scenarios the group decided to envision several different spatial methods which would allow for the mitigation of some of the negative and over-burdening effects of this identified constant stream of information.



Figure 6 Diagram of Byproducts, Source: group Process.

⁸ The Process group consisted of students: Ria Ivandić, Anja Pisačić, and Tea Pintar.

⁹ The Systems group consisted of students: Patrik Štefiček, Zino Marković-Juričak, Mia Mezić, and Laura Grancarić.

5 Conclusion

The utopian-based approaches which will continuously be developed and adapted within the context of the EDUTOPIA research project, aim to innovatively and holistically address the complex socio-spatial issues of today. Putting into question the totalizing form of historical utopian narratives, but still retaining some prescriptive capacity, both the methods developed within the framework of the research and the student projects which were developed as part of it will aim to establish that using storytelling-based, fictional, and utopian approaches in architectural education and practice is productive beyond just envisioning creative yet impossible solutions, and that these approaches can be seen as a legitimate and overall more successful way of understanding and addressing the numerous spatial and societal issues of our time.

Re-adopting utopia as a method, especially within the context of architectural education, aims to allow for a contemporary attempt in innovative, comprehensive, large-scale and long-term visioning, through which we could potentially imagine and test out-of-the-box approaches for our complex global contexts. Using narrative-based visual and textual approaches which are

developed with the tools stemming from the utopian genre of multiple creative disciplines, together with a precise methodological structure, architecture as a discipline could stand to engage more actively and productively in conversations regarding our wider spatial, climatic, cultural, political, economic, and societal milieu with the aim of fostering positive change which goes beyond simply modernizing the building industry.

Using interdisciplinary approaches, mostly converging with the fields of literature, film, sociology, architecture, philosophy, and urban planning, the developed methods aim to teach students and a new generation of spatial practitioners how to problematize and offer new insight into some of today's most pertinent issues related not only to the built environment, but also on the overall societal level. They will aim to foster a more comprehensive, holistic, and multi-disciplinary understanding of the (un)built environment which goes beyond the process of building or planning, and which examines, predicts, and plans for possible long-term developments and effects that projects can trigger and engender not only on the spatial but also on the wider societal and cultural level. Testing and implementing new methods on an educational level is done to assure the widest perceived impact through the process of training and educating future generations of spatial practitioners.

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Mahala: Magical Islands A Nissological Perspective on the Historical Landscape of Sarajevo

Mahala: Magična Ostrva
Nisološka perspektiva historijskog pejzaža grada Sarajeva

Eldar Hajdarević

Technische Universität Wien, Austria
eldar.hajdarevic@tuwien.ac.at, eldar@eldarevic.com | orcid.org/0009-0008-5707-8681

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Abstract This paper investigates the mahale (singular mahala), the Ottoman residential neighbourhoods of historical Sarajevo. These consist of clusters of courtyard houses grouped around mosques and were formerly organised as self-administered and self-sufficient neighbourhoods. Today they form a historical landscape that is mostly detached from the contemporary architectural and urban discourse. The investigation looks into the history and origins of the mahala archetype, as well as its contemporary re-emergence, arguing for a critical assessment and re-invention. This is undertaken by linking the mahala's original concept to the idea of the urban island, using the methods and metaphors of nissology, the geographical study of islands. By following a critical historiography of key examples of the type, the mahala, as an island, is understood as an ambivalent device, one that incorporates both a military apparatus for imperial colonisation and a decolonial social apparatus for the empowerment of local settlements. The paper concludes by proposing a re-invention of this apparatus, understanding it as a bottom-up decolonial idea: a "magical" island formed by social (and mythical) practices that reiterate local communal "interiors".

Keywords mahala; island; Sarajevo; nissology; landscape.

Sažetak Rad istražuje mahale (jed. mahala), osmanske stambene četvrti historijskog Sarajeva. One prikazuju skupine dvorišnih kuća grupiranih oko džamija i formalno su bile organizirane kao samostalna i samodovoljna naselja. Kao ostaci prošlosti, danas one čine historijski pejzaž koji je uglavnom odvojen od savremenog arhitektonskog i urbanističkog diskursa. Istraživanje se bavi historijom i arhetipskim porijeklom ovog tipa, kao i njegovim savremenim ponovnim pojavljivanjem, zalažući se za kritičku procjenu i ponovno osmišljavanje. Ovo se postiže povezivanjem originalnog koncepta mahale s idejom urbanog ostrva, koristeći metode i metafore nisologije, područja proučavanja doslovnih geografskih ostrva. Prateći kritičku historiografiju kroz ključne primjere ovog tipa, ostrvo mahala se shvata kao ambivalentni uređaj. Onaj koji uključuje i vojni aparat za carsku kolonizaciju i društveni dekolonijalni aparat za osnaživanje lokalnih naseljeničkih grupa. Rad završava predlogom ponovnog izmišljanja ovog aparata, shvatajući ga kao dekolonijalna ideja. "Magično" ostrvo formirano društvenim (i mitskim) praksama koje ponavljaju lokalne zajedničke "unutrašnosti".

Ključne riječi mahala; ostrvo; Sarajevo; nisologija; pejzaž.

1 Introduction

*[...] Here in this island we arriv'd; and here
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
Than other princess' can, [...]*

The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2 (Shakespeare & Stratmann, 2025, p. 28)

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, betrayed by his brother, strands on a mysterious remote island. It is an island of magical

creatures: the only native inhabitant is Caliban, the son of a witch, displayed as a deformed, monstrous being. With the help of books of magic Prospero takes control of the island by freeing the spirit Ariel from a tree and enslaving Caliban. He uses his powers to shipwreck his enemies from Milan and to orchestrate multiple events that lead them to regret their plots against him, one of which is Caliban's conspiracy to kill Prospero, foiled by Prospero's magic tricks. reflecting on the structure and aims of the course, as well as some of the early student outcomes.



Figure 1 The Enchanted Island Before the Cell of Prospero, engraving by Peter Simon after Henry Fuseli, 1797. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The Tempest was written during England's first overseas expansion campaigns, and was initially critically considered in the context of "preternatural beings", in which Caliban was characterised as a rebellious anti-democratic and "comic wild man" (Griffiths, 1983, p. 159). From the nineteenth century to the present, though in an ambivalent manner that evidences its complexity, critics have considered the play in relation to contemporary colonial studies¹ (Griffiths, 1983, p. 159). It is the coloniser Prospero who takes over the remote territory, for the purpose of resolving his conflicts, and it is the colonised, enslaved islander, Caliban, who is perceived as a "threatening 'other'" (Willis, 1989, p. 279) (Figure 1). Meredith Anne Skura summarises this dichotomy, reflecting on it geopolitically as "Europe's confrontation with the Other" (Skura, 1989, p. 43).

Of interest for this paper is this topic of "otherness" – its political connotation and its spatial translation to the metaphor of the island. The island is the geographical representation of the state of otherness. It reflects the conditions of separation, isolation and exception. (Hajdarević, 2026a, p. 21) Deriving from old English *igland*, 'island' is a combination of *ig*, translated to "island", and "land", literally forming "island-land". Thus it is a qualifying term describing a special situation within the general condition of land. Or, in other words, a land that is defined by its insularity (Onions et al., 1992, pp. 486–487), (Merriam-Webster, 2025, April 19), (Hajdarević, 2026a, p. 37). Thus "islands – as spatial topographies – are (other) lands within lands, (other) places within places, or (other) realities within realities." (Hajdarević, 2026a, p. 38)

This territorial definition is taken from nissology, the field of geography relating to the study of islands, that in this paper is used to reflect on the concept of the urban island within critical urban theory. The idea of cities as composed of insular entities emerges in today's architectural discourse as an alternative to large-scale modernist masterplans. Critical researchers such as Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici (Aureli & Giudici, 2019), Édouard Glissant (Glissant, 2009),

(Glissant & Obrist, 2021) and Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze et al., 2004) view islands as sites of political resistance against capitalist urban expansion.

However, as in *The Tempest*, where the metaphor of the island represents an ambiguous state between places of magic and marginalisation, this paper explores the concepts of insularity and urban separation, referencing Douglas Spencer's work which questions the value of the island as an enclosure (Spencer, 2016) as well as Giorgio Agamben (Agamben, 2021) and Philipp Oswalt's argument that islands often reflect either marginalised groups living in legal limbo or capitalist gated communities (Oswalt et al., 2013).

Within this framework, the paper discusses the concept of the island and its spatial reflection as a way of creating and administering human settlement, with particular reference to the phenomenon of the Sarajevo mahala.²

The mahala (plural mahale) is the South-East European term for the type of residential neighbourhoods created in the administration of Ottoman cities in the Balkans. It consisted of courtyard houses grouped around a mosque (Figure 2) and had its own neighbourhood infrastructures, as well as facilities such as wells, shops, bakeries and schools. Traditionally it was based on Islamic behavioural norms and rituals, as well as mutual care between its inhabitants, and represented a self-administered and self-sufficient neighbourhood.

The spaces of mahale, though partially transformed, still maintain their original morphological composition. But, stripped from their cultural connotation, they have lost their significance in determining the condition of the city and its inhabitants' way of life. Although large parts of these spaces are legally protected (by regulatory plans, see Regulacioni plan 'Mahale-Kovači', (2014)) – some even falling within the protective zone of the historical urban landscape (HUL) as part of the Ottoman centre of Sarajevo, their status remains fairly undetermined. They represent a remnant of the past, one that has not been significantly incorporated into contemporary urban discourse and development.

This paper, therefore, argues for a contemporary critical assessment of the mahala as an urban island; it asks: What potential does it offer for contemporary urban life in Sarajevo? I will argue that it is the way the mahala form creates self-sufficient insularity – spatially as well as socially – that is its crucial mechanism.

In the particular context of Sarajevo, by abstracting the mahala to the concept of an island, it can be positioned within the idea of the city as a historical urban "landscape". The paper thus focuses on islands as a specific type of landscape in order to re-evaluate their significance.

Here, the etymology of the term "land" is also significant. It derives from the Old English *lond* and the Germanic **landa*, meaning "untilled land", as well as the Old Frisian *land*, *lond* meaning "land, earth, country, landed property" (Merriam-Webster, 2026, March 9). Hence, it relates a particular territory to

¹ For the discourse on this see also, for instance, Willis (1989), Skura (1989), Fuchs (1997), Pierce (1999), and Brotton (1998).

² This study builds on my previous work in Hajdarević (2026a) and Hajdarević (2026b), but extends the analysis of the mahala to further case studies and explorations of the phenomenon as a (magical) social practice.



Figure 2 Plans, examples of the traditional mahala type.
Source: Author, 2025.

contexts of cultivation and property, linking it with control, governance and agricultural appropriation. It can thus be seen, and is shaped linguistically, within the European colonial discourse since the colonisation of the Americas. In documents such as, among many others, the Spanish conquest's 1513 Requerimiento (de Oviedo y Valdés, 1959, pp. 227–232), Pope Alexander VI's 1493 Inter Caetera (Giménez Fernández, 1944, p. 341 ff.), and John Locke's Second Treatise of Government in 1690 (Locke, 1690), the term is connected to indigenous territory that is transformed into "land" as a legitimate subject of European sovereignty, thus becoming legal property through cultivation as "improvement". Keeping this connotation in mind (as the island is similarly associated with imperial colonisation) the term is treated here in connection with the words "landscape" and "island", in order to emphasize their relation.

The paper offers, first, a critical historiography tracing key examples of the type, presenting and investigating the idea of the island through two aspects of the history of the mahala, metaphorically linking them to the figures of Prospero and Caliban. In the first part, "Martial Islands", it is presented as an imperial apparatus for the occupation of newly claimed territory. This is investigated in the context of the foundation of Sarajevo during the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century CE, and in relation to the origins of the mahala in the Arabian Empire during the rise of Islam from the sixth to the eighth century CE. The second part, "Magical Islands", in contrast, investigates the notion of the mahala as an island as a bottom-up social practice for the claiming of land for collective settlement and its organisation. This is investigated first in pre-Islamic prototypes of the mahala in Arabian nomad tent camps and their shift towards sedentary settlement. Then, on the opposite side of the historical spectrum, the mahala is considered within its emergence in contemporary Roma settlements through an example in contemporary Sarajevo.

But, just as the relation between Prospero and Caliban is revealed to be ambivalent and complex, lying between good and bad, order and chaos, right and wrong, where the individuals never categorically play the role of one extreme, the idea of the island emerges in a similar manner. The idea of the mahala appears

as a multi-faceted apparatus operating between occupation and rebellion, with colonial and decolonial, imperial and communal aspects, as well as subjugating and empowering tendencies. Consequently, the idea of urban islands thus consists of both potential and danger: potential in the sense of being an instrument for the participation and inclusion of local inhabitants in the urban discourse and the claim for territorial property, and danger in terms of creating precarious enclaves or gated communities based on homogeneous ethnic identities and enclosed and separated from the surrounding social and spatial fabric of the city.

The paper, in being aware of both potential and danger, then concludes by focusing on the island's most important aspect, that of relationality: relationality between the inhabitants of the island; relationality towards its surroundings, but, most importantly for the purposes of this paper, the relationality between inhabitants and the land they settle on. A relation that has to be practised, negotiated, recognized and protected, in administrative and political ways, but also in the community's social rituals. It is the enabling of the reiteration of these practices, their protection and their connection, to gain territorial property that, I argue, is the crucial potential of the mahala as island.

Therefore, historical Sarajevo, with its mahale, emerges as a literal landscape, a composition of potential local communal and contradictory lands as islands, that in their relation together form a multitude of future possibilities.

As Prospero and Caliban's ambivalent relationship is demonstrated, negotiated and scrutinised through the magical powers of the island, the potential and danger of the mahala island are used as a lens for discussing and reviewing the conditions of collective living in (historical) Sarajevo, thus, furthermore, introducing a discussion of human settlement types in general by investigating the aspect of "otherness" within a city community.

2 Martial Islands

*"Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care; and lodg'd thee
In my own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child."*

Prospero to Caliban
The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2 (Shakespeare & Stratmann, 2025, p. 42)

2.1 Isles of the Ottomans

Towards the end of the fifteenth century Europe was shaped by major transitional shifts that marked the end of the Middle Ages. One of the defining events was the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Constantinople in 1453 (Crowley, 2013). This was conducted under the rule of Sultan Mehmed II – thenceforth commonly known as 'The Conqueror' – and definitively represented the Ottomans' push towards the Balkans. In removing all the local dynasties, Mehmed II intended to establish sovereignty on the peninsula all the way up to the Danube river, representing

the empire's new natural border (İnalçık, 2001/2018, pp. 38–41). Around the time that Constantinople fell, Ottoman legions arrived at the narrow valley of the river Miljacka in what is now central Bosnia, the location of the future city of Sarajevo (Bišćević, 2006, p. 17). The landscape was populated by scattered Slavic villages positioned on the surrounding hills (Bejtić, 1973, pp. 28–29), small fortified towns such as Kotorac, Vrhbosna, and Hodidjed, and a weekly market place near the northern riverbank (Sumarni Popis Sandžaka Bosna Iz 1468/69. Godine, n.d., pp. 69–71).

In order to establish a functioning border territory – and thus a supply of resources and a financing system for further expansion campaigns (Malcolm, 2011, pp. 111–112) – the Ottomans implemented a feudal administrative apparatus: as well as the establishment of a military camp at the southern riverbank, newly occupied land in the valley around it was allotted to military leaders (Hajdarević, 2026a, pp. 64–66). These leaders – the most notable of them being Isa Beg Ishaković – assigned farmers to cultivate the land and in return charged them by withholding part of their harvest (Malcolm, 2011, p. 116). This system, known as *timar*, enabled these leaders not only to rapidly establish wealth (Zlatar, 1996, p. 12), but also to introduce imperial economic rule upon the local population.

The empire's intention, though, was not solely to exploit the land and its people, but rather to establish a functioning system of constant economic flow. Thus the military officials, in order to confirm their leadership – locally, as well as towards the Sultan – invested their income in charitable endowments, or *waqf* (*vakuf* in Bosnian). These consisted of monetary funds, as well as finance for the establishment of public institutions such as schools, public kitchens, bridges, fountains, inns, caravanserais, hammams and bazaars, and mainly, and most importantly, mosques. Revenues from these institutions were ploughed back into the investment funds, creating a mostly circular self-sufficient economic system (Zlatar, 1996, p. 12). This apparatus of harvest revenues and charitable circular endowments led to the rapid urban development and Islamisation of the valley, accomplishing, in parallel, imperial occupational rule and local financial stability.

The apparatus was directly connected to territorial rights and the relation of the population to the land it settled on. As newly occupied territory was usually owned by the Sultan (S. H. Gibb & Bowen, 1957, p. 166), the endowments meant that it was linked to metaphysical rights. They were given in honour of God, remained in undisputed public ownership and were intended to be used solely for the public good (Mehmedović, 2017, p. 17). So, in combining imperial with metaphysical ownership, the Sultan's intentions were not only militarily comprehensible but also justified on a religious basis.

These endowments encouraged new inhabitants to settle, as the monetary funds were also used to distribute loans to the local population (Zlatar, 1996, p. 13). In this combination of independent property and local urban development funding, the areas of settlement developed into economically and administratively independent clusters of local self-government (Zlatar, 1996, p. 97). With the endowment and the establishment of settlements as independent neighbourhoods, these areas were officially recognised as mahale (Hajdarević, 2026a, p. 71).



Figure 3 Plan, Ottoman Sarajevo as an abstracted cluster of mahale, Source: Author, 2025.

In a nissological sense, then, the apparatus thus created a cluster of islands of local settlement that, through their connection to the imperial institution of the military camp in the centre, emerged as an “archipelagic landscape” (Hajdarević, 2026a, p. 77) (Figure 3). A city with the ambiguous duality of decentralised occupatory rule and local self-sufficient settlements – in other words, a city landscape of mahala islands.

2.2 The Arabian Imperial Archetype

The Ottomans did not invent the idea of the mahala as an imperial device. As the etymology of the word suggests, the emergence of this settlement type can be traced back to the advent of Islam and its subsequent development in the Arabian Empire from the seventh century CE onwards. The Arabian etymological origin of the term is “a place where one makes a halt, where one settles” (Bosworth, 1986, p. 1220), linking it to early nomad tent camp structures, that only with the arrival of Islam became a city type. I will discuss the earliest connotations in the next section, concentrating here on the later Islamic type.

Somewhat similar to Ottoman urban development at the end of the Middle Ages, the Arabian Islamic city's major consolidation took place within the empire's campaign of expansion. In this case, though, it was on the threshold between the ancient world order and the Middle Ages. After the prophet Muhammad initiated the first Islamic community in Medina in 622 CE – introducing the mosque as the central settlement type (Hajdarević, 2026a, pp. 131–132) – the succeeding caliphs began expanding the empire from central Arabia towards Persia and North Africa. On newly occupied territory the military founded settlements as garrison towns, or *mīsr* (Whitcomb, n.d.). Reminiscent of earlier Roman camps, the central structures consisted of an enclosed regular grid system organised around a mosque and an adjacent palace (see the example of Kufa (Khosravi, 2014, pp. 32–33) and Anjar (Hillenbrand, n.d., pp. 60–

61)). The structures served as accommodation for the military organisation and provided assets for military staff and ongoing campaigns through the taxation of the newly conquered people (Lapidus, 2014, p. 52). As Hillenbrand summarises, they represented outposts of Medina and acted as “launching pads of invasions” (Hillenbrand, n.d., p. 80).

These camps were the initial structures positioned in the territory. The further development of the settlement was then conducted through the encampment of tribes affiliated to the military (the army even “divided into units based on tribal lines”: see Hitti, 1996, p. 27)) living in its vicinity. As seen in the example of Fustat – a garrison town from the seventh century CE founded in the area of today’s Cairo (Kubiak, 1987, p. 1) – these tribal camps were positioned around the central military quarter (Kubiak, 1987, p. 68). The land was allotted to individual groups by a process of affiliations to the military leadership and complex negotiations determined by the degree of power and influence each tribe held (Kubiak, 1987, p. 69). With the act of settling at a certain area of newly occupied territory, the tribes were granted property rights to the land, enabling them to establish a self-administered settlement. Within these, “all the decisions [...] were made by the inhabitants” and “[s]hared spaces [...] were collectively owned and controlled.” (Akbar, 1989, p. 29) Thus, like the endowment structures in Sarajevo, the relation of the settlers to their land remained in a duality of imperial rule and local control. As Lapidus clarifies, the territory could not be seized by other tribes and it remained in permanent ownership of the community (Kubiak, 1987, p. 69).

Reflecting back to the Ottoman apparatus, the Arabian Empire’s archetypes reveal further nuances of the concept of the mahala. The landscape of islands, in order to be stable and functional, was based on territorial negotiation between a central institutionalised authority and the self-administration of individual settlement groups (Figure 4). In a nissological context, the principle establishes an important basis for understanding independent settlements within the greater structure of a city: the relational structure of their interaction, in which territorial rights and the distribution of properties is constantly negotiated, is of crucial importance. Furthermore, as Akbar describes, it also involved the direct physical demarcation of boundaries that each quarter’s establishment was linked to: “If each tribe had the right to establish its own boundaries, it certainly owned and controlled the land within them.” (Akbar, 1989, pp. 28–29) Interestingly, this is also reflected in the North African synonym for mahala, khatta. Literally translated as “line”, it denotes the act of “demarcat[ing] a place, or outlin[ing] it with a wall [...]” (Akbar, 1989, p. 23) Within nissology, researchers highlight this feature of the idea of the island as having crucial potential: by thinking in archipelagic ways, collective identity is enhanced through the relation between individual groups and their bounding of space (see, for instance Polack (1998, p. 229) or Hay (2006, p.30)).

Nevertheless, in both imperial examples – the Ottoman and Arabian – the island, along with the mahala, is self-evidently an occupational device. It was primarily introduced in the former to control the local

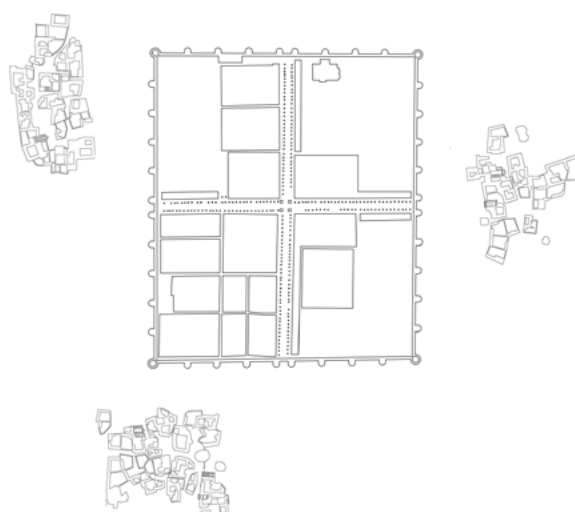


Figure 4 Plan, an Arabian military camp with adjacent settlements, imagined collage, Source: Author, 2025.

people in bordering regions and in the latter as a rigid system that allowed the diverse tribal military staff to be easily controlled and mobilised. Furthermore, as Kubiak concludes, this reduced the chances of a hegemonic individual tribe (Kubiak, 1987, p. 70), creating a functioning apparatus for expansion under central rule.

This definition of the mahala through an imperial lens evidences the concept of the island as a colonial device. In the next chapter, the notion of the mahala as an island is observed from the diametrically contrasting point of view of decolonisation and empowerment. As the metaphor of the island in its complexity displays a multi-layered ambiguous state, one containing both separation and connectivity, control and resistance, the next section will concentrate on investigating it from a contrasting perspective within history and the contemporary status quo.

3 Magical Islands

*“This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak’st from me. When thou cam’st first,
Thou strok’st me, and made much of me;
wouldst give me
Water with berries in’t; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I lov’d thee,
And show’d thee all the qualities o’ th’ isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Curs’d be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own King: and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o’ th’ island.”*

Caliban to Prospero
The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2 (Shakespeare & Stratmann, 2025, p. 42)

3.1 Tribal Islands

Although the mahala is a profoundly Islamic type, its origins can be traced even further back, to pre-Islamic Arabian settlements. The etymology of the Arabian noun *mahalla* as “a place where one makes a halt” originates from the verb *halla*, that translates as “to untie a knot or luggage” (Bosworth, 1986, p. 1220). This establishes a direct link to the prototypes of the mahala found in Arabian tent camps and also relates it to the characteristic of impermanence. This connotation thus reflects a phenomenon that marked an important phase in the early development of the mahala and consequently the Arabian city: the transition of temporary settlements to permanent ones. From an architectural perspective this emerges with the *parembole nomadon*, or nomad camp villages (Kennedy, 2014, p. 25), (Helms, 1990, p. 39). These appear from around the sixth millennium BCE onwards in the steppe of the Arabian Peninsula. This was a landscape which lacked a continuous supply of resources, but which was also a threshold between the kingdoms and urban societies of Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt and the Mediterranean (Hoyland, 2001, p. 1).

Within these conditions, Arabian nomad society developed a settlement system that was marked by a dichotomy between the temporary and the permanent, and was in addition based on the demarcation from the exterior world of adjacent threatening empires (Donner, 2017, pp. 26–29). Hence, the later imperial apparatus of the mahala originated here as an apparatus for constructing metaphysical and literal interiors for communal survival and resistance. Based on a code of loyalty towards their individual nomad clan, the settlers set up circular camps consisting of groups of tents within hierarchical layers of enclosure. The tent represented the individual core family and household and was grouped together with other tents into a *hayy*, that constituted a clan (Hitti, 1996, p. 26). These clans, along with other affiliated and friendly clans, formed a cluster, which made up a tribe (Hitti, 1970, p. 14). Spatially nomad settlements were composed of succeeding layers of borders implemented as planted rings of dry bushes and trenches. Separated from the outside world, the inner spheres interconnected, creating a collective area in the centre that enabled communal gathering spaces (Bianca, 1975, pp. 101–102) (Figure 5).

In the steppe it was crucial to continually reinforce the membership of this cellular hierarchy in order to enjoy security from hostile outsiders and be guaranteed access to food and water supplies. This was established by a close-knit relationship to the affiliated communities through what the fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun referred to as “group feeling” (Khaldun, 2015, pp. 97–98), through an unconditional bond of loyalty, or *asabiyya*, towards the members of a clan and its sheikh, which were considered to descend from one blood line³ (Hitti, 1996, pp. 26–27). The sheikh, as the head of the clan, was established through consensus by the clan members, based on his generosity and courage. Nevertheless, his decision-making authority for common

military or judicial affairs was limited, as he was obliged to consult with a tribal council composed of the heads of the individual families (Hitti, 1996, p. 28). As Philip K. Hitti summarises, it was this social relational structure that enabled the clans and tribes to become “self-sufficient and absolute” (Hitti, 1996, p. 27) units that were also ideologically separate from their exteriors. This is underlined by the fact that external relations with other tribes were marked by blood feuds (Hitti, 1996, p. 26) and raids (Hitti, 1996, p. 25).

This absolute “interiority” led to the development of insular fortresses, establishing the independence of the tribes from the exterior imposition of laws (Khaldun, 2015, pp. 95–97). As Stefano Bianca points out, this is also reflected in the Arab terms for dwelling, the etymological connotations of which relate the residential area to a protected and sacred interior space, encircled by boundaries which protected it from outside intrusion (Bianca, 2000, p. 72). These intrusions were not only by physical beings: they also included disturbances by metaphysical spirits – *jinn* – that dwelled in the dark and deserted exteriors⁴ (Henninger, 2017, p. 115). Interestingly, these spirits were considered to be living in tribal affiliations that reflected the relationships between the living (Henninger, 1981, pp. 143–144). They were believed to reside in the ground and were disturbed and enraged by the cultivation of the soil, the digging of wells and the constructing of buildings (Henninger, 1981, p. 146). Measures of resistance to their influence consisted of animal sacrifices and the sprinkling of their blood (Henninger, 1981, p. 150).

So the interior territory – representing the cells of the community, from the most intimate “body” of the family to the tribe – was defended using rituals and magical practice⁵ (Bianca, 2000, p. 73). In particular, these practices – combined with the reiteration of clan loyalty – demonstrated a strong cult of respecting tribal ancestors. Reflected in the original meaning of *asabiyya*, as “spirit of kinship” (H. A. R. Gibb et al., 1986, p. 681), the ancestors were regarded as legendary heroes or mythical forbears and – as Joseph Henninger suggests – even developed into deities.⁶ Despite their status they were regarded as in need of charity from the living, through animal sacrifices and the erection of stone structures (Henninger, 2017, pp. 116–117). As with the endowment structures of the Ottomans discussed earlier, sacrificed animals were regarded as in the property of the god(s) and provided communal meals (Henninger, 2017, p. 119). This leads to another similarity, as the settlements again displayed an ambiguous relation to their land. The parts that had earlier been portable – the tent and its contents, as well as the livestock – belonged to the individuals, whereas the pasture land, the local natural resources and the land that was settled on remained the common property of

⁴ Note that Henninger discusses here the origin of these beliefs and doubts whether the Bedouin nomads actually viewed the desert as a metaphysical threat.

⁵ These practices consisted of spells, counterspells and charms (Wellhausen, 1897, pp. 159–167).

⁶ He also suggests that myths were attributed retrospectively to some ancestors, granting them divine status (Henninger, 1981, pp. 40–41).

³ Nevertheless, it was possible for unrelated “clients” to establish a similar relation through an oath (Caskel, 2017, p. 34).

the tribe (Hitti, 1970, p. 14), (Khazanov, 1994, p. 123). With the cultivation of land and the act of settlement – both seen as disturbing the common ownership – the individual sacrificed a part of his private property – the livestock – in order to gain security.

As described, the tribal settlements of pre-Islamic Arabia were investigated in relation to the prototypical idea of the mahala as an island based on intrinsic social practices. Examples demonstrate the establishment and basic idea of the mahala as creating an “interior” that contrasts with, and positions itself against, a different “exterior”, not only physically and spatially but also in a metaphysical and social way. Within the idea of a decolonial island tribal islands are seen as settlements of resistance marked by their loyalty towards the local community. Nevertheless, they have also introduced a dangerous contrasting aspect of the idea of the island as a detached enclosure ruled by ethnic affiliations and patriarchal hierarchies.

So, after investigating these ancient islands of resistance against the violence of the desert and its jinn, further discussion focuses on contemporary Sarajevo, demonstrating a mahala-inspired island at the other end of the historical chronology: an island that resists the capitalisation, commodification and deregulation of urban land.



Figure 5 Plan, example of a nomad settlement based on camps in North Africa. Source: Author, 2025.

3.2 Islands of the Roma

In the hills to the west of the Ottoman centre of Sarajevo lies the green area of Crni Vrh (literally “black top”). Recognised as a one of the last forests within the urban area, it is surrounded by inter-war residential projects, a hospital complex from the 1970s (Mutevelić et al., 2023, pp. 170–171) and the development of Marijin Dvor, today’s commercial downtown centre of Sarajevo.

Despite the fact that the urban plan designated the forest area as a city park, the municipality began to contest this in 2019, illegally changing the regulatory plan. Parts of the area were recategorised as land for construction (Bakija, 2023). Following this, the municipality granted permission for a luxury residential project consisting of five multi-storey blocks of privately owned flats (*Park Residence Premium Living*, 2025).

Right next to this project, in the centre of Crni Vrh’s forest, lies the Roma settlement of Gorica, an arrangement of houses grouped along a cul-de-sac. Dating back to Socialist times, it occupied an area that was partly state property and partly owned by the municipality. The settlement’s existence was already contested in 1986, when the Sarajevo Institute for Urban Construction (in original Bosnian *Zavod za izgradnju grada Sarajeva*) expropriated land to implement a park. Along with the war in the 1990s, this meant that many Roma houses were destroyed and residents displaced. Disputes emerged in the following years around the ownership of the land, which led the Roma community to start a campaign to claim the property by mobilising international organisations and donors and setting up public protests. As a consequence the residents were granted ownership of the land in 2002, with the municipality legally allocating it to the residents (*Report on Roma Informal Settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2005, pp. 6–8).

Today, Gorica displays the stark contrast between communal bottom-up habitation and capitalist exploitation of land. Right next to the trench dug for the luxury residential project, the space of the cul-de-sac is used as an extension to the houses for gathering, exchange and communication. The elevated situation at the end of the street allows panoramic views of the surrounding city, a perspective that is increasingly becoming blocked, the ground literally being dug away for the construction project (Figure 6).

The precarious situation of Roma settlement islands like Gorica can be traced back to the emerging condition of the Roma community within the Ottoman empire in the Balkans. From the fourteenth century onwards Roma groups were brought into the conquests as military support groups – craftsmen, commissaries, blacksmiths and horsemen (Macura, 2009, p. 5). In the subsequent establishment of cities, they were incorporated into the administration but allocated their own areas, thus creating their own separate mahale (Vuksanović-Macura, Zlata, 2012, p. 686). They were often detached from the urban centres and positioned as independent settlements on open land. (See for instance the “Ziganka” in the map of Belgrade (Hellert, 1844).) Continuous social exclusion and segregation meant that these early Roma settlements continue up to today as insular entities detached from the surrounding urban fabric. Even newly emerging settlements immediately take on a segregated status, as they often arise on neglected or contested land, thus counteracting institutionalised urban developments (Vuksanović-Macura, Zlata, 2012, pp. 686–687).

Due to their historical emergence within the Ottoman administration of mahale, Roma settlements often have mahala-like characteristics: they consist of units of family houses (see for instance the plans of houses in (Macura, 1992, pp. 152, 155, 157)) with verandas along yards (Macura, 2009, p. 10). They consist of households that are tightly grouped together with a mutually supportive relationship between neighbours (Macura & Vuksanović, 2006, p. 21). The yards – often shared among families – are extended interiors used for everyday activities (Macura & Vuksanović, 2006, p. 22) and economic occupations, as the residents often

conduct independent entrepreneurial activity (Macura & Vuksanović, 2006, p. 35) in self-managed working conditions (Macura & Vuksanović-Macura, 2007, p. 60).

The settlement structure is defined by a densification process emerging from the unit of a singular house. Extensions and attachments are added through time, with new blocks, and even streets, emerging as the land becomes more densely covered. Within this evolution the singular plots are undergoing a process of “fragmentation through division” rather than an increase in size through addition (Macura, 2009, p. 9), (Macura, 1992, p. 134). The resulting morphology shows either loose or tight groups of houses along surrounding streets and narrow interior roads.⁶ More empty and open spaces are used as communal areas for collective washing facilities around a well or fountain and as gathering spaces with benches for conversation. At these locations, monuments are often erected depicting Saint Bibija Zara (Macura & Vuksanović, 2006, p. 20). These are simple blocks of bricks displaying an icon of the saint with a small area around it enclosed by a fence (Macura, 1992, p. 148).

Roma groups display a varied spectrum of religious and cultural beliefs, depending on the surrounding hegemonic context and their individual development. Here, research is used that was carried out in Serbia to highlight the emergence of an important social practice. In many Roma communities that are of Serbian orthodox influence, legends and myths play an important role in their collective identity. This originates from tales of the emergence of Roma settlements, that are sometimes based on local family legends. Stories are told of earlier ancestors arriving at the land of settlement and thus setting up the family line in a certain area (Macura, 1992, p. 133). Similarly, the cult around Saint Bibija Zara (translated as “auntie Zara”) or shortened to “Bibi”, is based on myths deriving from the fifteenth century CE during the plague (B., 2025). Wandering around from settlement to settlement, Bibija performed healing acts and thus represents the protective patron saint of the family. The celebratory ritual today consists of gathering at a holy place, the monument, a cross or a tree, where gifts such as a comb, a mirror or clothes are offered to the saint (*Intangible Cultural Heritage of Serbia - Auntie Bibia*, 2023).

Unlike the better-known significant settlements such as the Deponija in Serbia (Macura, 2009) or Stolipinovo in Bulgaria (Venkov et al., 2016), in Bosnia permanent Roma settlements are rarer and smaller. They consist of compact compounds like that at Kiseljak, near Tuzla (Bešlija, 2022), Rupin Dol, at Zavidovići (Gil Guimarães, 2004), the Roma mahala near Dobož (Grbešić, 2024), or the Varda quarter in Kakanj (Report on Roma Informal Settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005). They all demonstrate detached neighbourhoods, separated islands of local community “interiors”, mostly in precarious living situations. Due to social stigmatisation and neglect by city administrations they often are also detached from wider economic, infrastructural and communal systems. Excluded from facilities and basic



Figure 6 Plan, the Roma settlement of Gorica in Sarajevo with the trench dug for the private construction project adjacent to it, Source: Author, 2025.

resources like running water or the sewage system, they are often set up illegally on privately owned or contested land, and are thus constantly in danger of destruction (Macura & Vuksanović-Macura, 2007, p. 32).

These islands, based on ancestral tradition, mythical family protection and mutual neighbourly care are, in parallel, impoverished entities, segregated areas of ancestry, bloodlines and ethnic homogeneity, but also precarious islands of protest, counteracting contemporary capitalist land appropriation.

In reflecting back to the previous chapter, where the idea of the mahala as island was discussed as a colonial device, a military apparatus to gain power in border regions, this section has shown counteracting aspects of the notion. The archetypical notion of the mahala in ancient tribal Arabia, as well as contemporary remnants in today's Roma settlements, provide evidence of the mahala as a social practice, one that is able to create empowerment for local groups within challenging surroundings, a device that can be harnessed to transform the former imperial apparatus into a decolonial one. Nevertheless, one has to remember that these practices, in parallel, created enclaves, detached from their surroundings and emphasising ethnic background and homogeneity: a crucial danger that has continued to exist within the concept of the island.

In a report on the Gorica case in Sarajevo by the Human Rights Department of the OSCE, reflective lessons were established as a consequence after its successful fight for rights. These can be read as tools to be used in order to reimagine the notion of the mahala: islands must be protected, based on local solidarity among residents and

⁶ This can be seen, for instance, in the map of the Deponija settlement in Belgrade (Macura, 2009, p. 11) or in the Orlovsko settlement (Macura, 1992).

partnerships with governmental administrations that can introduce innovative ways of land ownership and the organisation of collective living (Report on Roma Informal Settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005, pp. 6-8). But, as seen in the Roma example, the idea of the island contains an ambiguous state: although it fosters empowerment and rights for the local population, in the same way it can lead to detachment and segregation from the surrounding infrastructure.

Nevertheless, the “magical islands” that we have discovered can teach us that communal care and bottom-up practices based on rites, rituals and relationships can foster mutual collective rights that allow islands to be resistant, resilient and powerful for their inhabitants. These are relationships not only between people but also between inhabitants and the land they settle on. Viewed through nissological imagery, it is the ambivalent relationship of the island to its shore that allows them to exist in the first place.

4 Conclusion

*“Now my charms are all o’erthrown,
And what strength I have’s mine own,
Which is most faint: now, ’tis true,
I must be here confin’d by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardon’d the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, Art to enchant [...]”*

The Tempest, Epilogue (Shakespeare & Stratmann, 2025, p. 182)

Sarajevo’s mahala spaces are a landscape of possibilities. Nevertheless, their condition remains rather uncertain.

This paper argues for the investigation and re-evaluation of the core spatial and social concepts of the mahala. Undertaken by looking into the history and archetypical origins of the mahala, as well as its re-emergence in Roma settlements today, the paper argued for the re-invention of the mahala’s crucial concept of insularity. In analysing it as an imperial apparatus and recognising both the dangers and possibilities of urban settlement islands, the paper thus advocates for its re-interpretation as a decolonial apparatus.

This was undertaken by understanding the mahala island as a social practice that reiterates local communal “interiors” and secures them through innovative relations between inhabitants and settlement land.

The paper has addressed this endeavour in two contrasting parts.

In “Martial Islands”, I presented the mahala type as an occupational device that was primarily introduced in order to control local people, as well as military affiliates in bordering imperial regions, but which, nevertheless, gave individual communities the possibility of owning land and managing their community themselves. Here, the mahala was deliberately implemented as a functional apparatus for territorial expansion under central rule.

In “Magical Islands”, however, I have shown that the oldest prototypes of the mahala emerged out of the desire for ancestral tradition, mythical family protection and mutual but patriarchal care. As these aspects re-emerge in today’s Roma settlements, they evidence a continuation of the idea of the mahala in contrast to its physical existence in Sarajevo, where it is a remnant of the past, stripped from its social connotations.

I have shown that the idea of the island, in parallel, is prone to creating impoverished entities, segregated areas of ethnic homogeneity, but also settlements of empowerment and protest, counteracting contemporary capitalist land appropriation. And thus I argue that the mahala type’s potential lies in defining it as a social practice that can be introduced as a device to transform the former colonial apparatus into a decolonial one. This can be accomplished by learning from the mahala islands that communal care and bottom-up practices based on rites, rituals and relationships can foster mutual collective rights, as well as resistant and resilient settlements.

Consequently, the paper’s main argument, by referencing nissological thinking and etymological aspects of the term “island”, is to re-introduce new relationships between inhabitants and the land they settle on. This can be accomplished through concentrating on three main aspects within the ideas of relationality; the relationality of inhabitants to their land: introducing territorial autonomy for settlements, allowing local inhabitants to claim land; setting up a relational infrastructure enabling solidarity and exchange between island units, and negotiating and administering an institutional recognition of the island in order to protect them from erasure. It is an impetus to implement some of the magic of the (mahala) island to reassess and reinterpret today’s aspects of collective living in Sarajevo – and possibly in other cities, too.

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PROFESSIONAL

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SECTION

NOTE FROM THE PROFESSIONAL SECTION EDITOR RIJEČ UREDNICE STRUČNOG DIJELA

“Architecture belongs to culture, not to civilization.”
Alvar Aalto

„Architecture belongs to culture, not to civilization.“
Alvar Aalto

Today, as we are already well into the first half of the twenty-first century. - although it often feels as though much more time has passed - the question arises once again: what is the role of architecture as a medium that participates in shaping the cultural space of the city and life within it, and in what ways can architecture influence the preservation of collective memory, cultural identity, and the construction of contemporary urbanity. We are particularly proud to have had the opportunity to discuss these issues with one of the most influential architects of our time and the author of the Ars Aevi Museum project in Sarajevo - a project that embodies his conviction that “the most honest architecture often raises questions rather than providing answers” - the Italian architect Renzo Piano. We are pleased to publish this exclusive interview in the present issue.

Through conversations with architect Emanuela Baglietto from the Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW) co-author of the museum project, Enver Hadžiomerspahić, the visionary founder of the Ars Aevi Museum and Collection, architect Professor Senka Ibrišimbegović, PhD, of the Sarajevo City Museums - Ars Aevi Museum; and architect Professor Mladen Jadrić, Dr Tech. from the Vienna office of JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH, who contributes his perspective through the design and realisation of the Museum of Photography in Seoul, we have further reflected upon these questions.

Finally, three expert articles by architects and academics from Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, whether - and in what ways - architecture can simultaneously serve as an agent of change within specific contexts where modernist heritage, as a carrier of collective cultural memory, intersects with new spatial paradigms that reflect post-socialist transformations and a changing relationship to capital.

In a time of pronounced instability, when culture is fighting for its place in a world shaped by commodification, and when the perception of culture and art in public realm is changing, architects continue to explore ways in which architecture can actively contribute to the cultural life of the city. Recognising the fact that universal cultural values, disseminated in various contexts, receive specific interpretations through architecture, this issue offers an opportunity to explore different approaches and reflections that, each in their own way, contribute to the space in which they have been - or will be - realised. Behind these projects lie stories yet to be told, visions yet to be fully articulated, and testimonies yet to be shared. We hope they will affirm the values of a more open understanding of the relationship between architecture, culture, art, and people - a relationship that extends beyond closed frameworks and flows into the urban fabric and public spaces of the city, regenerating them in accordance with contemporary needs. As Uskoković (2018) observes, “Contemporary art today resembles a time that needs to be experienced, or the opening of a dialogue that never ends.”

Danas, kada smo duboko zakoračili u prvu polovicu 21. stoljeća - premda se iskustveno doima kao da je prošlo i mnogo više vremena - nanovo se otvara pitanje: kakva je uloga arhitekture kao medija koji sudjeluje u oblikovanju kulturnog prostora grada i života u njemu, te na koji način arhitektura može utjecati na očuvanje kolektivne memorije, kulturnog identiteta i izgradnju suvremenog urbaniteta. Posebno smo ponosni što smo o tome imali priliku razgovarati s jednim od najvažnijih arhitekata današnjice i autorom projekta muzeja Ars Aevi u Sarajevu, projekta koji utjelovljuje autorovu ideju prema kojoj „Najiskrenija arhitektura često postavlja pitanja umjesto da daje odgovore.“, talijanskim arhitektom Renzo Pianom. Ekskluzivni intervju objavljujemo u ovom broju.

Kroz razgovore s arhitekticom Emanuelom Baglietto iz Renzo Piano studija (RPBW) koautoricom na projektu muzeja, Enverom Hadžiomerspahićem idejnim tvorcem muzeja i zbirke Ars Aevi, arhitekticom prof. dr. sc. Senkom Ibrišimbegović iz Gradskih muzeja Sarajevo - Muzej Ars Aevi, i arhitektom prof. dr. tech. Mladenom Jadrićem iz bečkog ureda JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH, koji svoje viđenje donosi kroz projekt i realizaciju Muzeja fotografije u Seulu, također smo promišljali ovu problematiku.

Konačno, tri stručna članka arhitektica i profesorica iz Hrvatske, Crne Gore i Bosne i Hercegovine, istražuju može li i na koji način arhitektura istodobno biti nositelj promjena unutar specifičnih konteksta u kojima se susreću modernističko nasljeđe (nositelj kolektivne kulturne memorije) i nove prostorne paradigme koje zrcale postsocijalističke transformacije i promijenjen odnos prema kapitalu.

U vrijeme izražene nestalnosti, kada se kultura bori za svoje mjesto u svijetu oblikovanom procesima komodifikacije i kada se mijenja percepcija kulture i umjetnosti u javnom prostoru, arhitekti promišljaju načine na koje arhitektura može aktivno sudjelovati u izgradnji kulturnog života grada. Polazeći od činjenice da univerzalne kulturne vrijednosti, prenesene u različite kontekste, kroz arhitekturu dobivaju i specifične interpretacije, u ovom broju imamo priliku upoznati različite pristupe i promišljanja koja, svaka na svoj način, pridonose prostoru u kojem su realizirana ili će biti realizirana. Iza njih stoje još neispričane priče, vizije i svjedočanstva, za koja se nadamo kako će afirmirati vrijednosti otvorenijeg shvaćanja odnosa arhitekture, kulture, umjetnosti i čovjeka - odnosa koji izlazi iz zatvorenih okvira i prelijeva se u gradska tkiva i prostore, regenerirajući ih u skladu sa suvremenim potrebama. Jer, kako piše Uskoković (2018) „Suvremena umjetnost danas nalikuje vremenu koje treba iskustveno proći ili otvaranju dijaloga koji nikada ne završava.“



Photographed by Fotografisao Enrico Cano

ARS AEVI

ARCHITECTURE IS A COLLECTIVE ENTERPRISE ARHITEKTURA JE KOLEKTIVNI PODUH VAT

RENZO PIANO

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW FOR AAeU JOURNAL EKSKLUZIVNI INTERVJU ZA ČASOPIS AAeU

Few architectural stories carry the weight of time, memory, and resilience quite like the one connecting Renzo Piano to Sarajevo. One of the world's most celebrated architects, Piano donated the design for the Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art and conceived the Ars Aevi bridge back in 1999 — a gesture of solidarity with a city still bearing the wounds of war. Nearly three decades later, the project endures, not merely as an architectural vision, but as a living testament to collective belief. As Piano himself reflects, its survival has never been about a single drawing or a single author — it has been sustained by institutions, citizens, artists, curators, and generations of people who refused to let it disappear. In this exclusive conversation, he speaks about authorship and time, about lightness and dignity, about what it truly means to build for a city that has already proven it knows how to endure.

Malo je arhitektonskih priča koje nose takav teret vremena, sjećanja i otpornosti kao ona koja povezuje Renzo Piana sa Sarajevom. Jedan od najslavnijih arhitekata današnjice, Piano je 1999. godine donirao projekat za Muzej savremene umjetnosti Ars Aevi i osmislio istoimeni most — u znaku solidarnosti s gradom koji je još uvijek nosio rane rata. Skoro tri decenije kasnije, projekat opstaje — ne samo kao arhitektonska vizija, već kao živo svjedočanstvo kolektivnog vjerovanja. Kako i sam Piano ističe, njegov opstanak nikada nije počivao na jednom crtežu niti jednom autoru, već na institucijama, građanima, umjetnicima, kustosima i generacijama ljudi koji nisu dopustili da nestane. U ovom ekskluzivnom razgovoru, govori o autorstvu i vremenu, o lakoći i dostojanstvu, o tome što zaista znači graditi za grad koji je već dokazao da zna kako da izdrži.

AAeU: *When you first became involved with Ars Aevi during the siege of Sarajevo, what did the project represent to you at that moment? Looking back more than thirty years later, has its meaning changed—or has the city changed the project more than the project has changed the city?*

Renzo Piano: When I became involved, the project represented a gesture of solidarity more than an architectural commission. The urgency was cultural and human before it was architectural. The museum was conceived during a tragic moment, and participating was a way of saying that Sarajevo belonged to the cultural map of Europe and the world despite the siege.

AAeU: *Kada ste se prvi put uključili u Ars Aevi tokom opsade Sarajeva, šta je projekat predstavljao za Vas u tom trenutku? Gledajući unazad više od trideset godina kasnije, da li se njegovo značenje promijenilo - ili je grad promijenio projekat više nego što je projekat promijenio grad?*

Renzo Piano: Kada sam se uključio, projekat je predstavljao gest solidarnosti više nego arhitektonsku narudžbu. Hitnost je bila kulturna i ljudska prije nego što je bila arhitektonska. Muzej je zamišljen u tragičnom trenutku, a učešće je bio način da se kaže da Sarajevo pripada kulturnoj mapi Evrope i svijeta uprkos opsadi.

Thirty years later, I see the project less as something that belongs to me and more as something that belongs to Sarajevo.

Over time, many people have carried it forward—curators, institutions, citizens, local architects, public authorities. The original idea may have come from a particular moment, but its survival is the result of many hands and many forms of commitment.

Perhaps that is the most beautiful aspect of the project: it has become larger than its author.

AAeU: *Ars Aevi emerged through an extraordinary network of international cultural solidarity. What sustains solidarity once the immediate emergency has passed? Can solidarity remain active across decades, or does it inevitably take on different meanings as circumstances change?*

Renzo Piano: Solidarity is not a monument. If it remains frozen in the conditions that produced it, it becomes nostalgia. Real solidarity adapts.

In the beginning, solidarity meant responding to violence and isolation. Today, it means listening. It means accepting that Sarajevo is not the Sarajevo of 1993. The danger is that outsiders continue to see the city through the lens of tragedy while the city itself is trying to imagine its future. The challenge is to transform solidarity from an emergency response into a long-term relationship based on respect and reciprocity.

Trideset godina kasnije, projekat vidim manje kao nešto što pripada meni, a više kao nešto što pripada Sarajevu.

Vremenom su ga mnogi ljudi razvijali- kustosi, institucije, građani, lokalni arhitekti, javne vlasti. Originalna ideja je možda proizašla iz određenog trenutka, ali njen opstanak je rezultat mnogih ruku i mnogih oblika posvećenosti.

Možda je to najljepši aspekt projekta: postao je veći od svog autora.

AAeU: *Ars Aevi je nastao kroz izvanrednu mrežu međunarodne kulturne solidarnosti. Šta održava solidarnost nakon što neposredna vanredna situacija prođe? Može li solidarnost ostati aktivna decenijama ili neizbježno poprima različita značenja kako se okolnosti mijenjaju?*

Renzo Piano: Solidarnost nije spomenik. Ako ostane zamrznuta u uslovima koji su je proizveli, postaje nostalgija. Prava solidarnost se prilagođava.

U početku, solidarnost je značila odgovor na nasilje i izolaciju. Danas znači slušanje. Znači prihvatanje da Sarajevo nije Sarajevo iz 1993. godine. Opasnost je u tome što autsajderi nastavljaju da gledaju grad kroz prizmu tragedije, dok sam grad pokušava da zamisli svoju budućnost. Izazov je transformisati solidarnost iz odgovora na kriznu situaciju u dugoročni odnos zasnovan na poštovanju i reciprocitetu.

AAeU: *The project has existed longer as an idea than as a building. If time were considered a building material rather than a delay, how might that alter the way you think about its realization today?*

Renzo Piano: Usually an architect develops an idea, oversees its realization, and then the building begins its life. Ars Aevi followed a completely different path.

The project remained suspended for decades, and during that time others had to interpret, adapt, and develop it. Local architects translated an initial concept into a project capable of being built in a different historical moment.

AAeU: *Projekat postoji duže kao ideja nego kao građevina. Ako bi se vrijeme smatralo građevinskim materijalom, a ne kašnjenjem, kako bi to moglo promijeniti način na koji danas razmišljate o njegovoj realizaciji?*

Renzo Piano: Obično arhitekta razvije ideju, nadgleda njenu realizaciju, a zatim zgrada započinje svoj život. Ars Aevi je slijedio potpuno drugačiji put.

Projekat je obustavljen, što je trajalo decenijama. Tokom tog vremena drugi su ga morali interpretirati, prilagoditi i razviti. Lokalni arhitekti su početni koncept preveli u projekat sposoban za izgradnju u drugom historijskom trenutku.

In that sense, time did not simply delay the architecture, it transformed its authorship. The project became a dialogue across generations.

U tom smislu, vrijeme nije samo odgodilo arhitekturu, već je transformisalo njeno autorstvo. Projekat je postao dijalog kroz generacije.

I think architects should not be afraid of that. Buildings are rarely the work of one person. Time reminds us that architecture is always collective.

Mislim da se arhitekti toga ne bi trebali bojati. Zgrade su rijetko djelo jedne osobe. Vrijeme nas podsjeća da je arhitektura uvijek kolektivna.

AAeU: *You designed Ars Aevi as a gift rather than a conventional commission. Does a gifted building carry different ethical responsibilities?*

And can architecture ever fully detach itself from questions of authorship, influence, or power?

AAeU: *Ars Aevi ste dizajnirali kao poklon, a ne kao konvencionalnu narudžbu. Da li poklonjena građevina nosi drugačije etičke odgovornosti?*

I može li se arhitektura ikada u potpunosti odvojiti od pitanja autorstva, utjecaja ili moći?

Renzo Piano: I hesitate to describe the museum as a gift in the sense of a finished object. What was offered was an idea, a gesture of participation, an expression of solidarity.

Once an idea enters the world, it no longer belongs entirely to its author: others reinterpret it, challenge it, improve it, and adapt it to realities the original architect could not foresee.

That does not remove responsibility. On the contrary, it requires humility. The role of the architect is not to impose a vision unchanged across decades, but to accept that architecture acquires new authors as it moves toward realization.

The project's evolution through local expertise is not a dilution of authorship; it is evidence that the project has remained alive.

Renzo Piano: Oklijevam opisati muzej kao poklon u smislu gotovog predmeta. Ono što je ponuđeno bila je ideja, gest sudjelovanja, izraz solidarnosti.

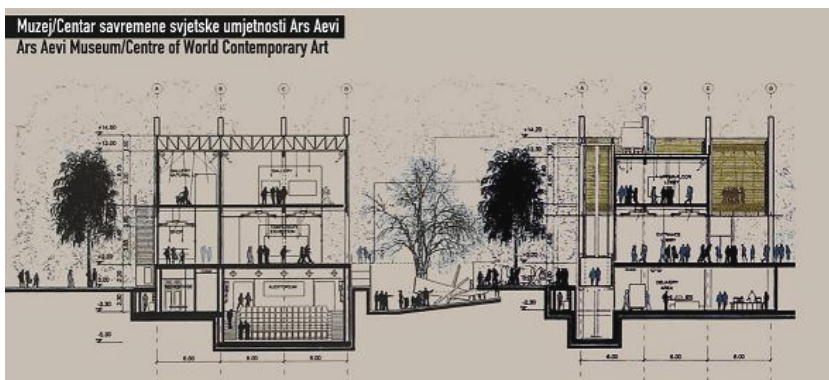
Kada ideja jednom uđe u svijet, ona više ne pripada u potpunosti svom autoru: drugi je reinterpretiraju, osporavaju, poboljšavaju i prilagođavaju stvarnostima koje originalni arhitekt nije mogao predvidjeti.

To ne isključuje odgovornost. Naprotiv, zahtijeva poniznost. Uloga arhitekta nije da nametne viziju nepromijenjenu kroz decenije, već da prihvati da arhitektura stiže nove autore dok se kreće prema realizaciji.

Evolucija projekta kroz lokalnu ekspertizu nije umanjivanje vrijednosti autorstva; to je dokaz da je projekat ostao živ.



Source Izvor
Archive Arhiva Senka Ibrišimbegović



Source Izvor
Renzo Piano Building Workshop

AAeU: For many years Ars Aevi existed primarily through its collection, its collaborations, and its cultural network rather than through a permanent building. In that sense, was it already a museum? What does that suggest about the role of museums in the twenty-first century?

Renzo Piano: Ars Aevi demonstrates that institutions are stronger than buildings. The collection existed. The intellectual project existed. The cultural relationships existed. The architecture was important, but it was never the whole story.

AAeU: Ars Aevi je godinama postojao prvenstveno kroz svoju kolekciju, saradnju i kulturnu mrežu, a ne kroz stalni objekat. U tom smislu, da li je već bio muzej? Šta to sugerise o ulozi muzeja u dvadeset prvom vijeku?

Renzo Piano: Ars Aevi pokazuje da su institucije jače od zgrada. Kolekcija je postojala. Intelaktualni projekat je postojao. Kulturni odnosi su postojali. Arhitektura je bila važna, ali nikada nije bila cijela priča.

Perhaps this is why the museum survived so long without a permanent building. It was sustained by a community rather than by an object. The future building should recognize that history. It should not behave as though everything begins when the doors open. The museum was already alive long before the construction site appeared.

Možda je to razlog zašto je muzej toliko dugo opstao bez stalne zgrade. Održavala ga je zajednica, a ne neki objekt. Buduća zgrada trebala bi prepoznati tu historiju. Ne bi se trebala ponašati kao da sve počinje kada se vrata otvore. Muzej je već bio živ mnogo prije nego što se pojavilo gradilište.

AAeU: Sarajevo carries visible and invisible traces of conflict. What does it mean for architecture to engage with historical and psychological layers without attempting to heal, erase, or resolve them?

AAeU: Sarajevo nosi vidljive i nevidljive tragove sukoba. Šta znači za arhitekturu da se bavi historijskim i psihološkim slojevima bez pokušaja da ih zacijeli, izbriše ili riješi?

Renzo Piano: Architecture should not pretend to solve historical trauma. That would be arrogance.

Renzo Piano: Arhitektura se ne bi trebala pretvarati da može riješiti historijske traume. To bi bila arogancija.

What architecture can do is create conditions for coexistence. It can provide places where people meet, reflect, disagree, and remember.

Ono što arhitektura može učiniti jeste stvoriti uvjete za suživot. Može pružiti mjesta gdje se ljudi susreću, razmišljaju, sučeljavaju različite stavove i sjećaju.

A city is composed of many layers, some visible and some hidden. The role of architecture is not to erase those layers but to allow them to remain legible. Sometimes respect means accepting complexity rather than searching for closure. The most honest architecture often asks questions instead of providing answers.

Grad se sastoji od mnogo slojeva, neki vidljivi, a neki skriveni. Uloga arhitekture nije da izbriše te slojeve, već da im omogući da ostanu čitljivi. Ponekad poštovanje znači prihvatanje složenosti, a ne traženje rješenja. Najiskrenija arhitektura često postavlja pitanja umjesto da daje odgovore.

AAeU: *Your work often seeks transparency, lightness, and openness. In a place marked by vulnerability and memory, how do you distinguish lightness from fragility? Can architecture be open without becoming exposed?*

Renzo Piano: Lightness is not weakness. Lightness can be very strong.

In nature, the most elegant structures often achieve strength through precision rather than mass. Architecture can learn from that lesson. Openness is not the absence of protection; it is the creation of trust.

In Sarajevo, lightness is important because it represents confidence in the future. But it must also be balanced with dignity and shelter.

A public building should welcome people while making them feel secure.

Architecture should be open, but never naïve.

AAeU: *Projects such as Ars Aevi are often described as instruments of reconciliation or healing. What can architecture realistically contribute in a post-conflict city—and what expectations should architects resist?*

Renzo Piano: One lesson of Ars Aevi is that architecture alone achieves very little.

If the project still exists after more than thirty years, it is not because of a drawing made by an architect. It is because institutions, citizens, artists, curators, politicians, engineers, and local professionals continued to believe in it.

Architects often receive disproportionate attention. The reality is that architecture is a collective enterprise. A building can provide a place, but the meaning comes from the people who sustain it over time.

In that sense, Ars Aevi is perhaps less a story about architecture than about persistence.

Post-conflict cities do not need architecture to tell them how to remember. They need architecture capable of accommodating memory, disagreement, and change. The most responsible architecture is often not the one that claims to heal, but the one that leaves room for society to do that work itself.

Genoa, June 2026

Questions by Pitanja pripremile
Dunja Krvavac, Irhana Šehović

AAeU: *Vaš rad često teži transparentnosti, lakoći i otvorenosti. Na mjestu obilježenom ranjivošću i sjećanjem, kako razlikujete lakoću od krhkosti? Može li arhitektura biti otvorena, a da se ne izloži?*

Renzo Piano: Lakoća nije slabost. Lakoća može biti vrlo jaka.

U prirodi, najelegantnije strukture često postižu snagu kroz preciznost, a ne kroz masu. Arhitektura može učiti iz te lekcije. Otvorenost nije odsustvo zaštite; to je stvaranje povjerenja.

U Sarajevu je lakoća važna jer predstavlja povjerenje u budućnost. Ali mora biti uravnotežena i s dostojanstvom i osjećajem sigurnosti.

Javna zgrada treba ljudima pružati dobrodošlicu, a istovremeno im pružati i osjećaj sigurnosti.

Arhitektura treba da bude otvorena, ali nikada naivna.

AAeU: *Projekti poput Ars Aevi često se opisuju kao instrumenti pomirenja ili iscjeljenja. Šta arhitektura realno može doprinijeti u gradu nakon sukoba - i kojim očekivanjima bi arhitekti trebali odoljeti?*

Renzo Piano: Jedna lekcija Ars Aevi-ja je da sama arhitektura postiže vrlo malo.

Ako projekat još uvijek postoji nakon više od trideset godina, to nije zbog crteža koji je napravio arhitekta. To je zato što su institucije, građani, umjetnici, kustosi, političari, inženjeri i lokalni stručnjaci nastavili vjerovati u njega.

Arhitekti često dobijaju nesrazmjernu pažnju. Stvarnost je da je arhitektura kolektivni poduhvat. Zgrada može pružiti mjesto, ali značenje dolazi od ljudi koji je održavaju tokom vremena.

U tom smislu, Ars Aevi je možda manje priča o arhitekturi, a više o upornosti.

Gradovima nakon sukoba nije potrebna arhitektura koja bi im rekla kako da pamte. Potrebna im je arhitektura sposobna da prihvati sjećanje, neslaganje i promjene. Najodgovornija arhitektura često nije ona koja tvrdi da liječi, već ona koja ostavlja prostora društvu da to samo učini.

Đenova, juni 2026.

Interview coordinated and edited by Intervju koordinirale i uredile
Senka Ibrišimbegović, Emanuela Baglietto



Source Izvor Studio NONSTOP

ARS AEVI

THREE DECADES TOWARD A MUSEUM TRI DECENIJE DO MUZEJA

CONVERSATION WITH RAZGOVOR SA

Enver Enjo Hadžiomerspahić, Founder of Ars Aevi Project osnivač projekta Ars Aevi

Emanuela Baglietto, Partner at Renzo Piano Building Workshop partnerica u RPBW

Senka Ibrišimbegović, Director of the City Museums Sarajevo direktorica Gradskih muzeja Sarajevo

The construction of the Ars Aevi Museum is much more than an architectural project. It represents the realization of an idea born in the first months of the siege of Sarajevo - that culture can be an act of solidarity, resistance and continuity.

Over the past three decades, that idea has grown into an international collection, drawing the support of artists, curators, museums, institutions, UNESCO, and Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Along the way, it has endured political transitions, economic uncertainty, and the challenges of sustaining a cultural vision across generations.

The story of Ars Aevi is therefore not simply the story of a building. It is the story of how a cultural project survived long enough to become architecture.

In this conversation, Enver Hadžiomerspahić, founder of the Ars Aevi Project, Emanuela Baglietto, partner at Renzo Piano Building Workshop, and Senka Ibrišimbegović, director of the public institution City Museums Sarajevo - Ars Aevi, reflect on the origins of the collection, the making of the museum, and the collective commitment that has carried Ars Aevi from an act of wartime solidarity toward its long-awaited realization.

Izgradnja Ars Aevi muzeja je mnogo više od arhitektonskog projekta. Ona predstavlja ostvarenje ideje rođene u prvim mjesecima opsade Sarajeva - da kultura može biti čin solidarnosti, otpora i kontinuiteta.

Tokom protekle tri decenije ta ideja je izrasla u međunarodnu kolekciju, okupljajući podršku umjetnika, kustosa, muzeja, institucija, UNESCO-a i arhitektonskog studija Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Na tom putu, kolekcija je preživjela političke tranzicije, ekonomsku neizvjesnost i izazove očuvanja kulturne vizije kroz generacije.

Priča o Ars Aeviju stoga nije samo priča o jednoj zgradi. To je priča o tome kako je jedan kulturni projekat opstao dovoljno dugo da postane arhitektura.

U ovom razgovoru Enver Hadžiomerspahić, osnivač projekta Ars Aevi, Emanuela Baglietto, partnerica u arhitektonskom studiju Renzo Piano Building Workshop i Senka Ibrišimbegović, direktorica javne ustanove Gradski Muzeji Sarajevo - Ars Aevi osvrću se na nastanak kolekcije, proces stvaranja muzeja i zajedničku posvećenost koja je Ars Aevi vodila od čina ratne solidarnosti do dugo očekivane realizacije.

AAeU: *Welcome to Sarajevo and thank you for your lecture at the Days of Architecture festival. You have been with Renzo Piano Building Workshop for almost four decades. How did architecture, and eventually RPBW, become your path?*

Emanuela Baglietto: I am Emanuela Baglietto, and I joined the office in 1988 and became a partner in 1997. Since then, I have been working in the office as an architect. My family was famous for boatbuilding, but the shipyard changed ownership when I was 18. So my first idea was to study naval engineering, but then there was no more reason. At the time, it was more difficult, so I eventually found my way into architecture, which allowed me to stay connected to building.

I studied in Genoa and started collaborating with the studio Renzo Piano as a student, as they recruited students at the university. I spent a lot of time in the office before I officially started working. It was a smooth transition because I went there right away after finishing my studies.

I have great experiences because the work allows me to travel abroad and learn about different countries and cultures.

AAeU: *Your relationship with Ars Aevi spans almost your entire professional career. How did you first become involved with the project?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: My name is Senka Ibrišimbegović, and I am an architect. My first professional experience was at the contemporary art museum Ars Aevi, which at the time operated as a foundation and association. Following my Master's degree in Italy, that experience somehow led me to this project.

Working there was not necessarily my initial goal, but after completing my studies in Italy, the museum, and the project itself, presented a challenge that appealed to me as a young architect. Intuitively, I felt motivated to join and become part of it.

I also have the opportunity to teach at the University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Architecture, where we try to connect academic and theoretical teaching with practical projects such as this one. In 2018, after Enver retired and the Ars Aevi project was institutionalized by the City of Sarajevo, I was appointed director.

It has been more than 25 years. Even the bridge donated by Renzo Piano dates back to 2002. It has been a long process, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to lead this project in its final phase and work toward the construction of the museum.

I am also happy that Emanuela Baglietto and Renzo Piano, both as people and as architects, together with the team and former students of RPBW, are still with us. They remain just as passionate about the project, perhaps even more passionate than we are, and it means a great deal to have their support today, after so many years.

AAeU: *Dobro došli u Sarajevo i hvala Vam na Vašem predavanju na festivalu Dani arhitekture. Već gotovo četiri decenije dio ste arhitektonskog studija Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Kako su arhitektura, a onda i RPBW, postali Vaš životni i profesionalni put?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Ja sam Emanuela Baglietto. Pridružila sam se studiju 1988. godine, a partnerica sam postala 1997. Od tada radim u uredu kao arhitektica.

Moja porodica bila je poznata po brodogradnji, ali je brodogradilište promijenilo vlasnika kada sam imala osamnaest godina. Moja prvobitna namjera bila je da studiram brodomaštvo, odnosno pomorsko inženjerstvo ali nakon promjene vlasništva, više nije bilo stvarnog razloga za to. U to vrijeme taj put je postao znatno teži pa sam se na kraju okrenula arhitekturi, koja mi je omogućila da ostanem povezana sa svijetom gradnje i stvaranja.

Studirala sam u Genovi i još kao studentica sam počela sarađivati sa studijem Renza Piana, jer su u to vrijeme regrutirali studente direktno na univerzitetu. Provodila sam mnogo vremena u uredu i prije nego što sam se zvanično zaposlila. Prelazak u profesionalni rad bio je vrlo prirodan i jednostavan, jer sam odmah nakon završetka studija nastavila raditi tamo.

Imala sam sreću da steknem izuzetno vrijedna iskustva, jer mi je ovaj posao omogućio da putujem širom svijeta i upoznajem različite zemlje, kulture i načine života.

AAeU: *Vaš odnos s Ars Aevijem traje gotovo cijelu Vašu profesionalnu karijeru. Kako ste se prvi put uključili u ovaj projekat?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: Moje ime je Senka Ibrišimbegović i po struci sam arhitektica. Svoje prvo profesionalno iskustvo stekla sam u Muzeju savremene umjetnosti Ars Aevi, koji je tada djelovao kao fondacija i asocijacija. Nakon magistarskog studija u Italiji, moj profesionalni put me je, na neki način, prirodno doveo do ovog projekta.

Rad u Ars Aeviju nije bio unaprijed zacrtan dio mog profesionalnog puta. Međutim, nakon završenih studija u Italiji, muzej i sam projekat predstavljali su izazov koji me je privukao kao mladu arhitekticu. Osjetila sam snažnu potrebu da se uključim i postanem dio jedne izuzetne priče koja se tada još uvijek oblikovala.

Istovremeno sam imala priliku da počnem predavati na Arhitektonskom fakultetu Univerziteta u Sarajevu, gdje nastojimo povezati akademski i teorijski rad s praktičnim projektima poput ovog. Godine 2018. nakon što se Enver povukao iz aktivnog vođenja projekta, a Ars Aevi institucionaliziran u okviru Grada Sarajeva, imenovana sam direktoricom ustanove.

Prošlo je više od dvadeset pet godina. Čak i most koji je Sarajevu poklonio Renzo Piano datira iz 2002. godine. Bio je to dug proces i zahvalna sam što mi je dato povjerenje da vodim ovaj projekat u njegovoj završnoj fazi te da radim na ostvarenju konačnog cilja, a to je izgradnja muzeja.

Također me raduje što su Emanuela Baglietto i Renzo Piano, kako kao ljudi, tako i kao arhitekti, zajedno s timom i nekadašnjim saradnicima RPBW-a, i dalje uz nas. Njihova posvećenost projektu nije oslabila, naprotiv, čini se da su danas možda čak i strastveniji od nas samih. Nakon toliko godina, njihova podrška nam izuzetno mnogo znači.



Photographed by
Fotografisao
Ammar Akšamija

AAeU: *Ars Aevi is often described as your life's work. Looking back, how did the path that led to it begin?*

Enjo: My name is Enver Hadžiomerspahić, although almost everyone calls me Enjo. When I look back today, it seems to me that my life has been a series of encounters, ideas, and circumstances that somehow always came together to create something new. I like to say that heaven loves me, because many of the things I imagined eventually came true.

My story begins in Sarajevo, in a building full of neighbors and children, with a strong sense of community. Even then, I was fascinated by the idea of bringing people together to create, to talk, and to share space. From an improvised children's club in the basement of our building to youth spaces on Radićeva Street and, later, the Youth Center in Skenderija, my path has always been connected to culture, art, and the gathering of people.

Over the years, I had the opportunity to take part in organizing numerous cultural programs, including the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo.

AAeU: *Ars Aevi se često opisuje kao životno djelo kojem ste posvetili najveći dio svog profesionalnog i ličnog angažmana. Kada se osvrnete unazad, kako je započeo put koji je doveo do njegovog nastanka?*

Enjo: Moje ime je Enver Hadžiomerspahić, iako me gotovo svi zovu Enjo. Kada danas pogledam unazad, čini mi se da je moj život bio niz susreta, ideja i okolnosti koje su se nekako uvijek spajale u nešto novo. Volim reći da me nebo voli jer su se mnoge stvari koje sam zamišljao na kraju zaista i ostvarile.

Moja priča počinje u Sarajevu, u zgradi punoj komšija i djece, u okruženju koje je njegovalo snažan osjećaj zajedništva. Još tada me privlačila ideja okupljanja ljudi koji zajedno stvaraju, razgovaraju i dijele prostor. Od improviziranog dječijeg kluba u podrumu naše zgrade, preko omladinskih prostora u Radićevoj ulici, pa sve do Doma mladih u Skenderiji, moj put je uvijek bio povezan s kulturom, umjetnošću i okupljanjem ljudi.

Tokom godina imao sam priliku učestvovati u organizaciji brojnih kulturnih programa, među kojima su bile i ceremonije otvaranja i zatvaranja Zimskih olimpijskih igara 1984. godine u Sarajevu.

Those experiences taught me that great things never happen on their own; they are made possible through trust, collaboration, and the shared energy of many people working together.

Ars Aevi grew out of that same belief. It did not appear overnight. It emerged through years of work, friendships, and a conviction that art has the power to connect people, even in the most difficult of times.

Ta iskustva naučila su me da se velike stvari nikada ne događaju same od sebe; one nastaju zahvaljujući povjerenju, saradnji i zajedničkoj energiji mnogih ljudi koji rade zajedno.

Ars Aevi izrastao je iz tog istog uvjerenja. Nije nastao preko noći. Oblikovao se kroz godine rada, prijateljstava i čvrstog vjerovanja da umjetnost ima moć povezivati ljude, čak i u najtežim vremenima.

AAeU: *Ars Aevi began as an idea before it became a collection. Where did that idea come from?*

Enjo: The idea of Ars Aevi did not emerge overnight. It grew out of everything we had been doing throughout the 1980s with the Jugoslovenska dokumenta exhibitions. After the success of the first exhibition in 1987 and the 1989 biennial, our ambitions grew. We wanted Sarajevo to become a meeting place for the most important artists, not only from Yugoslavia but from around the world.

However, that was when the war began. In 1992, while watching the Olympic Museum burn in Sarajevo, an idea came to me.

" I was convinced that some of the world's most renowned artists would want to respond to the injustice of the siege of Sarajevo through their work. I invited them to donate artworks for a future museum of contemporary art in Sarajevo, as a collective act of solidarity with the city. "

The idea was supported by the City of Sarajevo and the cultural institutions of the time, and we initially called the project Sarajevo 2000.

When I managed to leave the besieged city and reach Milan, Enrico Comi immediately began inviting artists. This led to the creation of the Milan Collection, based on a simple principle: one artist, one artwork. The first artist to respond was Michelangelo Pistoletto, and his work Mirror Doors symbolically opened the door for everything that followed.

Later, following a suggestion by my son Anur, the idea expanded even further. Instead of inviting individual artists alone, museums across Europe began organizing collective exhibitions and building collections for Sarajevo. This is how the collections in Milan, Prato, Ljubljana, Venice, and other cities came into being.

AAeU: *Ars Aevi je započeo kao ideja prije nego što je postao kolekcija. Odakle je ta ideja potekla?*

Enjo: Ideja Ars Aevija nije nastala preko noći. Ona je izrasla iz svega što smo radili tokom osamdesetih godina kroz izložbe „Jugoslovenska dokumenta“. Nakon uspjeha prve izložbe 1987. godine i bijenala 1989. godine, naše ambicije su rasle. Željeli smo da Sarajevo postane mjesto susreta najvažnijih umjetnika, ne samo iz bivše Jugoslavije, nego i iz cijelog svijeta.

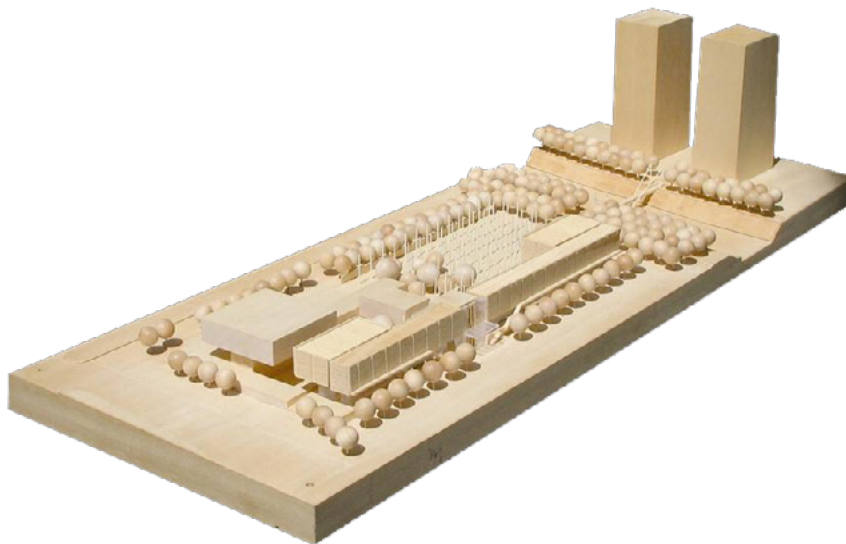
U međuvremenu je počeo rat. Godine 1992. dok sam posmatrao kako gori Olimpijski muzej u Sarajevu, javila mi se ideja.

Bio sam uvjeren da bi neki od najznačajnijih svjetskih umjetnika željeli odgovoriti na nepravdu opsade Sarajeva kroz svoj rad. Pozvao sam ih da doniraju umjetnička djela za budući muzej savremene umjetnosti u Sarajevu, kao zajednički čin solidarnosti s gradom. "

Ideju su podržali Grad Sarajevo i tadašnje kulturne institucije, a projekat smo u početku nazvali „Sarajevo 2000“.

Kada sam uspio napustiti opkoljeni grad i stići u Milano, Enrico Comi je odmah počeo pozivati umjetnike. To je dovelo do stvaranja Kolekcije Milano, zasnovane na jednostavnom principu: jedan umjetnik, jedno djelo. Prvi umjetnik koji je odgovorio bio je Michelangelo Pistoletto, a njegovo djelo Vrata ogledala simbolično je otvorilo vrata svemu što je uslijedilo nakon toga.

Kasnije, na prijedlog mog sina Anura, ideja se još više proširila. Umjesto da se pozivaju samo pojedinačni umjetnici, muzeji širom Evrope počeli su organizovati kolektivne izložbe i graditi kolekcije za Sarajevo. Tako su nastale kolekcije u Milanu, Pratu, Ljubljani, Veneciji i drugim gradovima.



Source Izvor
Renzo Piano Building Workshop

AAeU: *Let's focus on the museum. Why was it important for RPBW to contribute to Ars Aevi?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Enver came with a great collection and was looking for a home for it. He came to us and asked us to design this home, and that's what we did. The intention was to help him and the city after the war, because we all believe that culture can help the healing and provide a sort of refuge.

AAeU: *You first came to Sarajevo roughly twenty-five years ago, shortly after the war. What do you remember most vividly from that first visit?*

Emanuela Baglietto: The first time I didn't really know where I was going, as we had only seen images of the city from the war on TV. I knew very little about the region. When I arrived, I discovered this beautiful city. I remember the first walk through the Old Town with Enjo, who was trying to show me everything in two days so I could understand how the city works and how people use it.

One little detail I thought about was the benches outside cafés and shops that were up when they were closed and down during the day when they were open. This showed a great aspect of the population and their conviviality, sitting together for a coffee. This was something important that I learned.

" We walked along the river and realized there was a long distance between the bridges. By thinking through the whole project, we realized we needed a connection, so we imagined a bridge linking the residential area to the main boulevard leading to the City. Somehow this structured the building, my visit, and the site."

AAeU: *Renzo Piano often says that architects must, in a sense, become local in order to design responsibly. After twenty-five years with Ars Aevi, in what way have you become more Sarajevan?*

Emanuela Baglietto: I have a lot of friends here. *Laughs*

AAeU: *The story of Renzo Piano's involvement has almost become part of Ars Aevi mythology. How did it happen?*

Enjo: It all came together in a way I never really planned, more like it kept unfolding step by step.

After the Venice exhibition, I started going from mayor to mayor, coordinating that all the artworks would finally come to Sarajevo. When the war was over, the idea was that everything should be brought together and presented in a large, spectacular exhibition in the Skenderija Olympic halls, where Jugoslovenska dokumenta had once been held. That was around 1999.

AAeU: *Vratimo se na sam muzej. Zašto je za RPBW bilo važno da doprinese projektu Ars Aevi?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Enver je došao s izuzetnom kolekcijom i tražio joj je stalni dom. Obratio se nama i zamolio nas da osmislimo taj dom, i to smo i učinili. Namjera je bila pomoći njemu i gradu nakon rata, jer svi vjerujemo da kultura može doprinijeti ozdravljenju i pružiti svojevrsno utočište.

AAeU: *Prvi put ste došli u Sarajevo otprilike prije dvadeset pet godina, ubrzo nakon rata. Čega se najživopisnije sjećate iz te prve posjete Sarajevu?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Prvi put zapravo nisam znala tačno gdje idem, jer smo grad poznavali samo kroz slike iz ratnih vijesti na televiziji. O regionu sam znala vrlo malo. Kada sam stigla, otkrila sam jedan prelijep grad. Sjećam se prve šetnje kroz Stari grad s Enjom, koji je pokušavao da mi u dva dana pokaže sve kako bih razumijela kako grad funkcionise i kako ga ljudi koriste.

Jedan mali detalj na koji sam obratila pažnju bile su klupe ispred kafića i trgovina koje su bile podignute kada su radnje bile zatvorene, a spuštene tokom dana kada su radile. To je pokazivalo jedan važan aspekt stanovništva i njihove druželjubivosti, način na koji zajedno sjede i piju kafu. To je bilo nešto važno što sam naučila.

" Šetali smo uz rijeku i shvatila sam da postoji velika udaljenost između mostova. Promišljajući cijeli projekat, uvidjeli smo da je potrebna veza, pa smo zamislili most koji povezuje stambeni dio s glavnim bulevarom koji vodi prema gradu. Na neki način, to je strukturiralo i zgradu ali i moju posjetu gradu kao i sam lokalitet muzeja."

AAeU: *Renzo Piano često kaže da arhitekti, u određenom smislu, moraju postati lokalci kako bi mogli odgovorno projektovati. Nakon dvadeset pet godina rada na Ars Aeviju, na koji način ste i vi postali "više" Sarajka?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Imam mnogo prijatelja ovdje. *(smijeh)*

AAeU: *Priča o uključenosti Renza Piana gotovo je postala dio mitologije Ars Aevija. Kako je do toga došlo?*

Enjo: Sve se odvijalo na način koji nikada nisam zaista planirao, više kao niz koraka koji su se spontano nadovezivali jedan na drugi.

Nakon venecijanske izložbe, počeo sam obilaziti gradonačelnike, koordinirajući da sva umjetnička djela konačno stignu u Sarajevo. Kada je rat završio, ideja je bila da se sve objedini i prikaže u velikoj, spektakularnoj izložbi u olimpijskim dvoranama Skenderije, gdje su se nekada održavala "Jugoslovenska dokumenta". To je bilo oko 1999. godine.



Source Izvor Studio NONSTOP

The mayor of Venice asked me a very direct question: where will all these artworks go once they arrive in Sarajevo? I didn't really have an answer at first. But I told him something I had kept to myself: that my wife Jasminka's last wish, before she passed away, was that the architectural design of the future museum should be done by the architect Renzo Piano.

He immediately picked up the phone and called him. Just like that.

“ And the next day I was in Genoa, in Renzo Piano’s studio. I told him the whole story exactly as I had told it before. He asked me what his role would be. I said this was essentially a dream my wife had left behind. And he agreed. ”

Gradonačelnik Venecije postavio mi je vrlo direktno pitanje: gdje će sva ta umjetnička djela završiti kada stignu u Sarajevo? U tom trenutku zapravo nisam imao odgovor. Ali sam mu rekao nešto što sam dotad zadržao za sebe: da je posljednja želja moje supruge Jasminke, prije nego što je otišla sa ovog svijeta, bila da arhitektonsko rješenje budućeg muzeja uradi arhitekt Renzo Piano.

On je odmah uzeo telefon i nazvao ga. Tek tako i bez odlaganja.

“ Već narednog dana bio sam u Genovi, u studiju Renza Piana. Ispričao sam mu cijelu priču, baš onako kako sam je i ranije ispričao. Pitao me koja bi bila njegova uloga. Rekao sam da je to, u suštini, san koji je sanjala moja supruga. I on je pristao. ”

When Renzo Piano later came to Sarajevo, the project also received UNESCO support, with the Director-General present. That moment made it feel fully real.

AAeU: *Twenty-five years later, how has the project evolved - and what has remained unchanged?*

Emanuela Baglietto: We changed, during the development of the main design by Studio NONSTOP, the materialization of the facade. Originally, we intended to use a timber facade, but then we decided on stone. It's the same language as the Historical

Kada je Renzo Piano kasnije došao u Sarajevo, projekat je dobio i podršku UNESCO-a, uz prisustvo generalnog direktora. Taj trenutak je učinio da sve postane potpuno stvarno.

AAeU: *Dvadeset pet godina kasnije, kako se projekat razvijao i šta je ostalo nepromijenjeno?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Mi smo promijenili materijalizaciju fasade u fazi izrade glavnog/izvedbenog projekta od strane Studia NONSTOP. Prvobitno smo namjeravali koristiti drvenu fasadu ali smo se kasnije odlučili za kamen jer je to isti jezik kao i Historijski muzej. Osim



Photographed by Fotografisala Izela Kešmer-Wigemark

Museum. Apart from that, the concept has remained the same. It repeats the stratigraphy of the museums we design. It has a public ground floor.

We did the concept design, and in 2022 there was a competition to find a local firm to develop the construction documentation to proceed with the project. The winner was Studio NonStop, so they will be fully involved, together with Senka, in building the new building. I will be supervising.

AAeU: *Could you tell us about the concept behind the museum and how you approached its relationship to the city, particularly regarding openness, transparency, and the traditional expectation of monumentality?*

Emanuela Baglietto:

" The museum is conceived as a kind of promenade that begins at the riverbank and gradually unfolds through a series of public spaces integrated into the landscape. Visitors move from the city into a quieter, more contemplative environment where art is experienced under natural light filtered through skylights, creating a serene and suspended atmosphere.

Additional cultural spaces and an auditorium follow the site's topography, reinforcing the connection between architecture and landscape.

toga, koncept je ostao isti. On ponavlja stratigrafiju muzeja koje projektujemo. Ima javni prizemni nivo.

Mi smo uradili idejni projekat, a 2022. godine raspisan je konkurs za izbor lokalne firme koja će razviti projektnu dokumentaciju kako bi se nastavilo s realizacijom projekta. Pobjednik je bio studio NonStop, tako da će oni u potpunosti biti uključeni, zajedno sa Senkom, u izgradnju nove zgrade. Ja ću da nadzirem proces izgradnje.

AAeU: *Možete li nam reći više o konceptu muzeja i o tome kako ste pristupili njegovom odnosu prema gradu, posebno u pogledu otvorenosti, transparentnosti i tradicionalnog očekivanja monumentalnosti?*

Emanuela Baglietto:

Muzej je zamišljen kao svojevrsna promenade koja počinje na obali rijeke i postepeno se razvija kroz niz javnih prostora integrisanih u pejzaž. Posjetioci prelaze iz grada u mirnije, kontemplativno okruženje u kojem se umjetnost doživljava pod prirodnim svjetlom filtriranim kroz krovne otvore, stvarajući spokojnu i gotovo suspendiranu atmosferu.

Dodatni kulturni prostori i auditorij prate topografiju lokacije, čime se dodatno učvršćuje veza između arhitekture i pejzaža.

As for monumentality, we were not interested in creating a monumental object. Our architecture is about serving art and serving people.

Rather than imposing itself on the city, the museum seeks openness, transparency, and accessibility. If a building eventually becomes iconic, that is a consequence of how it works and how people relate to it, not something we set out to achieve from the beginning.

AAeU: What did Renzo Piano's proposal capture about Ars Aevi that felt true to the original idea?

Enjo: What I can say is that I am deeply impressed by the way Renzo Piano Studio responded to that idea and that wish. They did not allow themselves to raise the building two or three floors above the level of the National Museum and the Historical Museum. They respected the existing architectural structures around it, and designed it in a way that it fits in, that it belongs.

From my point of view, this will become a unique museum district, known worldwide, maybe the most important of its kind. The National Museum, the Historical Museum, and Ars Aevi together - this is a spectacle. I believe it will significantly and increasingly increase the flow of visitors to Sarajevo.

Not only to see history, but also to experience a contemporary spectacle, something living, something present.

Što se tiče monumentalnosti, nismo bili zainteresirani za stvaranje monumentalnog objekta. Naša arhitektura je u službi umjetnosti i u službi ljudi.

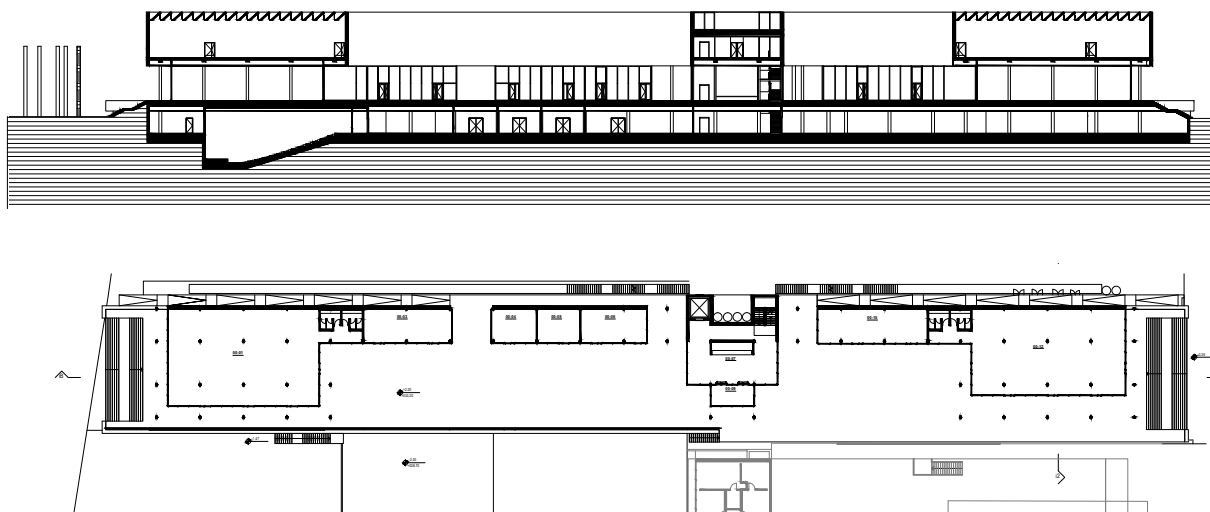
Umjesto da se nameće gradu, muzej teži otvorenosti, transparentnosti i pristupačnosti. Ako zgrada na kraju postane ikonična, to je posljedica načina na koji funkcionise i odnosa koji ljudi razviju prema njoj, a ne nešto čemu smo od početka težili.

AAeU: Šta je prijedlog Renza Piana uspio razumijeti o Ars Aeviju, a da je ostalo vjerno njegovoj izvornoj ideji?

Enjo: Ono što mogu reći jeste da sam duboko impresioniran načinom na koji je Studio Renza Piana odgovorio na tu ideju i tu želju. Nisu sebi dopustili da zgradu podignu dva ili tri sprata iznad nivoa Zemaljskog muzeja i Historijskog muzeja. Poštovali su postojeće arhitektonske strukture oko nove zgrade i projektovali je tako da se uklopi, da joj pripada.

Sa mog stanovišta, ovo će postati jedinstvena muzejska četvrt, poznata širom svijeta, možda i najvažnija te vrste. Zemaljski muzej, Historijski muzej i Ars Aevi zajedno će biti jedan spektakl. Vjerujem da će to značajno i sve više povećati priliv posjetilaca u Sarajevo.

Ne samo da bi došli da vide historiju, nego i da dožive savremeni spektakl, nešto živo, nešto prisutno.



Source Izvor Studio NONSTOP

Senka Ibrišimbegović: A specific site within the city was selected jointly by the Canton and the City of Sarajevo. The chosen plot, located near the Historical Museum and the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was entrusted to the RPBW. After analyzing the site's urban and cultural context, the studio proposed a design for the permanent home of the Ars Aevi collection.

As Emanuela said, the bridge was an urban element within the wider context leading to the entrance to the future Museum Quarter, as we call it today. We are speaking of culture as an element, an important layer of human life. People of Sarajevo, but also everybody.

AAeU: *To reflect on this shifting status of the museum as an institution, from the temple-like institutions of 50 years ago to today's platforms for performance, activism, discussion, public space. The museums have really shifted a lot. It's interesting that for half of the mentioned span you have been working on Ars Aevi. Museums today are expected to be much more than repositories of objects. What should a contemporary museum offer its city?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: I believe that with this project, the preliminary design for the Ars Aevi Museum developed by RPBW, we will achieve what a contemporary museum should be. The basement and ground-floor levels are conceived as highly transparent and accessible spaces, not only through their material expression but also through their programmatic functions.

The museum will accommodate a variety of public facilities, including exhibition halls, workshops, libraries, children's areas, and educational spaces. A large auditorium will remain accessible even outside regular museum opening hours, extending the building's role beyond that of a traditional cultural institution.

While its primary purpose is to house and preserve the art collection, the museum is envisioned as an inclusive civic space that serves the local community, the municipality, and the city as a whole. The promenade level on the ground floor is designed at the same height as the ground level of the neighboring History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way, the entrance plateau will be an extended part of the outdoor public space and an integral part of the urban life of the city.

AAeU: *Can you reflect on the role of museums in societies?*

Emanuela Baglietto: I think museums need to be flexible. Today, the museum needs to be adaptable because the art is so varied that it must accommodate any kind of performance or exhibition. It needs to integrate with the city's cultural activities. The idea

Senka Ibrišimbegović: Odabrana je specifična lokacija unutar grada, koju su zajednički odabrali Kanton Sarajevo i Grad Sarajevo. Izabrana parcela, smještena u blizini Historijskog muzeja i Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine, povjerena je studiju RPBW. Nakon analize urbanog i kulturnog konteksta lokacije, Studio je predložio projekt za stalni dom kolekcije Ars Aevi.

Kako je Emanuela rekla, most je bio urbani element unutar šireg konteksta koji vodi prema ulazu u buduću Muzejsku četvrt, kako je danas nazivamo. Govorimo o kulturi kao elementu, kao važnom sloju ljudskog života. Ljudi Sarajeva ali i svih drugih.

AAeU: *Da se osvrnemo na ovaj promjenjivi status muzeja kao institucije, od hramolikih institucija prije 50 godina do današnjih platformi za performans, aktivizam, diskusiju i javni prostor. Muzeji su se zaista mnogo promijenili. Zanimljivo je da ste za polovinu tog pomenutog perioda vi bili uključeni u rad na Ars Aeviju. Danas se od muzeja očekuje mnogo više od pukog čuvanja predmeta u depozitu. Šta savremeni muzej treba da ponudi svom gradu?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: Vjerujem da ćemo ovim projektom koji je idejno kreirao RPBW, postići ono što savremeni muzej treba da bude. Podrumski i prizemni nivoi zamišljeni su kao visoko transparentni i pristupačni prostori, ne samo kroz njihov materijalni izraz, već i kroz njihove programske funkcije.

Muzej će obuhvatati različite javne sadržaje, uključujući izložbene prostore, radionice, biblioteke, dječije prostore i obrazovne sadržaje. Veliki auditorij će ostati dostupan i izvan redovnog radnog vremena muzeja, čime se proširuje uloga zgrade izvan okvira tradicionalne kulturne institucije.

Iako mu je primarna svrha da smjesti i čuva umjetničku zbirku, muzej je zamišljen kao inkluzivan građanski prostor koji služi lokalnoj zajednici, općini i gradu u cjelini. Nivo promenade u prizemlju projektovan je na istoj koti kao i prizemni nivo susjednog Historijskog muzeja BiH. Na taj način, ulazni plato će biti produženi dio vanjskog javnog prostora i sastavni dio urbanog života grada.

AAeU: *Možete li se osvrnuti na ulogu muzeja u društvu?*

Emanuela Baglietto: Mislím da muzeji trebaju biti fleksibilni. Danas muzej mora biti prilagodljiv jer je umjetnost toliko raznolika da mora moći prihvatiti bilo koju vrstu performansa ili izložbe. Treba se integrirati s kulturnim aktivnostima grada. Ideja o

of having an auditorium and an educational program helps integrate it into the city. To have something that really makes the museum's life part of the city's life.

AAeU: *Your role has gone far beyond that of a conventional architect. What does a project like Ars Aevi demand from those who choose to carry it forward? How important is it to take this role of an architecture activist, and how can we expand it?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: I believe it is important that architects do more than simply serve clients and fulfill their requirements. In many ways, we help shape the society in which we live.

As a young architect, I soon realized that it represented much more than an architectural assignment—it was a responsibility towards the city, its culture, and future generations. The project inspired me to specialize in museum architecture and deepened my research into the relationship between architecture, art, and society.

" I felt a strong need to contribute, not only as a professional, but also as someone who belongs to the community this project is meant to serve. Once you truly recognize the significance and potential of an initiative like Ars Aevi, it is difficult not to devote yourself to it wholeheartedly.

Over the years, I have done everything within my capacity to help bring the project to this stage, and today I feel immense satisfaction and pride as we stand at the threshold of realizing a museum that, for decades, has embodied Sarajevo's aspirations, resilience, and belief in the transformative power of culture.

AAeU: *After three decades of delays, setbacks, and persistence, did you ever doubt that Ars Aevi would be realized? How do you understand its long gestation period, and what do you imagine comes next once the museum finally opens?*

Enjo:

" I have always known it would happen, sooner or later, slowly, when the pieces of life come together. It is not simple; nothing about this is, especially when you have to secure resources, coordinate people, and keep a process alive for decades. But I never allowed myself to think in terms of impossibility.

auditoriju i obrazovnom programu pomaže njegovoj integraciji u grad. Da se ima nešto što zaista čini da život muzeja postane dio života grada.

AAeU: *Vaša uloga je daleko nadmašila onu konvencionalnog arhitekta. Šta jedan projekat poput Ars Aevi zahtijeva od onih koji odluče da ga "nose" i razvijaju? Koliko je važno preuzeti ovu ulogu arhitektonskog aktiviste i kako je možemo proširiti?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: Vjerujem da je važno da arhitekti rade više od samo toga da služe klijentima i ispunjavaju njihove zahtjeve. Na mnogo načina, mi pomažemo oblikovati društvo u kojem živimo.

Kao mlada arhitektica uključena u ovaj projekat, vrlo brzo sam razvila duboku profesionalnu i ličnu posvećenost njegovoj ideji i vrijednostima. Upravo me rad na Ars Aevi projektu usmjerio prema specijalizaciji u oblasti arhitekture muzeja i podstakao da svoja istraživanja posvetim odnosu između arhitekture, umjetnosti i društva.

Osjećala sam da mogu i trebam dati svoj doprinos, ne samo kao stručnjakinja, već i kao osoba koja pripada zajednici kojoj ovaj projekat treba služiti. Kada prepoznate značaj i potencijal jedne ovakve inicijative, kao što je Ars Aevi, teško je ostati po strani.

Zato sam tokom svih ovih godina nastojala učiniti sve što je bilo u mojoj moći da projekat dođe do ove faze razvoja, i danas osjećam veliko zadovoljstvo i ponos što svjedočimo početku izgradnje muzeja koji je tokom desetljeća utjelovljivao sarajevske težnje, otpornost, i vjeru u transformativnu moć kulture.

AAeU: *Nakon tri decenije kašnjenja, prepreka i upornosti, jeste li ikada sumnjali da će Ars Aevi biti realizovan? Kako posmatrate ovaj izrazito dug period razvoja i šta zamišljate da dolazi nakon što se muzej konačno otvori?*

Enjo:

Oduvijek sam znao da će se to dogoditi, prije ili kasnije, polako, kada se dijelovi života slože. Nije jednostavno i ništa nikad i nije bilo jednostavno, posebno kada morate osigurati resurse, koordinirati ljude i održavati proces živim decenijama. Ali nikada sebi nisam dozvolio da razmišljam u terminima nemogućnosti.

As for the future.. My name is Enver, people call me Enjo, and sometimes I call myself "Enjo the fool." Because only a slightly foolish person could imagine something like this in the first place. And maybe that is exactly what was needed.

There is another idea I am holding back until the museum actually starts being built. It is already there in principle: Art Monument - the monumental art. Alongside the collection formed through museums across Europe, I imagine working with the same artists to create new, physically monumental works integrated into the urban fabric of Sarajevo, from the City Hall all the way to Ilidža.

But I do not want to overload the present with the future. That will come in its own time.

AAeU: *We are very excited to do another interview as soon as the museum is opened, but until then, last question: Are you optimists or pessimists?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: Optimist.

Emanuela Baglietto: It's obvious. Optimist.

Enjo: And me? My dream has been realized - and is still being realized. I have long forbidden negativity from entering my mind.

Što se tiče budućnosti... Moje ime je Enver, ljudi me zovu Enjo, a ponekad sebe zovem „Enjo blento“. Jer samo bi blago „lucidna“ osoba mogla uopće zamisliti nešto ovakvo. I možda je upravo to bilo ono što je bilo potrebno.

Postoji još jedna ideja koju zadržavam dok muzej zaista ne počne da se gradi. Ona je već prisutna u principu: Art Monument - monumentalna umjetnost. Pored zbirke formirane kroz muzeje širom Evrope, zamišljam rad s istim umjetnicima na stvaranju novih, fizički monumentalnih djela integriranih u urbanu strukturu Sarajeva, od Vijećnice pa sve do Ilidže.

Ali ne želim da preopteretim sadašnjost budućnošću. To će doći u svoje vrijeme.

AAeU: *Jako smo uzbuđeni da uradimo još jedan intervju čim se muzej otvori, ali do tada, posljednje pitanje: Jeste li optimisti ili pesimisti?*

Senka Ibrišimbegović: Optimista.

Emanuela Baglietto: Očigledno je. Optimista.

Enjo: A ja? Moj san je ostvaren - i još se ostvaruje. Odavno sam zabranio negativnosti da ulazi u moj um.

Sarajevo, 2026

Sarajevo, 2026.

Interview conducted and edited by Intervju vodile i uredile
Dunja Krvavac, Irhana Šehović, ARRA

English Language Proofreader Lektorisao
Feđa Krvavac

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Architecture and Photography: Media at the Intersection of Art, Science, and Everyday Life

Arhitektura i fotografija: mediji
na sjecištu umjetnosti, znanosti i
svakodnevnog života



CONVERSATION WITH RAZGOVOR SA MLADEN JADRIĆ

Mladen Jadrić, a renowned Austrian architect (with a degree from the University of Architecture in Sarajevo) and a professor at TU Wien, has been participating in shaping the internationally prominent architectural scene with his projects for almost four decades. He is the founder and leader of JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH.

His architecture, recognised by the expert public, has been decorated with a series of awards and tributes, among which the most important ones are the Karl Scheffel Prize (for an innovative approach to projects), the Schorsch Award of Vienna (for excellence and innovative solutions in residential design) and—thus far—the most significant one: the Outstanding Artist Award for experimental tendencies in architecture (awarded by the Republic of Austria). He is a member of the Künstlerhaus, the oldest association of Austrian architects and artists.

Jadrić's projects in Europe and Asia are establishing new paradigms of contemporary perception of space, while his executed projects redefine existing spatial models. Atypically designed spaces and dynamic forms seem to reflect on the current social moment through every line, offering innovative answers within architectural discourse.

This time, the conversation focuses on the recently opened Photography Seoul Museum of Art, the winning design of a competition in 2019, built in 2025 in cooperation with the Korean architect Yoon Geun-Ju.

A rotated black monolith simultaneously extends into the adjacent square and entrance, and envelops over 6,000 m² of interior space. This is our starting point for questioning the borders between an ontologically consistent architectural act and spontaneity, as well as contemplating the contemporary relationship between architecture and culture. It also encourages us to think about the changing role of the architect as someone who is expected to shift cultural limits.

Through this conversation, we will discover how Jadrić reflects on architecture in different, sometimes contradictory contexts, although with a single constant: the reshaping of encountered social values through which new cultural assumptions in architecture are formed.

By framing Jadrić's architecture as cosmopolitan, we will question the mental limits of understanding architecture, while becoming aware of how architectural approaches and their authors change spatial perceptions, opening new perspectives on the relationship between culture and architecture.

Razvijajući svoje arhitektonske vizije, renomirani austrijski arhitekt, s diplomom Arhitektonskog fakulteta u Sarajevu i profesor na TU Wien, Mladen Jadrić, već gotovo četiri desetljeća svojim projektima sudjeluje u oblikovanju prominentne međunarodne arhitektonske scene. Osnivač je i voditelj ureda JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH.

Njegova arhitektura, prepoznata u stručnoj javnosti, ovjenčana je nizom nagrada i priznanja, među kojima se izdvajaju Karl Scheffel Prize za inovativan pristup projektima i Schorsch Award Grada Beča za izvrsnost i inovativna rješenja u području stanovanja, kao i dosad najznačajnija Outstanding Artist Award for Experimental Tendencies in Architecture (Nagrada Republike Austrije za istaknutog umjetnika eksperimentalnih tendencija u arhitekturi). Član je Künstlerhausa, najstarije udruge arhitekata i umjetnika u Austriji.

Jadrićevi projekti u Europi i Aziji uspostavljaju nove paradigme suvremene percepcije prostora, dok realizirani objekti redefiniraju postojeće prostorne matrice. Atipično koncipirani prostori i pokrenute forme kao da u svakom potezu promišljaju aktualni društveni trenutak, nudeći inovativne odgovore unutar arhitektonskog diskursa.

Ovaj put razgovor je fokusiran na nedavno otvoreni Muzej fotografije u Seulu (Photography Seoul Museum of Art), prvonagrađeni rad na natječaju 2019. godine, realiziran u suradnji s korejskim arhitektom Yoon Geun-Juom 2025. godine.

Zarotirani crni monolit, koji se prelijeva u okolni prostor prema trgu i ulaznoj zoni, istodobno obuhvaćajući više od 6.000 m² unutarnjeg prostora, polazište je za propitivanje granica između ontološki dosljednog arhitektonskog čina i spontanog djelovanja, kao i za promišljanje suvremenog odnosa arhitekture i kulture te redefinicije uloge arhitekta kao aktera od kojeg se očekuje pomicanje kulturnih granica.

Kroz razgovor otkrivamo i kako Jadrić promišlja arhitekturu u različitim, ponekad oprečnim kontekstima, u kojima je jedina konstanta – preoblikovanje društvenih vrijednosti – s kojima se suočavamo i unutar kojih razvijamo nove specifične kulturne premise arhitekture.

Označivši Jadrićevu arhitekturu kozmopolitskom, u razgovoru preispitujemo mentalne granice shvaćanja arhitekture, svjesni koliko arhitektonski pristupi i njihovi autori mijenjaju prostorne percepcije i otvaraju nove perspektive odnosa kultura–arhitektura.



Source Izvor JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH

AAeU: *This time, from your fruitful oeuvre, we have selected the Photography Seoul Museum of Art, or rather the annex of the Seoul Museum of Art (SeMa). It is located in Chang-Dong, an area of the city primarily developed for residential use. The project we are referring to is participating in the transformation of that area from a living quarter, so to say, into a cultural and innovation hub. You developed the project with the Korean architect Geun-Ju Yoon, thereby also achieving an intercultural collaboration. Can you tell us more about the context of the project, and what preceded the idea of reshaping such a broad space?*

Mladen Jadrić: There are multiple topics concealed within this question, so I will have to give a more elaborate answer: Giulio Carlo Argan defined design as “a methodology of producing and creating, simultaneously applicable to an object and a city,” while it also functions as an important factor of social integration. I often use that definition when I describe this museum, because architecture here serves as a means of active social change and improvement.

AAeU: *Iz vašeg bogatog opusa, za ovaj put smo izdvojili Muzej fotografije u Seulu, Koreja (Photography Seoul Museum of Art), odnosno aneks Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), smješten u Chang-dongu, dijelu grada koji je u najvećoj mjeri razvijen za stanovanje. Objekt na koji se referiramo sudjeluje u transformaciji toga prostora iz „spavaonice“ u kulturno-inovacijsko središte (cultural and innovation hub). Projekt ste radili s korejskim arhitektom Geunju Yoonom i ostvarili tako interkulturnu suradnju. Možete li nam reći nešto više o kontekstu u kojem se nalazi objekt te što je prethodilo motivirajućoj ideji preoblikovanja šireg prostora?*

Mladen Jadrić: U ovom pitanju krije se nekoliko tema, zato ću morati opširnije odgovoriti: Giulio Carlo Argan definirao je dizajn kao „metodologiju stvaranja ili kreiranja primjenjivu ujedno i na objekt i na grad“, pri čemu on istodobno funkcionira kao važan faktor društvene integracije. Tu definiciju koristim često u opisu ovog muzeja, jer arhitektura ovdje služi kao sredstvo koje aktivno uzrokuje društvene promjene i društveni boljitak.

In my view, the idea of shaping an object is always subordinate to the idea that architecture is, above all, a matter of dialogue between design and surroundings. Every site is a link to its environment and cannot be understood as an independent object.

U mom shvaćanju arhitekture ideja o oblikovanju objekta uvijek je podređena ideji da je arhitektura prije svega pitanje odnosa između arhitekture i okoliša. Svako tlo je poveznica s okolinom i ne može se percipirati kao neovisan objekt.



Source Izvor JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH

At the very beginning of the competition, the context was a challenge—a dormitory for almost three million citizens in the northeast of Seoul. The Museum of Photography, as well as the Museum of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, a large K-pop arena under development, and a start-up centre are changing the appearance and character of an entire urban zone. That has always been much more interesting and challenging for us as architects. Communication and language played an essential role in intercultural cooperation.

Na samom početku natječaja kontekst je bio izazov – spavaonica za gotovo tri milijuna građana na sjeveroistoku Seula. Muzej fotografije, zajedno s muzejom robotike i umjetne inteligencije, velika K-pop arena u izgradnji i startup centar, upravo mijenjaju izgled i karakter čitavog dijela grada. To je od početka projekta bilo mnogo zanimljivije okruženje i veći izazov za nas kao arhitekte. Komunikacija i jezik igrali su ključnu ulogu u interkulturalnoj projektantskoj suradnji.

Practical communicational strategies such as visual communication, storytelling, and images helped overcome language barriers and encourage mutual understanding.

Praktične komunikacijske strategije poput vizualne komunikacije, pripovijedanja i slike pomogle su u prevladavanju jezičnih barijera i poticanju međusobnog razumijevanja.

The collaboration between Jadric Architektur and 1990uao is described as an exemplary model for future projects that combine international expertise and local insight in order to enrich urban structure.

Suradnja između Jadric Architektur i 1990uao je, prema refleksijama iz mnogobrojnih napisa u lokalnoj i međunarodnoj kritici, opisana kao primjeran model za buduće projekte u kojima se međunarodna stručnost i lokalni uvid kombiniraju kako bi obogatili urbanu strukturu.

AAeU: *For some time now, we have been facing a global issue of building within given values and limitations that come with them. Big cities push boundaries and create space for future interventions, therefore encouraging new, more challenging contemplations of space. How did you, in this case, approach designing when the goal was to change or reform the existing? To what extent could you turn to the context, or did you perhaps prefer the idea that “the context is not given, but rather created and defined based on an existing problem at hand”?*

AAeU: *Već dugo se suočavamo s globalnim problemom gradnje unutar zatečenih vrijednosti i ograničenja koja sa sobom nose. Veliki gradovi šire granice, otvaraju prostor za buduće intervencije i na taj način potiču novo, izazovnije promišljanje prostora. Kako ste, u ovom slučaju, pristupili projektiranju kada je cilj bio mijenjanje, preoblikovanje postojećeg? Koliko ste se mogli referirati na kontekst ili vam je, možda, bliža ideja po kojoj „kontekst nije zadan, nego se stvara i definira u odnosu na trenutni problem kojim se bavite“?*

Mladen Jadrić: I follow my belief that no building in this world stands alone. Its surroundings determine its existence and the way it is perceived. That is why we have, from the very beginning, contemplated the future relation of the Photography Museum with the neighbouring Robotics Museum. The complementary relationship of materials and colours (reminiscent of

Mladen Jadrić: Ja slijedim svoj credo da nijedna zgrada na svijetu ne stoji sama. Njezino okruženje određuje njezino postojanje i način na koji se percipira. Zato smo već u natječajnom radu za Muzej fotografije promišljali budući odnos s Muzejom robotike koji se nalazi neposredno uz njega. Komplementarni koncept

ebony and ivory) is accentuated through two major geometrical forms. Linked underground garages connect the lower floors. The new street has become a common cultural promenade in which four culture-oriented buildings take over responsibility for their surroundings and define public space in unison.

AAeU: *Your architecture is cosmopolitan; it transcends the local and seems to speak in its own universal language. In large cities and in contexts undergoing intense construction expansion, it is often difficult to clearly articulate specific ambient characteristics. To what extent is it still possible today, from the perspective of working on this project, to speak about the authenticity of an ambience?*

Mladen Jadrić:

The authenticity of an ambience is a dynamic notion—the only constant is that its conditions constantly change at a high rate.

As the Australian architect Glen Murcutt said, it is necessary to live in a place in order to understand how one may build there. Every location, every ambience in particular, “speaks” of what can be built in it—especially in environmental terms. That is why it is necessary to understand an area and its natural and cultural codes. A respected colleague of mine (and a well-known Korean architect from Seoul), Seung H-Sang, coined the term “landscript” for this. Aesthetics, theory, and the shaping of contemporary architecture present a form of cultural inscription. It is simultaneously shaped by tradition, language, and a vision of the future.

Long-term stays in Asia, alongside more than a quarter of a century of studying the cultures of Korea, China, and Japan, have enabled my team and me to develop the ability to read these complex and meaningful “directions”.

AAeU: *Nonetheless, that fact does not relieve architects of the obligation to offer their own response to the cultural and spatial identity of a place. Viewing architecture as a carrier of cultural development, can we speak of some kind of reciprocal stimulus? Or, on the contrary, paraphrasing Derrida, can we speak of architecture that resists the impact of culture, critically re-examining its own values?*

Mladen Jadrić: Considering the importance and growing popularity of museums as public spaces, this is an exceptionally interesting discussion. We could say that the spatial identity of a place is an

materijala i boja, koji podsjeća na „ebony and ivory“, naglašen je kroz dvije osnovne geometrijske forme. Povezane podzemne garaže dijele donje etaže. Nova ulica postala je zajednička kulturna promenada u kojoj četiri zgrade kulture preuzimaju odgovornost za svoje okruženje i zajedno definiraju javni prostor.

AAeU: *Vaša arhitektura djeluje kozmopolitski – nadilazi lokalno i kao da progovara vlastitim univerzalnim jezikom. U velikim gradovima i u sredinama snažne graditeljske ekspanzije često je teško jasno artikulirati specifične osobine ambijenta. Koliko je danas, iz perspektive rada na ovom projektu, uopće moguće govoriti o autentičnosti ambijenta?*

Mladen Jadrić:

Autentičnost ambijenta dinamičan je pojam; jedina konstanta jest da se uvjeti neprestano i sve brže mijenjaju.

Uz to, poštujem stav australskog arhitekta Glen Murcutta da je potrebno dugo živjeti na nekom mjestu kako bi se razumjelo kako se ondje gradi. Svaka lokacija, a osobito svaki ambijent, „govori“ što se na njemu može izgraditi ili oblikovati – osobito kada je riječ o okolišu. Zato je nužno razumjeti prostor i njegove prirodne i kulturne kodove. Moj uvaženi kolega i poznati korejski arhitekt iz Seoula, Seung H-Sang, za to je osmislio pojam „Landscript“. Estetika, teorija i oblikovanje suvremene arhitekture predstavljaju vrstu zanimljivog kulturološkog zapisa, kodiranog tradicijom, jezikom i istodobno projekcijom budućnosti.

Dugotrajni boravci u dalekoj Aziji te više od četvrt stoljeća bavljenja kulturom Koreje, Kine i Japana omogućili su meni i mom timu da korak po korak razvijemo sposobnost čitanja tih složenih i značajnih „uputa“.

AAeU: *Ipak, ta činjenica arhitekta ne oslobađa obaveze da ponudi svoj odgovor na kulturni, odnosno prostorni identitet mjesta. Promatrajući arhitekturu kao nositelja razvoja kulture, možemo li govoriti o recipročnom poticaju ili, suprotno, parafrizirajući Derridu, o arhitekturi koja odolijeva utjecaju kulture i kritički preispituje vlastite vrijednosti?*

Mladen Jadrić: To je, s obzirom na važnost i rastuću popularnost muzeja kao javnog prostora, izuzetno zanimljiva diskusija. O prostornom identitetu mjesta možemo reći da je to skup svih fizičkih, društvenih, kulturnih i perceptivnih obilježja koja čine neko

assemblage of all physical, social, cultural, and perceptual characteristics that make it discernible and distinct. Such characteristics are globally recognisable. However, we are also living in peculiar times of reflection and analysis of recent decades, marked by transition and a new technological revolution. In our region, modern architecture is often considered (not only among architects) incapable of respecting historical context, or even of further developing it. This theory claims that singular objects, although potentially individually significant, are unable to shape streets and squares—that is, the city as a whole.

In Italy, such an understanding of architecture cannot be applied, since architects continued to add to the rich experience of urban life in a natural way until the 1960s. Indeed, they did so with means considered highly modern at the time. I find that the quality of architecture lies not merely in its form, but also in the understanding of the appropriate social networks.

AAeU: *In contemporary discourse, architecture is increasingly considered a critical medium. Photography makes matters even more significant, since it has been considered as such for some time now. How much did that fact affect this project?*

Mladen Jadrić: The preparation of the museum project began four years before the architectural competition. An important part of the cultural record is now kept in complex storage facilities in the underground levels of the museum, under controlled conditions of temperature, light, and humidity.

At the beginning of the project, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, two congresses were organised. Interdisciplinary teams, including architects, discussed what would be the main content of the permanent museum exhibition. The decision to focus on artistic photography made further steps in the project somewhat easier. On the other hand, the project of interactive communication between photographs created by visitors and the museum itself is still being developed by the curators.

mjesto prepoznatljivim i različitim od drugih. Te su vrijednosti u cijelom svijetu prepoznatljive. Međutim, nalazimo se i u zanimljivom trenutku refleksije i analize proteklih desetljeća obilježenih tranzicijom kao i novom tehnološkom revolucijom. U našim krajevima arhitektura moderne često se smatra – ne samo među arhitektima – nesposobnom da poštuje povijesni kontekst ili ga dalje razvija. Prema toj teoriji, pojedinačna građevinska ostvarenja, iako sama po sebi mogu biti vizualno snažna, nisu u stanju oblikovati ulice, trgove, odnosno grad.

U Italiji se takvo opće viđenje arhitekture 20. stoljeća ne može potvrditi, jer su arhitekti sve do 1960-ih sasvim prirodno nastavili graditi na bogatom iskustvu urbanog života – i to sredstvima koja su se u svoje vrijeme smatrala modernima. Smatram da kvaliteta arhitektonskih rješenja nije samo u oblikovanju, već i u razumijevanju ispravne mreže društvenih odnosa.

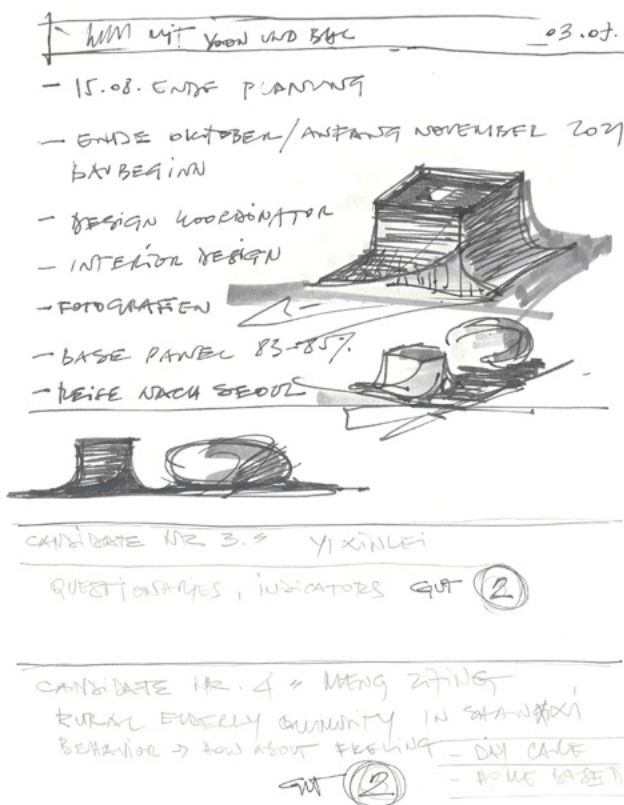
AAeU: *U suvremenom diskursu arhitekturu sve više promišljamo i kao kritički medij. U fotografiji je situacija još znakovitija, jer fotografiju odavno tako percipiramo. Koliko je ta činjenica utjecala na ovaj projekt?*

Mladen Jadrić: Projekt pripreme izgradnje muzeja započeo je četiri godine prije natječaja za arhitektonski dio. Važan dio vizualnog kulturnog zapisa danas se čuva u vrlo zahtjevno koncipiranim skladištima u podzemnim etažama muzeja, pod posebnim uvjetima temperature, svjetla i vlažnosti zraka.

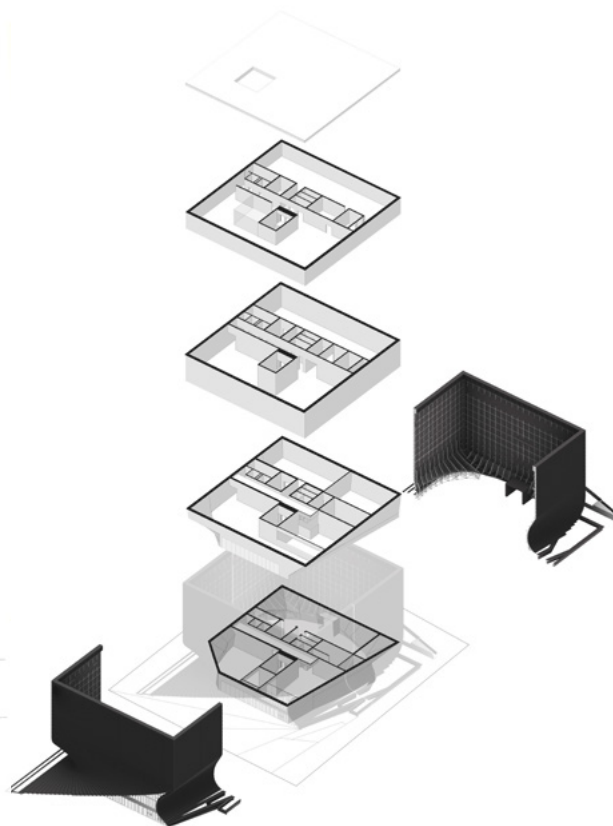
Na početku projekta, unatoč epidemiji COVID-19, organizirana su čak dva kongresa na kojima su interdisciplinarni timovi, uključujući i arhitekte, raspravljali o tome što će biti glavni sadržaj stalne muzejske zbirke. Odluka da to bude muzej umjetničke fotografije djelomično je olakšala sljedeće korake u izradi projekta. S druge strane, projekt interaktivne komunikacije između fotografija koje posjetitelji i muzej svakodnevno stvaraju, projekt je na kojem kuratori rade i danas.

The everyday life of the museum is a process; users need time to accept it and develop a sense of safety and belonging, almost like a home. Architecture must provide us with a framework within which we develop closeness and a sense of durability, in both interior and exterior spaces.

Svakodnevni život muzeja je proces; korisnicima je potrebno vrijeme da ga prihvate i razviju osjećaj sigurnosti i pripadnosti, gotovo poput doma. Arhitektura mora pružiti okvir u kojem vrijeme može razviti bliskost i atmosferu trajnosti, kako u unutarnjim prostorima tako i na otvorenom.



Source Izvor JADRIĆ ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH



AAeU: In an interview, you have compared architecture to music and poetry, alluding to the vivid world of imagination from which it stems. How do you connect specific functional demands with the metaphysical, intangible, almost sensual qualities that are also noticeable in the interior of this project?

Mladen Jadrić: Imagination is among the most important strengths of an architect. The Arcades Project (Passagenwerk) is a fundamental, unfinished work by the German philosopher, cultural theorist, and essayist Walter Benjamin. At one point he writes: "Architecture is, like a kind of dreaming, a form of prophecy. Not because it is a reliable forecast of the future, but because it is a manifestation of wishes fulfilled; an attempt to bring something into existence..."

This shows that architecture, like music or poetry, can create imaginary worlds—worlds that contrast with reality, yet remain poetic: something that surpasses material existence and is as central to life as reality itself. I hope that Yoon Geun-Ju and I, together with our teams in Vienna and Seoul, have created precisely such an atmosphere—an atmosphere in which people can spend an entire day, forget about time, and enjoy the rich tradition of Korean artistic photography. This is also supported by the noticeable increase in the number of visitors (30% non-Koreans), as well as by numerous national and international awards that the museum has received since its opening.

AAeU: U jednom intervjuu usporedili ste arhitekturu s glazbom i poezijom, aludirajući na bogat svijet imaginacije iz kojeg nastaje i koji i sama oblikuje. Kako spajate konkretne programske i funkcionalne zahtjeve s onim metafizičkim, neopipljivim i gotovo senzualnim, što je primjetno i u interijeru ovog objekta?

Mladen Jadrić: Mašta spada među najsnažnije alate arhitekata. „Projekt Arkada“ (njem. Passagenwerk) kapitalno je, nedovršeno djelo njemačkog filozofa, teoretičara kulture i esejista Waltera Benjamina. Na jednom mjestu on kaže: „Arhitektura je, poput sanjanja, svojevrsno proricanje budućnosti. Ne zato što je pouzdana prognoza, nego zato što je projekcija ispunjenja želja; pokušaj da se nešto zamisli u postojanje..."

Time pokazujemo da arhitektura, poput glazbe ili poezije, može stvarati imaginarne svjetove koji se suprotstavljaju stvarnosti nečemu poetskom – nečemu što nadilazi materijalno postojanje i što je jednako središnje za život kao i sama stvarnost. Nadam se da smo Yoon Geun-Ju i ja, zajedno s našim timovima u Beču i Seulu, stvorili upravo takvu atmosferu u kojoj ljudi mogu provesti cijeli dan, zaboraviti na vrijeme i uživati u bogatoj tradiciji umjetničke fotografije Koreje. To potvrđuje i znatan porast posjetitelja (30 % dolazi izvan Koreje), kao i brojne nacionalne i međunarodne nagrade koje je muzej dobio od otvorenja.

AAeU: *In the images I have seen, this exceptionally photogenic architecture resembles Op Art, as if it vibrates. The first association is the opening and closing of a camera aperture. However, that captures a single moment, whereas your form is dynamic and transitions into the logic of spatial duration. All these effects undoubtedly evoke certain sensations and thoughts in the observer. It would be interesting to hear more about the vision that guided you through the project, since the analogy between photography and architecture is quite evident.*

Mladen Jadrić: I will answer with the questions we asked ourselves at the beginning of the project: what is common to architecture and photography? Both lie at the intersection of art, science, and everyday life. There is practically no place or object on Earth that has not been photographed, just as there is no place where there have not been attempts to build. What is even more important is that there are hardly any other artistic forms that depend so fundamentally on light. Although both capture merely a moment in endless time, they function as precise documents.

The character and integrity of the museum building reflects this symbiosis between photography and architecture: photography is an image created by light, while architecture is a play of forms shaped in light. The dynamic form of the museum presents frozen moments — a momentary frame — characteristic of both architecture and photography.

AAeU: *The inner concept establishes the analogy between photography and architecture on multiple levels, doesn't it? The material from which the façade is made, or rather the envelope, also contributes to that effect.*

Mladen Jadrić: The semantics of the idea are layered. One of its main goals was to ensure that the building blends into the space of the square, becoming an object to sit on and run across—a space to walk through and linger in, thus creating a generous public realm.

The transparent entrance on the ground floor leads into the “guest room,” opening into an open, multi-level space. From the very beginning, we wanted to create a fusion of the square and the building itself—a continuation of public space upwards, or rather within the object.

AAeU: *Na slikama koje sam vidjela, ova iznimno fotogenična arhitektura djeluje poput Op Arta, kao da vibrira. Prva asocijacija priziva otvaranje i zatvaranje blende na fotografskom aparatu. Međutim, dok se fotografijom „hvata“ i bilježi jedan trenutak, vaša forma je dinamična i pokrenuta te kao takva prelazi u logiku prostornog trajanja. Svi ti efekti kod promatrača nesumnjivo bude specifične senzacije i razmišljanja. Možete li reći nešto o osnovnoj ideji koja vas je vodila kroz projekt, s obzirom na očitu analogiju između fotografije i arhitekture?*

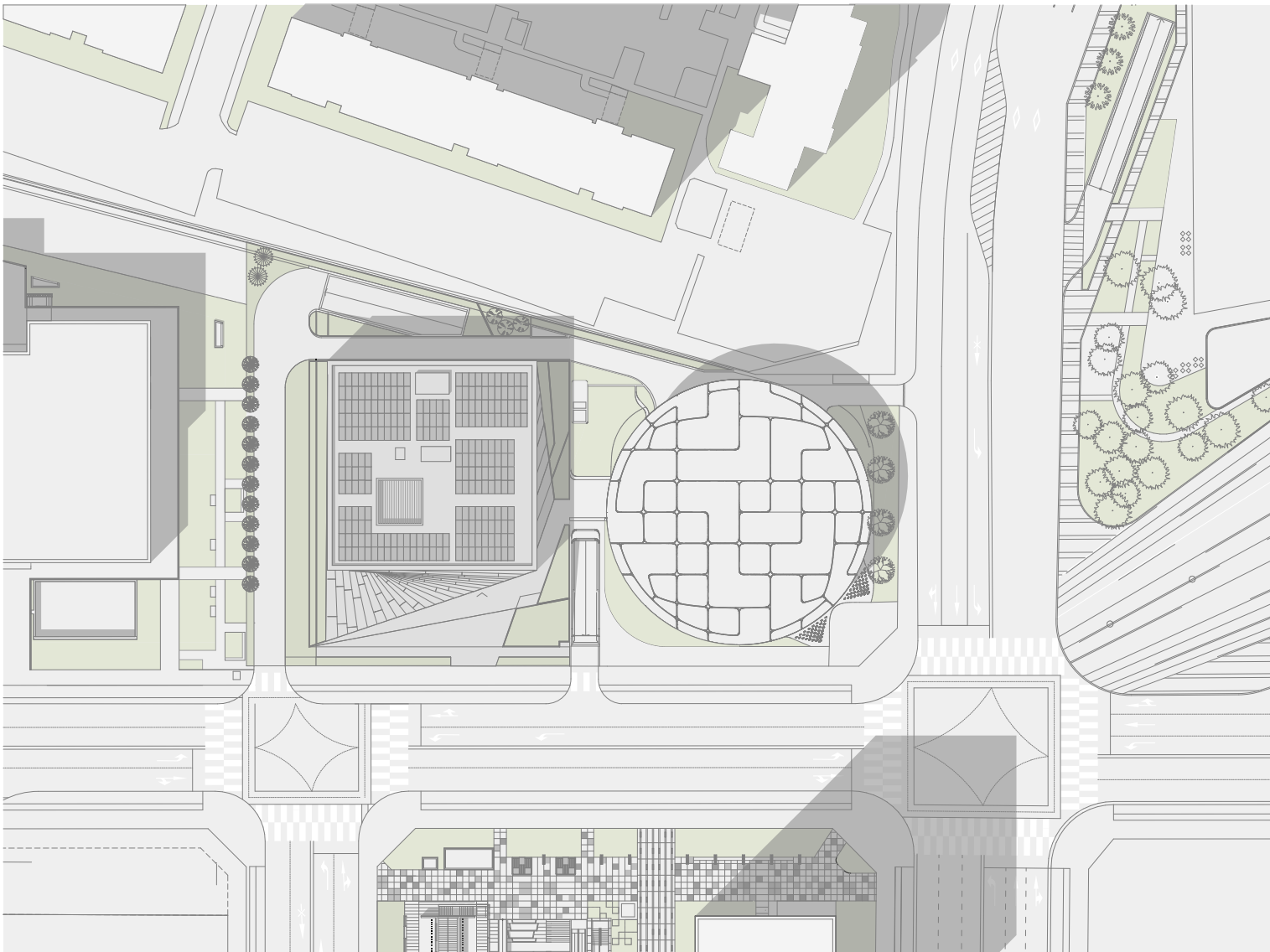
Mladen Jadrić: Odgovorit ću pitanjem koje smo si postavili na početku projekta: koje zajedničke elemente dijele arhitektura i fotografija? Obje se nalaze na sjecištu umjetnosti, arhitekture, znanosti i svakodnevnog života. Gotovo da ne postoji mjesto ili objekt na Zemlji koji nije fotografiran, niti lokacija na kojoj barem nije pokušano izgraditi neki objekt. Još je važnije da ne postoje druge umjetničke forme koje su toliko ovisne o svjetlu u svom nastajanju i razvoju. Iako obje hvataju samo trenutak u beskonačnom vremenu, one su neizostavne kao dokumenti.

Karakter i integritet muzejske zgrade oslikava simbiozu fotografije i arhitekture: fotografija je slika stvorena svjetlom, dok je arhitektura igra formi oblikovanih u svjetlu. Dinamični oblik muzeja preslikava zamrznuti trenutak – karakterističan i za arhitekturu i za fotografiju.

AAeU: *Također, unutarnji koncept ostvaruje analogiju fotografije i arhitekture na više znakovitih razina, zar ne? I materijal kojim je izvedena fasada, odnosno omotač, doprinosi tom efektu.*

Mladen Jadrić: Semantika ideje je višeslojna; jedna od njezinih glavnih namjera bila je da se zgrada stopi s prostorom trga i postane objekt na kojem se sjedi, trči, prostor u koji se ulazi i u kojem se zadržava, stvarajući velikodušan javni prostor.

Transparentni ulaz u prizemlju nastavlja se u „gostinjsku sobu“ koja svojim otvorenim, višekatnim prostorom poziva na ulazak. Od samog početka željeli smo ostvariti fuziju trga i same zgrade – svojevrсни nastavak javnog prostora prema gore, odnosno unutar same zgrade.



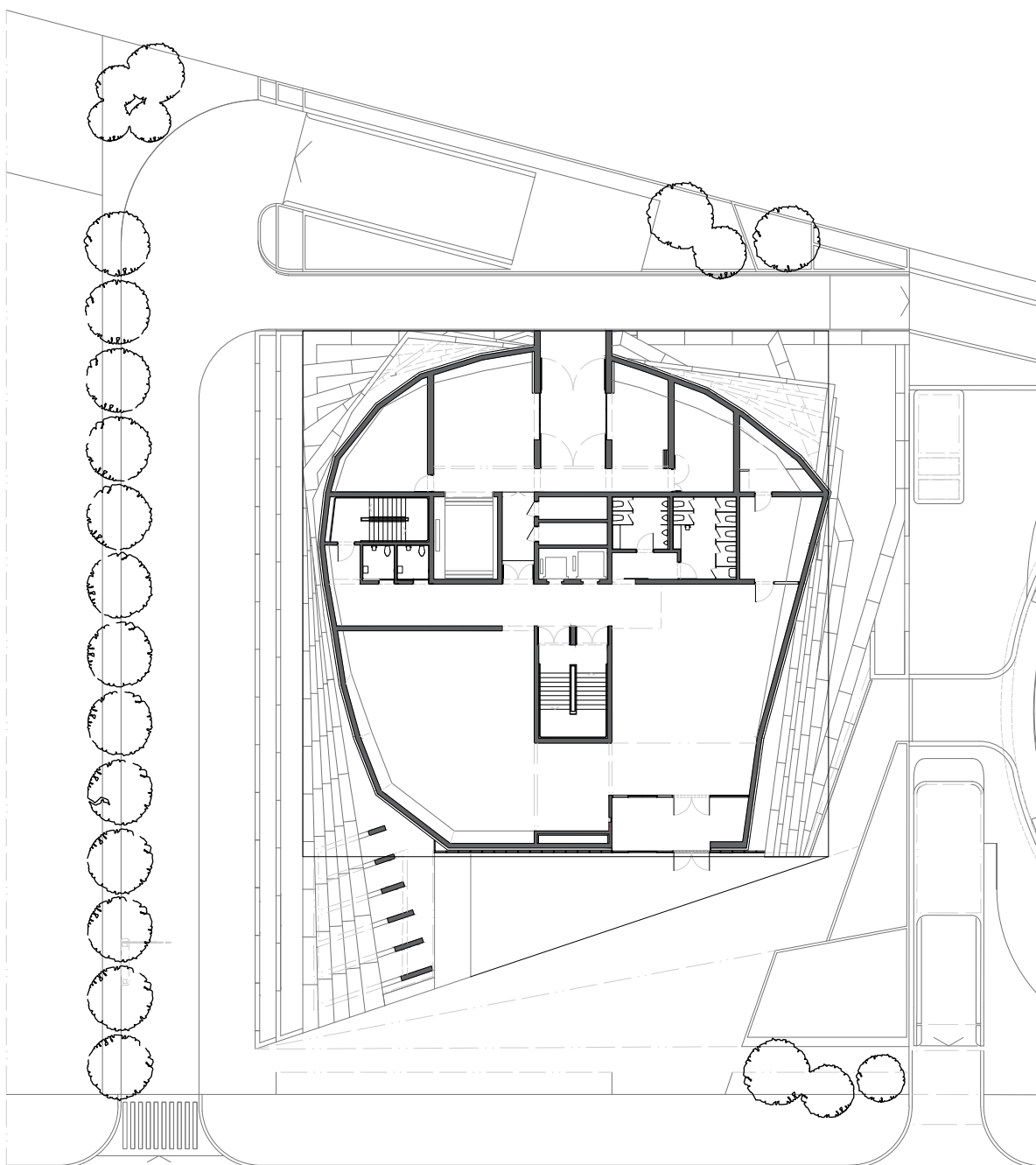
Source Izvor JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH

AAeU: *In the interior of Photo SeMA, which is almost monochromatic, shadow and light create a particular ambience directed towards the exhibits—photographs—and the experience of the space itself. Contemporary architectural practice often reconsiders the relationship between exhibit, space, and observer. It tends to align the aesthetic qualities of architecture with those of art, thus introducing a new condition into what was once a more straightforward relationship. It is also known that Eisenman explores this relationship, questioning the experience of space rather than treating space itself as a site for display. What was your approach to the complex relationship between exhibit, space, architecture, and observer? Can high-quality museum architecture be as compelling as the exhibits?*

Mladen Jadrić: The darkness is endless; space has no limits within it. At the beginning of the creative process, we are also figuratively moving through darkness and uncertainty: can a few buildings turn a newly created space into a cultural centre? Can pop culture and the zeitgeist be captured inside a museum? How does the past reflect in the present? Can the museum be accepted not only by the anonymous public, but also by the neighbourhood? Time will answer many of these questions.

AAeU: *U gotovo monokromatskom interijeru Photo SeMA svjetlo, tama i sjena tvore poseban ambijent usmjeren na eksponate – fotografije, ali i na doživljaj prostora. Suvremene arhitektonske prakse često preispituju vezu eksponat–promatrač, a estetske kvalitete arhitekture izjednačuju s estetikom umjetnosti, uvodeći time novu kategoriju u nekada jednostavan odnos. Poznato je da i Eisenman istražuje taj odnos, ispitujući iskustvo prostora, a ne samo prostor kao mjesto izlaganja. Kakav je bio vaš pristup složenom odnosu eksponat–prostor–arhitektura–promatrač i može li kvalitetna muzejska arhitektura biti jednako snažan atraktor kao i sami eksponati?*

Mladen Jadrić: Tama je beskraja; u njoj prostor nema granica. Na početku kreativnog procesa, figurativno govoreći, krećemo se kroz tamu i sumnju: mogu li nekoliko zgrada pretvoriti novonastalu situaciju u kulturno središte? Može li se popularna kultura i duh vremena sačuvati unutar muzeja? Na koji se način prošlost reflektira u sadašnjosti? Može li muzej biti prihvaćen ne samo od anonimne javnosti nego i od neposrednog susjedstva? Vrijeme će dati odgovore na mnoga od tih pitanja.



Source Izvor JADRIC ARCHITEKTUR ZT GmbH

We dedicated nearly three years of work to the topic of permanent and temporary exhibitions. The goal was to move away from the familiar museum concept—the so-called “white cube.” We wanted to offer curators greater freedom in shaping the relationship between exhibits and space.

White, neutral exhibition spaces have recently become repetitive worldwide. The problem is that, if you have seen one museum, you have seen them all. We wanted to avoid that at all costs by creating a neutral, dark spatial background. The result is a so-called “black box,” another reference to photography and the process of developing film in dark chambers.

Temi stalne zbirke i gostujućih izložbi posvetili smo gotovo tri godine rada. Cilj je bio odmaknuti se od poznatog muzejskog koncepta tzv. „white boxa“ i stvoriti okruženje koje bi kuratorima omogućilo znatno veću slobodu u osmišljavanju odnosa između eksponata i prostora.

Bijeli, neutralni prostori i metode izlaganja posljednjih se godina ponavljaju diljem svijeta. Problem je pritom sljedeći: ako ste vidjeli jedan muzej, vidjeli ste ih sve. To smo pod svaku cijenu željeli izbjeći, kroz materijalizaciju i stvaranje tamne, neutralne prostorne pozadine. Rezultat je tzv. „black box“ – još jedna referenca na fotografiju i proces razvijanja filma u tamnoj komori.

AAeU: *From the inside, we cannot see the complexity behind this exceptional architectural work. The interior is dominated by a geometry of clear surfaces that rarely change their slope or become curved. How was this object constructed, from a technical point of view?*

Mladen Jadrić: Elements carry many messages: layers of the façade thus become a symbol of a collection. The stairwell, for instance, represents an ascending, optimistic form. Another theme here is the contrast between visually heavy and light elements. There are many associations with textile architecture—the ease with which the envelope opens and forms the entrance, among other interpretations.

“ The making of such complex geometry was anything but simple. Double-curved steel beams carrying the “curtain” were added at the very end of the construction process, which demonstrates a high level of technical precision. ”

On the ground and first floors, intended for exhibition spaces, there are rotated and inclined interior walls. These have become popular because they enable interesting video projections. The top floor houses the library, darkrooms for developing photographs, and various staff rooms. This is also where young curators specialising in photographic art are trained.

“ In the middle, there is an open courtyard—madang—a reference to the Korean house, and in a broader sense, to Bosnian courtyards. ”

The green roof prevents overheating, and more than 40 probes in the basement cover a significant part of the building's energy needs. Museums, with their sophisticated humidity and temperature control systems, consume a great deal of energy.

AAeU: *Photo SeMA generates a specific connection to the adjacent space through the subtle use of parametric design (as does a large part of your oeuvre). From this, I assume that you have a clearly defined and well-thought-out approach to shaping space. Could you share it with our readers?*

Mladen Jadrić: Parametric architecture was a necessary element from the very beginning of the project, all the way through to the detailing phase. We drew each of more than six thousand façade elements individually, with precision.

AAeU: *Konstruktivnu kompleksnost koja stoji iza ovog vrhunskog arhitektonskog djela ne vidimo iznutra. U interijeru dominira geometrija čistih ploha koje tek povremeno mijenjaju nagib ili su zakrivljene. Kako je, u konstruktivnom smislu, izveden objekt?*

Mladen Jadrić: Elementi nose mnoge poruke: slojevi fasade tako postaju simbol skupljanja i zbirke. „Stubište“, primjerice, predstavlja uzlaznu, optimističnu formu, a dodatna tema ovdje je i kontrast između vizualno teških i laganih elemenata. Pojavljuju se asocijacije na tekstilnu arhitekturu, lakoća kojom se ovojnica otvara i oblikuje ulaz te mnoge druge interpretacije.

Izvedba složene geometrije bila je sve samo ne jednostavna. Dvostruko zakrivljene čelične grede koje nose tu „zavjesu“ dodane su pri kraju procesa gradnje, što predstavlja pravo majstorstvo izvedbe. ”

U prizemlju i na prvom katu, namijenjenima gostujućim postavama, prisutni su rotirani i zakošeni zidovi koji su postali popularni zbog mogućnosti stvaranja zanimljivih video-projekcija. Iznad toga nalaze se prostori stalne postavke, koji su potpuno kvadratni. Na zadnjem katu smješteni su biblioteka, tamne komore za razvijanje filmova te različiti prostori za osoblje. Tu se obučavaju i mladi kuratori specijalizirani za fotografsku umjetnost.

U središtu se nalazi otvoreni patio, tzv. Madang – svojevrsna reminiscencija na središnji prostor korejske kuće, nešto poput bosanske avlije. ”

Zeleni krov štiti od pregrijavanja, a preko 40 geosondi u podrumu pokriva velik dio energetske potrošnje. Muzeji su, sa svojom sofisticiranom regulacijom temperature i vlage, poznati kao veliki potrošači energije.

AAeU: *Photo SeMA generira specifičnu vezu s okolnim prostorom, suptilnom upotrebom parametrijskog dizajna, kao i veći dio vašeg opusa. Iz toga zaključujem da posjedujete jasno promišljene ideje o takvom pristupu oblikovanju. Možete li ih podijeliti s čitateljima?*

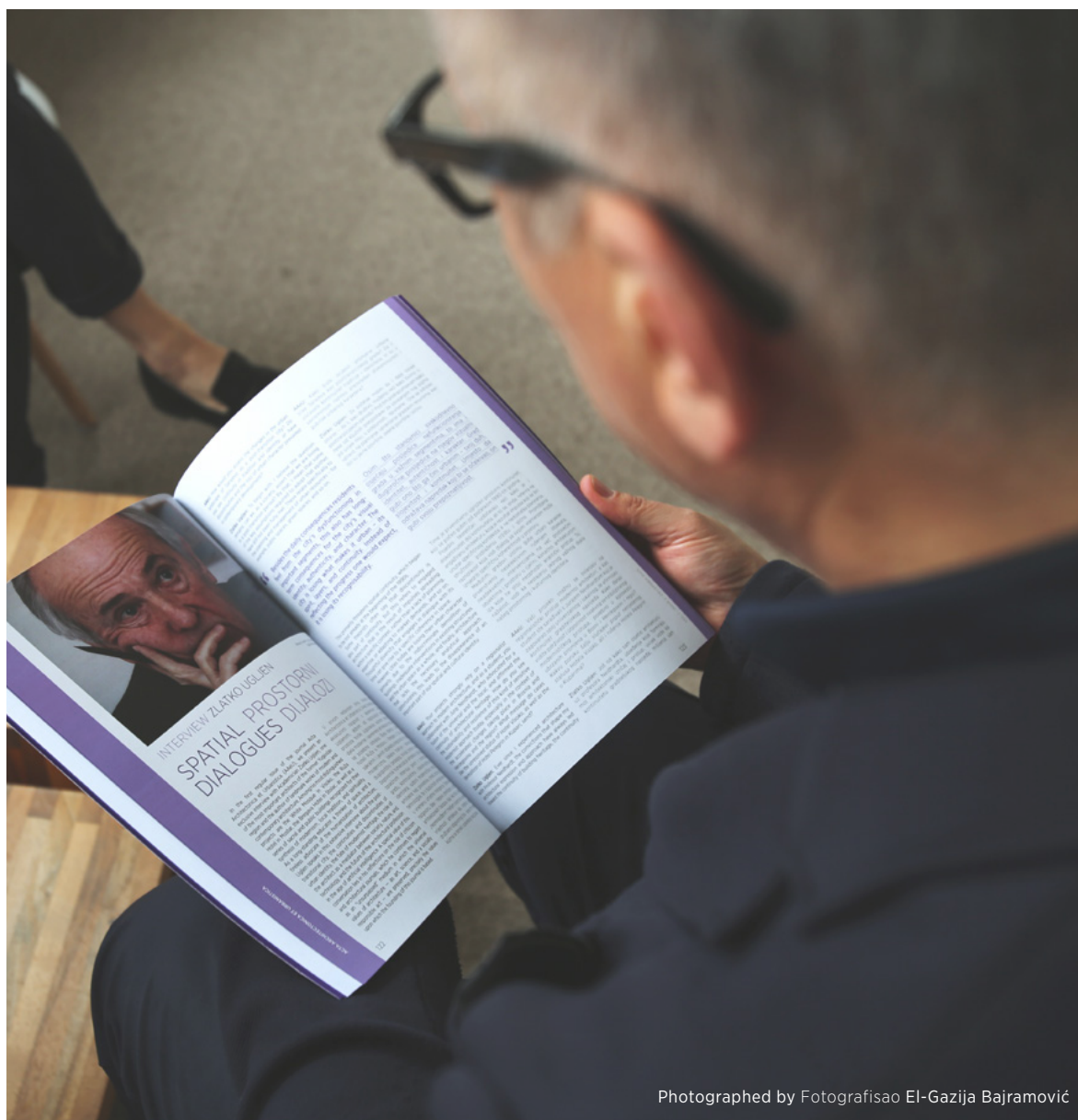
Mladen Jadrić: Parametrijska arhitektura bila je neophodan element od početka projektiranja objekta pa sve do izvedbe detalja. Nacrtali smo svaki od više od šest tisuća fasadnih elemenata pojedinačno, i to bez ijedne pogreške.

“ However, parametric tools themselves are not a style, but a means of architecture—just another tool developed throughout the long history of architecture. I feel the same way about the use of AI. We should not overestimate these tools.

Međutim, parametrijski alati sami po sebi nisu stil, nego arhitektonsko sredstvo – još jedno u nizu koje se razvilo u dugoj povijesti arhitekture. Isto mišljenje imam i o korištenju umjetne inteligencije. Te alate ne bismo trebali precjenjivati.

I belong to a generation that transitioned from the analogue to the digital world, and I appreciate both approaches equally. I believe that, if we have something to say, we must choose an appropriate medium and express it through it. I experience this parallel world as something entirely natural.

Pripadam generaciji koja je prešla iz analognog u digitalni svijet i jednako vrednujem oba pristupa. Vjerujem da, ako imamo nešto za reći, moramo odabrati odgovarajući medij i izraziti se kroz njega. Taj paralelni svijet doživljavam kao nešto vrlo prirodno.



Photographed by Fotografisao El-Gazija Bajramović

AAeU: Finally, since you are a highly respected and appreciated professor, could you give a motivating message or advice to young architects?

Mladen Jadrić: Architecture enables us to express things that cannot be expressed in any other way. It is simultaneously a great privilege and a strength of our profession. On the other hand, paraphrasing Wittgenstein, architecture is a lifelong confrontation with ourselves and a constant questioning of what is right in each present moment.

The process of learning is at the same time the work of our lives and our elixir of youth.

I have discovered that architecture offers the possibility of positively influencing social change through the subtle integration of appropriate values. That is our contribution, but also a great responsibility within civil society—one that we must take with the utmost seriousness.

Sarajevo, 2026

AAeU: I za kraj, budući da ste i profesor kojeg studenti iznimno cijene, možete li uputiti motivirajuću poruku i savjet mladim arhitektima?

Mladen Jadrić: Kroz arhitekturu možemo izraziti ono što ne možemo izraziti ni na koji drugi način. To je velika blagodat i istodobno snaga naše struke. S druge strane, parafrazirajući Wittgensteina, arhitektura je cjeloživotno suočavanje sa samim sobom i s pitanjem što je ispravno u svakom „sadašnjem“ trenutku.

Proces učenja životno je djelo i istodobno naš eliksir mladosti.

Pritom sam za sebe otkrio da arhitektura, kroz suptilnu integraciju ispravnih vrijednosti, pruža mogućnost pozitivnog utjecaja na nužne promjene u društvu. To je naš doprinos, ali i velika obaveza u civilnom društvu koju moramo shvatiti vrlo ozbiljno.

Sarajevo, 2026.

Interview conducted and edited by Intervju vodila i uredila
Prof. Nina Ugljen, PhD



Photographed by Fotografisao El-Gazija Bajramović

REVIEW TRILOGY: THREE PROJECTS BY ACADEMICIAN ŽIVORAD JANKOVIĆ TRILOGIJA OSVRTA: TRI PROJEKTA AKADEMIKA ŽIVORADA JANKOVIĆA

(UN)WANTED HERITAGE (NE)ŽELJENO NASLIJEĐE

1/3

Resistance of the Modernist Cultural Landscape — Skenderija, Welfare, and Lazy Liberalism

Otpornost modernističkog kulturnog pejzaža — Skenderija, blagostanje, i lijeni liberalizam

Assist. Prof. Doc. Merjema Zatrić, PhD International University of Sarajevo - IUS

"Steel girders will never possess the warmth of oak, nor will Portland cement ever match the playful texture of indigenous stone," wrote one of the many commentators who reflected in the Yugoslav press on the opening of the Skenderija Cultural and Sports Centre in Sarajevo in 1969. With these words, he introduced what he saw as the challenge that its architects—Živorad Janković, Halid Muhasilović, and structural engineer Ognjeslav Malkin—had successfully overcome. "Naturally," he continued, "we have had to submit to the laws of the age in which we live, and today the fundamental law is that of mass production and standardization." Yet, he added, "it would be dreadful and unbearable if this generation were to leave behind nothing but grey high-rise blocks, so that no one could later decipher whether this era, too, had a soul—and, by God, it does!" (Lešić, ca. 1969).

Writing at the close of a decade marked by an unprecedented intensity of construction across Yugoslavia, as well as by the emergence of criticism directed at the alienating character of modernist housing estates, this and other committed commentators saw in Skenderija not merely a demonstration of the excellence of Bosnian-Yugoslav architecture, but also the capacity of the building to epitomize the norms, capabilities, and ultimately the aspirations of the society that produced it—a testament that it both desired and was capable of achieving more than the generic "dormitory settlement."

Viewed from the present moment, more than half a century later, the design and construction of Skenderija

"Nikada, uvjeravaju tradicionalisti, čelične traverze neće imati pitomost hrastovine, a portland cement razigranost tekture autohtonog kamena" - ovako je jedan od mnogobrojnih komentatora koji su se oglasili u jugoslovenskoj štampi o otvaranju Kulturno-sportskog centra Skenderija u Sarajevu 1969. godine, započeo opis izazova nad kojim su, po njegovoj ocjeni, trijumfovali njeni arhitekti, Živorad Janković, Halid Muhasilović i građevinar Ognjeslav Malkin. "Prirodno," nastavio je, "morali smo se povinovati zakonima vremena u kom živimo, a danas je osnovni zakon: zakon velikih serija i konfekcije," ipak, "bilo bi užasno i nepodnošljivo kada bi ova generacija iza sebe ostavila posivele solitere, pa da tako, poslije, niko ne može da dešifruje da li je i ovo vrijeme imalo svoju dušu, a ima je, zaboga!" (Lešić, ca.1969)

Pišući na izmaku dekade koju je obilježio do tada neviđen intenzitet izgradnje širom Jugoslavije, kao i začetak kritike otuđenosti modernističkih stambenih naselja, ovaj i drugi predani komentatori, vidjeli su u Skenderiji, ne samo demonstraciju izvrsnosti bosansko-jugoslovenske arhitekture, već i kapacitet ove građevine da epitomizira norme, sposobnosti i, na kraju, stremljenja tadašnjeg društva - dokaz da želi i može više od generičkog "naselja-spavaonice."

Posmatrani iz sadašnjeg trenutka, više od pola vijeka kasnije, projekat i izgradnja Skenderije zaista se ocrtavaju kao višestruko preskakanje značajnog



Figure 1 The Brutalist Aesthetic of Skenderija as a Marker of a Place of Welfare. Source: Archive of Halid Muhasilović.

Ilustracija 1 Brutalna estetika Skenderije kao oznaka mjesta blagostanja. Izvor: Arhiv Halida Muhasilovića.

indeed appear as a series of significant threshold crossings in the development of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This monumental megastructure of exposed concrete, conceived to accommodate a complex programme of leisure, culture, and recreation, ushered the city into the era of modern urbanity while simultaneously certifying the quality and maturity of local architectural and engineering expertise. While these two facts alone are sufficient to establish the unquestionable historical significance of Skenderija as a cultural-historical monument in the local context, it remains necessary to examine what this work of modern architecture reveals about “that time” on a broader—one might even say global—scale, and by what means it does so.

***Béton Brut*: The Substance of Welfare**

Like many other works of exposed-concrete architecture, Skenderija stands as a worthy symbol of the powerful partnership between architects and local—and, consequently, state—authorities that proved crucial to the creation of rich and diverse spaces of social life across the world, particularly in the decades following the Second World War. In terms of its scale, programme, form, and ultimately its raw concrete skin, Skenderija is arguably one of the most compelling Yugoslav representatives of modern architecture as both an instrument and an expression of the welfare state.

praga u sarajevskom i bosanskohercegovačkom razvoju - ova monumentalna megastruktura od “golog betona,” namijenjena kompleksnom programu razonode i rekreacije, jednim potezom uvela je grad u eru moderne urbanosti i dala atest kvaliteta lokalnim snagama arhitektonske i građevinske ekspertize. Dok su ove dvije činjenice već dovoljne da uspostave nepobitnu istorijsku vrijednost Skenderije kao kulturno-istorijskog spomenika u lokalnom mjerilu, ostaje da se provjeri ono što nam ovo djelo moderne arhitekture svjedoči o “onem vremenu” u širem, moglo bi se reći čak i u globalnom mjerilu, kao i na koji način to čini.

***Béton brut*, supstanca blagostanja**

Kao i mnoga druga djela arhitekture “golog betona,” Skenderija je dostojan simbol moćnog partnerstva između arhitekata i lokalnih (pa posljedično i državnih) uprava, koje je bilo odsudno za kreiranje bogatstva prostora društvenog života širom svijeta, naročito poslije Drugog svjetskog rata. Po svojem mjerilu, programu, formi i, na kraju, svojoj suroj betonskoj koži, Skenderija je vjerojatno jedan od nekoliko najizrazitijih jugoslovenskih predstavnika moderne arhitekture kao instrumenta i izraza države blagostanja.

Iako revolucionarna u nacionalnim okvirima, Skenderija je sintetizirala nekoliko značajnih utjecaja

Although revolutionary within the national context, Skenderija synthesized several important influences from the new wave of international late modernism. Brutalism, the architecture of raw concrete, emerged as a means for post-war architects to distance themselves from what they perceived as the superficial “machine aesthetic” of interwar modernism and to establish a new “brutal” aesthetic that reflected a different approach to design—one in which technology assumed an essential and performative role. It is reasonable to assume that the new brutalist image of American university campuses,¹ which Živorad Janković must have encountered during his postgraduate studies at the University of Illinois Urbana in the early 1960s, directly informed his vision of the modern urban landscape of which Skenderija was intended to become a part. The powerful concrete tectonics of architect Walter Netsch offer a representative example of the brutalist monumentality that Janković almost certainly experienced firsthand in Chicago and appreciated as part of the formal and technological experimentation characteristic of the new American architecture, a developmental trajectory that also included figures such as Louis Kahn and Paul Rudolph.

A second, and more certain, reference for the Skenderija project was Roland Rainer's Vienna Stadthalle, which served as a model for the ingenious structural solution of the main hall and for its, within the Yugoslav context, innovative systems of climate control and lighting (Rainer, 1967). Yet beyond this transfer of technological knowledge, the Stadthalle demonstrated the powerful new political role of architectural monumentality. Large, visually striking, and full of life, Vienna's civic hall contributed to the publicity and progressive image-building of Austrian society within the context of the Cold War (Rohn, 2020), just as Skenderija would, a decade later, transform the standing of Sarajevo's culture at multiple levels—from high culture and architecture to urban and popular culture—within the Yugoslav cultural field.

The qualities shared by the two projects—scale, expressiveness, flexibility, and programmatic diversity—were, in the case of Skenderija, further amplified through the ethos of Brutalism. By embracing exposed-concrete architecture as its natural habitat, the society of the 1960s effectively cast itself into the abyss of a brave new world marked by increasingly unpredictable technological development and its problematic entanglement with global political and economic processes. These anxieties of the “developed West,” largely associated with the contradictions and injustices of neo-colonial expansion, undoubtedly appeared different when viewed from the distinctive perspective of the Yugoslav social and political experiment of the 1960s. The conviction that “concrete has a soul,” as one enthusiastic journalist remarked while describing

iz novog talasa internacionalnog kasnog modernizma. Brutalizam, izraz arhitekture “golog betona,” bio je način za poslijeratne arhitekta da se distanciraju od onoga što su shvatali površnom “mašinskom estetikom” međuratnog modernizma i da uspostave novu “brutalnu” estetiku, kao znak novog pristupa projektovanju u kome je tehnologija imala esencijalnu, performativnu ulogu. Moguće je pretpostaviti da je novo brutalističko lice američkih univerzitetskih kampusa,¹ koje je morao zapaziti Živorad Janković prilikom njegovog doškolovavanja na Univerzitetu u Illinoisu Urbana ranih 1960-ih godina, bilo direktna inspiracija za viziju novog modernog urbanog pejzaža čiji je Skenderija trebala biti dio. Snažna betonska tektonika arhitekta Waltera Netscha dobar je primjer brutalističke monumentalnosti koju je Janković u Čikagu gotovo sigurno neposredno doživio i znao cijeniti kao dio formalnih i tehnoloških eksperimenata u novoj američkoj arhitekturi, u razvojnoj liniji kojoj su pripadali stvaraoci poput Louisa Kahna i Paula Rudolpha.

Druga, sigurna, referenca za projekat Skenderije, bečka Gradska hala arhitekta Rolanda Reinera, bila je model za dovitljivo konstruktivno rješenje glavne dvorane i njen, u jugoslovenskom kontekstu inovativan, sistem klimatizacije i osvjetljenja (Rainer, 1967). Međutim, osim ovog transfera tehnološkog znanja, model Stadthalle ukazao je na moćnu novu političku ulogu arhitektonske monumentalnosti. Velika, upadljiva i puna života, bečka gradska hala je gradila publicitet i novu progresivnu sliku austrijskog društva u hladnoratovskom kontekstu (Rohn, 2020), kao što će Skenderija deceniju kasnije mijenjati status svih nivoa sarajevske kulture (od visoke, preko arhitektonske, do urbane i popularne) u jugoslovenskom kulturnom polju. Svojstva koja su dva djela dijelila - veličina, izražajnost, elastičnost i raznovrsnost programa - u slučaju Skenderije bila su značajno dodatno naglašena brutalističkim etosom. Sa prihvatanjem arhitekture golog betona kao svog prirodnog habitusa, savremeno društvo 1960-ih godina se bacalo u ambis hrabrog novog svijeta, obilježenog sve više nepredvidivim tehnološkim razvojem i njegovom problematičnom spregom sa globalnim političko-ekonomskom procesima. Ove dvojbe “razvijenog zapada,” mahom vezane za grijehe rekolonizacije, svakako su izgledale drugačije iz specifičnog ugla koji je definisao jugoslovenski društveni i politički eksperiment 1960-ih godina. Osjećaj da “beton ima dušu,” kako je jedan oduševljeni novinar primijetio opisujući Skenderiju, ne bi bio moguć bez duboke vjere društva u svoju inherentnu i nepokolebljivu humanost, uprkos sve više dehumaniziranim nivoima njegove organizacije. Sprema identifikacija građana i institucija Sarajeva sa novim brutalističkim izrazom u arhitekturi i momentalno prihvatanje Skenderije kao novog gradskog simbola svjedoče o ovom uvjerenju - stvaranje Skenderije bilo je “plemenit gest jedne generacije koja je sazrela i koja je svesna sama sebe.” (Lešić, ca.1969)

¹ For selected examples of Brutalist architecture on American university campuses, see: Strasnick, Stephanie. “5 Brutalist Buildings on College Campuses.” *Architectural Digest*, November 25, 2016. <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/brutalist-buildings-on-college-campuses>

¹ Za neke od primjera djela brutalističke arhitekture na kampusima američkih univerziteta vidi: Strasnick, Stephanie. “5 Brutalist Buildings on College Campuses,” *Architectural Digest*, 25.11.2016. <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/brutalist-buildings-on-college-campuses>

Skenderija, would not have been possible without a profound belief in the society's own inherent and unwavering humanity, despite the increasingly dehumanized scales of its organization.

The readiness with which the citizens and institutions of Sarajevo identified with the new brutalist architectural expression, and their immediate acceptance of Skenderija as a new urban symbol, bear witness to this conviction. The creation of Skenderija was perceived as "a noble gesture of a generation that has matured and become conscious of itself" (Lešić, ca. 1969).

Earthwork-Roofwork and the Modernist Cultural Landscape

Unmistakably tied, through its origins, to the post-war social-democratic (and socialist) political project, Skenderija appears anachronistic within its present-day neoliberal environment. It constitutes a kind of *corpus alienum* within the logic of neoliberal urban development. Yet it is not ideological incompatibility alone that makes it a bastion resistant to processes of commodification. The very form of Skenderija perfectly embodies the dialectic of the Earthwork-Roofwork, which Kenneth Frampton identified as the essential components of tectonic architecture—an architecture of resistance.

Frampton condensed Gottfried Semper's four fundamental architectural elements (Semper, 1989)—the hearth, the earthwork-podium, the structure-roof, and the enclosure-wall—into two categories: the Earthwork, encompassing the hearth and the podium, and the Roofwork, encompassing both roof and enclosure. Through this framework, he sought to define architecture's capacity to create place and thereby resist the relentless reduction of local specificity characteristic of neoliberalism. According to Frampton, the Earthwork and its "extension into the landscape" embody "the cosmogonic transformation of the site"; they constitute the means by which architecture becomes part of local geography (Frampton, 2024, p. 307). At the same time, the Roofwork emphasizes the public significance of the place thus created, rendering it visible. Through the application of these Semperian-Framptonian categories, Skenderija can be understood as a genuinely resistant architecture that continues to perform what, through its ideological origins, it signifies: the construction of a "public world" (Mitrašinović, 2024).

Its unique section reveals an equally complex development of both Earthwork and Roofwork. The ground plane—an extension of the street—is doubled, as are the benefits inherent in multifunctional public space. The level of the Skenderija plateau constitutes one ground plane, while the level of the main hall forms another. Together, these two central spaces constitute Frampton's Earthwork, through which architecture "holds ground." Simultaneously, a series

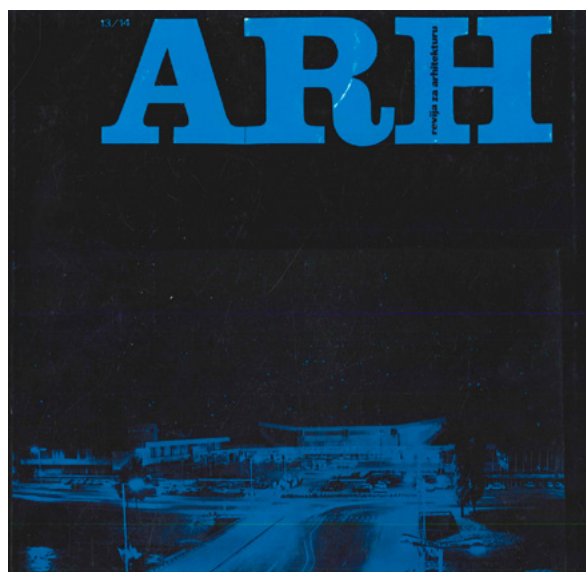


Figure 2 Multiple Leapfrogging of Developmental Thresholds — Skenderija on the Cover of the Architecture Journal ARH. Source: ARH, X(13-14) (Society of Architects Sarajevo, 1972).

Ilustracija 2 Višestruko preskakanje razvojnih pragova - Skenderija na naslovnoj stranici revije za arhitekturu ARH. Izvor: Arh, X(13-14) (Društvo arhitekata Sarajevo, 1972).

Temeljnica-krovište i modernistički kulturni pejzaž

Nepogrešivo vezana, posredstvom svog porijekla, za poslijeratni socijaldemokratski (i socijalistički) politički program, Skenderija je anahrona u svom sadašnjem neoliberalnom okruženju. Ona predstavlja svojevrsni *corpus alienum* u logici neoliberalnog urbanog razvoja. Ne čini je, međutim, samo ideološka nekompatibilnost bastionom koji odolijeva procesima komodifikacije. Sama forma Skenderije savršeno otjelovljuje dijalektiku temeljnice i krovišta, koje je Kenneth Frampton definirao kao suštinske elemente tektoničke arhitekture - arhitekture otpora.

Frampton je kondenzovao četiri bazična arhitektonska elementa Gottfrieda Sempere (Semper 1989), utemeljitelja materijalne arhitektonske teorije - ognjište, temelj-podijum, konstrukciju-krov i ogradu-zid - u dva: temeljnicu koji obuhvata ognjište i temelj i krovište koji obuhvata krov, i ogradu da definiše mjerilo sposobnosti arhitekture da gradi mjesto i time odolijeva nezajajljivoj redukciji lokalnih specifičnosti, svojstvenoj neoliberalizmu. Prema Framptonu, temeljnica i .njen "nastavak u pejzaž," otjelovljuju "kosmogoničnu transformaciju lokacije" - ona je način na koji arhitektura postaje dijelom lokalne geografije (Frampton 2024, str. 307). Istovremeno, krovište naglašava javni značaj nastalog mjesta, čini ga vidljivim. Primjenom ovih semperovsko-framptonovskih kategorija možemo sagledati Skenderiju kao istinski otpornu arhitekturu koja i dalje "radi" ono što, posredstvom svog ideološkog porijekla, označava: gradi "svijet javnog dobra." (Mitrašinović, 2024).

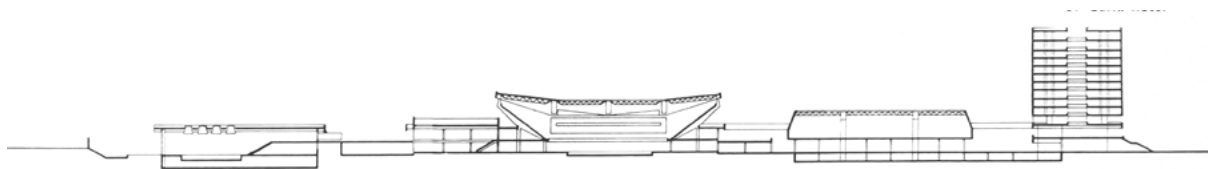


Figure 3 The Earthwork-Roofwork is clearly visible in the section of Skenderija. Source: Muhasilović, H., *Arhitektura i urbanizam* 24(94-95) (Union of Architects' Societies of Serbia).

Ilustracija 3 Temeljnica-krovište jasno su vidljivi u presjeku Skenderije, Izvor: Muhasilović, H., *Arhitektura i urbanizam* 24(94-95) (Savez društava arhitekata Srbije.).

of heterogeneous elements—the Main Hall, the Youth Centre (Dom mladih), the Ice Hall, and others—form a composition around the podium, dominated by the sweeping roof form of the Main Hall. Here, the plastic expression of the structural system—a network of primary and secondary steel trusses, combined with L-section prestressed-concrete beams supporting the seating tiers²—becomes architectural poetics. Together with the concrete skin, it forms the Roofwork, the second element in Frampton's dialectic.

Skenderija, therefore, possesses through its clearly articulated Earthwork-Roofwork an inherent resistance to reduction and commodification. By embedding itself into the ground through excavation (the hall) and by elevating a place of encounter (the plateau), it becomes part of the city's topography. At the same time, through its crowning roof form, it redefines the urban panorama of the city in which it stands. Yet this is not all. Precisely because it resists and “holds ground,” such architecture simultaneously creates the possibility for a “space of public appearance” (Frampton, 2024, p. 307).

This concept, which Frampton developed on the basis of the work of the German-American heterodox philosopher Hannah Arendt, forms the foundation of one of the few truly persuasive political interpretations of architecture—perhaps rivalled only by accounts of the role of the Doric temple within the democratic culture of the Greek polis. Arendt, whose political philosophy was shaped by an effort to understand the “banality of evil” revealed through the Holocaust, described the “space of appearance” as a figurative—but often also physical—space that emerges whenever at least two people speak or act together while revealing their distinct individuality (Arendt, 1958, p. 204). Frampton's reflection on architecture's role in creating the conditions for such a “space of public appearance” leads to the conclusion that the mere functional dedication of a building to public use is insufficient. Only the field of tension between Earthwork and Roofwork redefines architecture as a political resource—a condition of freedom.

Viewed through this lens, the heritage value of Skenderija becomes simultaneously enriched and complicated. Unlike most monuments of past eras, which primarily represent instances of power and authority, the values embodied by modern architecture are closely tied to everyday life and the well-being of mass society.

Njen neponovljivi presjek razotkriva nam jednako kompleksan razvoj projekta i u temeljnici i u krovištu. Parter, nastavak ulice, se udvaja (kao i benefiti višenamjenskog javnog prostora koji parter u osnovi jeste): nivo platoa Skenderije je jedan, dok je nivo same gradske dvorane, drugi parter. Ova dva centralna prostora zajedno jesu Framptonova temeljnica, posredstvom koje arhitektura “drži tlo.” Istovremeno, niz heterogenih elemenata (glavna dvorana, Dom mladih, Ledena dvorana i ostali) formiraju kompoziciju oko podijuma, kojom dominira raskriljena forma krova glavne dvorane. Ovdje plastika konstruktivnog rješenja - sistema primarnih i sekundarnih čeličnih rešetkastih nosača, sa gredama L presjeka od prednapregnutog betona koje nose tribine² - postaje poetika arhitekture. Zajedno sa betonskom kožom ona čini krovište, drugi element u Framptonovoj dijalektici.

Skenderija, dakle, sa svojom jasno definisanom temeljnicom-krovištem ima urođenu karakteristiku otpora redukciji i komodifikaciji. Dok temeljnim ukopavanjem (dvorana) i uzdizanjem mjesta susreta (plato) postaje dijelom topografije, krovnom krunom redefinira urbanu panoramu samog grada u kome stoji. Ovo, međutim, nije sve. Upravo zato što pruža otpor i “drži tlo,” ovakva arhitektura istovremeno stvara mogućnost za “prostor javnog pojavljivanja” (Frampton 2024, str. 307). Ovaj koncept, koji je Frampton razradio na osnovu djela njemačko-američke heterodoksne filozofkinje, Hanne Arendt, čini osnovu jednog od rijetkih ubjedljivih političkih promišljanja arhitekture (kome može parirati tek tumačenje uloge dorskog hrama u demokratskoj kulturi grčkog polisa). Arendt, koja je svoju političku filozofiju gradila trudeći se da razumije “banalnost zla” Holokausta, opisala je “prostor pojavljivanja” kao figurativni (ali uglavnom i konkretan) prostor koji nastaje kada god makar dvoje ljudi govori ili djeluje zajedno, otkrivajući pritom svoju posebnost (Arendt 1958, str. 204). Framptonovo promišljanje uloge arhitekture u stvaranju mogućnosti za “prostor javnog pojavljivanja” dovodi do zaključka da puka funkcionalna posvećenost građevine javnoj namjeni nije dovoljna. Tek polje napona između temeljnice i krovišta redefiniše arhitekturu kao politički resurs, uslov slobode.

Vrijednost Skenderije, kao naslijeđa, se sa ovakvim razmišljanjem istovremeno i bogati i komplicira.

² For a comprehensive and detailed account of the structural solutions developed for the Skenderija project, see: Medić, Milan. “Kulturno-sportski centar Skenderija u Sarajevu.” ARH 10, no. 13-14 (January-June 1972): 3-12

² Za puni i kvalitetan opis konstruktivnih rješenja projekta Skenderije vidi: Medić, Milan. “Kulturno-sportski centar Skenderija u Sarajevu,” ARH 10, br.13-14 (januar-juni 1972): 3-12.

Furthermore, over recent decades, historical distance and the pressures of neoliberal urban transformation have contributed to an understanding of modern architecture as testimony to a specific and completed historical condition (Fisher, 2009)—a time that, in the words of our commentator from 1969, “did, by God, have a soul” of a very particular kind.

The conviction that fundamentally defined this spirit of the age—that development could be achieved alongside social security, solidarity, and emancipation—remains embedded within the modernist built environment in ways that are far more complex than the semantic representation characteristic of monuments. Skenderija, like Zetra, the residential districts stretching from Ciglane to Alipašino Polje, and the modernist-socialist networks of schools and hospitals, continues to function within an alternative system dramatically opposed to the values of the prevailing political-economic order. Yet, owing to its exceptional internal coherence, this system somehow persists, sustaining living and contemporary cultural practices that are undoubtedly rooted in the era of the post-war welfare state.

These places communicate the values of that period, not merely through symbolic representation, but through their continued operation in shaping everyday life: a morning or afternoon spent in a sunlit apartment; the accessibility and proximity of a kindergarten or school to one's home; an evening walk through a green neighbourhood; or the opportunity for recreation and leisure in a carefully designed and generously dimensioned place such as Skenderija.

This remarkable system—which may also be understood as an infrastructure of the good life—consists of a clearly defined aesthetic, marked by architectural modernism, and a corresponding politics, embodied in the cultural practices that unfold within it. It can therefore be interpreted as a particular cultural landscape. The human geographic concept of the “cultural landscape” (Blankenship, 2016), which brings together the characteristics of physical geography, ways of life, and cultural values, enables us to grasp the broader civilizational and political significance of modernist heritage. Only when Skenderija is situated within this larger whole do we fully understand that its architectural monumentality functions as a key—a portal through which the values of the modernist cultural landscape become comprehensible in their entirety.

Za razliku od većine spomenika minulih doba koji predstavljaju instance moći i autoriteta, vrijednosti moderne arhitekture su vezane za svakodnevni život i dobrobit masovnog društva. Osim toga, u toku posljednjih decenija, vremenski otklon i pritisci neoliberalne urbane transformacije doprinijeli su stvaranju svijesti o modernoj arhitekturi kao svjedočanstvu sasvim određene i završene istorije (Fisher 2009), jednog vremena koje je, riječima našeg komentatora iz 1969., “zaboga, imalo dušu” vrlo specifične vrste.

Uvjereno je koje ključno određuje ovaj “duh vremena” - da je moguć razvoj uz socijalnu sigurnost, solidarnost i emancipaciju - još uvijek je prisutno u modernističkoj izgrađenoj okolini, i to na načine koji su kompleksniji od semantičke reprezentacije svojstvene spomenicima. I Skenderija, kao i Zetra, i stambena naselja od Ciglana do Alipašino polja, i modernističko-socijalističke mreže škola i bolnica, još uvijek funkcionišu u alter-sistemu koji je dramatično suprotstavljen vrijednostima vladajućeg političko-ekonomskog sistema, ali uslijed svoje izuzetne interne konzistentnosti još uvijek se nekako održava i podupire žive i aktualne kulturne prakse, nesumnjivo ukorijenjene u dobu poslijeratne države blagostanja. Ova mjesta nam komuniciraju vrijednosti ovog vremena posredstvom njihovog djelovanja na načine na koje uživamo svakodnevni život: jutro ili popodne u suncem okupanom stanu, dostupnost i blizina vrtića ili škole mjestu stanovanja, popodnevna šetnja komšilukom u zelenilu, ili prilika za rekreaciju i razonodu na lijepo oblikovanom, darežljivo dimenzioniranom mjestu kao što je Skenderija.

Ovaj zadivljujući sistem - možemo ga još nazvati i infrastrukturom dobrog života - koji se sastoji od jasno definisane estetike (obilježene arhitektonskim modernizmom) i politike (kulturnih praksi koje se u njemu odvijaju), moguće je razumjeti i kao određeni kulturni pejzaž. Antropogeografski pojam “kulturnog pejzaža” (Blankenship, 2016), koji objedinjuje specifičnosti zemljine kore, načina života i kulturnih vrijednosti, omogućuje nam da sagledamo civilizacijski i politički smisao modernističkog naslijeđa. Tek kada Skenderiju “uklopimo” u ovu cjelinu, shvatamo da je njena arhitektonska monumentalnost zapravo lozinka koja otvara portal prema punom razumijevanju vrijednosti modernističkog kulturnog pejzaža.

The Heritage of Architectural Innovation and the Desert of Lazy Liberalism

Janković and Muhasilović designed Skenderija within the framework of their engagement in the design organisation Dom, one of two Sarajevo-based socially owned architectural offices that were at the forefront of innovation and frequently secured victories in invited and public competitions. The architects’

Naslijeđe arhitektonskih inovacija i pustinja lijenog liberalizma

Janković i Muhasilović su Skenderiju projektovali u okviru angažmana u Projektnoj organizaciji Dom, jednom od dva sarajevska društvena arhitektonska biroa koji su prednjačili u inovacijama i mahom odnosili pobjede na pozivnim i javnim konkursima. Arhitektonsko obrazovanje autora, stečeno (redom)



Figure 4 Entry into the Value Matrix of the Modernist Cultural Landscape. Source: Archive of Halid Muhasilović.

Ilustracija 4 Ulaz u matricu vrijednosti modernističkog kulturnog pejzaža. Izvor: Arhiv Halida Muhasilovića.

education, obtained (respectively) at the faculties in Belgrade and Sarajevo, was further developed through joint research, as well as through the experiences and insights Živorad Janković acquired during his study travels to Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands in 1959, and to the United States in 1963. Janković's work was also significantly shaped by his collaboration with his mentor Muhamed Kadić, whose functionalism was enriched through bold experimentation in programme, construction, and the "plasticity" of form—always in the service of the welfare of mass society, a reality that must have appeared as a striking novelty to the interwar generation of modernists.

The authors of Skenderija saw the paradigm for a space of mass leisure in the historic core of Sarajevo, whose diversity and intensity they sought to translate into the form of a modern enclosed social centre (Bogunović, 1986). Unlike contemporary works of similar inspiration, which attempted to translate the qualities of the traditional European city through high-density programming and the fine-grained scale of "carpet" urbanism, Janković and Muhasilović instead composed a series of large-scale sculptural gestures that define and frame a generous open space of the entrance square.

These biographical fragments and the theoretical background of the Skenderija project point to an unusual but crucial aspect of its value as heritage. The built work testifies to a mode of design that itself constitutes a form of professional inheritance—one from which future generations of architects can learn: an example of courageous and determined architectural innovation. The story of Skenderija's design begins with a rejection of schematism and conventionality, first and foremost

na fakultetima u Beogradu i Sarajevu, nadograđeno je zajedničkim istraživanjima, ali i iskustvima i saznanjima koja je prikupio Živorad Janković u toku svojih istraživačkih putovanja u Švedsku, Dansku i Holandiju 1959. godine i u Sjedinjene Američke Države 1963. godine. Jankovićev rad je, takođe, značajno obilježen saradnjom sa starijim kolegom Muhamedom Kadićem, čiji je funkcionalizam obogatio smjelim eksperimentisanjem u domenu programa, konstrukcije i "plastike" forme - uvijek u službi dobrobiti masovnog društva, realnosti koja je za međuratnu generaciju modernista morala biti začudna novina.

Autori Skenderije su paradigmu za prostor masovne rasonode vidjeli u istorijskoj jezgri Sarajeva, čiju su raznovrsnost i intenzitet nastojali prenijeti u formu modernog zatvorenog društvenog centra (Bogunović, 1986). Za razliku od savremenih djela slične inspiracije koja su pokušavala da translaciju kvaliteta tradicionalnog evropskog grada ostvare kroz veliku gustinu programa i usitnjeno mjerilo "tepih" sistema projektovanja, Janković i Muhasilović kreiraju kompoziciju krupnih skulpturalnih poteza koji ovičavaju darežljiv otvoreni prostor ulaznog trga.

Ove crtice iz intelektualnih biografija autora i teoretske pozadine projekta Skenderije ukazuju na jedan neobičan, ali ključan, aspekt njene vrijednosti kao naslijeđa. Izgrađeno djelo je dokaz načina projektovanja koji predstavlja pravo stručno naslijeđe, na kome mogu učiti generacije arhitekata koje dolaze: primjer hrabrih i odlučnih inovacija u arhitekturi. Priča o projektovanju Skenderije počinje

at the level of architectural programme. Instead of the originally commissioned exhibition hall, Janković and Muhasilović invented a new building type, precisely tailored to the needs of Sarajevo as a metropolitan centre³. Their subsequent research and experimentation included the study of realised foreign projects, exchange with international colleagues, and the import of new technologies. Skenderija emerged in spite of the “law of mass production and ready-made standardisation,” through which the socialist state sought to reduce the cost of architectural production. From this perspective, it can be understood as an example of “collective luxury,” but also as a kind of architectural patent (particularly given its later export and replication in three other cities in Yugoslavia) (Butković Mićin, 2018).

The way in which this experimentation ultimately benefited Sarajevo’s urban culture underscores the importance of research and innovation not only in design practice, but also in local governance—without which such processes remain confined to the realm of imagined, “paper architecture.” Understood in this way, Skenderija is a heritage that challenges the entrenched thesis that the freedom of capital is a necessary precondition for innovation. Yet even without the evidence of Skenderija, this idea—repeatedly instrumentalised throughout history by ideologues of continuous and aggressive neoliberalisation⁴—appears rather hollow, since from the perspective of our Bosnian-Herzegovinian architectural experience, the opposite is demonstrably true.

Since 1995, liberal democracy has, in addition to nominal political freedom, introduced market logic into architectural production. Alongside inflows of foreign direct investment, architectural typologies tailored to investment formulas repeatedly tested in distant contexts have been imported into the country. From gated residential “bunkers” and thick apartment blocks of questionable design quality, to aggressive volumes filled with a heterogeneous mix of commercial, residential, and other functions, architecture produced in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1995 is close to the concept of junkspace (Koolhaas, 2002)—architecture that appears innovative on a superficial level while being structurally generic and market-conservative.

This outcome, often attributed to the difficulties of transition, in fact reveals a fundamental characteristic of the prevailing political-economic system. When left to shape spatial production, neoliberal capital will favour minimal iterations over genuine innovation. Italian-American economist Mariana Mazzucato has shown that the defining feature of neoliberalism is structural inertia and risk aversion, while true breakthroughs across fields of knowledge are in fact achieved—and historically have been achieved—by the entrepreneurial state (Mazzucato, 2013).

sa odbijanjem šematizma i konvencionalnosti, najprije u domenu arhitektonskog programa. Umjesto prvobitno naručene sajamske hale, Janković i Muhasilović izmišljaju novi tip građevine, precizno skrojen prema potrebama Sarajeva metropole.³ Njihovo daljnje istraživanje i eksperimentisanje uključuje studiranje inostranih izvedenih djela, razmjenu sa kolegama iz inostranstva i uvoz novih tehnologija. Skenderija nastaje uprkos “zakonu velikih serija i konfekcije,” kojima je socijalistička država nastojala da smanji cijenu arhitektonske produkcije. Iz ovog ugla moguće ju je shvatiti kao primjer “kolektivnog luksuza”, ali i kao svojevrsan arhitektonski patent (naročito obzirom na kasniji izvoz i reprodukciju u tri druga grada u Jugoslaviji) (Butković Mićin, 2018).

Način na koji se ovo eksperimentisanje isplatilo sarajevskoj urbanoj kulturi naglašava značaj istraživanja i inoviranja, ne samo u oblasti projektovanja, već i lokalnog upravljanja, bez čije podrške ona ostaju u domenu zamišljene, “papirne arhitekture.” Ovako sagledana, Skenderija je naslijeđe koje negira uvriježenu tezu da je sloboda kapitala neophodan preduslov za inovacije. Međutim, čak i bez svjedočanstva Skenderije, ova ideja, koju su kroz istoriju (zlo)upotrebljavali ideolozi stalne i agresivne neoliberalizacije,⁴ odjekuje prilično isprazno - jer iz našeg, bosanskohercegovačkog iskustva u domenu arhitekture, upravo obrnuto, je istina.

Od 1995. godine, liberalna demokratija je, osim nominalne političke slobode, uvela pravila tržišta u arhitektonsku produkciju. Sa tokovima stranih direktnih ulaganja, u zemlju su uvezene arhitektonske tipologije prilagođene investicionim formulama koje su investitori u tržište nekretnina isprobali nebrojeno puta na nekim dalekim mjestima. Od bunkera za stanovanje iza kapije i “debelih” stambenih zgrada sumnjivog projektantskog standarda, do napadnih volumena ispunjenih bučkurišom komercijalnih, stambenih i svih ostalih funkcija, arhitektura producirana u BiH poslije 1995. je bliska konceptu “junkspace”-a (Koolhaas, 2002), arhitekture koja izgleda inovativno na površini, dok je strukturalno duboko generička i tržišno-konzervativna.

Ovaj rezultat, koji često pripisujemo nevoljama tranzicije, zapravo pokazuje jednu od suštinskih karakteristika političko-ekonomskog sistema u kome živimo. Ostavljen da usmjerava proizvodnju prostora, neoliberalni kapital preferira minimalne iteracije umjesto istinske inovacije. Italijansko-američka ekonomistkinja Mariana Mazzucato pokazala je da je generalna osobina neoliberalizma strukturalna inertnost i izbjegavanje rizika, dok istinske proboje na svim frontovima znanja zapravo postiže (i oduvijek je postizala) poduzetna država (Mazzucato, 2013).

³ Based on an interview conducted by the author with Halid Muhasilović in April 2012.

⁴ Almost all seminal authors in the economic theory of capitalism, from Friedrich Hayek, through Joseph Schumpeter, to Milton Friedman, defend the thesis that innovation is made possible through the mechanisms of the free market.

³ Na osnovu razgovora autorice sa Halidom Muhasilovićem, aprila 2012. godine.

⁴ Gotovo svi seminalni autori ekonomske teorije kapitalizma, od Friedricha Hayeka, preko Josepha Schumpetera, do Milтона Friedmana brane tezu da su inovacije moguće zahvaljujući mehanizmima slobodnog tržišta.

The architectural history of Skenderija perfectly illustrates this thesis: research, experimentation, and conceptually rich architectural practice were defining features of the professional culture of the socialist Yugoslav design organisations. At the same time, its present-day gradual deterioration reveals the full inadequacy of what can be termed lazy liberalism—precisely because Skenderija represents evident social, symbolic, and material capital that could, through programme innovation, inter-sectoral cooperation, and above all creative and technologically informed revitalisation, undoubtedly be transformed into financial value for both public and private investors.

Modernist architectural heritage such as Skenderija is particularly vulnerable to the numbing processes of lazy liberalism. The reactivation of such a complex resource would require a genuinely entrepreneurial management of the public good, guided by an uncompromising agenda of collective welfare. Despite its multiple values evident in conventional heritage discourse (Zatrić, 2025), Skenderija continues to deteriorate, while the only publicly proposed solutions by local authorities rely on generic administrative and investment models (“Small Dubai,” for instance) (Radiosarajevo, 2018). What is perhaps most striking, however, is not the limitation or even the brazenness of these proposals. Although one can intuit the “structural” causes of lazy liberalism (constraints imposed by international financial instruments, prioritisation of profit, the negotiating weakness of public officials, and so on), it remains unclear how such a degree of inertia has become normalised.

Part of the answer undoubtedly lies in the illusory power of identity politics and their discourses—from revisionist narratives of the “totalitarian Yugoslav regime” (Bodrožić et al., 2018, p. 47) to the problem of re-appropriating the “heritage of Yugoslavia” as “one’s own” (Džumhur and Kreševljaković, 2025, p. 151). Another part is more straightforward and relentless: the passage of time, generational turnover, and the erosion of collective memory. By 2026, the youngest members of the generation that built and experienced the welfare state “as a normative condition of human civilisation” (Frampton, 2024, p. 305) are entering old age. With their gradual disappearance, we are confronted with the fading of living memory of the “modern project” and its normality.

In such circumstances, architectures of resistance such as Skenderija become crucial. Their role lies not only in preserving the collective memory of Sarajevo’s culture and sport, but also in enabling a full understanding of the modernist cultural landscape and its civilisational values. In the field of tension between Earthwork and Roofwork, it remains possible to think the world of welfare.

Note: parts of this text were previously published in the Docomomo BiH Dossier column on the website of the Association of Architects in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Arhitektonska istorija Skenderije savršeno ilustruje ovu tezu: istraživanja, eksperimenti i konceptualno bogata arhitektonska praksa bili su osobine profesionalne kulture društvenih projektnih organizacija Socijalističke Jugoslavije. Istovremeno, njeno današnje postepeno urušavanje razotkriva svu bijedu lijenog liberalizma - baš zato što predstavlja očigledan društveni, simbolički, ali i materijalni kapital, koji bi se, uz inoviranje u domenu programa, inter-sektorske saradnje i, iznad svega, kreativne i tehnološki promišljene revitalizacije, bez sumnje mogao pretvoriti u finansijski dobitak za javne, kao i za privatne investitore.

Modernističko arhitektonsko naslijeđe, poput Skenderije, je naročito ranjivo pred otupljujućim procesima lijenog liberalizma. Reaktivacija ovako kompleksnog resursa zahtijevala bi istinski poduzetno raspolaganje javnim dobrom, sa iskrenom i beskompromisnom agendom javne dobrobiti. Uprkos mnogostrukim vrijednostima vidljivim u konvencionalnoj analizi naslijeđa (Zatrić, 2025), Skenderija se postepeno urušava, dok su jedini publikovani prijedlozi lokalnih vlasti za rješenje ovog problema zasnovani na generičkim upravnim i investicionim modelima (“Mali Dubai,” na primjer) (Radiosarajevo, 2018). Ipak, ono što možda najviše čudi nisu ograničenost i besramnost samih prijedloga. Iako naslućujemo “strukturne” uzroke lijenog liberalizma (ucjene međunarodnih finansijskih instrumenata, prioritiziranje profita, pregovaračka nemoć zvaničnika, i slično), ostaje nejasno kako je ovolika lijenost normalizirana.

Jedan dio odgovora na ovo pitanje svakako leži u opsjenarskoj moći identitetskih politika i njihovih diskursa - od revizionističkih narativa o “totalitarnom jugoslovenskom režimu” (Bodrožić et al, 2018, str. 47) do problema ponovnog prisvajanja “naslijeđa Jugoslavije” kao “svoga” (Džumhur i Kreševljaković 2025, str. 151) Drugi dio odgovora je jednostavan i neumoljiv - protok vremena, smjena generacija i osipanje kolektivnog pamćenja. Sa 2026. godinom, u starost ulaze najmlađi predstavnici generacije koja je gradila i konzumirala državu blagostanja “kao normativno stanje ljudske civilizacije” (Frampton 2024, str. 305). Sa njihovim odlaskom, suočavamo se sa odumiranjem živog sjećanja na “moderni projekat” i njegovu normalnost.

U takvim okolnostima, arhitektura otpora, poput Skenderije, postaje ključna. Njena je uloga, ne samo u očuvanju kolektivne memorije vezane za kulturu i sport u Sarajevu, već i u punom razumijevanju modernističkog kulturnog pejzaža i njegovih civilizacijskih vrijednosti. U polju naboja između temeljnica i krovista još uvijek je moguće mišljenje svijeta blagostanja.

Napomena: dijelovi ovog teksta prethodno su objavljeni u kolumni Docomomo BiH Dossier na internet stranici Asocijacije arhitekata u Bosni i Hercegovini.



Figure 5 Skenderija aerial view. Source: Armin Durgut.
 Ilustracija 5 Skenderija iz zraka. Izvor: Armin Durgut.

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Figure 6 Skenderija - Facade detail. Source: Anida Krečo.
 Ilustracija 6 Skenderija - detalj fasade. Izvor: Anida Krečo



Figure 7 Skenderija - Renovation process. Source: Anida Krečo.
 Ilustracija 7 Skenderija - u procesu obnove. Izvor: Anida Krečo

REVIEW TRILOGY: THREE PROJECTS BY ACADEMICIAN ŽIVORAD JANKOVIĆ TRILOGIJA OSVRTA: TRI PROJEKTA AKADEMIKA ŽIVORADA JANKOVIĆA

(UN)WANTED HERITAGE (NE)ŽELJENO NASLIJEĐE

2/3

Spens as a Model for the Management of Modernist Heritage: from the Development Strategy to the Reconstruction Project

Spens kao model upravljanja modernističkim nasleđem:
od strategije razvoja ka projektu rekonstrukcije

Miljana Zeković, PhD Department of Architecture and Urbanism, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
Dragana Konstantinović, PhD Department of Architecture and Urbanism, Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

The architectural heritage of twentieth-century modernism, particularly that produced within the context of socialist Yugoslavia, continues to occupy an ambivalent position within contemporary practices of conservation, management, and urban transformation. In the case of complex public buildings, whose significance extends beyond purely architectural qualities to encompass spatial, social, infrastructural, and symbolic dimensions, approaches based solely on formal heritage protection or partial interventions have proven insufficient. This paper examines the case of the Sports and Business Centre "Vojvodina" (Spens) in Novi Sad as an example of the development of a methodological model for the sustainable management and transformation of modernist heritage.

Starting from an understanding of Spens as a complex spatial system and a significant public urban resource, the paper analyses the way a strategic framework for its future transformation was established through an assessment of its existing condition, the identification of key challenges and development potentials, and the analysis of relevant comparative case studies. Particular attention is given to the Development Strategy as an operational instrument that enabled the structuring of development priorities and their translation into the reconstruction design process.

The paper argues that the preservation of modernist heritage does not imply the static conservation of the existing state, but rather the active and long-term

Arhitektonsko nasleđe modernizma 20. veka, naročito ono nastalo u kontekstu socijalističke Jugoslavije, i dalje zauzima ambivalentnu poziciju u savremenim praksama zaštite, upravljanja i urbane transformacije. U slučaju kompleksnih javnih objekata, čija vrednost prevazilazi isključivo arhitektonske kvalitete i uključuje prostorne, društvene, infrastrukturne i simboličke dimenzije, pristupi zasnovani isključivo na formalnoj zaštiti ili parcijalnim intervencijama pokazuju se nedovoljnim. Ovaj rad razmatra slučaj Sportskog i poslovnog centra „Vojvodina“ (Spens) u Novom Sadu kao primer razvoja metodološkog modela za održivo upravljanje i transformaciju modernističkog nasleđa.

Polazeći od razumevanja Spensa kao složenog prostorno-funkcionalnog sistema i značajnog javnog urbanog resursa, rad analizira način na koji je kroz sagledavanje postojećeg stanja, identifikaciju problema i razvojnih potencijala, te analizu relevantnih uporednih primera, uspostavljen strateški okvir za njegovu buduću transformaciju. Poseban fokus stavljen je na strategiju razvoja kao operativni instrument koji je omogućio strukturiranje razvojnih prioriteta i njihovu operacionalizaciju kroz projektantski proces rekonstrukcije.

Rad argumentuje da očuvanje modernističkog nasleđa ne podrazumeva statičnu konzervaciju postojećeg stanja, već aktivno i dugoročno upravljanje promenom, usklađeno sa savremenim

management of change, aligned with contemporary functional, technical, and social requirements. The case of Spens points to the possibility of establishing a management model that understands twentieth-century modernist heritage simultaneously as cultural value, public infrastructure, and a developmental resource for the contemporary city.

Modernist Heritage as a Contemporary Management Challenge

The perception, understanding, and protection of twentieth-century architectural heritage in Serbia are problematised by a generally ambiguous relationship with the socialist past and the former Yugoslav state. As a result, this body of heritage is often viewed exclusively through the prism of the collapse of socialism and the common state—a rupture that is materially inscribed in the buildings of that period. Although within the framework of socialist society modernism was clearly associated with processes of modernisation, today it is rarely considered from this perspective. This raises the legitimate question of whether attitudes towards the socialist past also define our relationship to modernisation itself, and consequently to modernist heritage, and whether these relationships can in fact be understood independently of one another (Konstantinović et al., 2023-2, p.137). Such a position places the architectural corpus of post-war modernism within the domain of dissonant heritage, while, in a broader context, it may also be understood through the phenomenon of “unabsorbed modernisations”, whereby the social, technological, and architectural modernisations that undoubtedly took place are effectively denied.

Nevertheless, certain shifts in this domain have occurred. The National Architectural Strategy, as the overarching strategic document guiding architectural practice, emphasises that, for spatial development and the preservation of cultural identity, not only formally protected buildings but also other forms of heritage are significant, representing the particularities of Serbia's built environment, including “urban planning interventions and architectural works created during the socialist period after the Second World War (late modernist architecture)” (Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure [MCTI], 2023). Professional efforts to preserve twentieth-century heritage are also evident, as demonstrated by the cases of the Generalštab (General Staff) complex by architect Nikola Dobrović, and the halls of the Belgrade Fair designed by architect Milorad Pantović and structural engineers Branko Žeželj and Milan Krstić. However, these remain sporadic and unsystematic approaches, often requiring extensive social mobilisation and a broad professional coalition in order to ensure preservation.

The fact that many Yugoslav cities acquired their defining urban forms precisely during the period of post-war modernist reconstruction indicates that numerous buildings, and indeed entire urban fabrics, were shaped through construction in this era. The case

funkcionalnim, tehničkim i društvenim zahtevima. Slučaj Spensa ukazuje na mogućnost uspostavljanja modela upravljanja koji modernističko nasleđe 20. veka sagledava istovremeno kao kulturnu vrednost, javnu infrastrukturu i razvojni resurs savremenog grada.

Modernističko nasleđe kao izazov savremenog upravljanja

Percepcija, razumevanje i zaštita arhitektonskog nasleđa 20. veka u Srbiji problematizovana je uopšteno nejasnim odnosom prema socijalističkoj prošlosti i jugoslovenskoj državi. Time, ovaj korpus nasleđa biva isključivo posmatran kroz prizmu sloma ideje socijalizma i zajedničke države, koji je trajno zabeležen upravo u objektima toga vremena. Iako je u okvirima socijalističkog društva modernizam bio jasno povezan sa procesom modernizacije, danas se modernizam retko posmatra kroz tu prizmu. Time, se opravdano postavlja pitanje da li odnos prema socijalističkoj prošlosti definiše i naš odnos prema modernizaciji, te shodno tome prema modernističkom nasleđu, te da li se ti odnosi mogu posmatrati nezavisno jedni od drugih. (Konstantinović, et al., 2023-2, p.137). Ovakva pozicija arhitektonskog korpusa posleratnog modernizma stavlja ga u domen disonantnog nasleđa, dok, posmatrano u širem kontekstu, možemo govoriti i o fenomenu „neapsorbovanih modernizacija“, kojima se negiraju društvene, tehnološke i arhitektonske modernizacije, koje su se nesumnjivo desile.

Ipak, određeni pomaci u tom domenu jesu napravljeni. Nacionalna arhitektonska strategija, kao krovni strateški dokument arhitektonskog delovanja, ističe da su za prostorni razvoj i očuvanje kulturnog identiteta, osim objekata koji uživaju tehničku zaštitu, značajni i drugi oblici nasleđa, koji predstavljaju osobenosti graditeljstva u Srbiji, a obuhvataju i „urbanističke zahvate i arhitektonska ostvarenja nastala u socijalističkom periodu nakon Drugog svetskog rata (arhitektura kasnog modernizma)“ (Ministarstvo građevinarstva, saobraćaja i infrastrukture [MGSI], 2023). Evidentni su i napor struke u očuvanju baštine 20. veka u Srbiji, o čemu govori slučaj objekta Generalštaba, arhitekta Nikole Dobrovića, ili hala Beogradskog sajma, arhitekta Milorada Pantovića i konstruktora Branka Žeželja i Milana Krstića. Međutim, i dalje govorimo o sporadičnim i nesistematskim pristupima, koji zahtevaju veliku društvenu mobilizaciju i široki stručni front za njihovo očuvanje.

Činjenica da je veliki broj jugoslovenskih gradova upravo dobio svoja urbana obličja u periodu modernističke posleratne obnove, govori u prilog tome da su brojni objekti i čitava urbana tkiva obeležena upravo izgradnjom u ovom periodu. Slučaj Novog Sada epitomizira upravo ovakve posleratne preobražaje—urbanu rekonstrukciju koja je transformisala prostor srednjeevropske varošice u pravi grad, sa stambenim blokovima, bulevarima i velikim infrastrukturnim zahvatima. Kroz ove procese izvršeno je novo zoniranje grada i industrija smeštena tamo gde ne ugrožava kontakt grada sa rekam — na kanal Dunav-Tisa-Dunav,

of Novi Sad epitomises such post-war transformations: an urban reconstruction that transformed the space of a Central European provincial town into a fully developed city, with housing blocks, boulevards, and major infrastructural interventions. Through these processes, the city underwent new zoning, and industry was relocated to areas that would not disrupt the city's relationship with the river, specifically along the Danube-Tisa-Danube Canal, one of the largest infrastructural projects of former Yugoslavia. The city's urban capacities were largely realised during this period, creating the spatial framework for the development of socialist society and establishing a new paradigm of urban development, as the previous one had become exhausted within existing developmental processes.

Yet, as in most Serbian cities, this reality remains marginal within cultural policy and urban historiography. "Today, the City of Novi Sad selectively highlights its urban values, creating an incomplete kaleidoscope of romanticised urban history" (Konstantinović et al., 2023-1, p.8), focused on "authorised" fragments of the past (Smith, 2006). Within such a context, the fate of the buildings of this era has also been determined, despite their being unequivocal indicators of the developmental processes described above and of highly developed architectural practice. As these buildings emerged from the needs and ambitions of Yugoslavia's self-managing socialist society, this fact significantly shapes their present-day status. At the same time, to consider these buildings outside that context deprives them of the interpretative framework necessary to understand the highest principles of this architectural corpus—its modernising, humanistic, and emancipatory function—through which they became "simultaneously

jedan od najvećih infrastrukturnih projekata bivše Jugoslavije. Svi urbani kapaciteti ostvareni su upravo u ovom periodu, čime su kreirani prostorni okviri za razvoj socijalističkog društva i nova paradigma urbanog razvoja, jer je prethodna bila iscrpljena u postojećim razvojnim procesima.

Ipak, kao i u većini srpskih gradova, ova činjenica leži na marginama kulturnih politika i urbane istorije. „Danas, grad Novi Sad svoje urbane vrednosti ističe selektivno, kreirajući nepotpuni kaleidoskop romantizovane urbane istorije“ (Konstantinović, et al., 2023-1, p.8), fokusirane na „autorizovane“ fragmente prošlosti (Smith, 2006). U takvom kontekstu definisane su i sudbine objekata ove epohe, koji su nedvosmisleni pokazatelji opisanih razvojnih procesa i visoko razvijene arhitektonske prakse. Njihov status u savremenosti u velikoj mjeri određuju činjenice da su rezultat potreba i ambicija jugoslovenskog samoupravnog društva. Posmatrani izvan tog konteksta, ovi arhitektonski produkti gube dio kapaciteta za razumijevanje najviših principa predmetnog opusa — modernizujuće, humanističke i emancipatorske funkcije, čime oni „jednovremeno odražavaju urbanitet, ali i mjesto sa kojeg se razvija urbani život“ (Konstantinović et al., 2022, p.8)

Takav kontekst suočio je i novosadski Spens – sportski i poslovni centar „Vojvodina“, sa neizvesnošću sopstvenog trajanja i opstanka. Predlozi da se objekat zameni „manjim i efikasnijim“ izazvali su burnu reakciju stručne javnosti i građana, što je doprinelo odluci da se ipak razmotre modaliteti njegove obnove. Ova izmena okolnosti poslužila je kao osnova za propitivanje pristupa upravljanju modernističkim nasleđem—kroz istraživanje novog pristupa koji ove objekte tretira kao žive, aktivne i prilagodljive strukture, izvan strogo konzervatorskih strategija, i postavlja ih u održive okvire budućnosti.



Figure 1 Spens, approach to Hall 8.
Source: Aleksandar Dadić (photographer), 2026.

Ilustracija 1 Spens, prilaz holu 8.
Izvor: Aleksandar Dadić (autor fotografije), 2026.

a reflection of urbanity and a place from which urban life develops" (Konstantinović et al., 2022, p.8). It was precisely such a context that confronted Spens—the Sports and Business Centre Vojvodina—in Novi Sad with uncertainty regarding its continued existence and survival. Proposals to replace the building with a “smaller and more efficient” facility provoked strong reactions from both the professional community and the public, contributing to the decision to instead consider possibilities for its renewal. This shift in circumstances provided the basis for reconsidering approaches to the management of modernist heritage—through exploring a new approach that treats such buildings as living, active, and adaptable structures, beyond strictly conservation-based strategies, and positions them within sustainable futures.

For precisely this reason, the example of Spens in Novi Sad, although still in the process of implementation, offers valuable insight into the need for new methodologies, strategic thinking, and comprehensive analyses that can clearly guide any form of intervention in such buildings. Only such approaches can ensure clearly defined outcomes for intervention, channel societal expectations, and establish clear directions for future development, necessarily incorporating the public interest, whether in the context of private or public investment.

Megastructures of Socialist Yugoslavia: the case of Spens in Novi Sad

Spens in Novi Sad belongs to the now increasingly rare typology of social megastructures in Serbia. The building emerged from an extraordinary cycle of construction and the ambitions of the city and provincial authorities of Novi Sad, made possible by the substantial autonomy of the region and, consequently, considerable budgetary resources. This moment ultimately enabled Novi Sad to realise the long-planned construction of a complex sports centre, with the city's candidacy to host the 1983 World Table Tennis Championships providing additional impetus. The rescheduling of the event to 1981 did not undermine the hosts' confidence that the project could be completed; rather, it demonstrated the capacity of the construction sector at the time, as well as the political leadership, to secure all necessary resources and materials. For the city itself, the construction of Spens represented both the culmination of a cycle of modernisation and a marker of a newly attained level of urbanity, which simultaneously demanded and justified a facility of such scale and capacity.

The citizens of Novi Sad financed the greater part of the construction through a self-contribution scheme specifically dedicated to this project, which in turn secured the building a particular form of social stewardship during the turbulent transitional and post-transitional years. When discussions later

Upravo zato, primer novosadskog Spensa, iako i dalje u procesu realizacije, poučan je za razumevanje potrebe na novim metodologijama, strateškim promišljanjima i sveobuhvatnim analizama, koje jasno kanališu pristup bilo kojoj vrsti intervencije na objektu. Ovakvi postupci jedino osiguravaju jasno definisane ishode bilo kakve intervencije, kanališu društvena očekivanja i postavljaju jasna usmerenja daljeg razvoja, koja neizostavno uključuju javni interes, bilo da se radi o privatnim ili budžetskim investicijama.

Megastrukture socijalističke Jugoslavije: novosadski Spens

Novosadski Spens pripada danas već retkoj tipologiji društvenih megastrukture na prostorima Srbije. Objekat je proizašao iz jednog izvanrednog graditeljskog ciklusa i ambicija novosadske i pokrajinske vlasti, koja je bila rezultat suštinske autonomije regiona, i shodno tome, velikih budžetskih raspolaganja. Taj trenutak je konačno



Figure 2 Inner plateau.
Source: Aleksandar Dadić (photographer), 2026.

Ilustracija 2 Unutrašnji plato.
Izvor: Aleksandar Dadić (autor fotografije), 2026.



Figure 3 Interior street.

Source: Aleksandar Dadić (photographer), 2026.

Ilustracija 3 Unutrašnja ulica.

Izvor: Aleksandar Dadić (autor fotografije), 2026.

arose regarding its fate, this very argument further reinforced the strong public desire for the building to remain and for its reconstruction to be seriously considered.

The design was entrusted to the team of Sarajevo-based architect and professor Živorad Janković who, together with his colleague Branko Bulić, developed the outlines of a new approach to megastructures, adapted to the context of Novi Sad. Confidence in Janković's team—capable of responding within a short timeframe and meeting the demands of an intensive construction schedule—was based on their previous realised projects. Although a Novi Sad-based team was also invited to participate in the competition, this prior experience was likely decisive in awarding the commission to Janković's office.

The decision to build above ground determined the conceptual framework of the building: an urban megastructure under a single roof, intertwining sports, social, cultural, and commercial functions.

omogućio da Novi Sad dobije više decenija planirani kompleksni sportski centar, a kao dodatni povod poslužila je kandidatura grada za domaćina svetskog stonoteniskog prvenstva 1983. godine. Pomeranje ovog događaja na 1981. godinu nije poljuljalo uverenje domaćina da je to moguće, a u praksi je pokazalo kapacitet tadašnjeg građevinskog sektora, ali i partijskog vrha, da se sva potrebna sredstva i materijali obezbede. Za sam grad izgradnja Spensa bilo je svojevrsno zaokruživanje modernizacijskog ciklusa, ali i mera novog dosegnutog urbaniteta, koji je istovremeno zahtevao i obezbeđivao objekat ovakvog kapaciteta.

Novosađani su finansirali najveći deo izgradnje izglasavanjem izdvajanja samodoprinosu upravo za ovaj projekat, što je samom objektu obezbedilo i svojevrsnu društvenu brigu u turbulentnim tranzicijskim i posttranzicijskim danima. U danima kada se diskutovalo o njegovoj sudbini, upravo je taj argument dodatno pojačavao izraženu volju javnosti da objekat ostane, i da se počne misliti o njegovoj rekonstrukciji.

Izrada projekta poverena je timu sarajevskog arhitekta, profesora Živorada Jankovića, koji je uz kolegu Branka Bulića, postavio obrise novog pristupa megastrukturama, specijalizovanog za novosadsku sredinu. Poverenje u Jankovićev tim koji je mogao da reaguje u kratkom roku i da odgovori na zahteve intenzivne izgradnje bazirano je na njegovim prethodnim realizacijama, te je i pored novosadskog tima, koji je bio drugi učesnik na pozivnom konkursu, verovatno to bilo odlučujuće da se posao poveri upravo njima.

Odluka da se gradi iznad zemlje determinisala je koncept objekta, urbanističke megastrukture pod jednim krovom, u kojoj su prepleteni sportski, društveni, kulturni i komercijalni sadržaji. U urbanističkom smislu, iako na mestu susreta starog centra grada i novih modernističkih naselja, on je od početka koncipiran i razmatran kao centar. „To određenje, koje je sadržano u njegovom originalnom nazivu—Gradski sportski centar, potcrtava njegovu izrazitu društvenu dimenziju koja se očitava kroz osnovna konceptijska rešenja.” (Konstantinović, et al., 2022, p.102). Ova urbanističko-simbolička determinanta odredila je prostorno-programski koncept objekta. „Dispozicija osnovnih funkcionalnih jedinica objekata—sala i komunikacija koje ih tangiraju u dva pravca predstavlja osnovnu logiku, ali, kako navode njegovi autori, objekat ima karakteristike 'i longitudinalnog i koncentričnog razvoja sadržaja'. Velike sportske dvorane nižu se od severa ka jugu, longitudinalno, ali postavljanjem omladinsko-društvenih sadržaja u njegovo središte, uz najfrekventnije pešačke saobraćajnice kroz unutrašnjost objekta, ostvaren je karakter centralnog prostora, iz kojeg se granaju ostale komunikacije, ali i sadržaji.” (Konstantinović, et al., 2022, p. 114). Programski hibrid pod jednim krovom ponudio je tako i osnovu razvoja novih urbanih formi—natkrivenih ulica, pijaceta i trgova, duboko usađenih u novosadsko urbano tkivo i tokove, što je objektu obezbedilo vitalnost i tokom najizazovnijih trenutaka istorije.

Njegova koncepcija otvorena je za dalji rast i razvoj - „'preskakanjem' gabarita preko koridora Sutjeske ulice kao i specijalnim tretmanom parking garaže, ostvarena je mogućnost daljeg širenja sadržaja objekta” (Gradski sportski centar “Vojvodina”-obrazloženje projekta

In urbanistic terms, although positioned at the intersection of the historic city centre and the newer modernist neighbourhoods, it was conceived and understood from the outset as a centre in itself.

“This designation, embedded in its original name – the City Sports Centre – underscores its pronounced social dimension, evident in its fundamental conceptual solutions” (Konstantinović, et al., 2022, p.102). This urban-symbolic determinant shaped the spatial and programmatic concept of the building.

“The arrangement of the building’s principal functional units—the halls and the circulation routes intersecting them in two directions—constitutes its basic logic; however, as its authors note, the building possesses characteristics of both ‘longitudinal and concentric programme development’. The large sports halls are arranged longitudinally from north to south, but by placing youth and social functions at its centre, alongside the busiest pedestrian routes running through the interior, the character of a central public space was achieved, from which both circulation and activities branch out” (Konstantinović et al., 2022, p. 114). This hybrid programme under one roof also provided the basis for the emergence of new urban forms—interior streets, piazzettas, and squares—deeply embedded within Novi Sad’s urban fabric and movement patterns, which ensured the building’s vitality even during the most challenging historical periods.

Its concept was deliberately open to further growth and development: “By bridging the Sutjeska Street, as well as through the special treatment of the parking garage, the possibility for further expansion of the building’s programme was achieved” (Gradski sportski centar “Vojvodina”-obrazloženje projekta (n.d.)). This further positioned the urban-architectural complex as a megastructure, reflecting the defining characteristics of the type: “The volumetric indeterminacy of the whole (allowing for growth or contraction of the proposed formal model); The concentration of a multiplicity of functions within a (usually) horizontal structure (confluence of programmes prompting exchange); The programmatic and/or aesthetic indeterminacy of its parts (conceptualising segments of the whole as transient—anticipating changes in programme or unexpected uses of space over time)” (Đurašinović et al., 2025, p. 4).

Despite the continuity of its public presence and its deep entrenchment in the city’s collective memory, Spens today represents a building whose contemporary functioning requires renewed interpretation. Its complexity derives not only from its architectural and urban design concept, but also from the fact that, over the course of its prolonged use, it has evolved within shifting social, economic, and governance conditions. For this reason, any understanding of its future transformation must begin with a precise assessment of its existing condition.

(n.d.)), čime je ovaj urbanističko arhitektonski kompleks dodatno predodređen da se razmatra kao megastruktura, reflektujući njene karakteristike: volumetrijsku neodređenost celine (koja omogućava rast ili smanjenje predloženog formalnog modela); koncentraciju mnoštva funkcija unutar (obično) horizontalne strukture (preplitanje programa koje podstiče razmenu); programsku i/ili estetsku neodređenost njenih delova (konceptualizacija segmenata celine kao prelaznih/ prolaznih—uz predviđanje promena u programu ili neočekivanih načina korišćenja prostora tokom vremena (Đurašinović et al., 2025, p. 4).

Uprkos kontinuitetu njegovog javnog prisustva i snažnoj ukorenjenosti u kolektivnoj memoriji grada, Spens danas predstavlja objekat čije savremeno funkcionisanje zahteva novo čitanje. Njegova složenost ne proizlazi samo iz njegovog arhitektonskog i urbanističkog koncepta, već i iz činjenice da se tokom dugotrajnog korišćenja razvijao u promenljivim društvenim, ekonomskim i upravljačkim okolnostima. Upravo zato, razumevanje njegove buduće transformacije mora započeti preciznim sagledavanjem postojećeg stanja.



Figure 4 Spens interior garden.
Source: Aleksandar Dadić (photographer), 2026.

Ilustracija 4 Unutrašnja bašta Spensa.
Izvor: Aleksandar Dadić (autor fotografije), 2026.

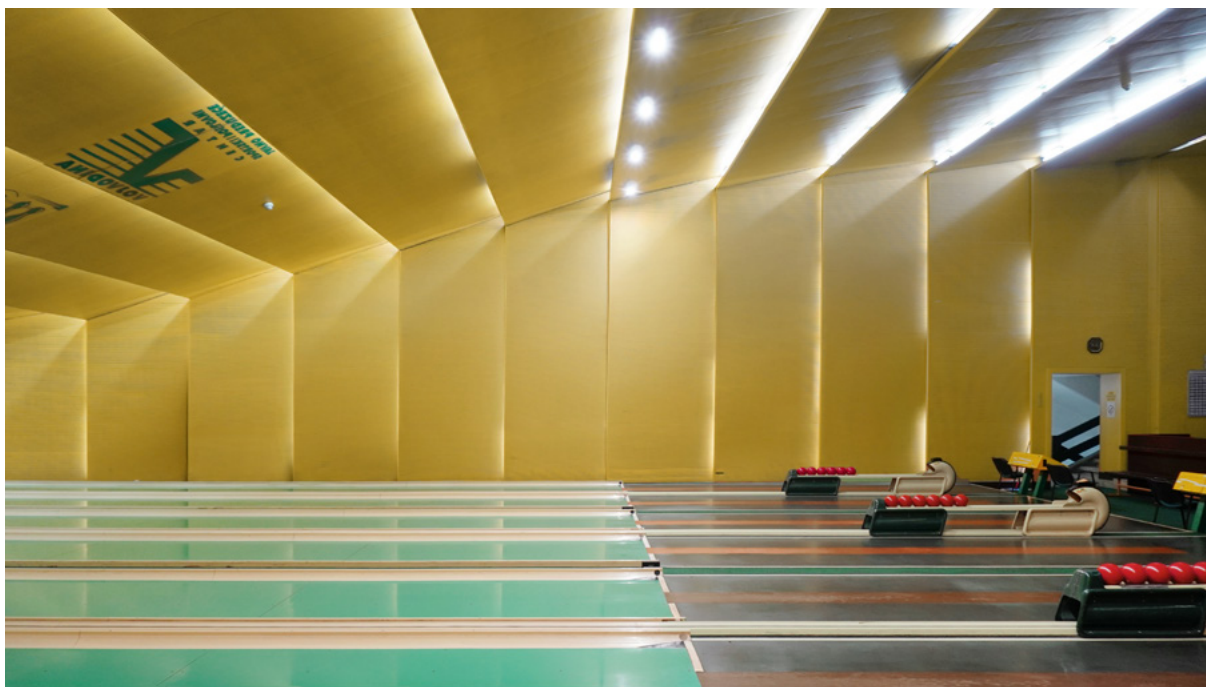


Figure 5 Bowling alley.

Source: Aleksandar Dadić (photographer), 2026.

Ilustracija 5 Kuglana.

Izvor: Aleksandar Dadić (autor fotografije), 2026.

The Building today: Analysis, Potentials, and Baselines for Transformation

3.1 Existing Conditions as the Basis for Understanding Transformation

The current condition of Spens is the result of a complex overlap of multiple parallel processes that have unfolded throughout its prolonged period of use. Changes in the social and economic context, the transformation of management models, and the continuous use of the building without adequate systematic upgrading have led to a gradual departure from its original conceptual framework. These processes did not occur in a linear or sequential manner, but simultaneously, producing a layered condition in which functional, spatial, and technical issues are deeply intertwined.

It is precisely the heterogeneity of the building's present condition, together with the complex question of its identity and status as an urban symbol, that shapes the approach to its transformation. It is clear that the transformation of a building of this degree of complexity cannot be reduced to isolated interventions or partial reconstruction, but requires a comprehensive assessment of its existing qualities, constraints, and developmental potential. As a complex spatial system, Spens has undergone numerous changes over time, often without a coherent framework to guide them. In this sense, the analysis of the existing condition represents not merely a technical step in the planning process, but a methodological prerequisite for understanding the building and defining the principles of its future transformation.

Stanje objekta danas: analiza, potencijali i polazišta za transformaciju

3.1 Stanje kao polazište za razumevanje transformacije

Stanje Spensa danas rezultat je složenog preklapanja različitih paralelnih procesa koji su se odvijali tokom njegove dugotrajne eksploatacije. Promene društvenog i ekonomskog konteksta, transformacija modela upravljanja, kao i kontinuirano korišćenje objekta bez adekvatnog sistemskog unapređenja, doveli su do postepenog odstupanja od izvorno postavljenog koncepta. Ovi procesi nisu se odvijali linearno i konsekutivno, već simultano, proizvodeći slojevito stanje u kojem se prepliću funkcionalni, prostorni i tehnički problemi.

Upravo heterogenost današnjeg stanja objekta, uz složeno pitanje identiteta i statusa urbanog simbola, uslovljava pristup njegovoj transformaciji. Jasno je da se promena objekta ovakvog stepena kompleksnosti ne može svesti na pojedinačne intervencije ili parcijalne rekonstrukcije, već zahteva celovito sagledavanje njegovih postojećih kvaliteta, ograničenja i razvojnih mogućnosti. Kao kompleksan prostorno-funkcionalni sistem, Spens je tokom vremena prolazio kroz brojne promene, često bez jedinstvenog okvira koji bi ih usmeravao. U tom smislu, analiza postojećeg stanja ne predstavlja samo tehnički korak u procesu planiranja, već metodološki preduslov za razumevanje objekta i definisanje principa njegove buduće transformacije.

3.2 Analysis of the Existing Condition: Degradation of Functional Coherence

The analysis of the existing condition revealed a significant transformation in the building's functional structure, which has gradually diverged from its original conceptual framework. One of the key consequences of this process is the disruption of the originally established functional hierarchy of the building (Brand, 1994; Konstantinović, 2021), whereby certain primary functions have been retained but have lost visibility, accessibility, and spatial legibility, while secondary functions—most notably commercial and service-related activities—have expanded, often operating in isolation from the building's core concept. Such a redistribution of programme is not inherently negative, given that buildings of this complexity inevitably undergo a degree of transformation over time; however, it becomes problematic in the absence of a clear development framework capable of guiding such change.

Without defined priorities and clearly established relationships between functional units, spatial and programmatic dissonance emerges, directly affecting the way the building is used. Instead of an integrated system in which different activities complement one another and generate continuous public life, the result is a collection of partially active zones that fail to achieve mutual synergy. In this way, one of Spens's key qualities is gradually lost: its capacity to bring together diverse social activities within a unified and interconnected spatial framework.

This issue becomes particularly evident when the building is considered in relation to its original spatial and functional logic, based on the integration of diverse programmes within a single, interconnected system. The spatial organisation of Spens is founded on principles analogous to the urban fabric itself—a network of circulation routes, public spaces, and concentrations of different functions that together enable continuous movement and spontaneous interaction among users. In this sense, Spens was not designed as a collection of separate facilities, but as an integrated micro-urban system. However, the disruption of its functional balance, the closure of certain spaces, and the fragmentation of programmes have interrupted these flows, making the problems of its integrated micro-urban concept comparable to those of the real city: breaks in circulation networks, uneven spatial activation, and the loss of clearly defined public zones.

The building's technical and infrastructural condition further complicates its functionality. Obsolete systems, energy inefficiency, and difficulties in maintenance directly affect the quality of spatial use, as well as the building's capacity to adapt to contemporary needs and programmes. Limited financial resources for maintenance and system upgrades further intensify these challenges, making the technical condition not merely a consequence of the building's age, but an active factor influencing its usability and long-term sustainability.

3.2 Analiza postojećeg stanja: degradacija funkcionalne koherentnosti

Analiza postojećeg stanja ukazala je na značajnu promenu funkcionalne strukture objekta, koja se tokom vremena udaljila od izvorno postavljene koncepta. Jedna od ključnih posledica ovog procesa jeste narušavanje prvobitno uspostavljene hijerarhije funkcija objekta (Brand, 1994; Konstantinović, 2021), pri čemu pojedini segmenti primarnih sadržaja ostaju očuvani, ali gube na vidljivosti, pristupačnosti i prostornoj čitljivosti, dok istovremeno dolazi do širenja sadržaja sekundarnog karaktera, pre svega komercijalnih i uslužnih delatnosti, koji često funkcionišu izolovano u odnosu na osnovni koncept objekta. Ovakva redistribucija programa ne predstavlja nužno negativan proces sama po sebi, budući da objekti ove složenosti podrazumevaju određeni stepen transformacije kroz vreme, ali postaje problematična u odsustvu jasnog razvojnog okvira koji bi te promene usmeravao.

Bez definisanih prioriteta i jasno uspostavljenih odnosa između funkcionalnih celina, dolazi do njihove prostorne i programske disonance, što se direktno odražava na način korišćenja objekta. Umesto integrisanog sistema u kojem se različite aktivnosti međusobno dopunjuju i generišu kontinuirani javni život, formira se skup parcijalno aktivnih zona koje ne ostvaruju međusobnu sinergiju. Time se postepeno gubi jedan od ključnih kvaliteta Spensa – sposobnost da objedini različite društvene aktivnosti unutar jedinstvenog i međusobno povezanog prostornog okvira.

Ovaj problem posebno je izražen ukoliko se objekat posmatra u odnosu na njegovu izvornu prostornu i funkcionalnu logiku, zasnovanu na integraciji različitih sadržaja unutar jedinstvenog i međusobno povezanog sistema. Prostorna organizacija Spensa počiva na principima analognim urbanom tkivu—mreži komunikacija, javnim prostorima i koncentraciji različitih funkcija koje zajedno omogućavaju kontinuirano kretanje i spontanu interakciju korisnika. U tom smislu, Spens nije projektovan kao zbir odvojenih sadržaja, već kao integrisani mikrourbanistički sistem. Međutim, narušavanje funkcionalne ravnoteže, zatvaranje pojedinih prostora i fragmentacija sadržaja, doveli su do prekida u ovim tokovima, čime problemi integrisanog koncepta mikrourbanizma postaju uporedivi sa problemima realnog grada: prekidima u mreži kretanja, neujednačenom aktivacijom prostora i gubitkom jasno definisanih javnih zona.

Tehničko i infrastrukturno stanje objekta dodatno komplikuje njegovu funkcionalnost. Zastareli sistemi, energetska neefikasnost i otežano održavanje direktno utiču na kvalitet korišćenja prostora, ali i na mogućnost prilagođavanja objekta savremenim potrebama i programima. Ograničeni finansijski kapaciteti za održavanje i unapređenje sistema dodatno produbljuju ove izazove, čineći tehničko stanje ne samo posledicom starosti objekta, već i faktorom koji aktivno utiče na njegovu upotrebnu vrednost i dugoročnu održivost.

3.3. The Building's Potential as the Basis for Future Reconstruction and Revitalisation

Despite the identified challenges, the analysis of the existing condition demonstrated that Spens continues to possess significant spatial, functional, and social potential that justifies its transformation and revitalisation. The very fact that, despite prolonged use and numerous changes, the building has not lost its fundamental spatial logic or public significance points to its exceptional adaptability and developmental capacity.

One of the building's key potentials lies in its spatial and structural robustness. Large spans, a flexible spatial organisation, and the capacity to accommodate different modes of use (Đurašinović et al., 2025) provide a substantial basis for redefining and enhancing existing programmes. Although certain spaces have undergone alterations over time that have diminished their legibility and functional interconnectedness, the building's underlying spatial structure has retained a high degree of adaptability, enabling the development of diverse future-use scenarios without compromising its key architectural characteristics.

An equally significant potential derives from the building's urban position and public character. Spens occupies one of the most important locations in the city, serving as both a spatial and symbolic landmark of Novi Sad, with a pronounced capacity to function as a place of encounter, transit, and collective activity. Its urban position and spatial organisation indicate a continuing capacity to operate as a major public space and a meeting place for diverse user groups, providing an important foundation for its contemporary redefinition.

A significant developmental potential has also been identified in the possibility of the building's technical and energy-efficient transformation. Given its scale, the complexity of its infrastructural systems, and the long period of use without systematic upgrading, energy retrofitting represents not merely a technical necessity, but one of the key opportunities for improving the building's overall performance. The integration of contemporary energy-efficient and technical solutions would enable substantial improvements in user comfort, the rationalisation of operational costs, and the building's long-term sustainability, while preserving its key architectural and spatial-functional qualities.

Beyond its spatial and functional qualities, the building's potential is also confirmed by its strong embedding in the city's collective memory. Despite operational challenges and perceptions of inadequate management, Spens remains a recognisable site of urban identity, intergenerational use, and everyday social interaction. This symbolic and social value suggests that the revitalisation of the building is not merely a matter of technical or functional renewal, but also of preserving an important segment of contemporary urban heritage.

Considered collectively, the identified potentials indicate that the analysis of the existing condition confirmed not only the scale of the challenges, but also the building's real capacity for transformation. It was precisely this understanding of its existing qualities that provided the basis for the subsequent development of a strategic approach to its reconstruction.

3.3. Potencijali objekta kao osnova buduće rekonstrukcije i revitalizacije

Uprkos identifikovanim problemima, analiza postojećeg stanja pokazala je da Spens i dalje poseduje značajne prostorne, funkcionalne i društvene potencijale koji opravdavaju njegovu transformaciju i revitalizaciju. Upravo činjenica da objekat, uprkos dugotrajnoj eksploataciji i brojnim promenama, nije izgubio svoju osnovnu prostornu logiku i javni značaj, ukazuje na njegovu izuzetnu adaptabilnost i razvojni kapacitet.

Jedan od ključnih potencijala objekta leži u njegovoj prostornoj i konstruktivnoj robusnosti. Veliki rasponi, fleksibilna organizacija prostora i kapacitet za prihvatanje različitih režima korišćenja (Đurašinović et al., 2025) predstavljaju značajnu osnovu za redefinisavanje i unapređenje postojećih programa. Iako su tokom vremena pojedini prostori pretrpeli izmene koje su umanjile njihovu čitljivost i funkcionalnu povezanost, osnovna prostorna struktura objekta zadržala je visok stepen prilagodljivosti, omogućavajući razvoj različitih scenarija buduće upotrebe, bez narušavanja njegovih ključnih arhitektonskih karakteristika.

Podjednako značajan potencijal proizilazi iz urbanističke pozicije i javnog karaktera objekta. Spens se nalazi na jednoj od najvažnijih tačaka na mapi grada, kao prostorni i simbolički orijentir Novog Sada, sa izraženim kapacitetom da funkcioniše kao mesto susreta, tranzita i kolektivnih aktivnosti. Njegova urbanistička pozicija i prostorna organizacija ukazuju na kontinuirani kapacitet objekta da funkcioniše kao značajan javni prostor i mesto susreta različitih korisničkih grupa, što predstavlja važnu osnovu za njegovo savremeno redefinisavanje.

Značajan razvojni potencijal objekta prepoznat je i u mogućnosti njegove tehničke i energetske transformacije. Imajući u vidu veličinu objekta, složenost infrastrukturnih sistema i dug period eksploatacije bez sistemskog unapređenja, energetska sanacija predstavlja ne samo tehničku nužnost, već i jednu od ključnih prilika za unapređenje ukupnog funkcionisanja objekta. Integracija savremenih energetskih i tehničkih rešenja omogućila bi značajno poboljšanje komfora korisnika, racionalizaciju operativnih troškova i dugoročnu održivost objekta, uz očuvanje njegovih ključnih arhitektonskih i prostorno-funkcionalnih kvaliteta.

Pored prostorno-funkcionalnih kvaliteta, potencijal objekta potvrđuje i njegova snažna ukorenjenost u kolektivnoj memoriji grada. Uprkos problemima u funkcionisanju i percepciji upravljanja, Spens i dalje predstavlja prepoznatljivo mesto urbanog identiteta, višegeneracijske upotrebe i svakodnevne društvene interakcije. Ovakva simbolička i društvena vrednost ukazuje da revitalizacija objekta ne predstavlja samo pitanje tehničke ili funkcionalne obnove, već i očuvanja jednog važnog segmenta savremenog urbanog nasleđa.

Sagledani zajedno, identifikovani potencijali ukazuju da analiza postojećeg stanja nije potvrdila samo obim problema, već i realne kapacitete objekta za transformaciju. Upravo ovo razumevanje postojećih kvaliteta predstavljalo je osnov za dalje definisanje strateškog pristupa njegovoj rekonstrukciji.

The Development Strategy as an Operational Framework for Transformation

4.1. Strategy as a Response to Identified Challenges

The transformation of complex modernist heritage buildings such as Spens requires an approach that goes beyond isolated technical interventions and short-term spatial adaptations. In buildings of this kind, where architectural, functional, social, and technical values intersect, reconstruction is not merely a matter of physical renewal, but a process of strategically directing change in accordance with a long-term development vision.

In this context, the Development Strategy was not treated as an accompanying planning document, but as an operational instrument enabling a systematic understanding of the building and guiding its transformation. In this case, the Development Strategy encompassed an analysis of the existing condition, the identification of developmental potentials and constraints, the consideration of relevant comparative examples, and the definition of objectives, principles, and priority guidelines for the building's future transformation. Its role was not limited to identifying existing problems, but extended to defining the principles of future development, establishing priorities, and articulating the relationship between the preservation of existing values and the need for the building's contemporary functional and technical transformation (Kolaković et al., 2021).

In complex cases of modernist heritage such as Spens, this approach proves particularly important, as preservation does not imply the conservation of the existing state, but rather the careful management of change (Kisić, 2016). In this sense, the Development Strategy becomes a tool that ensures transformation does not unfold as a series of disconnected interventions, but as a structured process grounded in a clear vision for the building's future development.

4.2. Defining the Development Direction: Objectives, Measures, and Principles of Reconstruction

Building on the identified challenges and developmental potentials, the Development Strategy defined the key directions for the building's transformation, starting from the need to preserve its recognised architectural, spatial, and social values while simultaneously enhancing its functional and technical performance in line with contemporary requirements of use. Such an approach implied that reconstruction should not be understood solely as a technical process of renewal, but as the carefully directed transformation of a complex public system.

One of the Strategy's primary objectives concerned the functional strengthening of the building's core programmes, particularly its sports

Strategija razvoja kao operativni okvir transformacije

4.1. Strategija kao odgovor na identifikovane izazove

Transformacija kompleksnih objekata modernističkog nasleđa, poput Spensa, zahteva pristup koji prevazilazi pojedinačne tehničke intervencije i kratkoročna prostorna prilagođavanja. Kod ovakvih objekata, u kojima se prepliću arhitektonske, funkcionalne, društvene i tehničke vrednosti, rekonstrukcija ne predstavlja isključivo pitanje fizičke obnove, već proces strateškog usmeravanja promena u skladu sa dugoročnom vizijom razvoja.

U tom kontekstu, strategija razvoja nije tretirana kao prateći planski dokument, već kao operativni instrument koji omogućava sistemsko sagledavanje objekta i usmeravanje njegove transformacije. Strategija razvoja u ovom slučaju obuhvatila je analizu postojećeg stanja, identifikaciju razvojnih potencijala i ograničenja, sagledavanje relevantnih uporednih primera, kao i definisanje ciljeva, principa i prioriteta smernica za buduću transformaciju objekta. Njena uloga nije bila samo u identifikaciji postojećih problema, već u definisanju principa budućeg razvoja, uspostavljanju prioriteta i artikulaciji odnosa između očuvanja postojećih vrednosti i potrebe za savremenom funkcionalnom i tehničkom transformacijom objekta (Kolaković et al., 2021).

Kod kompleksnih primera modernističkog nasleđa poput Spensa, ovakav pristup pokazuje se kao naročito važan, budući da očuvanje ne podrazumeva konzervaciju postojećeg stanja, već pažljivo upravljanje promenom (Kisić, 2016). Strategija razvoja u tom smislu postaje alat koji omogućava da se transformacija ne odvija kao niz nepovezanih intervencija, već kao strukturiran proces zasnovan na jasnoj viziji budućeg razvoja objekta.

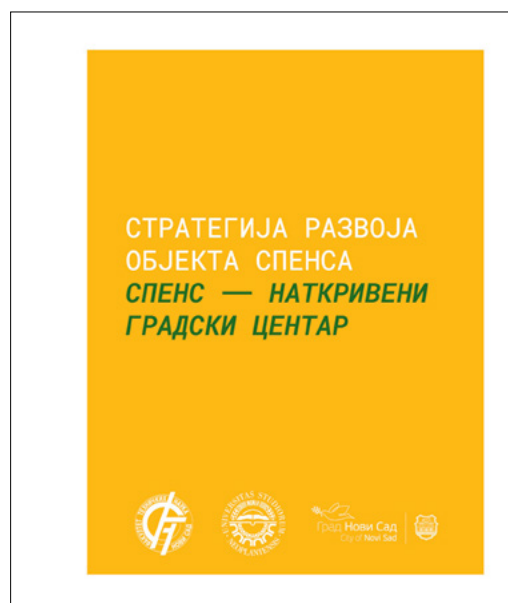


Figure 6 Spens facility development strategy: SPENS – a covered urban center. Source: Authors, 2022.

Ilustracija 6 Strategija razvoja objekta Spensa: Spens – natkriveni gradski centar. Izvor: Autori, 2022.

and recreational functions, alongside the rational redefinition of relationships between different programmatic components (Kolaković et al., 2021, p. 64). The recognised need to improve user experience, spatial legibility, and clearer functional zoning pointed to the necessity of establishing a more coherent relationship between individual programmes, while preserving the building's hybrid character as one of its key values.

An equally important direction concerned the building's technical and energy transformation. Decades of use without systematic upgrading, the obsolescence of infrastructural systems, and pronounced energy inefficiency all indicated the need for the integration of contemporary technical and energy solutions—not only to improve the building's performance, but also as a precondition for its long-term sustainability. In this sense, energy retrofitting was not regarded as an isolated technical measure, but as an integral part of the broader reconstruction process.

At the same time, the Strategy established principles intended to guide future interventions, including phased implementation, flexibility for future use scenarios, and the careful alignment of new interventions with the building's identity and spatial characteristics. In this way, the fundamental lines of development were established, enabling reconstruction to become not a simple restoration of the existing condition, but a controlled and well-argued transformation grounded in clearly defined priorities.

4.3. Operationalisation through the Design Brief

The key value of the strategic approach in the case of Spens lies in its ability to enable the direct operationalisation of the defined principles through the design brief, by which strategic commitments were translated into a clear set of design requirements and criteria for the subsequent reconstruction project.

This approach made it possible for the identified challenges and developmental potentials of the building to be articulated through concrete guidelines encompassing spatial and programmatic reorganisation, the preservation of the building's structural and aesthetic values, the enhancement of user experience, the redefinition of public circulation flows, and the integration of contemporary technical and energy-efficient systems. In this way, the Strategy did not function merely as a general framework of recommendations, but as an active instrument guiding the design process, clearly establishing the priorities and boundaries of future interventions.

The particular value of this operationalisation lies in the fact that the design brief approached reconstruction not as a collection of technical remedial measures, but as an integrated process that simultaneously addressed questions of space, programme, energy performance, and the building's long-term management. This ensured

4.2. Definisanje razvojnog pravca: ciljevi, mere i principi rekonstrukcije

Polazeći od identifikovanih izazova i razvojnih potencijala, strategija razvoja definisala je ključne pravce transformacije objekta, polazeći od potrebe da se očuvaju njegove prepoznate arhitektonske, prostorne i društvene vrednosti, uz istovremeno unapređenje funkcionalnih i tehničkih performansi u skladu sa savremenim zahtevima korišćenja. Takav pristup podrazumevao je da rekonstrukcija ne bude shvaćena isključivo kao tehnički proces obnove, već kao pažljivo usmerena transformacija kompleksnog javnog sistema.

Jedan od osnovnih ciljeva strategije odnosio se na funkcionalno osnaženje primarnih sadržaja objekta, pre svega sportskih i rekreativnih funkcija, uz racionalno redefinisane odnose između različitih programskih celina (Kolaković et al., 2021, p.64). Prepoznata potreba za unapređenjem korisničkog iskustva, boljom prostornom čitljivošću i jasnijim funkcionalnim zoniranjem ukazivala je na neophodnost uspostavljanja koherentnijeg odnosa između pojedinačnih sadržaja, uz očuvanje hibridnog karaktera objekta kao jedne od njegovih ključnih vrednosti.

Podjednako važan pravac odnosio se na tehničku i energetska transformaciju objekta. Dugogodišnja eksploatacija bez sistemskih unapređenja, zastarelost infrastrukturnih sistema i izražena energetska neefikasnost ukazali su na potrebu za integracijom savremenih tehničkih i energetskih rešenja, ne samo radi poboljšanja performansi objekta, već i kao preduslova njegove dugoročne održivosti. U tom smislu, energetska sanacija nije posmatrana kao izolovana tehnička mera, već kao integralni deo šireg procesa rekonstrukcije.

Strategija je istovremeno uspostavila principe koji bi trebalo da usmeravaju buduće intervencije, uključujući faznost realizacije, fleksibilnost budućih scenarija korišćenja i pažljivo usklađivanje novih intervencija sa identitetskim i prostornim karakteristikama objekta. Time su postavljene osnovne razvojne linije koje omogućavaju da rekonstrukcija ne bude jednostavna obnova postojećeg stanja, već kontrolisana i argumentovana transformacija zasnovana na jasno definisanim prioritetima.

4.3. Operacionalizacija kroz projektni zadatak

Ključna vrednost strateškog pristupa u slučaju Spensa ogleda se u tome što je omogućio direktnu operacionalizaciju definisanih principa kroz projektni zadatak, kojim su strateška opredeljenja prevedena u jasan skup projektantskih zahteva i kriterijuma za projekat rekonstrukcije koji je usledio.

Ovakav pristup omogućio je da se identifikovani problemi i razvojni potencijali objekta artikuliraju kroz konkretne smernice koje obuhvataju prostorno-programsku reorganizaciju, očuvanje strukturnih i estetskih vrednosti objekta, unapređenje korisničkog iskustva, redefinisane javnih tokova i integraciju savremenih tehničkih i energetskih sistema. Na taj način strategija nije funkcionisala kao opšti okvir preporuka, već kao aktivni instrument usmeravanja projektantskog procesa, kojim su jasno trasirani prioriteti i granice budućih intervencija.

Posebna vrednost ovakve operacionalizacije leži u tome što projektni zadatak nije pristupio rekonstrukciji



Figure 7 Spens, view from the northern plateau.
Source: Aleksandar Dadić (photographer), 2026.

Ilustracija 7 Spens, pogled sa severnog platoa.
Izvor: Aleksandar Dadić (autor fotografije), 2026.

that the reconstruction remained consistent with the core principles defined by the strategy, while enabling their concrete application through the design process.

In this sense, the design brief represents a crucial link between strategic thinking and design implementation, demonstrating that, in cases of complex modernist heritage, a development strategy can function as an active tool for managing transformation, rather than merely as an analytical or planning document.

kao zbiru tehničkih mera sanacije, već kao integrisanom procesu koji istovremeno razmatra pitanja prostora, programa, energetike i dugoročnog upravljanja objektom. Time je omogućeno da rekonstrukcija ostane dosledna osnovnim principima definisanim strategijom, uz njihovu konkretnu primenu kroz proces projektovanja.

U tom smislu, projektni zadatak predstavlja krucijalnu vezu između strateškog promišljanja i projektantske implementacije, potvrđujući da strategija razvoja, u slučajevima kompleksnog modernističkog nasleđa, može funkcionisati kao aktivni alat za upravljanje transformacijom, a ne isključivo kao analitički ili planski dokument.

Conclusion

The case of Spens demonstrates that the question of the survival and transformation of complex twentieth-century modernist heritage cannot be reduced solely to technical renewal, formal protection, or partial interventions aimed at resolving isolated problems. Buildings of this kind represent multilayered spatial, functional, and social systems whose contemporary transformation requires a careful understanding of their inherited values, existing constraints, and developmental potential, as well as clearly defined management models capable of ensuring their long-term sustainability.

It was precisely through the process undertaken in the case of Spens—from the analysis of the existing condition, the identification of challenges and developmental potentials, through the formulation of a development strategy, to its operationalisation through the design process—that a methodological framework was established which may serve as a relevant model for the sustainable management and development

Zaključak

Primer Spensa pokazuje da pitanje opstanka i transformacije kompleksnog modernističkog nasleđa 20. veka ne može biti svedeno isključivo na tehničku obnovu, formalnu zaštitu ili parcijalne intervencije usmerene ka rešavanju pojedinačnih problema. Objekti ovakvog tipa predstavljaju višeslojne prostorne, funkcionalne i društvene sisteme, čija savremena transformacija zahteva pažljivo razumevanje njihovih nasleđenih vrednosti, postojećih ograničenja i razvojnih potencijala, ali i jasno definisane modele upravljanja koji omogućavaju njihovu dugoročnu održivost.

Upravo kroz proces koji je sproveden u slučaju Spensa—od analize postojećeg stanja, identifikacije problema i razvojnih potencijala, preko formulisanja strategije razvoja, do njene operacionalizacije kroz projektantski proces—uspostavljen je metodološki okvir koji može predstavljati relevantan model održivog upravljanja i razvoja modernističkog

of modernist heritage. Its value does not lie in the universal applicability of ready-made solutions, but in demonstrating an approach in which preservation is understood not as the static conservation of an existing condition, but as the active, well-argued, and long-term management of change.

In this sense, Spens transcends the status of an individual case of building reconstruction and becomes an important example for rethinking attitudes towards the architectural heritage of Yugoslav modernism. As a building that simultaneously embodies strong architectural, urban, social, and symbolic values, it demonstrates that the sustainability of such heritage depends not solely on formal protection, but on the capacity to define models for its future use, development, and management through interdisciplinary and strategically guided processes.

At the same time, the case of Spens remains an open process. Although the reconstruction has passed through all the key stages of professional consideration, and the reconstruction project has been completed and submitted, its implementation has yet to begin, leaving the question of the building's future unresolved. This fact further confirms that the challenges of preserving modernist heritage lie not solely in the design response, but also in the broader institutional, political, and social capacities required to carry such processes through to completion.

nasleđa. Njegova vrednost ne leži u univerzalnoj promenljivosti gotovih rešenja, već u demonstraciji pristupa u kojem se očuvanje ne razume kao statična konzervacija postojećeg stanja, već kao aktivno, argumentovano i dugoročno upravljanje promenom.

U tom smislu, Spens prevazilazi status pojedinačnog slučaja rekonstrukcije jednog objekta i postaje važan primer promišljanja odnosa prema arhitektonskom nasleđu jugoslovenskog modernizma. Kao objekat koji istovremeno nosi snažne arhitektonske, urbanističke, društvene i simboličke vrednosti, on pokazuje da održivost ovakvog nasleđa ne zavisi isključivo od njegove formalne zaštite, već od sposobnosti da se kroz interdisciplinarnu i strateški vođene procese definišu modeli njegove buduće upotrebe, razvoja i upravljanja.

Istovremeno, slučaj Spensa ostaje otvoren proces. Iako je rekonstrukcija prošla kroz sve ključne faze stručnog promišljanja, a projekat rekonstrukcije izrađen i predat, njegova realizacija još uvek nije započela, ostavljajući pitanje budućnosti objekta otvorenim. Upravo ta činjenica dodatno potvrđuje da izazovi očuvanja modernističkog nasleđa ne leže isključivo u projektantskom odgovoru, već i u širim institucionalnim, političkim i društvenim kapacitetima da se ovakvi procesi sprovedu do kraja.

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REVIEW TRILOGY: THREE PROJECTS BY ACADEMICIAN ŽIVORAD JANKOVIĆ TRILOGIJA OSVRTA: TRI PROJEKTA AKADEMIKA ŽIVORADA JANKOVIĆA

(UN)WANTED HERITAGE (NE)ŽELJENO NASLIJEĐE

3/3

Landscapes of Unrealised Possibilities: The Case of the Koteks Gripe Sports and Commercial Center in Split

Pejzaži neostvarenih mogućnosti: slučaj Sportsko-
-prodajnog centra Koteks Gripe u Splitu

Nataša Bodrožić, Curator, Head of the Motel Trogir project, Loose Associations, Zagreb, Croatia

Lidija Butković Mićin, PhD Senior research and teaching assistant, Department of Art History, University of Zadar, Croatia

Material Traces of Past Futures

The twentieth century was an era of grand experiments with forms of social organisation in Europe and beyond: from state socialism to self-management in the Balkans, anti-colonial struggles across Africa and Asia, to the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement in the context of Cold War divisions.

Such attempts at a different, more just social order and at alternatives to capitalism — or its moderation — no matter how critically we may view them from today's perspective, left behind concrete material traces embodied in architecture and urbanism. Whatever we think of the (un)success of these endeavours, the twenty-first century has inherited material evidence of certain 'past futures' in the form of 'ruins', environments and structures that do not fit the current logic of spatial production or the imagination of new spatial managers.

As structural frameworks of collective memory, such spaces are today frequently the sites of bottom-up civic initiatives and struggles for their protection and re-use, with the public interest in their core — in opposition to the devastating policies of commercialisation and privatisation of every square metre of space, particularly along the coast and in tourist centres.

Materijalni tragovi prošlih budućnosti

Dvadeseto stoljeće bilo je doba velikih eksperimenata s formama društvenih uređenja u Europi i šire: od državnog socijalizma do samoupravljanja na Balkanu, od antikolonijalnih borbi na afričkom i azijskom kontinentu do pojave Pokreta nesvrstanih uslijed hladnoratovske podjele svijeta.

Takvi pokušaji drugačijeg, pravednijeg društvenog uređenja i alternative kapitalizmu ili njegovog omekšavanja (bez obzira na to koliko iz današnje perspektive bili i kritični prema njima), ostavili su za sobom i konkretne tragove, utjelovljene u arhitekturi i urbanizmu. Kako god gledali na (ne)uspjeh takvih pokušaja, u 21. stoljeću ostali su nam materijalni dokazi nekih „prošlih budućnosti“ u formi „ruševina“, okoliša i struktura koje se ne uklapaju u današnju logiku proizvodnje prostora i imaginaciju novih prostornih upravitelja.

Kao strukturni okviri kolektivnog sjećanja, takvi su prostori danas nerijetko poprišta *bottom-up* građanskih inicijativa i borbi za njihovu zaštitu i ponovno korištenje, s javnim interesom u središtu, nasuprot devastirajućim politikama komercijalizacije i privatizacije svakog centimetra prostora, posebno uz obalu, u turističkim središtima.

The Motel Trogir Project

The Motel Trogir project was launched in 2013 as one of the programmes of the NGO Slobodne veze (Loose Associations) and its collaborators¹ and has since operated at the intersection of activism, art and architecture. Over the years, working like forensic investigators, we have been gathering evidence in order to re-establish a connection and continuity with our shared socialist past, and to find ways of speaking about it — as objectively as possible.

The project is a civic campaign and artistic initiative focused on the social valorisation and formal protection of late modernist architecture in Croatia, a built heritage to which systematic institutional attention has yet to be devoted.

Our engagement was prompted by the precarious situation of the motel in Trogir, a work by architect Ivan Vitić dating from 1965 and part of the acclaimed series of Adriatic motels for which the author received the federal *Borba* award. The building had been subjected to decades of neglect and, amid growing speculative pressures, treated as an unused spatial resource rather than as a valuable document of a particular social and historical moment. The project took its name from Vitić's motel, and over the following twelve-plus years we continued to work in the field of heritage activism, engaging with diverse themes, buildings and issues in the complex process of 'defining recent cultural heritage', as a combination of civic activism, scientific, publishing, curatorial and educational work.

In the meantime, the Motel Trogir project has come to be recognised as a kind of interface and mediator between the profession, public administration and groups of citizens who have identified the protection of modernist environments as part of the broader struggle for the preservation of public spaces and public goods — a theme that has become central to political discourse in Croatia and the wider region over the past two decades.

Experience gained through work on Vitić's Trogir motel — listed as a cultural heritage asset of the Republic of Croatia at the end of 2013, thanks in part to our initiative, followed in 2015 by the protection of the motel in Rijeka — demonstrated that concrete results can be achieved by combining expert argumentation, public advocacy and the promotion of cultural awareness of the values of modern architecture.

Projekt Motel Trogir

Projekt Motel Trogir započeo je 2013. godine kao jedan od programa udruge Slobodne veze i suradnika¹ i od tada djeluje na raskrižju aktivizma, umjetnosti i arhitekture. Pritom godinama, poput kakvih forenzičara, prikupljamo dokaze kako bismo ponovno uspostavili vezu i kontinuitet sa zajedničkom socijalističkom prošalošću i pronašli načine da o njoj govorimo (koliko-toliko) objektivno.

Riječ je o građanskoj kampanji i umjetničkom projektu usredotočenom na društvenu valorizaciju i formalnu zaštitu arhitekture kasnog modernizma u Hrvatskoj, graditeljske baštine kojoj još uvijek nije posvećena sustavna institucionalna pažnja.

Naš angažman bio je potaknut nezavidnom situacijom motela u Trogiru, djela arhitekta Ivana Vitića iz 1965. godine, ostvarenja iz antologijske serije jadranskih motela za koju je autor primio saveznu nagradu *Borba*. Objekt je bio izložen višedesetljetnom propadanju te, uz sve glasnije spekulativne interese, tretiran kao neiskorišteni prostorni resurs, a ne kao vrijedan dokument jednog društvenog i povijesnog trenutka. Projekt je dobio ime po Vitićevom motelu, a u sljedećih više od dvanaest godina nastavili smo djelovati u polju baštinskog aktivizma. Dotakli smo se različitih tema, objekata i problema u kompleksnom procesu „definiranja novije kulturne baštine“, razvijajući specifičnu metodologiju koju možemo opisati kao spoj građanskog aktivizma te znanstvenog, publicističkog, kustoskog i edukativnog rada.

U međuvremenu, projekt Motel Trogir prepoznat je kao svojevrsno sučelje, medijator između struke, javne uprave i skupina građana koji su prepoznali područje zaštite modernističkih okoliša kao segment šireg polja borbe za očuvanje javnih prostora i javnih dobara, što je u posljednja dva desetljeća postala ključna politička tema u Hrvatskoj i regiji.

Iskustvo rada na Vitićevom trogirskom motelu, koji je krajem 2013. godine zaštićen kao kulturno dobro Republike Hrvatske zahvaljujući, između ostalog, našoj inicijativi, nakon čega je 2015. uslijedila zaštita motela u Rijeci, pokazalo je da je moguće postići konkretne rezultate kombiniranjem stručne argumentacije, javnog zagovaranja i širenja kulturne svijesti o vrijednostima moderne arhitekture.

¹ The NGO Slobodne veze (Loose Associations) was founded in 2009 by Nataša Bodrožić together with Ivana Meštrović and Tonka Maleković. The Motel Trogir project was initiated in 2012 by Nataša Bodrožić with the support of Saša Šimpraga. The initial Motel Trogir project team (2013–2021) comprised Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin and Saša Šimpraga, with local support from Diana Magdić (2013–2016). To this day the project operates on the principle of tactical collectives — smaller teams assembled around a particular programme, building or context — with long-term collaborators including Lidija Butković Mićin, Antonia Vodanović, Ivan Huljev, Sanja Matijević Barčot, Ana Grgić, Lujana Paraman, Nikola Križanac and many others.

¹ Udrugu Slobodne veze osnovala je 2009. godine Nataša Bodrožić s Ivanom Meštrović i Tonkom Maleković. Projekt Motel Trogir inicirala je 2012. godine Nataša Bodrožić uz podršku Saše Šimprage. Inicijalni projektni tim Motel Trogira (2013.–2021.) činili su Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin i Saša Šimpraga uz lokalnu podršku Diane Magdić (2013.–2016.). Do danas projekt funkcionira po principu taktičkih kolektiva, odnosno manjih timova okupljenih oko određenog programa, objekta ili konteksta, uz dugoročne suradnike: Lidiju Butković Mićin, Antoniu Vodanović, Ivana Huljeva, Sanju Matijević Barčot, Anu Grgić, Lujanu Paraman, Nikolu Križanca i mnoge druge.

The Initiative for Koteks Gripe Center in Split

Following Ivan Vitić's Adriatic motels in Trogir and Rijeka, which marked the trajectory of the project from 2013 to 2016, the fourth year of the Motel Trogir project was defined by a new endeavor. We initiated a critical evaluation, interpretation and examination of the possibilities for protecting a well-known Split landmark: the Koteks Gripe sports and commercial center (1979–1981), one of the outcomes of extensive and far-reaching spatial interventions in Split in preparation for the VIII Mediterranean Games in 1979. The complex was the result of a collaboration between the Sarajevo-based professor Živorad Janković, who had already established his reputation in the design of multifunctional architectural and urban complexes, and his former student, the younger Split architect and Sarajevo graduate Slaven Rožić.

This collaboration between actors from contexts that were then close yet geographically and professionally distinct produced a kind of confluence of ideas and gestures on the Gripe site, at the same time opening space for a multi-layered interpretive reading and even partially competing interpretations of certain segments of this architectural ensemble. Often described in the media as 'the first real shopping mall' in socialist Yugoslavia, Koteks was financed through the joint investment of the eponymous company and nearly two hundred business partners, bearing witness to the specific mechanisms of late socialist economy. Middle-aged residents of Split remember it as synonymous with the prosperous 1980s, the first pizzerias, iconic shops and spaces of urban social life — a true 'consumer city' that employed five hundred people and provided much-needed public and commercial amenities for the city's newer residential areas.

Inicijativa za Koteks na splitskim Gripama

Nakon jadranskih motela Ivana Vitića u Trogiru i Rijeci, kojima smo markirali trasu projekta od 2013. do 2016. godine, četvrtu godinu projekta Motel Trogir obilježio je novi poduhvat. Započeli smo kritičku evaluaciju, interpretaciju i propitivanje mogućnosti zaštite poznatog splitskog prostornog repera, sportsko-prodajnog centra Koteks Gripe (1979.–1981.), jednog od rezultata složenih i dalekosežnih prostornih zahvata u Splitu uoči VIII. Mediteranskih sportskih igara 1979. godine. Riječ je o suradničkom projektu sarajevskog profesora Živorada Jankovića, već afirmiranog u projektiranju multifunkcionalnih arhitektonsko-urbanističkih kompleksa, te njegova učenika, mlađeg splitskog arhitekta i sarajevskog studenta Slavena Rožića.

Ova suradnja aktera iz tada bliskih, ali i različitih geografskih i profesionalnih konteksta, rezultirala je svojevrsnom konfluencijom utjecaja na prostoru splitskih Gripa, istodobno otvarajući prostor za interpretativno višeslojno čitanje, pa i djelomično suprotstavljena tumačenja pojedinih segmenata ove arhitektonske cjeline. Nerijetko u medijima opisivan kao „prvi pravi shopping mall“ u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji, Koteks je bio financiran zajedničkim ulaganjem istoimene tvrtke i gotovo dvije stotine poslovnih partnera, svjedočeći o specifičnim mehanizmima kasnosocijalističke ekonomije. Srednje generacije Splitskana pamte ga kao sinonim prosperitetnih osamdesetih, prvih pizzerija, kulturnih dućana i mjesta gradskog društvenog života, kao pravi „potrošački grad“ koji je zapošljavao pet stotina ljudi, pružajući nasušno potreban javni i komercijalni sadržaj u novijim stambenim zonama grada.



Figure 1 The Koteks Gripe sports and commercial centre in Split, current condition. Source: Bojan Mrdenović, 2018.

Ilustracija 1 Sportsko-prodajni centar Koteks Gripe u Splitu, suvremeno stanje. Izvor: Bojan Mrdenović, 2018.

In February 2016 we sent a letter to the Conservation Department of the Ministry of Culture in Split, proposing that the complex be protected as one of the most representative architectural and urban achievements of modern Split, without at that stage specifying the level or category of protection. Even at this initial phase, the initiative was backed by a significant number of signatories, primarily architects, cultural workers and citizens of Split who expressed their ready support. The fact that the complex had been built less than forty years earlier, combined with its relative state of preservation, seemed a compelling reason to begin thinking about this example of modern architecture — a Split landmark — in a timely manner, before it could lose its heritage qualities through alterations or suffer the fate of the many irretrievably lost modernist environments. A key motivation for launching the initiative was the fact that discussions about demolishing the complex had already taken place at the highest levels of city governance (in 2010), on the part of the then mayor of Split and majority owner of Koteks,² opposition to which came from the still-living architect Slaven Rožić, while the professional community, with rare exceptions, remained passive.

From the outset, however, the intention was not to reduce the Koteks Gripe center to yet another 'cultural monument' in the formal conservationist sense, but rather to affirm its architectural and spatial values — above all the primacy of public spaces — and to stimulate reflection on possible revitalisation and a return to the principles of integrated urban and social planning that have been largely abandoned in the post-socialist period. In the words of Dr. Sanja Matijević Barčot, a long-standing Motel Trogir collaborator and faculty member at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy in Split:

It is the unbuilt space, the urban void that is the key element of the spatial concept of Koteks. However, this open public space is Koteks' greatest and, at the same time, most troublesome quality. Namely, on such a hypertrophied scale, the articulation of the space is sporadically weakened and diminished, and since the space's primary function is commercial, the dynamics of its use mostly narrows down to the shops' opening hours, which quells the ambition of urban development. Nevertheless, a walk through the area remains an outstanding spatial experience, and Koteks a unique example of the local, Mediterranean interpretation of the shopping centre as scenery for socialist consumerist leisure. This architectural contribution of Koteks to the local architectural heritage is especially significant nowadays, when the shopping centres recently built in Split represent concrete manifestations of Augé's non-places — spaces bereft of identity, history and relationship with the local.³

U februaru 2016. godine uputili smo dopis Konzervatorskom odjelu Ministarstva kulture u Splitu s prijedlogom da se predmetni kompleks zaštiti kao jedno od najreprezentativnijih arhitektonsko-urbanističkih ostvarenja modernog Splita, pritom se još ne upuštajući u preciziranje razina, odnosno stupnjeva zaštite. Već u toj fazi inicijativa je bila potkrijepljena značajnim brojem potpisnika, ponajprije iz redova arhitekata, kulturnih djelatnika i građana Splita, koji su joj iskazali podršku. Okolnost da je kompleks izgrađen prije manje od četrdeset godina, kao i njegova relativna očuvanost, činili su se dobrim razlogom da se o modernoj arhitekturi — u ovom slučaju i splitskom *landmarku*, počne misliti na vrijeme kako ne bi izgubio spomenička svojstva uslijed preinaka ili doživio sudbinu brojnih nepovratno izgubljenih modernističkih ambijenata. Jedan od ključnih motiva za pokretanje inicijative bila je i činjenica da se o rušenju kompleksa već otvoreno govorilo na najvišim gradskim razinama (2010. godine), odnosno od strane tadašnjeg splitskog gradonačelnika i većinskog vlasnika Koteksa², čemu se suprotstavio tada još živući arhitekt Slaven Rožić, dok je struka, uz rijetke iznimke, ostala pasivnom.

Međutim, od samog početka intencija nije bila svesti centar Koteks Gripe na još jedan „spomenik kulture“ u formalno-konzervatorskom smislu, već afirmirati njegove arhitektonske i prostorne vrijednosti, osobito primat javnih prostora, te potaknuti razmišljanja o mogućoj revitalizaciji, kao i povratku principima integriranog urbanističkog i društvenog planiranja koje smo gotovo napustili u postsocijalističkom razdoblju. Riječima dr. sc. Sanje Matijević Barčot, dugoročne suradnice Motela Trogir, djelatnice Fakulteta građevinarstva, arhitekture i geodezije u Splitu:

Urbana praznina ključan je element Koteksove prostorne koncepcije. No, taj otvoreni javni prostor istovremeno je i Koteksova najveća kvaliteta i najveći predmet zamjerki. Naime, u tako hipertrofiranom mjerilu artikulacija tog prostora ponegdje se gubi i postaje nejasna, a kako je uglavnom podređen funkciji trgovine, dinamika njegovog korištenja u najvećoj mjeri svodi se na radno vrijeme trgovina, pa gradogradbena ambicija ustvari podbacuje. Ipak, bez obzira na to, šetnja tim prostorima predstavlja vrlo upečatljiv prostorni doživljaj, dok Koteks predstavlja jedinstven primjer lokalne, mediteranske interpretacije trgovačkog centra kao krajolika socijalističke konzumerističke okolice. Taj arhitektonski doprinos Koteksa lokalnom arhitektonskom naslijeđu posebno je značajan danas, kada recentni primjeri trgovačkih centara izgrađenih u Splitu redom predstavljaju konkretnu manifestaciju Augeovih nemjesta — prostore lišene identiteta, povijesti i odnosa prema lokalnom.³

² Vidulić, Sandi, BAGERIMA PO KOTEKSU. Rožić: Kerum bi rušio kao da mu je čačino; Šundov: Star je i ružan, Slobodna Dalmacija, 3 March 2010.

³ Matijević Barčot, Sanja, Svi putevi vode u Koteks [All Roads Lead to Koteks], in: Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer Culture Landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia, eds. Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin and Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018, 203, 207.

² Vidulić, Sandi, „BAGERIMA PO KOTEKSU. Rožić: Kerum bi rušio kao da mu je čačino; Šundov: Star je i ružan“, Slobodna Dalmacija, 3. 3. 2010.

³ Matijević Barčot, Sanja, Svi putevi vode u Koteks, u: Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia, (ur.) Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin i Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018., 204, 206.



Figure 2 Gildo Bavčević: *White Balance*, performance, The Koteks Gripe center, 2017. Source: Roko Birmiša, 2017.

Ilustracija 2 Gildo Bavčević: *Balans bijele*, performans, Centar Koteks Gripe, 2017. Izvor: Roko Birmiša, 2017.



Figure 3 Katerina Duda: *A Step for Koteks*, performance, The Koteks Gripe center, 2017. Source: Saša Šimpraga, 2017.

Ilustracija 3 Katerina Duda: *Korak za Koteks*, performans, Centar Koteks Gripe, 2017. Izvor: Saša Šimpraga, 2017.

Regional Solidarity: Consumer Culture Landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia

We soon came to recognise that, given its urbanistic, programmatic and symbolic complexity, the Koteks Gripe center deserved a comprehensive process of historicisation, interpretation and valorisation — not merely an opportunistic defence against demolition. Broadening the focus from Koteks to the remainder of Janković's oeuvre was not merely a research step, but an almost necessary gesture: an argument in favour of a single complex becomes considerably stronger when it can be shown that the same problems, the same threats and the same (missed) opportunities exist elsewhere, and are therefore structural rather than incidental.

In the following years we organised various artistic events and urban walks on the Koteks site, returning it to the mental map of the city,⁴ and assembled a regional network of collaborators⁵ tracing the architectural practice of Živorad Janković (1924–1990) and his associates, specifically the realisation of related multifunctional complexes in other Yugoslav cities: the KSC Skenderija in Sarajevo in 1969 (with Halid Muhasilović and Ognjen Malkin), the Vojvodina sports and commercial center (SPENS) in Novi Sad in 1981 (with Branko Bulić), and the *Boro and Ramiz* sports and memorial center in Priština in 1982 (with Halid Muhasilović and Srećko Ešpek).

We sought to investigate the social, political and historical context that enabled the creation of these hybrid sports, commercial, cultural and youth centres,

Regionalna solidarnost: Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji

Ubrzo smo osvijestili činjenicu da zbog svoje urbanističke, programske, kao i simboličke složenosti, centar Koteks Gripe zaslužuje cjelovitu historizaciju, interpretaciju i valorizaciju, a ne samo prigodnu obranu od rušenja.

U narednih nekoliko godina organizirali smo razna umjetnička događanja i urbane šetnje na prostoru Koteksa, vraćajući ga na mentalnu kartu grada,⁴ te okupili regionalnu mrežu suradnika,⁵ slijedeći tragove arhitektonske prakse arhitekta Živorada Jankovića (1924.–1990.) sa suradnicima, tj. realizaciju srodnih multifunkcionalnih objekata u drugim jugoslavenskim gradovima: KSC Skenderija u Sarajevu 1969. godine (s Halidom Muhasilovićem i Ognjenom Malkinom), Sportsko-poslovni centar Vojvodina (SPENS) u Novom Sadu 1981. godine (s Brankom Bulićem) te Omladinski i sportski centar *Boro i Ramiz* u Prištini 1982. godine (s Halidom Muhasilovićem i Srećkom Ešpekom). Nastojali smo istražiti društveno-politički i povijesni kontekst koji je omogućio nastanak ovakvih hibridnih sportsko-trgovačkih, kulturnih i omladinskih centara, radi njihova ponovnog sagledavanja i kritičke reevaluacije. Kako smo tada sročili:

U današnjem postjugoslavenskom vremenu (i prostoru), kada je neophodno stalno se opirati dominantnim tendencijama da novo uspostavljene nacionalne granice prerastu u mentalne, istraživanje Jankovićeve opusa, razasutog od Splita do Kosova, čini se kao odlična studija slučaja za razumijevanje

⁴ From 2014 onwards, the Motel Trogir project has been opened to artists through open calls conceived by Nataša Bodrožić on the basis of an open curatorial framework, with the support of the Motel Trogir team and often in collaboration with international partners such as the Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean (BJCEM) — for example the projects *Motel Trogir: Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, 2015, and *East is West of the West*, 2016–2017. The best-known artistic intervention that marked the project in its early phase was *Stolen Future* by artist Neli Ružić (2014/2015). A video work arising from an in situ light installation on the motel bungalows in Trogir, it was awarded a prize and acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, where it is now displayed in the permanent collection. As early as summer 2015, the Koteks Gripe centre was included in a study visit/residency programme open to citizens, a professional tour entitled *Od Dalme do Koteksa: Poslijeratno stanovanje, shopping i programiranje socijalističke svakodnevice* [From Dalma to Koteks: Post-War Housing, Shopping and the Programming of Socialist Everyday Life], conceived by architect Sanja Matijević Barčot. In the course of the multi-year Koteks campaign, we collaborated with numerous artists from Croatia and abroad: Duška Boban, Katerina Duda, Gildo Bavčević, Siniša Labrović, Julie Desprairies, and many others whose photographs enriched our publication.

⁵ In Sarajevo our principal contacts were Mejrema Zatrić Šahović, Mirza Mehaković and the group active around the student journal of architecture, design and art *Tristotrojka*, as well as individual media outlets such as *Oslobođenje*. In Priština our collaborator was Eliza Hoxha, and in Novi Sad Aleksandar Bede and the team gathered around the Society of Architects of Novi Sad (DaNS). Texts by these collaborators are included in the publication as regional contributions to the theme.

⁴ Od 2014. godine projekt Motel Trogir otvaramo umjetnicima putem javnih poziva koje artikulira Nataša Bodrožić temeljem otvorene kustoske koncepcije, uz potporu Motel Trogir tima, često u suradnji s međunarodnim akterima poput Bijenala mladih umjetnika Europe i Mediterana (BJCEM), primjerice projekti *Motel Trogir: Alice doesn't live here anymore*, 2015. i *East is West of the West*, 2016.–2017. Najpoznatija umjetnička intervencija koja je na početku obilježila projekt jest *Stolen Future* umjetnice Neli Ružić iz 2014/2015. Video-rad proizašao iz in situ svjetlosne intervencije na bungalovima motela u Trogiru, nagrađen je i otkupljen za zbirku Muzeja suvremene umjetnosti u Zagrebu te je danas izložen u njegovom stalnom postavu. Još u ljeto 2015. godine centar Koteks Gripe uvrstili smo u studijski posjet/program umjetničke rezidencije otvoren za građane, stručnu turu naziva *Od Dalme do Koteksa: Poslijeratno stanovanje, shopping i programiranje socijalističke svakodnevice* koju je osmislila arhitektica Sanja Matijević Barčot. U sklopu višegodišnje kampanje za Koteks, surađivali smo s mnogobrojnim umjetnicima iz Hrvatske i inozemstva: Duška Boban, Katerina Duda, Gildo Bavčević, Siniša Labrović, Julie Desprairies i mnogi drugi koji su svojim fotografijama upotpunili našu knjigu.

⁵ U Sarajevu smo se povezali prvenstveno s Mejremom Zatrić Šahović, Mirzom Mehakovićem i skupinom aktivnom oko studentskog časopisa za arhitekturu, dizajn i umjetnost *Tristotrojka* i pojedinim medijima poput *Oslobođenja*. U Prištini nam je suradnica bila Eliza Hoxha, a u Novom Sadu Aleksandar Bede i ekipa okupljena oko Društva arhitekata Novog Sada (DaNS). Tekstovi navedenih suradnika uvršteni su u publikaciju kao regionalni doprinosi temi.

with a view to re-examining and critically re-evaluating them. As we articulated it at the time:

In this post-Yugoslav time (and space), when one must constantly resist the dominant tendencies of turning the newly established national borders into mental ones, the study of Janković's oeuvre, scattered as it is from Split to Kosovo, represents an excellent case study for understanding the workings of Yugoslav architectural practice, especially the interconnectedness of its focal points in different republics. One such point was the Koteks Gripe sports and commercial complex whose stylistic provenance and specific relationship with the context of Split can be identified and analyzed only through comparison with other Janković's structures. Inversely, this method would also enable a historically more authentic and complete interpretation of the mentioned – tentatively speaking, "our" – Croatian part of his oeuvre.⁶

In the course of collaborative work on the comprehensive publication *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer Culture Landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, published in 2018 in a co-edition by the association Slobodne veze and Onomatopee of Eindhoven, all four of Janković's complexes came under pressure from investors and new spatial managers. While in Priština the main hall of the *Boro i Ramiz* complex (today Adem Jashari) was destroyed by fire under unexplained circumstances in 2000,⁷ the Sarajevo KSC Skenderija found itself at the beginning of 2018 under pressure from local authorities acting in concert with investors from Dubai.⁸ Plans were then publicly presented for its reconstruction and transformation into a kind of 'little Dubai', which provoked strong opposition from professional circles and a significant number of Sarajevo's citizens.⁹ Similar discourses emerged in Novi Sad, where in the summer of 2018 the mayor commented on the SPC Vojvodina complex (SPENS), suggesting its demolition with the words "that building should be torn down and a smaller one built in its place, one that would not be a burden on the city budget".¹⁰ These examples point to a troubling pattern in which, under the rhetorical framing of 'reconstruction' or

funkcioniranja jugoslavenske arhitektonske prakse, naročito međupovezanosti republičkih žarišta. Među njima je i sportsko-trgovački sklop Koteks Gripe čija se stilska provenijencija, kao i specifični odnos prema splitskom kontekstu, mogu uočiti i analizirati tek komparacijom s preostalim Jankovićevim gradnjama te, povratno, osigurati da i ovaj, uvjetno rečeno „naš“ (hrvatski) segment njegove produkcije, interpretiramo na povijesno autentičniji i potpuniji način.⁶

Proširivanje fokusa s Koteksa na ostatak Jankovićeva opusa nije bio tek istraživački korak, već gotovo nužna gesta, jer argument u korist jednog kompleksa postaje bitno snažniji kada se pokaže da isti problemi, iste prijetnje i iste (ne)prilike postoje i drugdje, te da su stoga strukturni, a ne slučajni. Tijekom zajedničkog rada na pripremi opsežne publikacije *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia* koja je objavljena 2018. godine u suizdavaštvu udruge Slobodne veze i Onomatopee iz Eindhovena, sva četiri Jankovićeva kompleksa došla su na udar investitora i novih prostornih menadžera. Dok je u Prištini velika dvorana kompleksa *Boro i Ramiz* (danas Adem Jašari) 2000. godine stradala u požaru pod nerazjašnjenim okolnostima⁷, sarajevski KSC Skenderija početkom 2018. godine našao se pod pritiskom lokalnih vlasti u sprezi s investitorima iz Dubaija.⁸ Tada su javno predstavljeni planovi o njegovoj rekonstrukciji i transformaciji u svojevrsni „mali Dubai“, što je izazvalo oštro protivljenje stručne javnosti i znatnog dijela građana Sarajeva.⁹ Slični diskursi pojavili su se i u Novom Sadu, gdje se u ljeto 2018. godine gradonačelnik očitovao o kompleksu SPC Vojvodina (SPENS), sugerirajući njegovo rušenje riječima „Da bi taj objekat trebalo srušiti i na njegovom mestu izgraditi manji, koji ne bi bio na teretu gradskog budžeta“.¹⁰ Ovi primjeri upućuju na zabrinjavajući obrazac u kojem se, pod retoričkim okvirom „rekonstrukcije“ ili kroz argumente o navodnoj neodrživosti velikih

6 Butković Mićin, Lidija, Živorad Janković: arhitektonski nomadizam unutar jugoslavenskog kulturnog prostora [Živorad Janković: Architectural Nomadism in the Yugoslav Cultural Space], in: *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer Culture Landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, eds. Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin and Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018, 359.

7 The hall was subsequently partially reconstructed (roof, façade), while large sections of the complex remained non-functional and lost their original purpose.

8 The Dubai state investment fund (Investment Corporation of Dubai) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canton Sarajevo at Sarajevo Town Hall in September 2016, identifying Skenderija as 'the first in focus'. See: <http://www.seebiz.eu/investment-corporation-of-dubai-ce-ulagati-u-kanton-sarajevo-prva-u-fokusu-skenderija/ar-142762/>

9 Krajišnik, Đorđe, 'Slučaj Skenderija – urbicid ili investicija?' [The Skenderija Case – Urbicide or Investment?], *Oslobodjenje*, Sarajevo, 22 February 2018, <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/o2/kultura/slučaj-skenderija-urbicid-ili-investicija>

10 <http://rs.n1info.com/a415810/Biznis/Vucevic-bi-Spens-da-posalje-u-istoriju-struka-revoltirana.html>

6 Butković Mićin, Lidija, Živorad Janković: arhitektonski nomadizam unutar jugoslavenskog kulturnog prostora, u: *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, (ur.) Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin i Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018., 356, 360.

7 Dvorana je potom djelomično rekonstruirana (krov, fasada), a veliki dijelovi kompleksa ostali su nefunkcionalni i izgubili prvotnu namjenu.

8 Državni investicijski fond Dubaija (Investment Corporation of Dubai) potpisao je u sarajevskoj Vijećnici *Memorandum o razumijevanju* s Vladom Kantona Sarajevo još u rujnu 2016. godine, navodeći Skenderiju kao „prvu u fokusu“. Više: <http://www.seebiz.eu/investment-corporation-of-dubai-ce-ulagati-u-kanton-sarajevo-prva-u-fokusu-skenderija/ar-142762/>

9 Krajišnik, Đorđe, „Slučaj Skenderija – urbicid ili investicija?“, *Oslobodjenje*, Sarajevo, 22. 2. 2018., <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/o2/kultura/slučaj-skenderija-urbicid-ili-investicija>

10 <http://rs.n1info.com/a415810/Biznis/Vucevic-bi-Spens-da-posalje-u-istoriju-struka-revoltirana.html>



Figure 4 *Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia* book cover, design: Rafaela Dražić. Source: Rafaela Dražić, 2018

Ilustracija 4 Naslovnica knjige *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji*, dizajn: Rafaela Dražić. Izvor: Rafaela Dražić, 2018.

through arguments about the alleged unsustainability of large modernist structures, processes of gradual privatisation and alienation are in fact taking place. Such processes involve changes in ownership and patterns of use, alongside the simultaneous narrowing or complete elimination of the original public function. The documentation and cross-referencing of these four cases thus became not only a research imperative, but an activist one.

The Koteks Sports and Commercial Center Today

Seven years after the launch of our publication, interest in the Koteks and in the related complexes in Sarajevo, Novi Sad and Priština shows no sign of waning. At the end of 2025, colleagues from Novi Sad presented '(The Case of) SPENS' at the Croatian Association of Architects in Zagreb, as an indispensable site in the memory of their city, whose past, present and future are important questions not only for the Novi Sad architectural scene but for broader attitudes towards the modernist heritage. Their presentation of a strategy for the adapted renewal of the complex¹¹ offered a glimmer of hope for the future — though in the light of the recent tragedy at Novi Sad's railway station, the reconstruction project will in all likelihood have to wait for better times.

¹¹ *Strategija razvoja objekta SPENS. SPENS natkriveni gradski centar [SPENS Development Strategy. SPENS as a Covered Urban Centre]*, presented in Zagreb on behalf of a broader authorial team and the Society of Architects of Novi Sad (DaNS) by Slobodan Jović, Dragana Konstantinović, Maja Momirov, Višnja Žugić (and Aleksandar Bede), 19 December 2024. The visit was organised by the Croatian Association of Architects (UHA), moderated by Fran Petar Zovko and Nataša Bodrožić.

modernističkih struktura, zapravo odvijaju procesi njihove postupne privatizacije i otuđenja. Takvi procesi uključuju promjene vlasničkih odnosa i načina korištenja, uz istodobno sužavanje ili potpuno ukidanje njihove izvorne javne funkcije. Dokumentiranje i stavljanje u međusobnu komunikaciju tih četiriju slučajeva postalo je, stoga, ne samo istraživački nego i aktivistički imperativ.

Sportsko-prodajni centar Koteks na Gripama danas

Sedam godina nakon lansiranja naše knjige, ne jenjava interes za SPC Koteks, kao i srodne komplekse u Sarajevu, Novom Sadu i Prištini. Krajem 2025. u Udruženju hrvatskih arhitekata u Zagrebu, novosadske kolege predstavili su (Slučaj) SPENS, kao nezaobilazno mjesto u memoriji grada, čija su prošlost, sadašnjost i budućnost važna pitanja ne samo novosadske arhitektonske scene nego i šireg odnosa prema modernističkom naslijeđu. Tračak nade za budućnost dala nam je njihova prezentacija prilagođene obnove kompleksa¹¹, iako u svjetlu nedavne tragedije Željezničke stanice u Novom Sadu, projekt rekonstrukcije vjerojatno čeka neka bolja vremena.

Što se Koteksa tiče, premda je točno da je u vrijeme svog otvaranja bio svojevrsna atrakcija i kulminacija ideje integriranog konzumerizma, njegova slava bila je relativno kratkog daha zbog ekonomske krize koja je uslijedila, a zatim i političkih promjena, uključujući (kao i u slučaju Vitićevog motela u Trogiru) netransparentnu privatizaciju, što je ubrzalo njegovo „starenje“ i polagano propadanje. Sportska dvorana, koja se i dalje intenzivno koristi kao dio splitske infrastrukture, svjedoči da je kompleks još uvijek funkcionalan i potreban, no veliki problem predstavlja zapušteni trgovački dio koji je danas opterećen hipotekama i financijskim spekulacijama.¹²

Čak i u ovakvom derutnom stanju, Koteks na Gripama pronašle su nove generacije te se, primjerice, međunarodni festival hip-hop kulture *xStatic* održava upravo tamo. Namjera je bila da naša opsežna publikacija potakne raspravu o dosegima i modalitetima zaštite u konkretnom slučaju, kao i o načinima integracije suvremenih intervencija i novih funkcija, no malo što se promijenilo u ovih sedam godina od njenog lansiranja. Svako malo javlja se

¹¹ *Strategija razvoja objekta SPENS. SPENS natkriveni gradski centar*, koju su u ime šireg autorskog tima i Društva arhitekata Novog Sada (DaNS) u Zagrebu predstavili Slobodan Jović, Dragana Konstantinović, Maja Momirov, Višnja Žugić (i Aleksandar Bede), 19. 12. 2024. Program gostovanja organizirala je Udruga hrvatskih arhitekata (UHA), uz moderaciju Frana Petra Zovka i Nataše Bodrožić.

¹² Pojedini ugostiteljski objekti još uvijek su djelatni (i dobro posjećeni), a 2016. godine otvoren je i hostel u valjkastom volumenu nekadašnje robne kuće, za čije je potrebe podignuta i željezna vitičasta ograda uz stepenište, koju su prolaznici upadljivo komentirali i dokumentirali jer predstavlja upečatljivu intruziju.

As regards Koteks itself: while it is true that at the time of its opening it was something of an attraction and the culmination of the idea of integrated consumerism, its heyday was relatively short-lived, cut short by the economic crisis that followed and then by political changes — including, as in the case of Vitić's Trogir motel, an opaque privatisation process that accelerated its 'ageing' and gradual decline. The sports hall, which continues to be intensively used as part of Split's infrastructure, attests that the complex is still functional and needed; the serious problem lies in the neglected retail section, today encumbered with mortgages and financial speculation.¹²

Even in its current state of disrepair, Koteks on Gripe has attracted new generations: the international hip-hop culture festival *xSTatic*, for example, takes place there. Our comprehensive publication was intended to stimulate debate on the scope and modalities of protection in this specific case, as well as on approaches to integrating contemporary interventions and new functions — yet little has changed in the seven years since its launch. Every so often the idea of a comprehensive renovation of Koteks resurfaces; fortunately, no one is talking about demolition any more. In the early summer of 2025, the local media — primarily *Slobodna Dalmacija* — began making bombastic announcements about a redevelopment, revealing the ambitious intentions of the *Tommy* supermarket chain, which had entered Koteks's ownership structure in 2017 without, until now, taking any significant steps towards revitalising the centre.¹³ Meanwhile, the temperamental people of Split — for whom Koteks remains a genuinely important urban landmark to which they are emotionally attached — were, at the beginning of 2026, commenting on the progress of renovation works on the large plateau. A video recording of the newly refurbished plateau had begun circulating on social media, revealing that parts of the recent work had been carried out rather poorly. "This is Split, Koteks, we might call it a marvel of modern

¹² Several catering establishments remain in operation (and are well frequented). In 2016 a hostel was opened in the cylindrical volume of the former department store, for which a wrought-iron fence was erected alongside the staircase — an element conspicuously commented on and documented by passers-by as a striking intrusion that is wholly foreign to the semantics of the complex, even as its dilapidated north-western sections rapidly lose their original form.

¹³ Markota, Augustin, Na Gripama se rade velike stvari. Mnogi će se vraćati u veliki šoping, a u planu su brojni infrastrukturni projekti. Šef kotara je zadovoljan i pohvalio je novu vlast u Splitu [Big Things Are Happening on Gripe. Many Will Return to the Big Shopping Centre, with Numerous Infrastructure Projects Planned. The District Head Is Satisfied and Has Praised the New City Administration], *Dalmacija danas*, 24 July 2025, <https://www.dalmacijadanas.hr/na-gripama-se-rade-velike-stvari-mnogi-ce-se-vracati-u-veliki-soping-a-u-planu-su-brojni-infrastrukturni-projekti-sef-kotara-je-zadovoljan-i-pohvalio-je-novu-vlast-u-splitu/>; Šimundić Bendić, Tanja, Poznati poduzetnik usred Splita ulaže milijune i vraća život u zaboravljeni šoping centar; evo tko sve može ući i kada [Well-Known Entrepreneur Invests Millions in the Heart of Split and Breathes New Life into a Forgotten Shopping Centre; Here Is Who Can Enter and When], *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 26 October 2025, <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/split-i-zupanija/split/poznati-poduzetnik-usred-splita-ulaze-milijune-i-vraca-zivot-u-zaboravljeni-soping-centar-evo-tko-sve-moze-uci-i-kada-1511867>



Figure 5 Architect Živorad Janković's sports and commercial complexes shown on a map of Yugoslavia, from the book *Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, design: Rafael Dražić. Source: Rafaela Dražić, 2018.

Ilustracija 5 Prikaz sportsko-trgovačkih kompleksa arhitekta Živorada Jankovića na karti Jugoslavije, iz knjige *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji*, dizajn: Rafaela Dražić. Izvor: Rafaela Dražić, 2018.

ideja potrebe cjelovite obnove Koteksa, srećom, nitko više ne spominje rušenje. Početkom ljeta 2025. godine u lokalnim medijima, prvenstveno *Slobodnoj Dalmaciji*, bombastično se počelo najavljivati preuređenje, otkrivajući ambiciozne namjere lanca supermarketa *Tommy* koji je u vlasničku strukturu Koteksa ušao 2017. godine, ne poduzimajući dosad bitne korake u revitalizaciju centra.¹³ Međutim, temperamentni Splitsani kojima je Koteks još uvijek zaista bitan gradski punkt za kojeg su i emotivno vezani, početkom 2026. komentiraju kako teku radovi obnove velikog platoa. Naime, na društvenim mrežama počeo je kružiti videozapis novouređenog platoa u kojem se vidi da je dio posla nedavnog uređenja odrađen poprilično loše. „Ovo je Split, Koteks, rekli bismo čudo moderne arhitekture. Išlo se u izmjenju kamena na dijelovima. Ovo su naši meštiri, ovo je fuga, ovako taj kamen izgleda, kao da su se dica iz vrtića igrala. Neredno, šporko, nikako“, rekao je u videu jedan prolaznik.¹⁴ A mi bismo kao dodatni komentar mogli parafrazirati i naslov naše prve knjige: „nije uvijek budućnost ono što dolazi“.

Nevoljkost gradskih vlasti i/ili privatnih investitora da se upuste u cjelovitu obnovu Koteksa smatrali smo

¹³ Markota, Augustin, Na Gripama se rade velike stvari. Mnogi će se vraćati u veliki šoping, a u planu su brojni infrastrukturni projekti. Šef kotara je zadovoljan i pohvalio je novu vlast u Splitu, *Dalmacija danas*, 24. 7. 2025., <https://www.dalmacijadanas.hr/na-gripama-se-rade-velike-stvari-mnogi-ce-se-vracati-u-veliki-soping-a-u-planu-su-brojni-infrastrukturni-projekti-sef-kotara-je-zadovoljan-i-pohvalio-je-novu-vlast-u-splitu/>; Šimundić Bendić, Tanja, Poznati poduzetnik usred Splita ulaže milijune i vraća život u zaboravljeni šoping centar; evo tko sve može ući i kada, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 26. 10. 2025., <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/split-i-zupanija/split/poznati-poduzetnik-usred-splita-ulaze-milijune-i-vraca-zivot-u-zaboravljeni-soping-centar-evo-tko-sve-moze-uci-i-kada-1511867>

¹⁴ Facebook grupa „Split i okolo Splita“, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Split.i.okolo.Splita/>

architecture. They went to replace the stone in certain sections. These are our craftsmen, this is the grouting, this is what the stone looks like, as if children from a nursery had been playing with it. Disorderly, dirty, unacceptable", said a passer-by in the video.¹⁴ As a further comment, we might paraphrase the title of our first publication: *it is not future that always comes after*.

The reluctance of the city authorities and/or private investors to embark on a comprehensive renovation of Koteks has, we believed, been partially explicable by a deficit of affective capital, as the problem was articulated in our publication by the Split writer and journalist Jurica Pavičić:

*In other cases, the classics of Modernist heritage might be saved through citizen mobilisation on one of two grounds: neighbourly/co-owner interest (as is the case with the inhabitants of the Split 3 neighbourhoods) or affective capital – shared memory, identity and feeling of connection with the space (as is the case with the Marjan hill and Poljud stadium). One of the unfortunate circumstances inherent to the Koteks centre is the nonexistence of such affective capital. In other words, although the Koteks centre is a fine edifice, a valuable architectural monument and the embodiment of interesting modernisation tendencies of a then ambitious city, it was built too late, its fame was too short-lived and it lapsed into stagnation too soon to really leave a mark on the mental landscape of Split's inhabitants.*¹⁵

It appears, however, that the problem lies in the legislative framework and the prevailing social climate in Croatia, which are not conducive to a systematic approach to these issues or to the formulation of economically and socially sustainable solutions. It suffices to note that in the present day (2026) there is a seriously entertained – and entirely irrational – argument for the demolition of the masterpiece of sports architecture and symbol of Split that is the Poljud Stadium, designed by architect Boris Magaš and a contemporary of Koteks, supported by the leadership of the football club Hajduk as well as by the newly elected mayor of Split, Tomislav Šuta, from the right-wing political spectrum (and himself a businessman). It is difficult to imagine a meaningful renovation of Janković's and Rožić's mixed-use megastructure – which the same city authority has announced – when the simultaneous demolition of the Hajduk stadium at Poljud is being advocated, despite its status as a protected cultural asset, in contravention of the law, and in the face of unanimous opposition from the profession and the broader cultural public (but unfortunately with the support of a significant number of Hajduk club football supporters). Renovation and adaptation are not impossible; they are necessary, important and

da se djelomično može objasniti manjkom afektivnog kapitala, kako je taj problem u našoj knjizi artikulirao splitski književnik i publicist Jurica Pavičić:

*U nekim drugim primjerima, klasici modernističke baštine spašavali bi se mobilizacijom građana, a ta mobilizacija imala je dva moguća uporišta: ili u susjedskom/suvlasničkom interesu (kao što je slučaj sa stanarima kvartova Splita 3), ili u mobilizaciji afektivnog kapitala – zajedničke memorije, identiteta i osjećaja povezanosti s prostorom (kao u slučaju Marjana i Poljuda). Jedna od nezgoda u slučaju Centra Koteks je ta što takav afektivni kapital u slučaju Koteksa jedva postoji. Jer, Centar Koteks neupitno jest lijepo zdanje, vrijedan spomenik arhitekture i fizičko utjelovljenje zanimljivih modernizacijskih stremljenja jednog tada ambicioznog grada. Ali, Koteks je nastao prekasno, premalo je zaživio i prebrzo utonuo u stagnaciju da bi se stvarno utisnuo u mentalni krajobraz stanovnika Splita.*¹⁵

Međutim, čini se da problem ipak leži u zakonodavnom okviru i prevladavajućoj društvenoj klimi u Hrvatskoj koji ne pogoduju sustavnom pristupu ovoj problematici ni formuliranju ekonomski i socijalno održivih rješenja. Dovoljno je spomenuti da je ovih dana (2026.) ozbiljno prisutna iracionalna teza o potrebi rušenja remek-djela sportske arhitekture i simbola Splita – stadiona Poljud arhitekta Borisa Magaša, Koteksovog vršnjaka, koji podržava vodstvo nogometnog kluba Hajduk, ali i novoizabrani splitski gradonačelnik Tomislav Šuta iz redova desnog političkog spektra (i poslovni čovjek). Teško je zamisliti smislenu obnovu Jankovićeve i Rožićeve megastrukture mješovite namjene, koju ipak najavljuje ista gradska vlast, kada se istovremeno propagira rušenje Hajdukovog stadiona na Poljudu unatoč statusu zaštićenog kulturnog dobra, dakle mimo zakona i usprkos unisonom protivljenju struke i široke kulturne javnosti (ali nažalost uz podršku velikog dijela navijača). Obnova i adaptacija nije nemoguća, ona je potrebna, bitna i ekološki poželjna, uostalom, svi već dobro znamo – „zgrade se baš i ne ruše tako lako same od sebe (ako zanemarimo potrebe), zgrade se ruše jer netko želi da ih sruši“.¹⁶

Čini se da su i poljudski stadion i Koteks na Gričama postali preveliki za grad koji se u međuvremenu (intelektualno) smanjio i postao tek turistička pozornica za drugorazredne predstave i loše scenografije. Kako je u našoj knjizi poentirao prof. dr. sc. Darovan Tušek s Fakulteta građevinarstva, arhitekture i geodezije u Splitu:

¹⁴ Facebook group Split i okolo Splita [Split and Surroundings], <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Split.i.okolo.Splita/>

¹⁵ Pavičić, Jurica, Centar Koteks: priča o obećanju koje se nije ispunilo [Koteks Centre: The Story of an Unfulfilled Promise], in: *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer Culture Landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, eds. Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin and Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018, 251.

¹⁵ Pavičić, Jurica, Centar Koteks: priča o obećanju koje se nije ispunilo, u: *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, (ur.) Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin i Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018., 248.

¹⁶ U intervjuu s članovima sekcije Docomomo Srbija 2015. godine javila se ova misao te je ovdje parafraziramo. Vidjeti više na: <https://slobodneveze.wordpress.com/interviews/>



Figure 6 Siniša Labrović; Hansel and Gretel, performative walk, 2017. Source: Saša Šimpraga, 2017.

Ilustracija 6 Siniša Labrović: Ivica i Marica, performativna šetnja, 2017. Izvor: Saša Šimpraga, 2017.

ecologically desirable. After all, we all know by now: “buildings do not really demolish themselves so easily (earthquakes aside) — buildings are demolished because someone wants them demolished”.¹⁶

It seems that both the Poljud stadium and Koteks on Gripe have become too large for a city that has in the meantime (intellectually) shrunk and become merely a tourist stage for second-rate productions and poor scenography. As Professor Darovan Tušek of the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy in Split concluded in our publication:

*Both the stadium in Poljud and the complex in Gripe represent supreme creative achievements in the authorial ouvres of Magaš and Rožić. Despite the unquestionable value of this recent architectural heritage, these structures have been exposed to almost hysterical attacks aimed at their redesign, or even, as in the case of Gripe, to abominable initiatives for the removal of the entire complex. If we do not know what to do with Gripe, let us at least leave the future of these authentic emblems of modern Split architecture to those who will. No destruction of established values is ever anything but a sign of one's own weakness and incompetence.*¹⁷

¹⁶ This formulation emerged in an interview with members of the Docomomo Serbia section in 2015 and is here paraphrased. See: <https://slobodneveze.wordpress.com/interviews/>

¹⁷ Tušek, Darovan, *Amblemi modernog Splita* [Emblems of Modern Split], in: *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer Culture Landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, eds. Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin and Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018, 229.

*I stadion u Poljudu i ansambl na Gripama znače najviši kreativni doseg u autorskom opusu Magaša i Rožića. Unatoč neprijepornoj vrijednosti ove recentne arhitektonske baštine, ovi objekti izloženi su gotovo histeričnim nasrtajima u cilju njihova redizajna, ili pak u slučaju Gripa čak i nakaradnim inicijativama za uklanjanjem cijelog kompleksa. Ako već mi ne znamo što ćemo s Gripama, onda barem prepustimo budućnost tih autentičnih amblema moderne splitske arhitekture nekim novim ljudima koji će to znati. Svako rušenje potvrđenih vrijednosti uvijek je samo znak vlastite slabosti i nesposobnosti.*¹⁷

¹⁷ Tušek, Darovan, *Amblemi modernog Splita*, u: *Pejzaži potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji / Consumer culture landscapes in Socialist Yugoslavia*, (ur.) Nataša Bodrožić, Lidija Butković Mićin i Saša Šimpraga, Zagreb / Eindhoven, 2018., 226.

Between Professional Value and Social Indifference

The case of Koteks Gripe, and of the related complexes across the region, demonstrates that the degradation of modernist heritage is not merely a consequence of financial constraints or legislative gaps, but above all of a deficit of social and urbanistic imagination. It is precisely that imagination which the Motel Trogir project — a decade after its beginnings — continues to seek to re-activate. Our approach to the research and promotion of the architecture of socialist Yugoslavia is grounded in the conviction that knowledge can be an instrument of protection and of real change. It is directed towards fostering informed dialogue between the profession, institutions and the broader public — the only democratic and meritorious means of deciding on the future of these and similar spaces — in the belief that their value transcends nostalgia and constitutes an important segment of the contemporary cultural and urban heritage. In the context of the (still) dominant revisionist narratives, our position is clear: if all architecture is a manifestation of the culture and social framework in which it is produced, then the achievements of the Yugoslav socialist experiment — with all its merits and shortcomings — unquestionably include outstanding works that reflected progressive aspirations. For as long as we fail to develop a different relationship to collective memory and to generate alternative models for the management of this heritage, complexes such as Koteks Gripe will remain permanently 'stuck' in an ambivalent position between recognised historical value and an absence of clear vision for the future, and every announcement of their renovation will remain merely another landscape of unrealised possibilities.

Između stručne vrijednosti i društvene indifferencije

Slučaj Koteks Gripe i njemu srodnih kompleksa u regiji pokazuje da degradacija modernističke baštine nije posljedica samo financijskih ograničenja ili zakonodavnih praznina, već u prvom redu nedostatka društvene i urbanističke imaginacije. Upravo je ta imaginacija ono što projekt Motel Trogir, desetljeće nakon svojih početaka, još uvijek pokušava reaktivirati. Naš pristup istraživanju i popularizaciji arhitekture socijalističke Jugoslavije utemeljen je na uvjerenju da znanje može biti instrument zaštite, ali i realne promjene. Usmjeren je prema poticanju informiranog dijaloga između struke, institucija i šire javnosti, što je jedini demokratski i meritorni način za odlučivanje o budućnosti ovih i sličnih prostora, uz uvjerenje da njihova vrijednost nadilazi nostalgiju i predstavlja važan segment suvremenog kulturnog i urbanističkog nasljeđa. U kontekstu (još uvijek) dominantnih revizionističkih narativa, naša je pozicija jasna: ako je svaka arhitektura manifestacija kulture i društvenog okvira u kojemu nastaje, onda dosezi jugoslavenskog socijalističkog eksperimenta (s prednostima i manama) nedvojbeno uključuju izuzetna ostvarenja koja su odražavala progresivna stremljenja. Dok god ne razvijemo drugačiji odnos prema kolektivnom sjećanju i iznjedrmo alternativne modele upravljanja ovom baštinom, kompleksi poput Koteks Gripe trajno će „zapeti“ u ambivalentnoj poziciji između prepoznate povijesne vrijednosti i nedostatka jasne vizije budućnosti, a svaka najava njihove obnove ostat će tek jedan pejzaž neostvarenih mogućnosti.

ŽIVORAD JANKOVIĆ

Višegrad, 1924. -
- Sarajevo, 1990.



Živorad Janković graduated in 1950 from the Department of Architecture, Technical Faculty in Belgrade. In the period from 1952 to 1970, he worked as a designer in the company "Dom" in Sarajevo and, from 1968, as a professor at the Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo, teaching the course Elements of Architectural Design. From 1970 to 1972, he held the position of Chief Urban Planner of the City of Sarajevo. He received numerous awards and recognitions, including two Sixth of April Awards of the City of Sarajevo, the Yugoslav Award of the newspaper Borba, and the 27th of July Award of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. After specializing in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands in 1959, and in the United States in 1964, he focused his studies on housing issues and the improvement of prefabricated construction systems. Janković's professional oeuvre is characterized by continuous work on the realization of residential, administrative, commercial, and sports-recreational facilities, in which he creatively applied technological innovations to complex programmatic requirements. Many of his buildings became recognizable landmarks within the urban landscapes of the former Yugoslavia, including the Tobacco Factory in Sarajevo (co-author M. Kadić), the Energoinvest and UPI Bank office buildings in Sarajevo, the Cultural and Sports Centre "Skenderija" in Sarajevo (co-author H. Muhasilović), the "Gripe" Sports Hall with the "Koteks" Shopping Centre in Split (co-author S. Rožić), the "Vojvodina" Sports Centre in Novi Sad (co-author B. Bulić), and the "Boro i Ramiz" Social and Sports Centre in Priština (co-author H. Muhasilović). He actively contributed to the work of professional associations of architects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yugoslavia. He also served as Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo. He was a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1987 onward.

Živorad Janković diplomirao je 1950. godine na Arhitektonskom odsjeku Tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu. U periodu 1952-1970. radio je kao projektant u firmi „Dom“ u Sarajevu, a od 1968. godine kao profesor na Arhitektonskom fakultetu u Sarajevu na predmetu Osnovi projektovanja. U periodu 1970-1972. obavljao je funkciju glavnog urbaniste Grada Sarajeva. Dobitnik je brojnih nagrada i priznanja, poput dvije Šestoapriilske nagrade Grada Sarajeva, Jugoslovenske nagrade lista „Borba“ i Dvadesetsedmojulske nagrade SR BiH. Nakon specijalizacije u Švedskoj, Danskoj i Holandiji 1959. te u SAD-u 1964. godine, svoje studije usmjerio je na problematiku stanovanja i unapređenja korištenja montažnih objekata. Jankovićev stručni opus karakteriše kontinuirani rad na realizaciji stambenih, administrativnih, privrednih i sportsko-rekreativnih objekata, na kojima je inventivno primjenjivao tehnološke inovacije za složene programske sadržaje. Mnogi njegovi objekti prepoznatljiviji su reperi urbanih pejzaža bivše Jugoslavije, poput „Fabrike duhana“ u Sarajevu (koautor M. Kadić), Poslovne zgrade „Energoinvesta“ i „UPI banke“ u Sarajevu, Kulturno-sportskog centra „Skenderija“ u Sarajevu (koautor H. Muhasilović), Univerzalne dvorane „Gripe“ s trgovačkim centrom „Koteks“ u Splitu (koautor S. Rožić), Sportskog centra „Vojvodina“ u Novom Sadu (koautor B. Bulić) i Društveno-sportskog centra „Boro i Ramiz“ u Prištini (koautor H. Muhasilović). Aktivno je doprinio radu strukovnih udruženja arhitekata Bosne i Hercegovine i Jugoslavije. Obavljao je i funkciju dekana Arhitektonskog fakulteta u Sarajevu. Bio je član Akademije nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine od 1987. godine.

OVERVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS AND DOCTORAL RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SARAJEVO - FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE (2025-2026)

PREGLED PUBLIKACIJA I DOKTORSKIH ISTRAŽIVANJA NA UNIVERZITETU U SARAJEVU - ARHITEKTONSKOM FAKULTETU (2025-2026)

TITLE NASLOV *Navigating Architecture: Faculty of Architecture Study Guide* Vodič za studente UNSA-AF

AUTHORS & EDITORS AUTORI I UREDNICI Lejla Kahrović Handžić, Author & Editor-in-Chief autorica i glavna i odgovorna urednica; Zulejha Šabić-Zatrić, Mladen Burazor, Erdin Salihović, Authors, Editorial Board Autori i urednički odbor; Amira Salihbegović, Nermina Zagora, Senaida Halilović-Terzić, Armin Karalić, Authors Autori; Ehlimana Šaranović, Alem Hasanović, Authors and Design Team Autori i dizajnerski tim.

ASSOCIATES SARADNICI Academic staff and Student Association UNSA-AF Akademsko osoblje i Asocijacija studenata UNSA-AF

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA 2026 ISBN: 978-9926-490-38-6

Navigating Architecture: Faculty of Architecture Study Guide offers a concise yet comprehensive institutional portrait of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sarajevo. It is intended primarily for prospective and current students, as well as for a broader audience interested in the Faculty's identity, history, and educational profile. The publication presents the Faculty both as a historical institution and as an active centre of architectural education, linking teaching, research, professional practice, and student life into a unified whole.

The text begins by situating the Faculty within the context of the University of Sarajevo, one of the key academic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It then follows the Faculty's development from its establishment within the Faculty of Technology in 1949, through post-war reconstruction and the Bologna reform, to contemporary forms of teaching, including doctoral studies and digital learning platforms. This historical overview emphasizes continuity, resilience, and the capacity to adapt to different social and institutional changes.

The guide further explains the academic structure and organization of studies. It presents the departments through which architecture is shaped as an interdisciplinary field, with an emphasis on the integration of theory and practical work. The study program is organized according to the Bologna model across three cycles, progressively developing students' competencies from foundational knowledge to complex research and design tasks, preparing them for various professional and academic pathways. Overall, the text provides an overview of the opportunities available to students throughout their studies.

Special attention is given to study conditions, including spatial resources, admission procedures, and assessment criteria. In addition, opportunities for mobility, research, and public engagement are highlighted, along with a rich extracurricular life, presenting the Faculty as a dynamic and open academic community.

Vodič za studente UNSA-AF predstavlja sažet, ali sveobuhvatan institucionalni portret Arhitektonskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu. Namijenjen je prvenstveno budućim i sadašnjim studentima, ali i široj javnosti zainteresiranoj za identitet, historiju i obrazovni profil Fakulteta. Publikacija prikazuje Fakultet istovremeno kao historijsku instituciju i aktivno središte arhitektonskog obrazovanja, povezujući nastavu, istraživanje, profesionalnu praksu i studentski život u jedinstvenu cjelinu.

Tekst započinje smještanjem Fakulteta u kontekst Univerziteta u Sarajevu, jedne od ključnih akademskih institucija u Bosni i Hercegovini. Potom prati razvoj Fakulteta od osnivanja u okviru Tehničkog fakulteta 1949. godine, kroz poslijeratnu obnovu i bolonjsku reformu, do savremenih oblika nastave, uključujući doktorske studije i digitalne platforme za učenje. Ovaj historijski pregled naglašava kontinuitet, otpornost i sposobnost prilagođavanja kroz različite društvene i institucionalne promjene.

Vodič detaljno objašnjava akademsku strukturu i organizaciju studija. Predstavljene su katedre kroz koje se arhitektura oblikuje kao interdisciplinarna oblast, uz naglasak na povezivanje teorije i praktičnog rada. Studij je organiziran prema bolonjskom modelu kroz tri ciklusa, koji postepeno razvijaju kompetencije studenata od osnovnih znanja do kompleksnih istraživačkih i projektantskih zadataka, pripremajući ih za različite profesionalne i akademske puteve. Tekst u cjelini pruža pregled prilika koje studentima stoje na raspolaganju tokom studija.

Posebna pažnja posvećena je uslovima studiranja, uključujući prostorne resurse, upisne procedure i kriterije ocjenjivanja. Uz to, istaknute su mogućnosti mobilnosti, istraživanja i javnog angažmana, kao i bogat vannastavni život, čime se Fakultet prikazuje kao dinamična i otvorena akademska zajednica

TITLE NASLOV KULISA : Cultural District Sarajevo KULISA : Kulturni distrikt Sarajevo

AUTHORS & EDITORS AUTORI I UREDNICI Senka Ibrišimbegović, Editor-in-Chief glavna i odgovorna urednica; Senka Ibrišimbegović, Aida Idrizbegović-Zgonić, Edin Jenčiragić, Mustafa Mehanović, Hubert Klumpner, Michael Walczak, Andrea Pavlović, Nermina Zagora, Amira Salihbegović, Vedad Islambegović, Isra Tatlić, Nedim Mutevelić, Armin Kešo, Lea Pelivan, Iva Letilović, Toma Plejić, Authors.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA 2025 ISBN: 978-9926-490-26-3

The publication *KULISA: Cultural District Sarajevo* presents the results of an interdisciplinary scientific research project carried out between 2023 and 2025, organized by the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sarajevo in collaboration with the Institute for Planning and Development of Sarajevo Canton, ETH Zurich UTT-next (Urbanthinktank_next), the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo, and partner institutions and researchers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Switzerland. The project was developed as a platform for exploring the possibilities of urban regeneration through the integration of culture, art, architecture, and participatory planning.

The research focuses on the area between the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the future Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art, including the spatial potentials of the Grbavica I neighbourhood. This urban area has been recognized as a potential museum quarter, or cultural district of Sarajevo — a dynamic urban hub connecting cultural institutions, public space, and the everyday life of citizens. Through the concept of integral urbanism, the project explores how cultural infrastructure can become a driver of social cohesion, urban vitality, and sustainable urban development.

The methodological framework of the project is based on participatory and interdisciplinary approaches involving students, teachers, researchers, citizens, cultural institutions, and local authorities. Through workshops, pilot projects, and analyses of international case studies, the project tested models of cultural acupuncture, ephemeral architecture, and the architecture of togetherness, with a particular focus on activating urban voids and improving public space.

The publication affirms the importance of connecting education, research, and spatial practice, while contributing to the development of contemporary urban policies and cultural strategies for Sarajevo, offering a model of inclusive, sustainable, and culturally conscious urban development.

Publikacija *KULISA: Kulturni distrikt Sarajevo* predstavlja rezultat interdisciplinarnog naučno-istraživačkog projekta realizovanog u periodu 2023–2025. godine u organizaciji Arhitektonskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu, u saradnji sa Zavodom za planiranje razvoja Kantona Sarajevo, ETH Zurich UTT-next (Urbanthinktank_next), Opštinom Novo Sarajevo, te partnerskim institucijama i istraživačima iz Bosne i Hercegovine, Hrvatske i Švicarske. Projekat je razvijen kao platforma za istraživanje mogućnosti urbane regeneracije kroz integraciju kulture, umjetnosti, arhitekture i participativnog planiranja.

U fokusu istraživanja nalazi se prostor između Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine, Historijskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine i budućeg Muzeja savremene umjetnosti Ars Aevi, uključujući i prostorne potencijale naselja Grbavica I. Ovaj urbani prostor prepoznat je kao potencijalna muzejska četvrt odnosno kulturni distrikt Sarajeva – dinamično urbano čvorište koje povezuje kulturne institucije, javni prostor i svakodnevni život građana. Kroz koncept integralnog urbanizma projekat istražuje kako kulturna infrastruktura može postati pokretač društvene kohezije, urbane vitalnosti i održivog razvoja grada.

Metodološki okvir projekta zasniva se na participativnim i interdisciplinarnim pristupima koji uključuju studente, nastavnike, istraživače, građane, kulturne institucije i lokalne vlasti. Kroz radionice, pilot projekte i analize međunarodnih primjera testirani su modeli kulturne akupunkture, efemerne arhitekture i arhitekture zajedništva, sa posebnim fokusom na aktivaciju urbanih praznina i unapređenje javnog prostora.

Publikacija afirmiše značaj povezivanja obrazovanja, istraživanja i prostorne prakse te predstavlja doprinos razvoju savremenih urbanih politika i kulturnih strategija Sarajeva, nudeći model inkluzivnog, održivog i kulturno osviještenog urbanog razvoja.

TITLE NASLOV GRAMMAR OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE: Analysis and Synthesis in Architectural Compositions

GRAMATIKA ARHITEKTONSKOG PROSTORA: Analiza i sinteza u arhitektonskim kompozicijama

AUTHORS AUTORI Mladen Burazor, Nermina Zagora.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA 2025 ISBN: 978-9926-490-30-0

The textbook *Grammar of Architectural Space: Analysis and Synthesis in Architectural Compositions* explores the complex aspects of architecture through an analogy between architectural composition and language. The introduction examines the role of composition in architecture, relating it to other visual arts, music, literature, and theatre. Architectural composition distinguishes the art of building from technical and engineering knowledge and skills, elevating construction to the level of the art of spatial design through the use of compositional principles analogous to grammatical rules and systems in linguistics.

The book is divided into three parts in order to familiarize readers with the elements and principles of architectural language. The first part, entitled Elements of Architectural

Udžbenik *Gramatika arhitektonskog prostora: Analiza i sinteza u arhitektonskim kompozicijama* istražuje kompleksne aspekte arhitekture kroz analogiju arhitektonske kompozicije s jezikom. Uvod se bavi ulogom kompozicije u arhitekturi, kojom se ona dovodi u vezu sa ostalim vizualnim umjetnostima, muzikom, književnošću i teatro. Arhitektonska kompozicija diferencira umijeće gradnje od tehničkih i inženjerskih znanja i vještina, i podiže gradnju na razinu umjetnosti oblikovanja prostora, koristeći kompozicione principe analogne gramatičkim pravilima i sistemima u lingvistici.

Knjiga je podijeljena u tri dijela kako bi čitaocima približila elemente i principe arhitektonskog jezika. Prvi dio, nazvan "Elementi arhitektonskog jezika", razmatra

Language, discusses fundamental concepts such as point, line, and plane, which are defined and described as the "Architectural Alphabet," followed by the genesis of spatial models in the section titled "Architectural Vocabulary." The second part, Architectural Grammar, explores spatial relationships, configurations, and compositional principles, analogous to grammar that governs the syntax and structure of sentences. The third part, Architectural Semantics, deepens the understanding of the meaning of architecture within the context of natural, urban, and socio-cultural environments.

The textbook includes case studies of global and local architectural projects that illustrate key concepts through textual and graphical analyses. The research methodology is based on detailed analyses of selected examples, supporting a didactic approach that encourages critical thinking and a deeper understanding of architectural principles.

osnovne pojmove poput točke, linije i površine, koji se definišu i opisuju kao „Arhitektonski alfabet“, a zatim i genezu prostornih modela, u segmentu naslovljenom „Arhitektonski vokabular“. Drugi dio, "Arhitektonska gramatika", istražuje prostorne odnose, konfiguracije i kompozicione principe, analogno gramatici koja uređuje sintaksu i strukturu rečenice. Treći dio, "Arhitektonska semantika", produbljuje razumijevanje značenja arhitekture u kontekstu prirodnog, urbanog i društveno-kulturološkog okruženja.

Udžbenik sadrži studije slučaja globalnih i lokalnih arhitektonskih realizacija kojima se ilustruju ključni pojmovi, pružajući tekstualne i grafičke analize. Metodologija istraživanja temelji se na detaljnoj analizi pojedinih primjera, podupirući didaktički pristup koji podstiče kritičko mišljenje i dublje razumijevanje arhitektonskih principa.

TITLE NASLOV Ephemeral Sarajevo Efemerno Sarajevo

AUTHORS AUTORI Andrea Pavlović, Author & Editor-in-Chief autorica i glavna i odgovorna urednica.

ASSOCIATES SARADNICI Bećirović Hamza, Babović Zejneb, Bošnjak Karla, Daljac Adnan, Ejubović Aiša, Fijuljanin Asija, Fišić Melika, Huseinović Safeta, Imamović Neira, Kozlica Haris, Mešan Aldin, Okanović Lejla, Perić Sonja-Kjara, Suljić Amina, Šantić Ena, Zulić Amar, student co-authors studenti koautori.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA 2025 **ISBN:** 978-9926-490-31-7

Understanding the transience of space, just like the transience of time, represents a philosophical undertaking that humanity has engaged with throughout history. There is a certain intoxication in the lightness of existence within temporally limited environments — a sense of liberation from everyday norms and responsibilities precisely because such spaces are temporary. Ephemeral urban spaces, appearing in countless forms and typologies, allow us to experience alternative realities within familiar surroundings, where we become both participants in and creators of space. Observing this "other face" of the city helps reveal the potentials, limitations, and weaknesses of the everyday urban environment.

For this reason, the research conducted during the winter semester of the 2024/25 academic year at the Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo opens a new chapter in the fields of urbanism, architecture, and related disciplines by viewing space and time as interconnected and interchangeable dimensions within which short-term transformations and long-lasting experiences unfold.

Through the study of the Sarajevo Film Festival, recognized as a representative of the celebratory taxonomy of ephemeral urban spaces in the local context, the research sought to understand the constitutive elements of both physical and experienced space. The results of the research were presented in the form of a publication intended not only for professionals, but also for the wider public.

Shvatanje prolaznosti prostora, jednako kao i prolaznosti vremena, predstavlja filozofski poduhvat kojim se čovjek bavi oduvijek. Postoji određena opijenost lakoćom postojanja unutar vremenski ograničenih cjelina — osjećaj oslobađanja od svakodnevnih normi i odgovornosti upravo zato što su takvi prostori prolazni. Efemerni urbani prostori, koji se pojavljuju u brojnim formama i tipologijama, omogućavaju da u poznatim sredinama privremeno iskusimo alternativne stvarnosti, u kojima smo istovremeno i sudionici i kreatori prostora. Sagledavanje tog „drugog lica“ grada pomaže razumijevanju potencijala, ograničenja i slabosti svakodnevnog življenog urbanog prostora.

Upravo zbog toga, istraživanje provedeno tokom zimskog semestra akademske 2024/25. godine na Arhitektonskom fakultetu u Sarajevu otvara novo poglavlje u oblasti urbanizma, arhitekture i srodnih disciplina, posmatrajući prostor i vrijeme kao međusobno promjenjive i isprepletene dimenzije unutar kojih se odvija svijet kratkotrajnih promjena i dugotrajnih iskustava.

Kroz istraživanje pojavnosti Sarajevo Film Festival, prepoznatog kao predstavnika celebratorne taksonomije efemernih urbanih prostora u lokalnom kontekstu, nastojalo se razumjeti gradivne elemente kako fizičkog, tako i doživljenog prostora. Rezultati istraživanja predstavljeni su u formi publikacije prilagođene ne samo stručnoj, već i široj javnosti.

TITLE NASLOV Cultural Centers of Bosnia and Herzegovina: a contribution to the study of socialist architectural heritage Domovi kulture Bosne i Hercegovine: prilog izučavanju socijalističke graditeljske baštine

AUTHOR AUTORICA Lejla Kreševljaković.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA 2025 **ISBN:** 978-9926-490-34-8 / 978-9958-9142-8-7

The book explores the phenomenon of cultural centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina as key spaces of social and cultural life in socialist Yugoslavia. Cultural centers are not viewed only as architectural objects, but as carriers of the idea of togetherness, collective identity, and cultural emancipation.

Knjiga istražuje fenomen domova kulture u Bosni i Hercegovini kao ključnih prostora društvenog i kulturnog života u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji. Domovi kulture se ne posmatraju samo kao arhitektonski objekti, već kao nosioci

Through the book, the development of Yugoslavia is followed through four historical periods, from post-war construction and the influence of the Soviet model, through the development of self-management and modernization, to the processes of decentralization and the final crisis of the system. These socio-political changes directly shaped the emergence, function, and transformation of cultural centers. In this context, cultural centers are recognized as key spatial instruments in which culture was produced, shared, and lived as part of everyday life.

At the center of the book is an architectural analysis of cultural centers, structured in parallel with the historical periodization of Yugoslavia. Through four developmental phases, changes in their typology, spatial organization, and formal expression are followed, whereby the centers are not considered only through stylistic affiliation, but also through the functional models they develop. In this way, different types of centers are distinguished, indicating their internal diversity and developmental dynamics. At the same time, through these typological and spatial transformations, it is possible to trace broader architectural tendencies, from socialist realism and modernism, brutalism to postmodern approaches, which position cultural centers as precise reflections of the spirit of the time in which they are created.

The book calls for a reinterpretation of the idea of cultural centers in a contemporary context. It raises the question of how to renew spaces of community today, emphasizing that cultural centers from the socialist period of Bosnia and Herzegovina are a valuable part of the cultural heritage, whose social value must be preserved in parallel with the renewal of their physical structure. It is precisely in this combination of the material and the social that their potential for future models of cultural and social life lies.

ideje zajedništva, kolektivnog identiteta i kulturne emancipacije.

Kroz knjigu se prati razvoj Jugoslavije kroz četiri historijska perioda, od poslijeratne izgradnje i uticaja sovjetskog modela, preko razvoja samoupravljanja i modernizacije, do procesa decentralizacije i konačne krize sistema. Ove društveno-političke promjene direktno su oblikovale nastanak, funkciju i transformaciju domova kulture. U tom kontekstu, domovi kulture su prepoznati kao ključni prostorni instrumenti u kojima se kultura proizvodila, dijelila i živjela kao dio svakodnevice.

U središtu knjige nalazi se arhitektonska analiza domova kulture, strukturirana paralelno s historijskom periodizacijom Jugoslavije. Kroz četiri razvojne faze prate se promjene u njihovoj tipologiji, prostornoj organizaciji i formalnom izrazu, pri čemu se domovi ne razmatraju samo kroz stilsku pripadnost, već i kroz funkcionalne modele koje razvijaju. Na taj način izdvajaju se različiti tipovi domova čime se ukazuje na njihovu unutrašnju raznolikost i razvojnu dinamiku. Istovremeno, kroz ove tipološke i prostorne transformacije moguće je pratiti i šire arhitektonske tendencije, od socrealizma i modernizma, brutalizma do postmodernih pristupa, koje domove kulture pozicioniraju kao precizne refleksije duha vremena u kojem nastaju.

Knjiga poziva na reinterpretaciju ideje domova kulture u savremenom kontekstu. Postavlja pitanje kako danas obnoviti prostore zajedništva, naglašavajući da su domovi kulture iz socijalističkog perioda Bosne i Hercegovine vrijedan dio kulturnog naslijeđa, čija se društvena vrijednost mora očuvati paralelno s obnovom njihove fizičke strukture. Upravo u tom spoju materijalnog i društvenog leži njihov potencijal za buduće modele kulturnog i društvenog života.

TITLE NASLOV *Marginal Architecture: Socially Responsible Spatial Concepts, Community, and Strategies for Action in Reshaping the Contemporary Context of Scarcity* Marginalna arhitektura: Društveno odgovorni prostorni koncepti, zajedništvo i strategije djelovanja za preoblikovanje suvremenog konteksta oskudice

AUTHOR AUTORICA Isra Tatlić.

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Marginal Architecture invites readers to consider architecture as a social and political practice that transcends institutional frameworks and market-driven narratives. It emphasizes how space is created through relationships, care, improvisation, and togetherness. At the heart of this exploration is the concept of marginal architecture, rooted in everyday life and with the potential to become a space for resistance, solidarity, and imagination. The central question it raises is how to construct not only physical structures but also relationships, communities, and trust amidst multiple crises— economic, ecological, and social. In this context, scarcity, often used to justify inaction, can instead serve as a starting point for developing alternative strategies. These strategies are grounded in real-life problems and embrace experimentation, learning from mistakes, and collective exploration. Drawing on both theoretical insights and practical examples of a "different" approach to architecture, community work, and cultural collectives, the book critically reflects on contemporary urban, social, and educational trends. It emphasizes participatory methods and experiments in spatial transformation, as well as work with recycled materials, ephemeral structures, and local

Marginalna arhitektura je poziv na promišljanje arhitekture kao društvene i političke prakse, izvan okvira institucija i tržišnih narativa, tamo gdje prostor nastaje kroz odnos, brigu, improvizaciju i zajedništvo. U središtu analize je marginalna arhitektura, arhitektura koja polazi od svakodnevice i njenog potencijala da postane prostor otpora, solidarnosti i imaginacije. Pitanje koje se postavlja jeste kako graditi — ne samo fizičke strukture, već i odnose, zajednice, povjerenje — u kontekstu višestrukih kriza: ekonomskih, ekoloških, društvenih. Oskudica, kojom se često opravdava pasivnost, ovdje postaje mjesto iz kojeg se rađaju drugačije strategije. One su ukorijenjene u konkretnim problemima, otvorene za eksperimentiranje, za grešku, za zajedničko traženje odgovora. Polazeći od teorijskih uvida i praktičnih primjera u praksi "drugačijeg" pristupa arhitekturi, radu sa zajednicama i kulturnim kolektivima, knjiga nudi kritičku refleksiju na suvremene urbanističke, društvene i obrazovne tendencije. Poseban naglasak stavljen je na participativne metode i eksperimente u transformaciji prostora, potom rad s recikliranim materijalima, efemernim strukturama i lokalnim zajednicama. Tekst je strukturiran kroz tematske

communities. The book is organized into thematic sections that trace the evolution of architecture from a discipline focused on objects and individual authorship to a practice rooted in processes, relationships, ethics, and responsibility.

By analyzing specific projects and spatial interventions, the book categorizes and values aspects of collective work, informal knowledge, and alternative spatial economies. It advocates a critical, inclusive, and contextual approach to architecture, encouraging reflection on the architect's role in contemporary society—not merely as a neutral expert but as an active participant in fostering more equitable spatial relations. The focus is on the potential of architectural practice to operate from the margins through sensitive, limited, yet socially significant spatial interventions. This publication aims to initiate a dialogue on socially engaged architecture and education, creating opportunities for exchange between theory and practice, between universities and communities, and between architecture as a discipline and architecture as a way of life.

cjeline koje prate transformaciju arhitekture iz discipline usmjerene na objekt i autorstvo, ka praksi koja se temelji na procesima, odnosima, etici i odgovornosti.

Kroz analizu konkretnih projekata i intervencija u prostoru, potom njihovom kategorizacijom i valorizacijom, promišljaju se karakteri i principi kolektivnog rada, neformalnog znanja i drugačijih prostornih ekonomija. Knjiga zagovara pristup arhitekturi koji je kritičan, inkluzivan i kontekstualan, te poziva na promišljanje uloge arhitekta u suvremenom društvu – ne kao neutralnog stručnjaka, već kao aktivnog sudionika u stvaranju pravednijih prostornih odnosa. U fokusu je potencijal arhitektonske prakse da djeluje s margina – kroz osjetljive, ograničene, ali društveno relevantne prostorne intervencije. Ova publikacija nastoji započeti dijalog o društveno angažiranoj arhitekturi i obrazovanju, te otvara prostor za razmjenu između teorije i prakse, između univerziteta i zajednice, između arhitekture kao discipline i arhitekture kao životne prakse.

TITLE NASLOV Unfinished De-Ottomanization: The Formation and Dynamics of the Value of the Sarajevo Bazaar

Nedovršena deosmanizacija: Izgradnja i dinamika vrijednosti Sarajevske čaršije

AUTHOR AUTORICA Lejla Džumhur.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA 2026 **ISBN:** 978-9926-490-35-5

The monograph explores the development, transformation, and contemporary significance of the Sarajevo bazaar through an innovative research paradigm grounded in Ottoman and post-Ottoman studies, particularly the concept of de-Ottomanization within the wider pan-Ottoman cultural sphere.

The author examines the emergence of Ottoman Sarajevo and its bazaar, tracing the process of Ottomanization that shaped dominant spatial, social, and cultural values during the classical period. This relatively stable development was disrupted during the Tanzimat and post-Ottoman eras, when theocratic social structures weakened and Ottoman cultural patterns and everyday practices gradually declined.

The study investigates which elements of the bazaar's dominant historical values survived and resisted de-Ottomanization, and which were transformed under its influence. It also considers the motives behind preservation or resistance to change, and questions how these transformations affect the dominant spatial and social identity of the bazaar.

Particular attention is given to the relationship between the bazaar as a spatial category and the social milieu continuously identified as "Čaršija" (Bazaar). The analysis follows the rise and decline of Ottoman institutions through successive historical contexts, including the Austro-Hungarian and interwar periods, concluding with the era before formal legal protection of the Sarajevo bazaar. The medieval period occupies a prominent place in the analysis, as its interpretation within certain national historiographies often hinders objective valorization.

The monograph defines the present condition of the bazaar as one of "unfinished de-Ottomanization," arguing that this condition requires a revision of current protection approaches. It proposes an amended statement of significance and an expansion of protected boundaries to more authentically and integrally communicate the area's historical and spatial values.

Monografija istražuje razvoj, transformaciju i savremeni značaj Sarajevske čaršije koristeći inoviranu istraživačku paradigmu: posuđujući iz oblasti osmanskih i postosmanskih studija, a posebno teorijskog okvira problema deosmanizacije panosmanskog svijeta i kulture.

Autorica analizira nastanak osmanskog Sarajeva i njegove čaršije, prateći proces osmanizacije koji je u klasičnom periodu doveo do formiranja dominantnih prostornih, društvenih i kulturnih vrijednosti. Taj relativno stabilan razvoj prekida se u tanzimatskom i postosmanskome razdoblju, kada dolazi do raspada teokratskog društvenog poretka i postepenog udaljavanja od osmanskih kulturnih obrazaca i svakodnevnih praksi.

Monografija postavlja pitanje šta su sastavnice vrijednosti dominantne faze i šta od takvih elemenata i značajki ostaje očuvano i odupire se deosmanizaciji, a koji se transformiraju pod njenim pritiskom. Kakvi su to razlozi i povodi očuvanju ili otporu promjenama? Konačno, kako takva transformacija i redefinicija doprinose ili „štete“ dominantnom prostornom i socijalnom identitetu Čaršije?

Posebna pažnja posvećena je odnosu između Čaršije kao prostorne kategorije i društvenog miljea koji simbolički i kontinuirano nosi naziv „Čaršija“. Analiza je strukturirana dosljedno i paralelno u odnosu na ulazno-silaznu putanju osmanskih institucija te kroz daljnje historijsko-društvene realitete – austrougarsku, epohu između dva rata, da bi okončala u periodu prije nastupanja zakonskih okvira zaštite Sarajevske čaršije. Istaknuto mjesto u analizi zauzima srednjovjekovni period, kao jedno od žarišnih historijskih pitanja upisanih u pojedine nacionalne historiografije, koje ometaju pažnju objektivnoj valorizaciji.

Zaključak monografije definira trenutno stanje Čaršije kao "nedovršenu deosmanizaciju", što podrazumijeva nužnu reviziju pristupa zaštiti ovog područja. Monografija nudi izmijenjenu tvrdnju o značaju područja kao okosnice upravljačke politike, te proširenje granica unutar kojih se ona istinito i sveobuhvatno komunicira.

More broadly, this undertaking offers an analytical framework for more objective understanding of the Ottoman past within the architectural and cultural identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, today shaped by overlapping processes of de-Ottomanization, re-Ottomanization, and the mythologization of heritage.

U širem smislu, ovaj rad crta analitički okvir za objektivnije smještanje osmanske prošlosti u arhitektonski i kulturni identitet BiH, koji je trenutno opterećen suvremenim procesima deosmanizacije, ali i reosmanizacije i mitologizacije baštine.

TITLE NASLOV **NEW! Novo Sarajevo: New Urban Protocol** NOVO! Novo Sarajevo: Novi urbani protokol

AUTHORS & EDITORS AUTORI I UREDNICI **Nermina Zagora**, Editor-in-Chief glavna i odgovorna urednica; **Nermina Zagora**, **Andrea Pavlović**, **Nasiha Pozder**, **Aida Idrizbegović Zgonić**, **Isra Tatlić**, **Vedad Islambegović**, **Senka Ibrišimbegović**, **Nedim Mutevelić**, **Lejla Kreševljaković**, **Mladen Burazor**, Authors Autori.

ASSOCIATES SARADNICI **Erdin Salihović**, **Amira Salihbegović**, **Lejla Kahrović Handžić**, **El-Gazija Bajramović**, **Armin Kešo**; **Edib Pašić**, Design & DTP dizajn i prijelom publikacije.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA **2024 (REPRINT 2025)** ISBN: 978-9926-490-15-7

The change in the socio-economic system has led to a imbalance between the public and private spheres, resulting in neglect, decay, and private appropriation of public spaces in many residential neighborhoods of the city of Sarajevo from the period of socialist modernism. The book *NEW! Novo Sarajevo: NEW Urban Protocol* proposes an alternative methodological approach by introducing a new urban protocol in the domain of public space planning strategy, as a critical response to the discrepancy between the existing top-down institutional planning approach and the technological and social dynamics of the digital age, as well as the real needs of the local community. The residential neighborhoods of the Novo Sarajevo municipality are seen in this book as urban laboratories for the exploration and detection of public space problems and the quality of urban life, aiming for their comprehensive and multi-layered urban regeneration. In response to identified problems, the book elaborates on the steps of the methodological process: mapping and networking of data in the GIS database of public spaces, co-creation or collaborative approach involving cooperation of all stakeholders in the processes of public space planning, digitalization of analytical data, use of innovative visualization tools for testing scenarios of urban transformation in a participatory process. The new urban protocol integrates guidelines for research and design methodological frameworks, and connects urban planning and design of public spaces for recreation and leisure, architectural design of commercial, cultural and tourist facilities, while empowering social infrastructure, spaces, and tools for citizen participation.

Promjena društveno-ekonomskog sistema je uzrokovala disbalans između javne i privatne sfere, te dovela do zapuštanja, propadanja i privatnog prisvajanja javnih prostora u mnogim stambenim naseljima grada Sarajeva iz perioda socijalističkog modernizma. U knjizi *NOVO! Novo Sarajevo: NOVI urbani protokol* se predlaže alternativni metodološki pristup kroz uvođenje novog urbanog protokola u domenu strategije uređenja javnih prostora, kao kritički odgovor na neusklađenost postojećeg, institucionalnog pristupa top down planiranja s tehnološkom i društvenom dinamikom digitalnog doba, kao i stvarnim potrebama lokalne zajednice. Stambene četvrti općine Novo Sarajevo su ovoj knjizi posmatrane kao svojevrsni urbani laboratorij za istraživanje i detekciju problema javnih prostora i kvalitete urbanog života, s ciljem njihove sveobuhvatne i višeslojne urbane regeneracije. Kao odgovor na identificirane probleme, u knjizi se elaboriraju koraci metodološkog postupka: mapiranje i umrežavanje podataka u GIS bazi javnih prostora, ko-kreacija ili kolaborativni pristup koji podrazumijeva saradnju svih aktera u procesima uređenja javnih prostora, digitalizacija analitičkih podataka, korištenje inovativnih alata vizuelizacije za testiranje scenarija urbane transformacije u participativnom procesu. Novi urbani protokol integriše smjernice za istraživačke i projektantske metodološke okvire, te povezuje urbanističko planiranje i projektovanje javnih prostora za rekreaciju i slobodno vrijeme, arhitektonsko projektovanje komercijalnih i sadržaja kulture i turizma uz osnaživanje društvene infrastrukture, prostora i alata za participaciju građana.

TITLE NASLOV **Natural and Biocomposite Materials in Architecture 1** Prirodni i biokompozitni materijali u arhitekturi 1

AUTHORS AUTORICE **Salihbegović Amira**, **Salihbegović Amra**.

YEAR OF PUBLICATION GODINA IZDANJA **2025** ISBN: 978-9926-490-27-0

The book *Natural and Biocomposite Materials in Architecture 1* brings together the theoretical and practical aspects of the application of natural and biocomposite materials, highlighting the importance of their use in contemporary architecture and sustainable development. Drawing upon traditional building principles, it demonstrates how modern technological innovations can contribute to environmentally responsible architecture and the creation of higher-quality living environments. This edition explores natural materials such as earth/clay and straw, as well as clay-based biocomposites reinforced with straw fibres and industrial hemp. It examines their

Knjiga pod naslovom *Prirodni i biokompozitni materijali u arhitekturi 1* spaja teorijske i praktične aspekte primjene prirodnih i biokompozitnih materijala, te akcentira na značaju njihove upotrebe u savremenoj arhitekturi i održivom razvoju. Na temeljima tradicionalnih principa građenja, ističe kako se uz savremene tehnološke inovacije, može doprinijeti ekološki prihvatljivoj arhitekturi i kvalitetnijem životnom prostoru. Ovo izdanje obrađuje prirodne materijale poput zemlje/gline i slame, kao i biokompozite na bazi gline, vlakana slame i industrijske konoplje, njihove estetske

aesthetic and functional values, specific properties, and methods of application in architectural practice.

The depletion of natural resources, together with climate and environmental challenges partly caused by unsustainable construction and design processes, has created a need to rethink conventional building methods and promote the innovative use of natural and biocomposite materials as renewable resources. Inspiration for contemporary approaches to sustainable, energy-efficient, and environmentally responsible architecture can be found in traditional buildings constructed from natural materials, whose qualities and characteristics are being reinterpreted through innovative technologies and contemporary design. These low-tech solutions embody universal aesthetic values and offer significant resource potential. They are characterised by low embodied energy, reduced environmental impact, recyclability, and the possibility of reuse within architectural practice.

Written in a bilingual format, the book is intended for architects, engineers, researchers, and students of architecture and civil engineering. Its aim is to encourage a more creative and responsible approach to architecture, sustainable construction, and building rehabilitation through the application of natural and biocomposite materials. At the same time, it provides insight into emerging construction trends, technological innovations, and the aesthetic qualities of these materials, illustrated through contemporary architectural projects and practical examples of their implementation.

TITLE NASLOV TRANSFORMATION OF ARCHITECTURE: Energy, People and Space

TRANSFORMACIJA ARHITEKTURE: energija, čovjek i prostor

AUTHOR AUTOR Haris Bradić.

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Climate change and energy unpredictability have presented architecture with new challenges, requiring a redefinition of the relationship between humans, space and energy. This book explores key aspects of architectural transformation in the context of energy efficiency, with a special emphasis on primary education buildings. The first part of the book deals with humans as users of space. It considers how the anatomical and psychological structure of humans shape the perception of space, and how design can influence emotions, social relationships and cognitive processes. It analyzes the senses and their role in interacting with space, as well as the creation of a harmonious environment that contributes to a sense of well-being. The second part focuses on space and environment, exploring the interrelationship of nature, society and technology. The topics of climate change, resources, natural disasters and the urban environment are addressed, with a particular focus on the cultural and technological impact on the design of space. The emphasis is placed on contemporary environmental challenges and the need for sustainable solutions inspired by history and natural processes. The third part is dedicated to energy: its history, current state and sustainable future. It analyses the energy situation, with particular attention to renewable energy sources. Passive and active systems for using solar energy in architecture are considered, as well as the potential of wind, water, biomass, geothermal and ambient air energy. Complex energy efficiency systems are also investigated, including indoor air energy recovery and cogeneration. The fourth part deals

i funkcionalne vrijednosti, specifična svojstva i načine primjene.

Ograničenost resursa, klimatski i ekološki problemi izazvani dijelom neodgovornim procesima građenja i projektiranja nametnuli su i potrebu za promjenom konvencionalnih metoda građenja i inovativnu primjenu prirodnih i biokompozitnih materijala, odnosno obnovljivih resursa prirode. Inspiracija za savremene tendencije održive, energetske učinkovite i ekološke odgovorne arhitekture pronalaze se u tradicionalnoj arhitekturi građenju prirodnim materijalima, čije kvalitete i svojstva se reinterpreтираju kroz inovativne metode i savremeni dizajn. Ova niskotehnološka rješenja nose univerzalne estetske vrijednosti te su izuzetnog resursnog potencijala, niske utjelovljene energije, smanjuju zagađenje, mogu se reciklirati i ponovo koristiti u arhitektonskoj praksi.

Knjiga je dvojezično pisana i namijenjena je arhitektima, inženjerima, istraživačima i studentima arhitekture i građevinarstva, s ciljem da ih podstakne na kreativnije i odgovornije promišljanje arhitekture, održivog građenja, te obnove objekata, kroz primjenu prirodnih i biokompozitnih materijala. Ujedno pruža uvid u nove tendencije građenja, tehnološke inovacije i estetske vrijednosti ovih materijala ilustrirane kroz savremena arhitektonska rješenja i načine primjene.

Klimatske promjene i energetska nepredvidivost postavili su arhitekturu pred nove izazove, zahtijevajući redefiniranje odnosa između čovjeka, prostora i energije. Ova knjiga istražuje ključne aspekte arhitektonske transformacije u kontekstu energetske učinkovitosti, uz poseban naglasak na zgrade za osnovno obrazovanje. Prvi dio knjige bavi se čovjekom kao korisnikom prostora. Razmatra se kako anatomska i psihološka struktura čovjeka oblikuju percepciju prostora, te na koji način dizajn može utjecati na emocije, socijalne odnose i kognitivne procese. Analiziraju se osjetila i njihova uloga u interakciji s prostorom, kao i stvaranje harmoničnog okruženja koje doprinosi osjećaju ugone. Drugi dio fokusira se na prostor i okruženje, istražujući međusobni odnos prirode, društva i tehnologije. Obrađuju se teme klimatskih promjena, resursa, prirodnih katastrofa i urbanog okruženja, pri čemu se posebno kulturni i tehnološki utjecaj na oblikovanje prostora. Naglasak je stavljen na suvremene izazove okoliša te potrebu za održivim rješenjima inspiriranim poviješću i prirodnim procesima. Treći dio posvećen je energiji njezinoj povijesti, sadašnjem stanju i održivoj budućnosti. Analizira se energetska situacija, pri čemu se posebna pažnja pridaje obnovljivim izvorima energije. Razmatraju se pasivni i aktivni sustavi korištenja sunčeve energije u arhitekturi, kao i potencijali energije vjetra, vode, biomase, geotermalne energije i energije okolnog zraka. Također se istražuju složeni sustavi energetske učinkovitosti, uključujući rekuperaciju

with architecture in the context of energy unpredictability, analysing various forms of energy-efficient architecture. The concepts of bioclimatic architecture, low-energy and passive houses, Zero Energy and Energy Plus architecture and green architecture are discussed. The concept of the Active House approach is also emphasized, which includes the integration of advanced energy solutions into modern buildings. The fifth part of the book is dedicated to the building envelope as the "skin of space". Its function, historical development and contemporary innovations in materialisation are discussed. The importance of façade systems in achieving interior comfort is explained, analysing transparent and non-transparent envelopes and examples of efficient external openings. The sixth part introduces basic concepts from architectural physics and their applications in the design of energy-efficient buildings. It discusses how thermodynamics, heat transfer, and microclimate regulation within a building can contribute to creating optimal conditions for users. The seventh part of the book concretizes the research using the example of the city of Sarajevo and primary education buildings. The urban development of the city is explained through historical construction phases, and then the architectural condition of school buildings is analyzed in the context of hygienic and technical conditions, interior space comfort, and energy requirements. The eighth part presents the key study of the book - an analysis of the energy transformation of existing school buildings through four detailed case studies. Through the analysis of existing envelopes, energy needs of buildings, and the results of thermal imaging tests, specific models of energy renovation are investigated. Each case study includes user surveys, an analysis of the current situation, and transformation proposals, with a special emphasis on ventilation, facade optimization, and increasing energy efficiency. The final part of the book summarizes the research methodology and its scientific contribution. The importance of redefining the envelope of school buildings is emphasized in order to achieve energy efficiency, but also to ensure a quality stay for students and teachers. The key result of the research is recommendations for the architectural transformation of existing educational facilities, whereby the envelope is viewed as a dynamic membrane that enables controlled management of the flow of energy between the interior and exterior space. This book offers a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between man, space and energy, presenting concrete models of architectural and energy transformation with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

energije unutarnjeg zraka i kogeneraciju. Četvrti dio bavi se arhitekturom u kontekstu energetske nepredvidivosti, analizirajući različite oblike energetski učinkovite arhitekture. Obrađuju se koncepti bioklimatske arhitekture, niskoenergetskih i pasivnih kuća, Zero Energy i Energy Plus arhitekture te zelene arhitekture. Naglašava se i koncept Active House pristupa, koji uključuje integraciju naprednih energetskih rješenja u suvremene građevine. Peti dio knjige posvećen je ovojnici objekta kao "koži prostora". Razmatraju se njezina funkcija, povijesni razvoj i suvremene inovacije u materijalizaciji. Objašnjava se značaj fasadnih sustava u postizanju unutarnjeg komfora, pri čemu se analiziraju transparentne i netransparentne ovojnice te primjeri učinkovitih vanjskih otvora. Sesti dio donosi temeljne pojmove iz arhitektonske fizike i njihove primjene u dizajnu energetski učinkovitih zgrada. Obrađuje se kako termodinamika, prijenos topline, regulacija mikroklimе unutar zgrade mogu doprinijeti stvaranju optimalnih uvjeta za boravak korisnika. Sedmi dio knjige konkretizira istraživanje na primjeru grada Sarajeva i zgrada za osnovno obrazovanje. Objašnjava se urbanistički razvoj grada kroz povijesne graditeljske faze, a potom analizira arhitektonsko stanje školskih zgrada u kontekstu higijensko-tehničkih uvjeta, komfora unutarnjeg prostora i energetskih zahtjeva. Osmi dio predstavlja ključnu studiju knjige - analizu energetske transformacije postojećih školskih zgrada kroz četiri detaljne studije slučaja. Kroz analize postojećih ovojnica, energetske potrebe zgrada i rezultate termovizijskih ispitivanja, istražuju se konkretni modeli energetske obnove. Svaka studija slučaja uključuje ankete korisnika, analizu postojećeg stanja i prijedloge transformacije, s posebnim naglaskom na ventilaciju, optimizaciju fasada i povećanje energetske učinkovitosti. Zaključni dio knjige sažima metodologiju istraživanja i njezin znanstveni doprinos. Naglašava se važnost redefiniranja ovojnice školskih zgrada kako bi se postigla energetska učinkovitost, ali i osigurao kvalitetan boravak za učenike i nastavnike. Ključni rezultat istraživanja su preporuke za arhitektonsku transformaciju postojećih obrazovnih objekata, pri čemu se ovojnica sagledava kao dinamična membrana koja omogućuje kontrolirano upravljanje protokom energije između unutarnjeg i vanjskog prostora. Ova knjiga nudi sveobuhvatnu analizu odnosa između čovjeka, prostora i energije, predstavljajući konkretne modele arhitektonske i energetske transformacije s ciljem postizanja održivog razvoja.

TITLE NASLOV POST-SOCIALIST SETTLEMENT – IDENTITY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SARAJEVO SETTLEMENT IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD POSTSOCIJALISTIČKA NASELJA – IDENTITET I KARAKTERISTIKE SARAJEVSKIH NASELJA U PERIODU TRANZICIJE
 AUTHOR AUTORICA Leila Krivošić Dizdarević
 MENTORS MENTORI Prof. Aida Idrizbegović Zgonić, PhD, Assoc. Prof. Vedad Islambegović, PhD
 PhD DEFENSE DATE DATUM ODBRANE May 27 2025

This doctoral dissertation explores the complex processes of urban and architectural transformation in the context of post-socialist and post-conflict transition, focusing on Sarajevo as a multi-layered and dynamic urban space. Starting from the geopolitical changes after 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall) and the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, it analyzes how the transition to a market economy, wartime destruction and post-war reconstruction shaped the contemporary identity of the city. Special attention is paid to the interrelationship of physical reconstruction and social processes, including migration, changes in demographic structure and transformations of collective identity and sense of belonging.

The research focuses on residential settlements as key spaces of everyday life in which the tensions between inherited urban patterns and contemporary development practices are most clearly reflected. It analyzes how new spatial interventions, often driven by market interests and the logic of profit, affect spatial continuity, infrastructural capacity and community identity. At the same time, it considers the specific challenges of post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, marked by a complex institutional framework, political fragmentation and unresolved property relations.

The aim of this work is to provide a critical understanding of these processes, but also to identify potentials for sustainable and inclusive transformation of urban spaces. Through the analysis of Sarajevo as a case study, the paper seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the role of architecture and urbanism in shaping social relations, identity and long-term development of the city.

Ova doktorska disertacija istražuje složene procese urbane i arhitektonske transformacije u kontekstu postsocijalističke i postkonfliktne tranzicije u čijem se s fokusu nalazi Sarajevo kao višeslojni i dinamičan urbani prostor. Polazeći od geopolitičkih promjena nakon 1989. godine (pad Berlinskog zida) i raspada Jugoslavije početkom 90-tih godina prošlog vijeka, analizira se kako su prelazak na tržišnu ekonomiju, ratna razaranja i poslijeratna obnova oblikovali savremeni identitet grada. Posebna pažnja posvećena je međusobnom odnosu fizičke rekonstrukcije i društvenih procesa, uključujući migracije, promjene demografske strukture te transformacije kolektivnog identiteta i osjećaja pripadnosti.

U središtu istraživanja nalaze se stambena naselja kao ključni prostori svakodnevnog života u kojima se najjasnije reflektuju napetosti između naslijeđenih urbanih obrazaca i savremenih razvojnih praksi. Analizira se kako nove prostorne intervencije, često vođene tržišnim interesima i logikom profita, utiču na prostorni kontinuitet, infrastrukturni kapacitet i identitet zajednice. Istovremeno se razmatraju specifični izazovi postdejtonske Bosne i Hercegovine, obilježeni složenim institucionalnim okvirom, političkom fragmentacijom i neriješenim vlasničkim odnosima.

Cilj rada je pružiti kritičko razumijevanje ovih procesa, ali i identificirati potencijale za održivu i inkluzivnu transformaciju urbanih prostora. Kroz analizu Sarajeva kao studije slučaja, rad nastoji doprinijeti širem razumijevanju uloge arhitekture i urbanizma u oblikovanju društvenih odnosa, identiteta i dugoročnog razvoja grada.

TITLE NASLOV INHERENCE OF THE BOUNDARY PHENOMENON IN THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING URBANITY. Special overview of transformations in the relationship: city-society-boundary INHERENTNOST FENOMENA GRANICE U PROCESU ODREĐIVANJA URBANITETA – Poseban osvrt na transformacije u relaciji: grad-društvo-granica
 AUTHOR AUTORICA Katarina Bošnjak Karadža MENTOR MENTORICA Prof. Jasenka Čakarić, PhD
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The doctoral dissertation titled *INHERENCE OF THE BOUNDARY PHENOMENON IN THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING URBANITY. Special overview of transformations in the relationship: city-society-boundary* has directed this research on the polysemy of boundary phenomenon and socio-spatial manifestations related to it. Internal segmentation of consciousness and dichotomous manifestations of gender roles, age groups, class hierarchies, interwoven with individual and collective territorial behaviors, establish and maintain different forms of societal and spatial organization in which the phenomenon of boundary, as a kind of reference point, plays a key role. The subject of the dissertation is the phenomenon of the boundary and its role and significance in the process of determining urbanity, understood as a definition of the quality of architectural and urban form. Ubication of a boundary implies the transformation of city's space, which is accompanied by transitional (borderline) states, the specificities of which were

Doktorska disertacija *INHERENTNOST FENOMENA GRANICE U PROCESU ODREĐIVANJA URBANITETA. Poseban osvrt na transformacije u relaciji: grad-društvo-granica* istraživala je polisemičnost fenomena granice i njegove socio-prostorne manifestacije. Interna segmentacija svijesti i dihotomne manifestacije rodničkih uloga, dobrih skupina, klasnih hijerarhija, isprepletene s pojedinačnim i kolektivnim teritorijalnim ponašanjima, uspostavljaju i održavaju različite oblike organizacije društva i prostora u kojima fenomen granice, kao referentna tačka, igra ključnu ulogu. Tema disertacije je fenomen granice i njegova uloga i značaj u procesu određivanja urbaniteta, kao definicije kvaliteta arhitektonske i urbane forme. Ubikacija granice podrazumijeva transformaciju prostora grada, što prate prelazna (granična) stanja, čije su specifičnosti sagledane. Fenomen granice se proučavao unutar šest

considered. Therefore, the phenomenon of boundary was observed within six aspects of its agency: nature, space, process, state, society and time. The essence of the boundary phenomenon relies on its perception, thus, this dissertation establishes the city-society-boundary relation as a framework for transformation processes research, guiding the definition of the hypothetical standpoint of the dissertation: Recognition and definition of Otherness are deeply embedded in introspective and intersubjective social sphere - the origin of the definition of boundary is placed within these spheres, and the reflection of Otherness is the process by which boundary is transposed into the (city) space. Boundary, city and society that inhabits it are connected in the state of cause-and-effect union, where, mediated by boundaries, the existential space of society is translated into specific properties of urbanity, and the transformation of one conditions the transformation of the other and vice versa, and, ultimately, that transforms the boundary. Therefore, boundaries are recognized as an inherent socially and spatially coded phenomenon, that conceptualizes and mediates all processes of spatial and social patterns creation, which is particularly recognized in the transposition of liminality phenomenon to (urban) space and society.

aspekata njenog djelovanja: priroda, prostor, proces, stanje, društvo i vrijeme. Suština fenomena granice oslanja se na njegovu percepciju, pa je uspostavljena relacija grad-društvo-granica kao okvir istraživanja procesa transformacija, usmjerivši definiciju hipotetskog stajališta: Prepoznavanje i definiranje Drugosti duboko su usađeni u introspektivnu i intersubjektivnu socijalnu sferu – ishodište definiranja granice smješteno je unutar ovih sfera, a refleksija Drugosti je proces kojim se granica transponira u prostor (grada). Granica, grad i društvo koje ga nastanjuje su povezani u stanje uzročno-posljedične unije, gdje se posredstvom granice egzistencijalni prostor društva prevodi u konkretna svojstva urbaniteta, a transformacija jednog uvjetuje transformaciju drugog i obratno, a, u konačnici, one transformišu granicu. Granicu, stoga, prepoznavamo kao inherentan društveno i prostorno kodiran fenomen, koji konceptualizira i posreduje svim procesima tvorbe prostornih i društvenih obrazaca, što se naročito prepoznaje u transpoziciji fenomena liminalnosti na (gradski) prostor i društvo.

PhD

TITLE NASLOV UTILIZATION OF SARAJEVO'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN TOURISM INDUSTRY
KORIŠTENJE GRADITELJSKE BAŠTINE SARAJEVA KROZ ASPEKT TURIZMA

AUTHOR AUTORICA Džanita Lutvić MENTOR MENTORICA Prof. Lemja Chabbouh-Akšamija, PhD
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By defining and presenting the architectural heritage of Sarajevo through historical layers, inevitable changes were established in its appearance, but also in its purposes. At the same time, noticing the constant increase in the arrival of tourists to Sarajevo, the emergence of cultural tourism and the potential of the city of Sarajevo through its architectural heritage and historical layers, I connected the active protection of Sarajevo's architectural heritage and cultural tourism. Given that active protection involves three phases: research and documentation, recording and field work with the creation of a protection study and project with the selection of a protection method and the creation of a use plan and feasibility study of the protected object, without neglecting the importance of the first two phases, I analyzed the effects of tourism on the sensitive category of architectural heritage objects from the aspect of use. Since the specificity of contemporary cultural tourists is research, education, consumption, constant desire to experience the new and different, valuable objects of architectural heritage are among the first priorities of this group of tourists. The older and more specific the objects of architectural heritage, the greater the interest of cultural tourists in them. At the same time, such objects are exposed to a long service life, previous use and wear and tear, and their spatial disposition is more difficult to adapt to modern needs and use. The use of facilities through the modality of cultural tourism also includes secondary activities related to tourism, such as hospitality, hotel management, culture, art, etc., so that the future use of facilities can be in accordance with this. The doctoral dissertation is an applied research whose conclusions and guidelines for further action can be used for: future protection measures, presentation of architectural heritage, development of strategies for the protection of architectural heritage and development of tourism, design guidelines, development of specific tourist itineraries and as a basis for future research.

Definišući i prezentirajući graditeljsku baštinu Sarajeva kroz historijske slojeve ustanovljene su neminovne promjene na njenom izgledu, ali i namjenama. Istovremeno, uočavajući konstantan porast dolaska turista u Sarajevo, pojavu kulturnog turizma i potencijal grada Sarajeva kroz njegovu graditeljsku baštinu i historijske slojeve, dovela sam u vezu aktivnu zaštitu graditeljske baštine Sarajeva i kulturni turizam. S obzirom na to da aktivna zaštita podrazumijeva tri faze: istraživačko-dokumentacionu, snimanje i rad na terenu s izradom elaborata zaštite i projekta s odabirom zaštitarske metode i izradu plana korištenja i studije izvodljivosti zaštićenog objekta, ne zanemarujući značaj prve dvije faze, analizirala sam učinke turizma na osjetljivu kategoriju objekata graditeljske baštine s aspekta korištenja. Budući da specifičnost kulturnih turista savremenog doba jeste istraživanje, edukacija, konzumiranje, stalna želja za doživljajem novog i drugačijeg, vrijedni objekti graditeljske baštine spadaju u prvi red prioriteta ove grupe turista. Što su objekti graditeljske baštine stariji i specifičniji, to je veći interes kulturnih turista za njih. Istovremeno, takvi objekti su izloženi dugom vijeku trajanja, prethodnog korištenja i trošenja, te je njihova prostorna dispozicija teže prilagodljiva savremenim potrebama i korištenju. Korištenje objekata kroz modalitet kulturnog turizma podrazumijeva i sekundarne djelatnosti vezane za turizam poput ugostiteljstva, hotelijerstva, kulture, umjetnosti itd., tako da i buduće korištenje objekata može biti u skladu s tim. Doktorska disertacija predstavlja aplikativno istraživanje čiji se zaključci i smjernice za dalje postupanje mogu koristiti prilikom: budućih mjera zaštite, prezentacije graditeljske baštine, izrade strategija zaštite graditeljske baštine i razvoja turizma, smjernica za projektovanje, izrade konkretnih turističkih itinerera i kao podloga za buduća istraživanja.



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