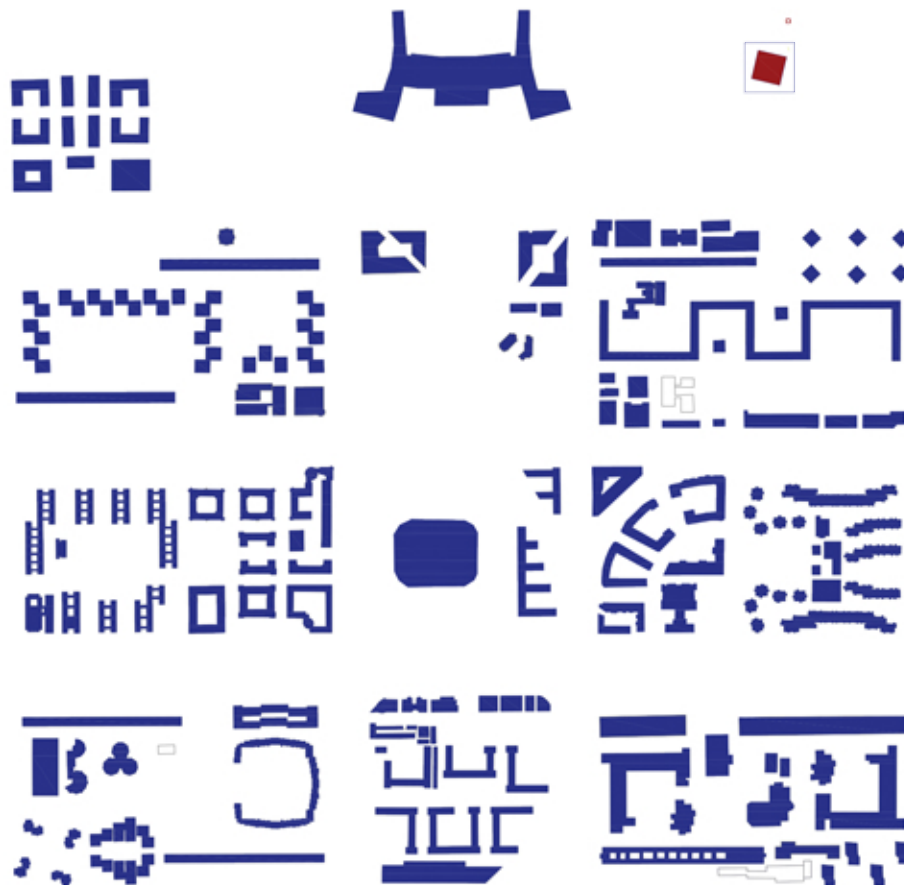


NEW BELGRADE

FROM BUILDING UTOPIA TO A NEW SYMBOLISM



ALEKSANDRA TUNIC
MASTER THESIS

NEW BELGRADE: FROM BUILDING UTOPIA TO A NEW SYMBOLISM

NEW SOLUTIONS FOR THE MUSEUM OF THE REVOLUTION
OF YUGOSLAV NATIONS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES
IN BELGRADE, SERBIA

Master thesis
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THANK YOU

To my team:

My mom, who was my biggest moral support and my rock,

My dad, who stayed awake for doing all those 5am models with me

My brother, my first consultant and advice - giver

For the unconditional support, devotion and strength
you provided me throughout this journey.

FOREWARD

The truth is that we value the things most when we are desperately missing them, or when they seem elusive and far away. We travel the world, learn languages, and particularly as students of architecture, we expose ourselves daily to different cultures and their architectural heritage. However, it's always escaping us what is before our eyes, and we often forget to see the beauty in what is the most available. This may have been the strongest motive to write my thesis about the city where I was born and grew up, and that I referred to as my house. According to the already established model, what is "mine" awakened my interest only when I was away from it, and having a completely new and different environment that has become my home.

At the time I was born, in 1994, Yugoslavia was going through the downfall and ceased to exist. I don't manage to remember the blackness of that period but growing up in a state that was a fresh remnant of Yugoslavia, definitely left a mark on my subconsciousness. I was lucky not to feel the more serious consequences of all this on my skin, although these circumstances shaped the world which I lived in. I don't remember bombing of Belgrade in 1999, I remember that shelter as my happy place, where I could play with my friends all day and never had to go home. Maybe this topic is my desire to puncture that balloon and face the facts about the reality and circumstances that preceded all that.

The architecture that the former Yugoslavia produced might not be everyone's "cup of tea", it is not necessarily pretty or attractive, neither is the work of the starchitects, and is definitely rarely presented in a positive context (if presented at all), but for me it was all part of the challenge. During the studies, different kinds of aesthetics were imposed as beautiful and desirable, although architecture is much more than visual impression, so I was triggered to explore the limits of "beautiful". What is not always referred to as pretty, can carry within itself some other kind of beauty, the one that is not obvious. It could have a deeper meaning and motives in itself that stand behind that unattractive aesthetics.

In order to awaken my own and other people's consciousness and interest in the architectural heritage of the former Yugoslavia, I dedicated this topic to my home, New Belgrade.

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HISTORY



POLITICAL YUGOSLAVIA

History of Yugoslavia began exactly a century ago, with the establishment of the first one of three countries that bore that name until the collapse of the state, and the wars in the beginning of 1990s. The first Yugoslavia was founded on December 1, 1918 as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed in 1929 to Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

During the World War II Yugoslavia was attacked and defeated by power of Axis and divided between Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. For Yugoslavia, WWII was both the resistance against the occupying forces, as well as a civil war between the communist-led Partisans and the Serbian royalist Chetniks. The partisans won not only as a resistance to Nazi occupation, but also against bourgeois class system in favor of a classless society, with Josip Broz Tito rising as the Partisan's main hero. Under his rule, the second Yugoslavia was founded - Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The Constitution has appointed five nations, six republics and two autonomous provinces.

After the bombardments by the Axis in 1941 and in 1944 by the Allies, Belgrade was liberated in October 1944. The city suffered a great damage: nearly 5000 buildings containing over 115000 apartments were destroyed, as well as the bridges and ports on both Sava and Danube, the train station, railway lines and most of the rolling stocks. The city's connection to the rest of the country was extremely difficult – several industrial zones were destroyed, power and telephone lines disabled, and water supply interrupted. In other words, the city needed a complete repair.



CONTEXT

After the World War II and creation of socialist Yugoslavia, a multicultural country with Belgrade as a capital needed a new administrative center representing all the Yugoslavian components. New Belgrade (Novi Beograd) in its name already reflected some of the symbolic ideas and aspirations of the socialist country – **breaking up with the past** and **entering in a new era**. The site itself provided good ground for the notion of a capital city of the new republic, distinctly set apart from the historical Serbia and the city of Belgrade as the ex-crown seat of the former Yugoslav monarchy. It represented the federal extra-territory with a potential to become a "heart of new Yugoslavia", where the new state had the opportunity to conceive its capital as the center of administration, culture and economy.¹

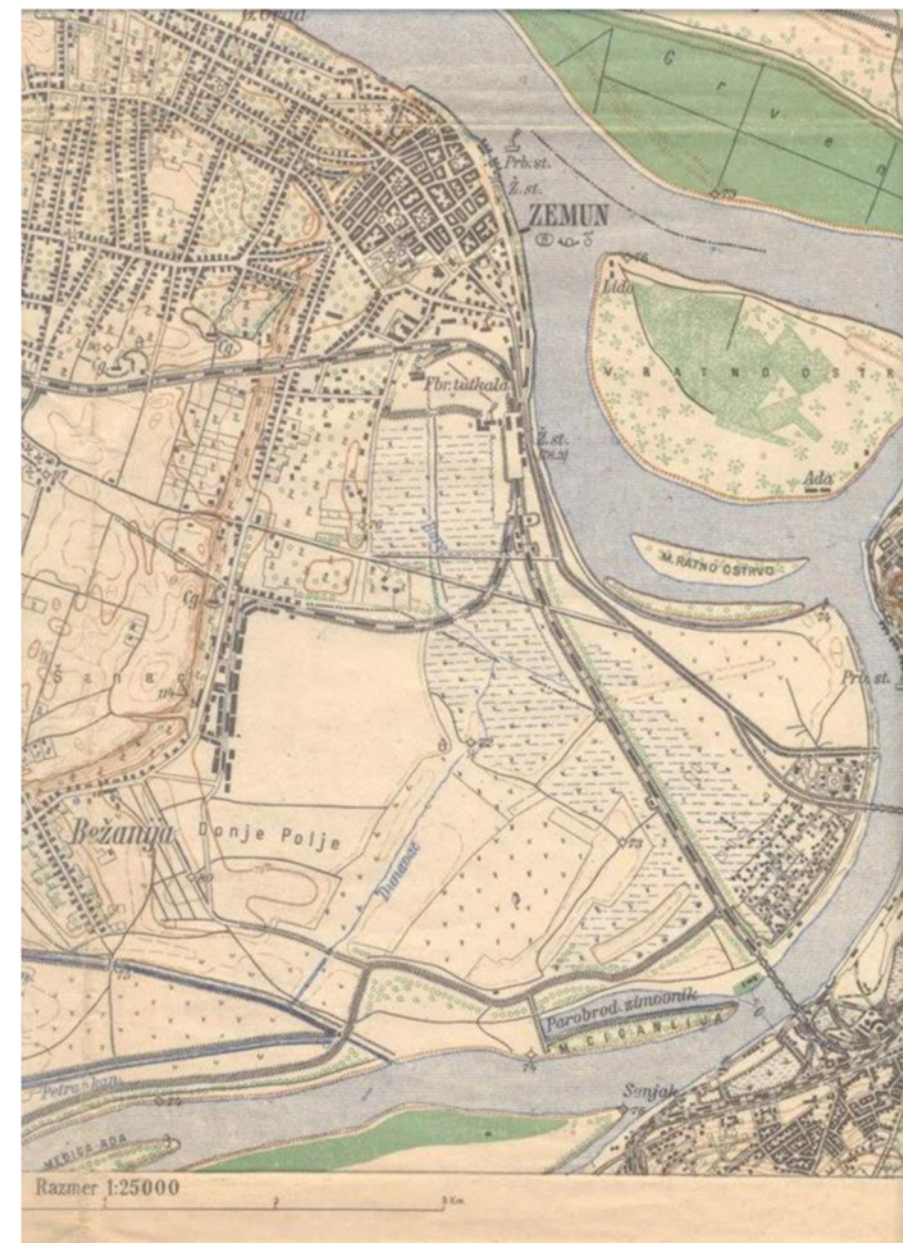
In accordance with the change in sociopolitical conditions after the Second World War, the status of Belgrade has changed - the historic city on the ridge, the capital of the former monarchy, should now become **a new, different Belgrade**, the capital of the new republic. This change is seen as a decisive factor in the establishment of the new city precisely in this field, utterly clean space, which has never in history held an urban structure. Only such place, without the urban history of the city, could carry the supra-historical reality of the construction of the capital of "people's democracy", later socialism.²

The site was occupying wide empty ground of wetlands and fields between two historical centers: Belgrade and Zemun, former parts of Otoman on one, and Austro – Hungarian empire on the other side. Over time, the modern urban infrastructure integrated two previously independent and autonomous centers into the greater Belgrade metropolis. The new regime did not want to merely redesign Belgrade from the past, but to profoundly **transform** the city and put a light on its new political and social order.

The liberation of Belgrade in the WWII, was immediately followed by collectivization of property in 1946 and inauguration of highly ambitious five-year plan crafted by the Soviet's model. The first months and years that followed, Yugoslavia's new regime focused on reconstruction of Belgrade's devastated infrastructure. Although having to deal with these urgent tasks, Tito and his associates took the first step in planning the development of the city.

¹ Edvard Ravnikar, "Veliki Beograd" [Greater Belgrade], Obzornik (Ljubljana), no. 11-12 (1947), p. 454

² Ljiljana Blagojević (Back to the future of New Belgrade: Functional Past of the Modern City, 2005



wetlands in New Belgrade before its construction / 1936

YUGOSLAVIA'S IN-BETWEENNESS

Socialist Yugoslavia was “one of the most complicated countries in the world,” as two American scholars once observed. It was popular to describe it (not entirely precisely) as one country with two alphabets, three languages, four religions, five nationalities, six constituent republics, and seven neighbors.³

Architectural style of Yugoslavia was highly influenced by the two historical phases during its development. Those shifts made it a part of international exchange among the global network.

The first phase involved a period immediately after the Second World War (1945-1948) during which Yugoslavia fostered intense relationships with Stalin's politics and adopted the architectural models and principles of the Soviet Block, including its five-year plan. However, in the pursuit of international partnership rather than neocolonial hegemony, the conflict between Tito and Stalin led to the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the USSR's European Communist party (Cominform) and tense relationships with Soviet Block until Stalin's death.

The end of this coalition marked a beginning of a new era for the country - now renamed to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the event initiated its **ideological redefinition**. Starting in 1949-50, party ideologues developed a new economic, administrative and political model for Yugoslavia around the concept of workers' self – management. The split with USSR also shifted Yugoslavia's diplomatic and cultural attraction towards the West. In 1961 Yugoslavia initiated and maintained the Non - Aligned Movement which promoted **non – alliance**, political **friendship** and **independence** during the Cold War.⁴



photo from the book “Holidays After The Fall - Seaside Architecture and Urbanism in Bulgaria and Croatia”, Michael Zinganel / Elke Beyer / Anke Hagemann

³ Vladimir Kulić, Wolfgang Thaler, Maroje Mrduljas, 'Modernism In-between - The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia' p.30

⁴ Živojin Mišić, Nikola Korbutovski, Bojan Kveder, Kordija Kveder and Srđan Vujica. In Belgrade Once Again: Ninth Non Aligned Summit, Beograd '89.

From the Soviet Union's closest ally in the first postwar years, to the brink of joining NATO in the mid nineteen-fifties, and then to one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement in the early nineteen-sixties, Yugoslavia fluctuated between the so-called First, Second, and Third Worlds, before finally reaching a point of **balance** in which it was tied to all three, while effectively being a part of none. ⁵

The notion of Yugoslavia's in-betweenness was thoroughly studied by Vladimir Kulić, stating that although describing a region as "in-between" is a global state, the in-betweenness of socialist Yugoslavia was exceptional. Besides being suspended between forces of the East and the West, it had to deal with the superpowers of the Cold War, rival ideological systems, multiple ethnic identities of its own populations, varied versions of modernity and tradition, past and future. Condensing so many overlapping geopolitical and cultural in-between conditions, they became one of the country's defining features. Yugoslavia was a rare place where the citizens of both Eastern and Western Europe could meet as they vacationed together on the Adriatic coast. At the same time, the country had maintained equidistance from both blocs, while building its own alliances with the Third World. ⁶

Unique geopolitical context of the country provided relationship to both Eastern and Western architectural influences, constantly blending with both socialism and western modernism. Most political models and social visions - from liberal bourgeois capitalism to nationalism, communism, Stalinism, self-governing socialism, and transitional post-socialism - swept through a country which was in the process of **permanent reinvention** of itself. With that in mind, it doesn't come as a surprise that Yugoslav architecture had never developed a recognizable identity and could not be easily labeled and marketed.

After the Second World War, when Yugoslavia physically and ideologically settled somewhere in between, the country was in search of its unique response to international architectural style of Modernism.

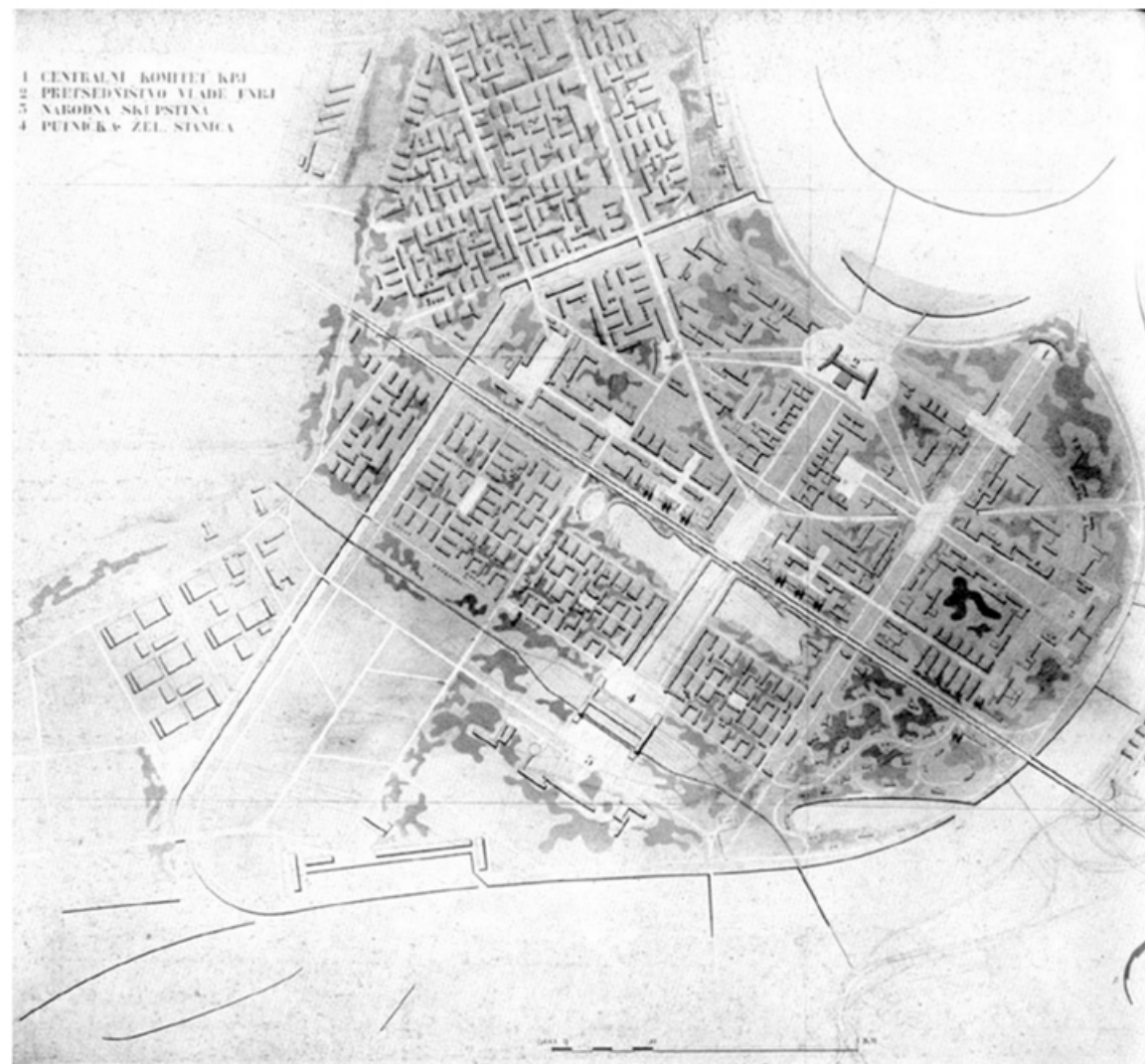
^{5,6} Vladimir Kulić, Wolfgang Thaler, Maroje Mrduljas, 'Modernism In-between - The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia' p.32

EARLY BEGINNINGS AND THE SPLIT

Some of the first proposals for the New Belgrade illustrated the initial idea to make a new administrative center of a socialist country, but already in the 1950s was abandoned as an idea. Instead, 1960s and 1970s brought intense **industrialization** of the country, and extremely increased the number of population as a consequence, thus the new district will be conceived as a residential area, with **housing** as a predominant function.

It is interesting how architects and designers have organized themselves within self-government system. Many competitions for architects and designers were conducted, which led to a lot of experimentation and bold ideas. Many of these ideas were never accepted and implemented, but it was useful to explore the possibilities, and were a base for the self-management system to seek for new ways to create new spaces and ideas that would be useful for the whole society.

Prominent architect Nikola Dobrović was put at a head of the newly founded Urban Planning institute, and already in 1946 produced his first sketch for New Belgrade, which triggered the most important architects of the time to discuss the idea of a new city. Dobrović's sketch was developed into an actual design proposal for the competition, which came along in the following year. The competition that opened in 1947. was focused on design proposals for two presidency buildings, but with an additional request for masterplan ideas for New Belgrade.



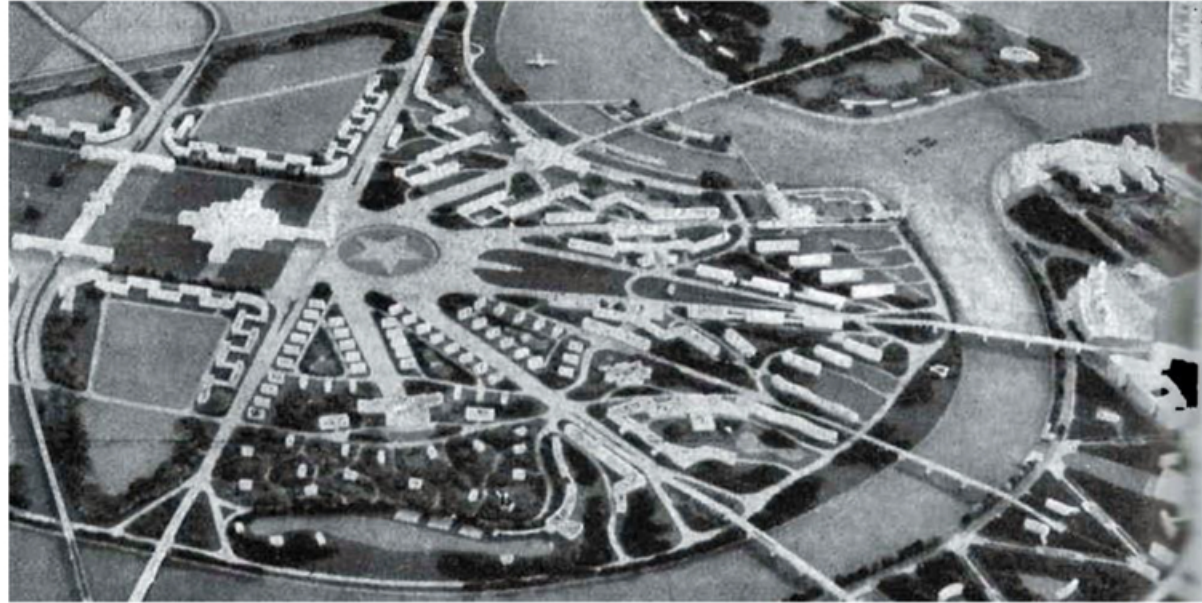
Nikola Dobrovic / Proposal for Masterplan for New Belgrade / 1948

Dobrović's plan highly emphasized the importance of **symbolism** and opens an important question of New Belgrade as the new administrative center. The plan caused criticism of the Commission, focusing on its radial shape and that "the basic idea is concentrated on formalism, which is necessarily reflected in the functioning of the plan, inconvenient collection of the traffic in one point, without a functional disassembly of transit, etc... This form has derived from the past and it belonged to a different view of life." This comment implies that social realism of Soviet Union was rejected as a model, years before the actual split with USSR. On the other hand, Dobrović's proposal awakened a lot of controversy, regarding not only functionality of the plan, but also the architect's unwillingness to compromise with the regime, causing him to resign his position at the Town Planning Institute. And after this, plans were no longer associated with particular personalities but were the products of collaborative work.

Result of the competition was not one awarded scheme, but a general consensus over rejecting Nikola Dobrović's radial plan and embracing concept of functional organization of orthogonal urban structure with the two main state and party buildings as the center pieces of the urban composition. The competition program for the two buildings asked for a "monumental and representative" architecture. The program specified that the Central Committee building had to be the "powerful symbol of the Communist Party", and the most prominent object dominating with its height and monumentality in the "plastic urban composition of New Belgrade".⁷

The result of the competition didn't make any progress in urban planning, but the conceptual solution of the two government buildings dictated the character of the new city, as well as the further work on its construction. Additionally, competition program related exclusively to physical design of ministry buildings and did not contain the necessary information for a more detailed analysis and elaboration of the urban problems of the new city. Although only as a set of sketches, over 70 proposals which came as a response to this competition were the base of the future general urban plan of New Belgrade.

⁷ Ljiljana Blagojević, New Belgrade: The capital of no – city's land, Stadtbauwelt 163, Berlin, 2004 ⁸Ljiljana Blagojević, "Novi Beograd: Osporeni modernizam" (New Belgrade: Contested Modernism), 2007. p.5



proposal for the Masterplan of New Belgrade / Urban Institute / 1947



proposal for masterplan of New Belgrade / Evdard Ravnika / 1947



sketch of proposal for masterplan of New Belgrade / Antolic, Bahovic, Tusek / 1947

The construction of the new city officially started on April 11th, 1948 symbolically - by reclaiming the ground from the water. By the end of this year, concrete skeletons of the Presidency building, and the hotel Yugoslavia emerged, and first wetland was covered. The first phase of the construction of New Belgrade (1947-1950) corresponded the implementation of the Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Economy in Yugoslavia (1947-1951), based on the hyper centralized Stalinist model. The concept of the plan was a rapid industrialization and recuperation of the country from inherited backwardness. It was in this context that urban planners began to work on Belgrade's master plan and that architects began to imagine how workers might live in a society that was building socialism.

However, merely three years after the war, a smooth and optimistic uprising of the first phase was interrupted for several years, as a result of Tito-Stalin split. Yugoslavia's economy faced a major breakdown and left architects and urban planners in uncertainty about the future development of the city. In the beginning of the 1950s, New Belgrade had only 8000 inhabitants, and the construction was completely suspended. At the same time, the belief in the idea of its construction had decreased. In the first post-war years, New Belgrade was conceived as the site of a new supra-historical reality of socialism and the primary aesthetic object of a socialist state. However, the split caused New Belgrade to be realized as a city with a completely different function - the city of housing, instead of the seat of power.⁸

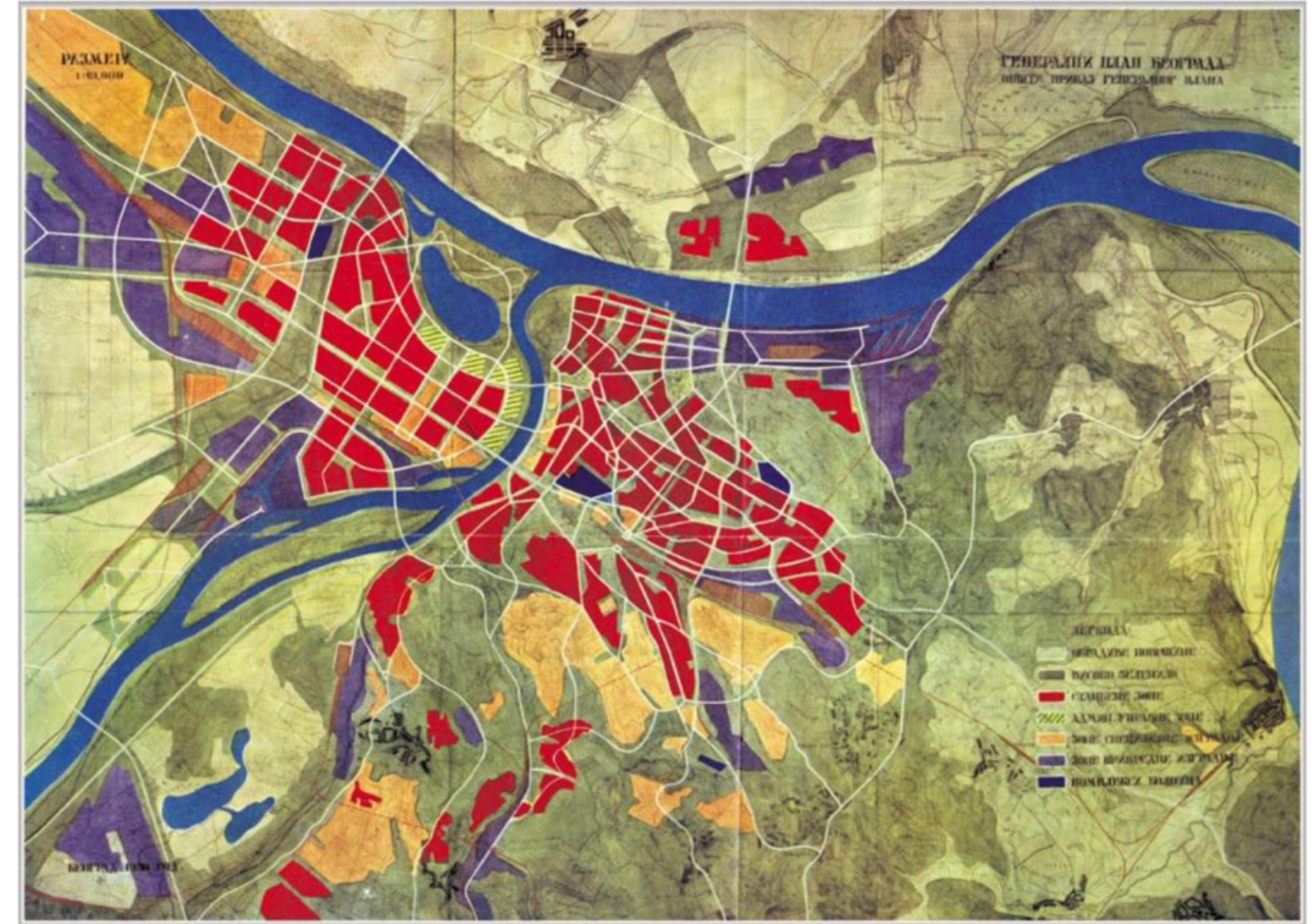
⁸Ljiljana Blagojević, "Novi Beograd: Osporeni modernizam" (New Belgrade: Contested Modernism), 2007. p.5



construction of experimental housing blocks 1 and 2 / 1960.

In the mid-50s, construction was continued with a new, fundamentally changed conceptual framework. In 1950, the first post-war general regulation plan for Belgrade was adopted, based on Dobrovic's plan from 1948, under a strong influence of highly demanding and unrealistic ideas of Five – Year plan. Planners were under the serious challenge to satisfy current needs of citizens without compromising with the long – term plans for the devastated city. In the absence of information, resources and agreement, the town planners presented a plan that focused on **infrastructural improvement** and remained vague on precisely how different part of the city would be affected.⁹

Parallely, the **Tito-Stalin split** meant the beginning of the process of redefining itself through architecture, as a part of its larger geopolitical **reorientation**, and while it would at first privilege the Western influences, it would in the long term stake out a position of **independence**. Moreover, the planners had devised a scheme that they believed to be flexible enough to accommodate changing needs and a changing vision. This was a reflection of planners' awareness of the instability and rapid change that characterized the modern age.



general regulation plan / 1950

⁹ Brigitte Le Normand, "Designing Tito's capital / Urban planning, modernism and socialism in Belgrade", 2014, P.29 ¹⁰ Brigitte Le Normand, "Designing Tito's capital / Urban planning, modernism and socialism in Belgrade", 2014, p.62

After an initial period of confusion, Tito's regime redefined itself as a different kind of socialist state, which had inevitable consequences on urban planning. Finding the new ideological framework which differentiated Yugoslavia from the Soviet Bloc, architects have been relieved from the pressure to adapt to socialist aesthetics which didn't get a proper support anyway. The event also gave architects more freedom to criticize imposed norms. Some of the criticisms of the five-year plan emerged, emphasizing its limitation for both ideas and resources. It forced architects to fit into the imposed standards and norms which caused complete ignoring of the most basic – the object and the individuals who create it. At the same time, it gave a solid base for expressing distinction from the Soviet architecture. Instead of creating a uniform society, architects were stressing the importance of **individuality** of each household and building homes that would meet their needs. This attitude reflected the truly socialist character of Yugoslav architecture and urban planning. Unlike the approach followed in the first post-war years, architects now showed the intention to adapt to the existing lifestyles rather than transforming the culture of everyday life.

Apart from the first housing block (built in a style of social realism, 1950 by model of Moscow), most of the designs were quite advanced for their time. Unlike other socialist countries of that period, and especially after a break up with SSSR, Yugoslavia was open to the Western trends and most of the urban design was based on **Le Corbusier's model of open city**. Part of the break with the Soviet Union was determination of the Yugoslav authorities for abstract art against the banality of socialist realism. The architecture of residential buildings of New Belgrade is the architecture of European modernism, while the city is planned according to the principles of the Functional City that Le Corbusier put through 95 points of the **Athens Charter** (1943). In fact, it has been said that architecture of Yugoslav socialism is architecture of double negation – International western style is rejected, but so is formalism of Soviet model. It was reflected in the tendency to achieve the monumentality of significant presidency buildings without the false pathos, but in simple and clear way.

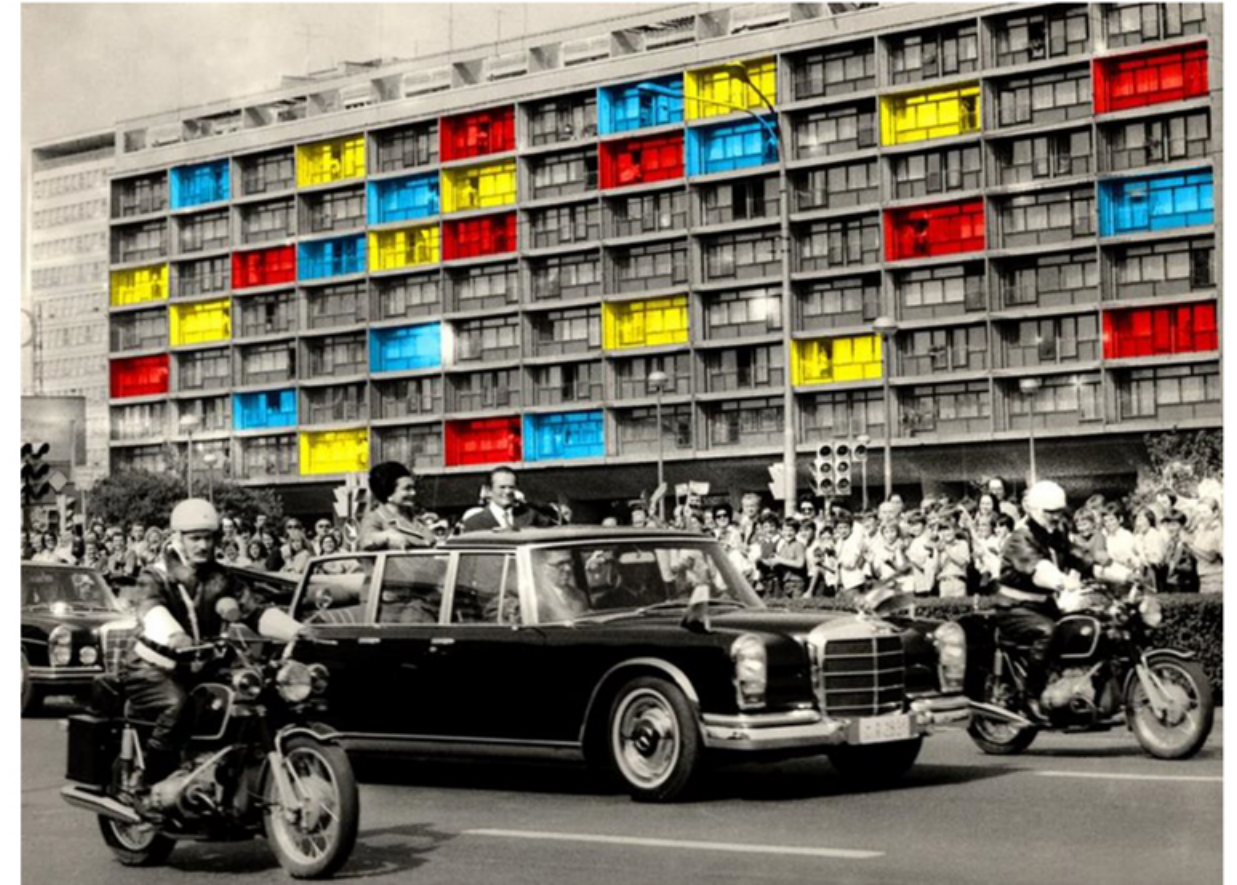


New Belgrade / photo Oliver Weber

NEW SYMBOLISM

Although it is unknown who initiated the idea of shifting the city center across the river and replacing swamps with a new metropolis, the concept was inaugurated in the masterplan from 1950. The powerful symbolic meaning behind this was not emphasized in the discourse around the masterplan, but it indeed bore a strong metaphor. In crossing Sava, Tito would be the first to accomplish the **union of two cities** that had, until the creation of the First Yugoslavia, been a part of different empires: Austro-Hungarian Zemun and Ottoman, and later Serbian, Belgrade. Moreover, building on the floodplains would require substantial effort and technical knowledge, allowing the new regime to showcase its ability to triumph over natural forces. All of these factors would illustrate the **Titoist regime's superiority** over the ineffectual and divisive Kingdom of Yugoslavia.¹⁰

Planners took these swamps as a unique laboratory for creative ideas. Besides that, it reflected symbolical significance as “administrative and political center of Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, a city on which the eyes of our people are focused and that represents us to the world”.



Sanja Ivekovic, New Zagreb, “People Behind the Windows”, 1979

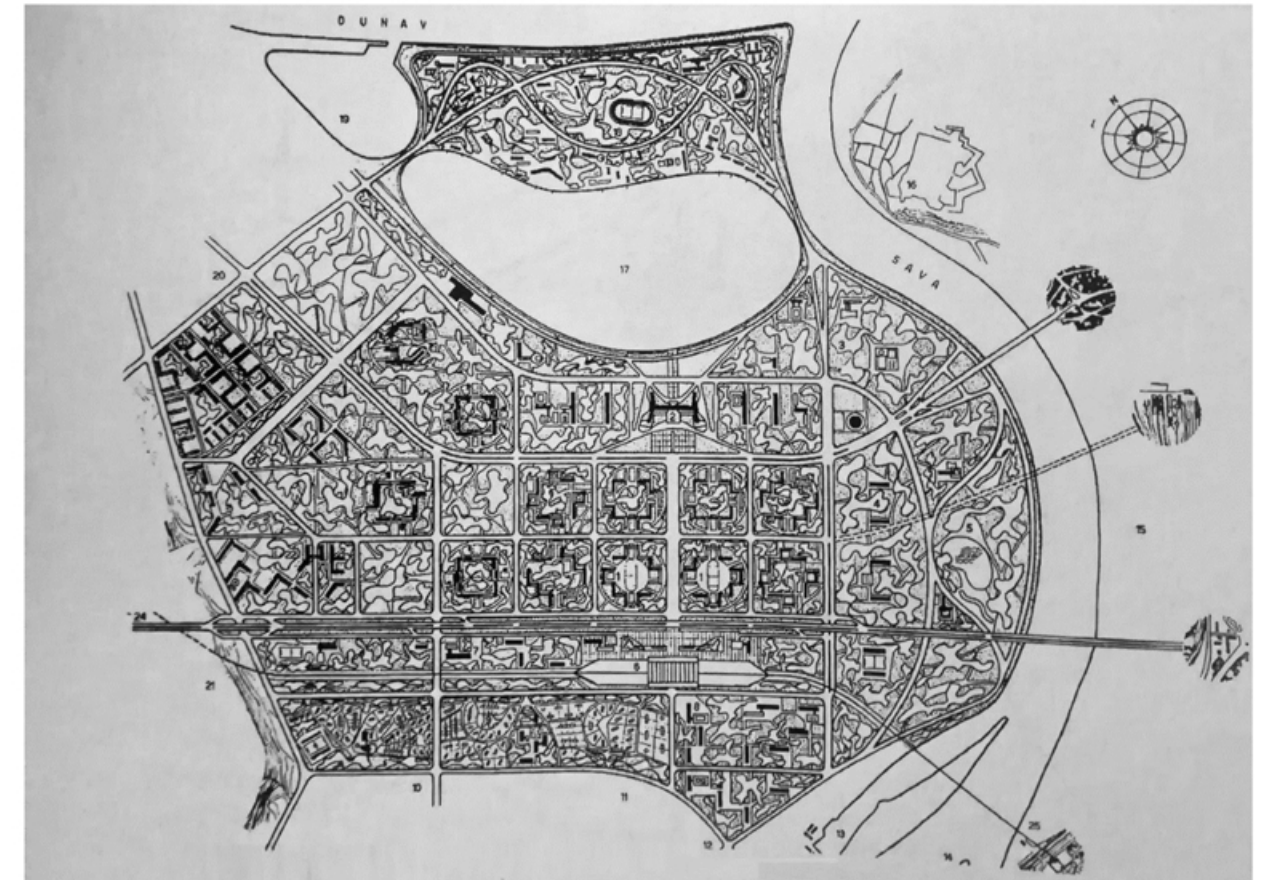
During the president’s parade, people were prohibited from being on their balconies and here Iveković highlights other citizens barely visible, looking out from behind their windows.

¹⁰ Brigitte Le Normand, “Designing Tito’s capital / Urban planning, modernism and socialism in Belgrade”, 2014. p.62

By the mid-1950s, New Belgrade was more an uncompleted dormitory than center of a socialist capital city. In the years that followed, financial situation was slowly improving and party leadership along with planners and architects returned to realizing their vision for New Belgrade. After years of stagnation, it was finally the right time to clearly refocus investment priorities – **production of consumer goods** and **bettering standards of living**. Shifting the focus towards consumption instead on a “small worker” influenced urban planners to adapt their designs to consumer preferences. Improved economic situation increased the need for housing and consequentially, housing was identified as consumer good. On the other hand, this shift meant large neglect of New Belgrade’s symbolic function as the district of the new political, administrative and symbolic center of Yugoslavia.

Between 1954 and 1960 planners debated on several plans for New Belgrade, divided between the ideas of satisfying increasing need for housing and looking for its ideological significance.

In 1958. The new General regulation plan was produced and accepted, designed by Branko Petričić. At the very beginning of his career, Petričić was collaborating with Le Corbusier on his urban projects for Paris, and he reinterpreted slightly modified version of these ideas 20 years later. The design of the general regulation plan for New Belgrade echoed Le Corbusier’s project for radiant city. In theoretical attachment to his proposal Petričić relies entirely on the principles of Le Corbusier’s Athens Charter, emphasizing the importance of solar orientation, optimal density, building height and functional zoning. Shortly after, he designed one of the first residential blocks based on such principles, experimental blocks 1 and 2 near Zemun. The construction of these two blocks was the first step in the reorientation from individual construction to the construction of large residential blocks.



general regulation plan / Branko Petričić / 1958

This plan has initiated a series of discussions on the symbolic role of the New Belgrade. Many experts expressed the strong criticism towards the diminished significance of New Belgrade shown in presentation of this plan. They emphasized the importance of establishing a clear philosophy, appearance and general concept for what New Belgrade was supposed to become. However, these suggestions did not receive a satisfying response from the council members. Instead, they have accepted the value of housing as a powerful symbolism of New Belgrade, incorporating the new Yugoslav Dream.

Moreover, with rejection of Stalinist way of monumental urban planning, the authorities needed affirmation of validity of the newly introduced regime. New Belgrade was a tool for expression of how well people could live in a socialist state. This decision also had a pragmatic approach: funds for its construction would appear gradually, therefore planning should be limited to immediate needs of the citizens. As a response to sharp criticisms based on their lack of fundamental understanding of socialist urbanism, the Urban Institute considered that it is unnecessary to assume and enforce New Belgrade's final appearance and character. In other words, the uniqueness of New Belgrade is not one coherent vision, but an **open-end project** with constant evolvement in the search for a truly socialist city.

The 1958 master plan had left aside the question of New Belgrade's central zone, which required more detailed urban development. Therefore, in the following year authorities announced a competition for "Conceptual masterplan for the center of Novi Beograd". This plan had reapproved the eminence of New Belgrade nationwide and was a base of regulation plan developed in 1962 which was followed in the entire further construction.

CENTRAL ZONE OF THE NEW CITY

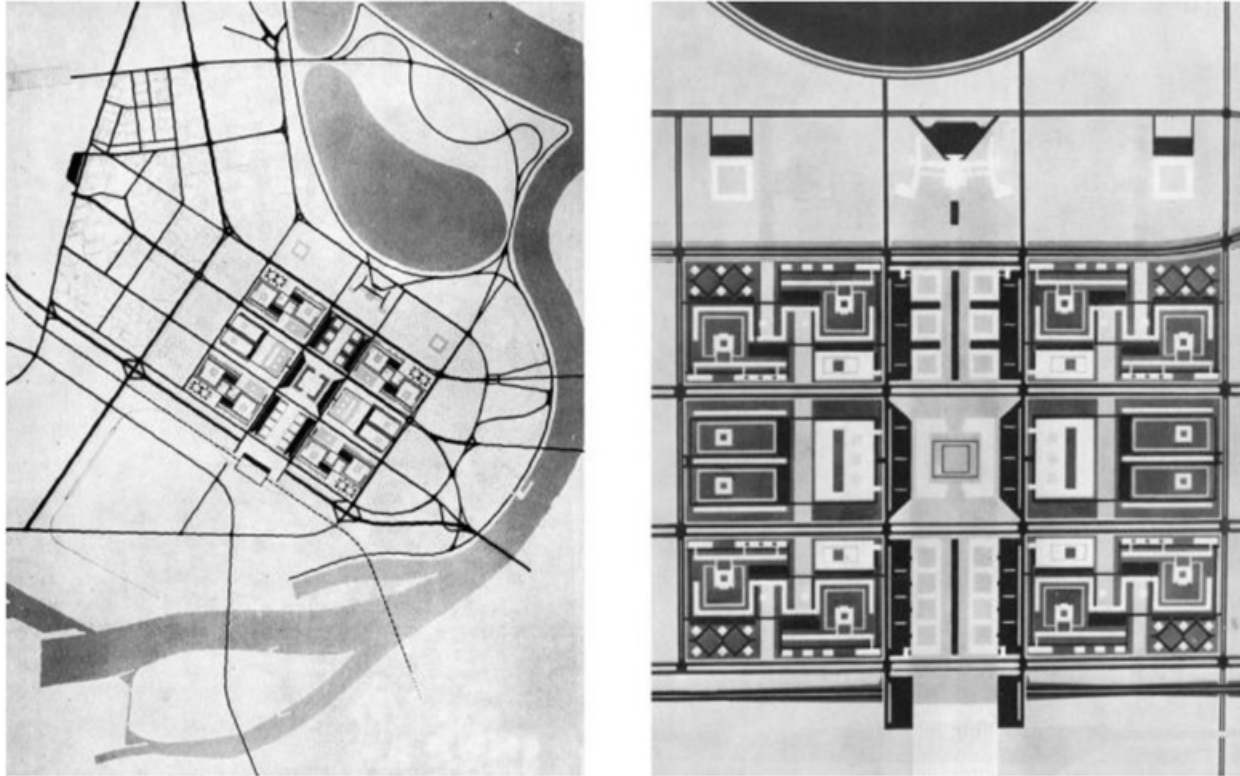
Establishment of Non-Aligned movement presents one of the most important examples of the interaction between the politics of socialism and modern architecture in Belgrade. The event was a trigger point for construction of one of the symbols of New Belgrade - building of Federal Executive Council, which had hosted the first summit of **Non – Aligned movement** in 1961. The site occupied New Belgrade's central zone and hosted another important governmental building - the Central Committee of the league of Communist.

The "Conceptual masterplan for the center of Novi Beograd" adopted in 1962 was a backbone for its construction. The plan has also been used as the foundation for a more detailed development of individual parts until the mid-1980s, when the idea of forming the **monumental central zone** of New Belgrade was finally annulled. Plan of the central zone covers the territory along the axis of Federal Executive Council - railway station. The 6 residential blocks along this axis – later to be converted into 9 - were topic of the urban competition in 1958 that resulted in a joint solution between two *ex-aequo* winning teams.¹¹

Additionally, the competition raised again the issue of the central block's function. The crucial question was how to accommodate two fundamentally different typologies within one zone: functional residential neighborhood and formal government building on the opposite side of the street.

The central core of New Belgrade was planned to be predominately dedicated to consumption and leisure. The concept for the district was based on creating a more "human, sunny, lively and useful center of life" - monumental ideas established in the past. Although still uncertain about the notion of "central" within the zone and what would it mean in the scale of the city and the country, the planners were determined about its character of consumer attractions.

¹¹Ljiljana Blagojević, "Novi Beograd: Osporeni modernizam" (New Belgrade: Contested Modernism), 2007.



project of two winning proposals for the New Belgrade central zone / Institute of Urbanism of Serbia /
architects: Aleksandar Djordjević, Leonid Lenarčić, Milutin Glavički, Uroš Martinović / 1960

The central line is planned as a center of common interest and was designed as three blocks, square shaped, measuring 400 x 400 m. They were meant to stretch from the Federal Executive Council to the train station in the South and incorporate 3 large squares. In front of the building would be a ceremonial manifestation square used for parades and gatherings. The central city square would host facilities for inhabitants' free time: "theaters, clubs, cafes, exhibition spaces, shops of attractive character for the most exceptional articles", terraces with chairs, all surrounding a central courtyard made attractive by the play of water in fountains and free of vehicular traffic, comparing it to Piazza San Marco in Venice. The southernmost was the railway station's square, welcoming travelers to the "most lively and most beautiful parts of the city". The lateral blocks along the axis is made up of 6 residential blocks with 10 000 inhabitants, in the plan drawn symmetrically, emphasizing that they will be treated individually in their further development.¹²

However, the three central blocks, designed as a metropolitan center with cultural and commercial character, were never built according to this plan. The representative axis of New Belgrade remained under construction for decades, ending up with one residential block, one with a multifunctional sports and spectacle hall and the third with a mix of housing, offices and an orthodox church.¹³ These blocks, intended to act as a spine for the settlement and an attraction for the entire city, remained vacant, a powerful symbol of the regime's inability to materialize its promises.¹⁴

¹² Brigitte Le Normand, "Designing Tito's capital / Urban planning, modernism and socialism in Belgrade", 2014. P.115

^{9, 13} Prokopljevic, Jelena. "Do Not Throw Concrete Blocks! Social and Public Housing in New Belgrade and their Representations in Popular Culture." *fusion*, no. 6, 2015.

¹⁴ Brigitte Le Normand, "Designing Tito's capital / Urban planning, modernism and socialism in Belgrade", 2014. p.116

THE PALACE OF THE FEDERATION

One building was the main focus of the overall planning of New Belgrade, and a decisive factor in deciding its central zone. The construction of the federal ex council began in 1948, according to the design of a group of architects Potočnjak, Nojman, Urlih and Perak, but the continuity in its construction and design itself was interrupted by changing political situation in the country. As the construction continued in 1955, the physical characteristics of the new building changed, as well as the authors.

Construction was completed in 1961, in occasion to the First Conference of the Non-aligned countries, and was realised according to the final project of Mihailo Janković. According to the criticism given by architect Milorad Macura, the aesthetics of this building is entirely based on principles of **classicism**, yet with using **modern elements**; “new forms are given to the inherited principles”. What makes this object significant is the integration of architectural and urban thinking, particular for the time when it was created. The location on which it was built has changed from the one which was set up in the masterplan, but that's what gave its unique character. Its placement in the central core of the new city was the generator for establishing an urban **hierarchy in New Belgrade**. According to the plan, the order of the blocks of the central zone was following: administrative center - city center - housing¹⁵. Therefore, the most important feature of the building of Federal Executive Council of Yugoslavia is that it was created as a response to the ideas and concepts of the new city, while at the same time it significantly influencing its realization.



Central zone of New Belgrade today: central axis – unfinished commercial block, sports hall block, residential block; all built after 1990. 6 lateral blocks are residential with commercial ground floors, built according to Masterplan from 1962.

¹⁵ Ljiljana Blagojević, “Novi Beograd: Osporeni modernizam” (New Belgrade: Contested Modernism), 2007. p.5

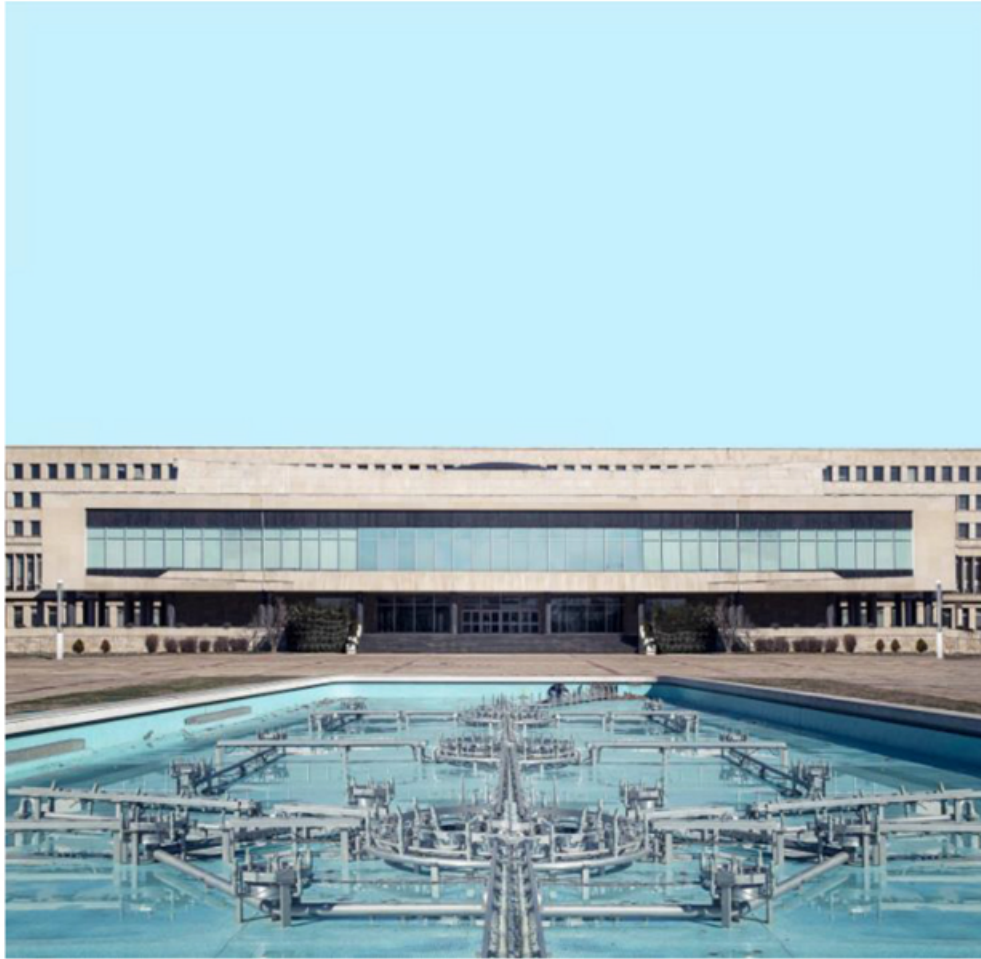


photo / minimalbelgrade.com



photo / stillinbelgrade.com



Federal Executive Council interior / phtotos / Dusan Djordjevic

CENTRAL COMMITTEE BUILDING

Another building arose in the same context, the tower of the Central Committee, until the mid 80's the highest building of the new Belgrade. Along with the Palace of Serbia, this building appears from the very beginning of the idea of a new Belgrade in the context of a new city as the administrative center of Yugoslavia. However, the final design was chosen in the plan from 1960., and the construction was completed in 1964.

In the previous plans and competitions building of Central Committee was placed in the park of confluence of rivers nearby, conceived as a symbol of New Belgrade towards which opens a view from the historical center. However, it was eventually located linearly with Palace of Serbia, about 600m away from it.

According to the authors Jankovic, Milenkovic, Marjanovic, it was designed distinctively as an office building with offices, meeting rooms and conference rooms. The tower was built with classical forms with a facade that visually gives the impression of a curtain wall, although essentially it is not. During the bombing in 1999. the building was hit 2 times setting the upper floors on fire. Despite the heavy damage, the building did not collapse and remained structurally intact. It was reconstructed in 2005, with 2 additional floors and new glass façade; becoming a commercial building, owned by a private holding company.



after the construction /1960s



bombing of the building / 1999



after the reconstruction / 2000s

THE MUSEUM OF THE REVOLUTION OF YUGOSLAV NATIONS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

The never built Museum of the Revolution was meant to be publicly open in 1981 and was supposed to represent collection and permanent exhibition, a complete insight into the labor movements and people's revolution within the whole Yugoslavia. The project was initiated through a national competition with the task to express the socialist ideal, which constitutes the 'revolution' of the international labor movement. At the time, Museums of the Revolution were sprouting across Yugoslavia and this one was supposed to be the centerpiece, a monumental modernist structure with the carefully chosen location in accordance with the vision of New Belgrade. After a decade and several attempts to improve the design and with help of engineers and planners, the construction started in 1977. However, it was interrupted soon after, when only the concrete skeleton of underground level was made and it is all that exists of the museum today. Initially, the museum was supposed to be placed in the park of the confluence of two rivers, within the "cultural hub" consisted of Ethnographic and Natural History Museum (not built), and Museum of Contemporary Art (built).

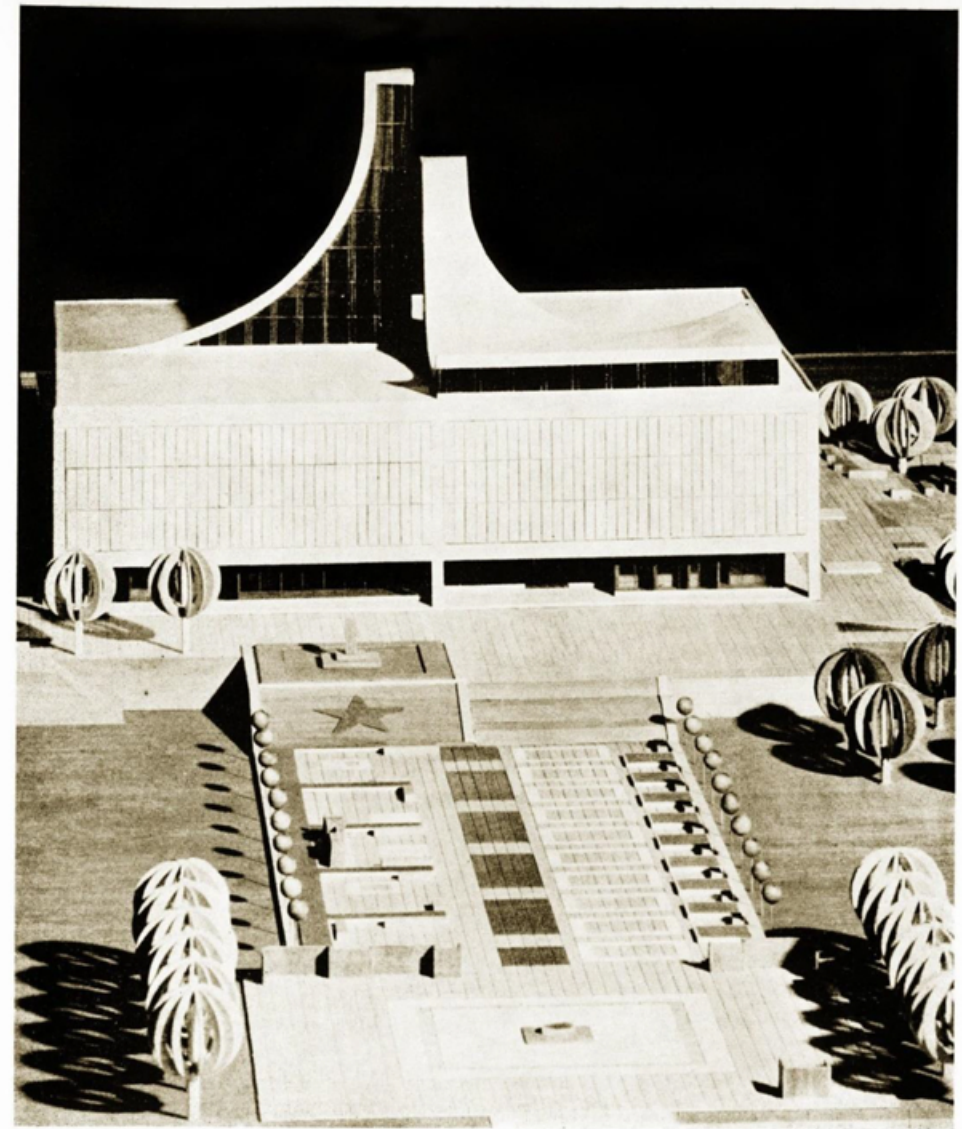
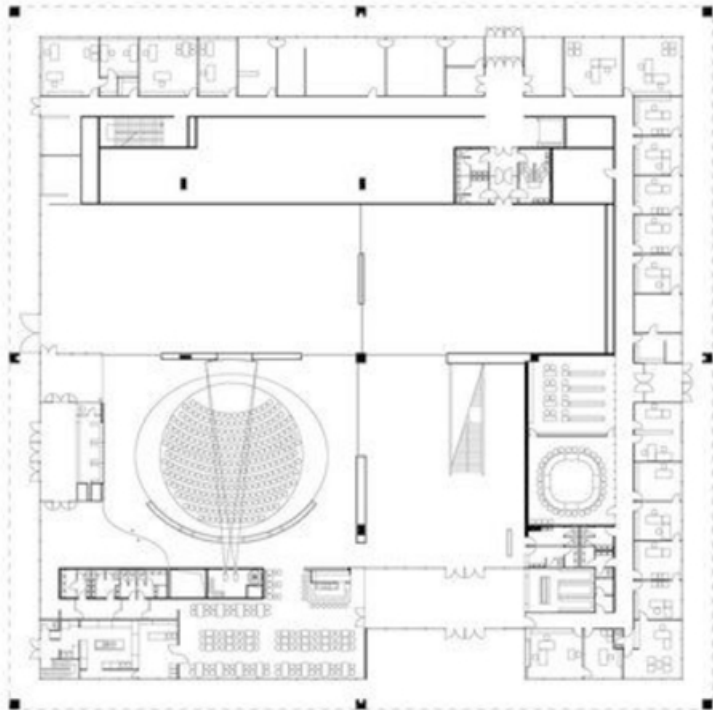
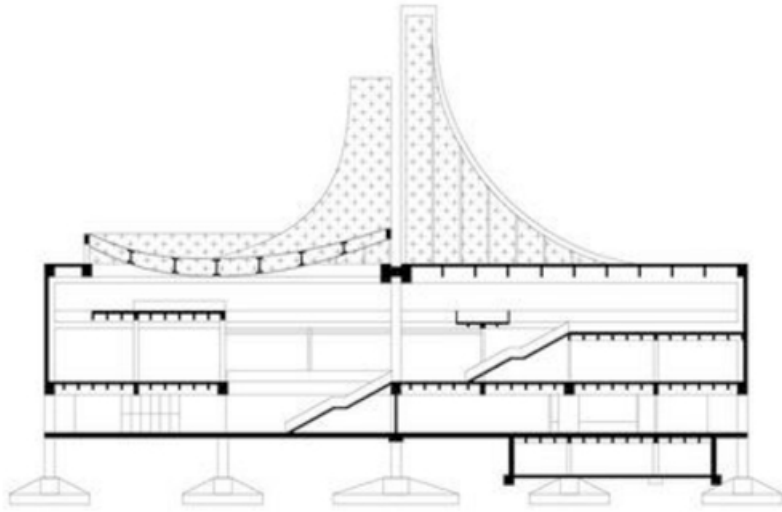
The location was changed and the position of the museum was eventually situated between two important objects: Palace of Serbia (former Palace of Federation) and Palace of Central Committee. By changing the location, and by placing it linearly in a sequence with objects of a political significance, the museum is given only the **ideological role**, increasing the political power.

A new, "festive" square access, was also designed which was supposed to "involve revolutionary themes" - "the eternal fire would be burning in the middle of the square in a memory of fallen soldiers," and "area will be ending with a single pedestal in front of the museum, with a sculpture President of the Republic, Josip Broz Tito " ¹⁶ The building that has **never been built** further from the foundations and basement, stands as an example of architectural work in which all the social upheavals left a mark. Its scratches are the only tangible thing that we have today of the old **aspirations**, standing in contrast with modernist idea of the massive progress and optimism that characterized the 20th century.



Vjenceslav Richter's design for Museum of Revolution / 1961

¹⁶ Ljiljana Blagojević, "Novi Beograd: Osporeni modernizam" (New Belgrade: Contested Modernism), 2007



Vjenceslav Rihter's design for Museum of Revolution / 1961



★PROBLEM ★DEFINITION

URBAN IDEALISM MALFUNCTIONS

Development of New Belgrade was not smooth, after all. Some of the problems were recognized already during its construction, but their solution was postponed, justified with a plan to address all the issues gradually, as the funds are provided.

However, some problems remain permanent due to crisis and sudden breakdown of the country, but also because of the problematic concepts on which the Athens Charter was based. The notion of tower in the park proved to be fatal at several levels: it produced a large physical distance between the housing units and additional housing facilities, which is why New Belgrade has long been known as a dormitory of Belgrade. As the construction of cultural and leisure facilities was not proportional to the rapidly increasing number of residents of New Belgrade, people were unable to engage in these kinds of activities within the urban area they lived in and forced to commute to the old city. In addition, vast green areas and empty plots waiting for funds to enable implementation of the plan were abused for the purpose of wild construction.

All these problems coincided and created through media an overall negative image of New Belgrade. By observing New Belgrade through certain discrepancies expressed, it is easy to ignore its aesthetical, historical and symbolical value. Neglection gradually leads to oblivion, which proved to be harmful for one's national identity.

SLEEPING CITY

The vast area of New Belgrade is organized in blocks (blokovi), acting like microcosms constituting local urban identity, with architectural style that differs as new design trends emerged. Over the years they adopted their own characters, each one becoming a neighborhood with distinct traits and a distinct sense of belongings among its inhabitants. The blocks are designed according to varying concepts and typologies, producing from block to block different qualities of urban space, and ultimately resulting in a kind of catalogue of the virtues and vices of the modernist city.

Although many of them are holding more than 10 thousand inhabitants, the feeling of **isolation** often prevails. However, these problems have been recognized and criticized already during the construction, as Alison and Peter Smithson have put it: "the sense of belonging is one of the basic emotional needs of man", while "from the sense of belonging grows a sense of neighborhood",¹⁷ it was a critique of the absence of environment (ambient) that grows spontaneously and naturally, often from unfinished and flexible urban structures. The monotony of precisely located skyscrapers and gaps and open green space between them had inevitably created a feeling of isolation, while the urban zoning made the city does not develop complexity and stratification of the traditional city.

The question of neighborliness is particularly relevant since it's a well-known, traditional form of sociability in rural Yugoslavia. Although local communities were intended to foster a sense of **community**, the blocks typically contained several thousand people which was too large to play an integrative role. On the other hand, the amount of services provided wasn't sufficient neither. The absence of a sense of neighborhood was further enhanced by privileging residential constructions over all other kinds of other facilities. In the first years of New Belgrade's renewed construction, the absence of these facilities was considered normal. New Belgrade, after all, was a construction site.

¹⁷ CIAM X, Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia (now Croatia), on Habitat, 1956

New inhabitants were moving in every month, who quickly filled up the capacities of buses and stores that were provided. They were forced to do their grocery shopping and meeting needs for social interaction in the old town and merely spend the night in the new city. It was hardly surprising that New Belgrade got a moniker “a dormitory of Belgrade”, where nobody knew his neighbor, which stands in the contrast to traditional Yugoslav sense of neighborhood.

The lack of commercial, educational, administrative, or social and cultural services was long-lasting. Even during the “golden 1960s” not much seemed to have changed. In 1968 number of local community centers was still criticized as insufficient. Although being home for many popular actors, New Belgrade had only three libraries and four movie theaters. Educational facilities and cultural life were, therefore, New Belgrade’s two big problems and major needs”. Community centers, shops, and markets were amply provided in the detailed site plans, but they were simply not being built. This was not only a problem in Belgrade but common throughout the Eastern Block. New Belgrade’s shortage of commercial, cultural, educational, and political facilities was not a temporary phenomenon; it was systematic.¹⁸

A high demand for housing was recurrent which led investors to maximize the number of housing units, often replacing a shop with an apartment, ignoring the requirements of detailed site plans. The part of the fault was on the government for not investing in community centers, schools, cultural spaces; libraries, cinemas, theaters... Construction of community centers was a part of the plan for each block, but its construction lagged behind the construction of housing.

It seemed paradoxical that Yugoslavia’s model city, a showcase for country’s high standard of living and modernity, lacked modern grocery shopping facilities, especially considering the important place that shopping came to occupy in Yugoslav popular culture. The “human needs of the little worker” were narrowed down to one simple element: the modern apartment.

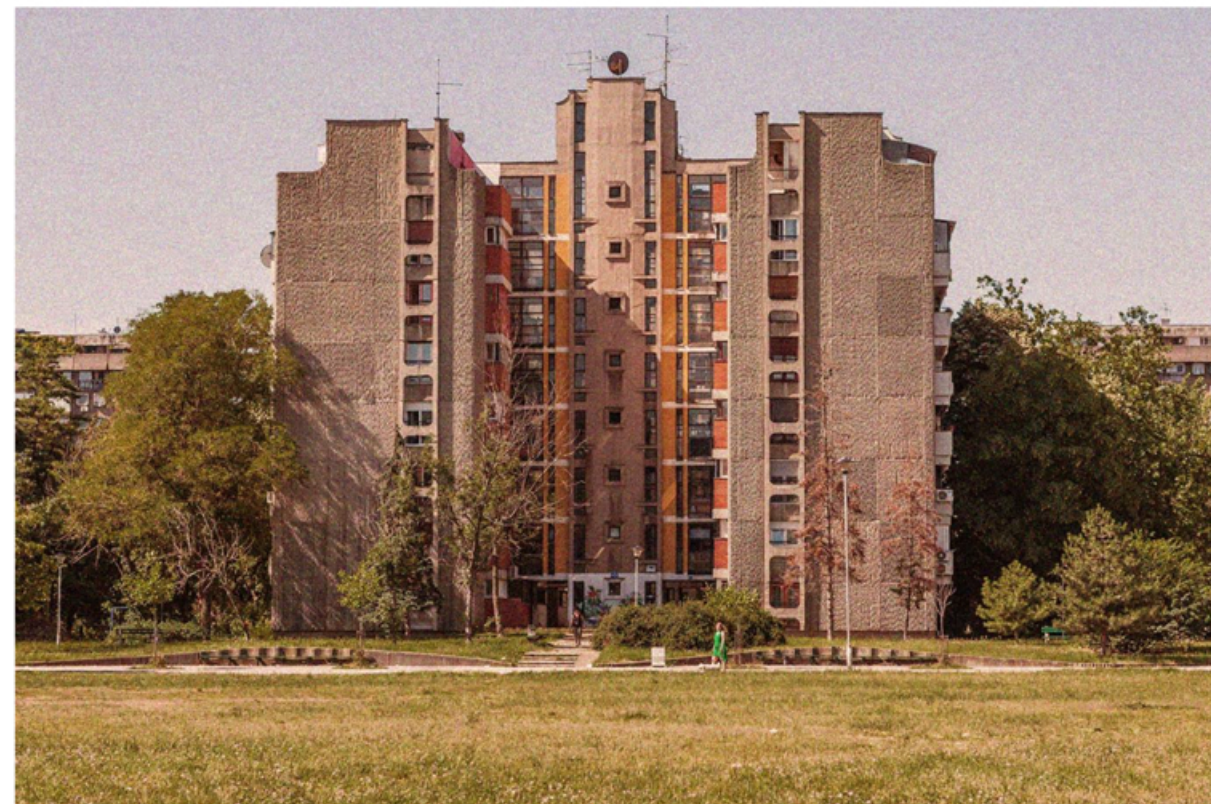
¹⁸ Brigitte Le Normand, “Designing Tito’s capital / Urban planning, modernism and socialism in Belgrade”, 2014. P.133



residential complex / block 44 / photo by the author



residential complex / block 30 / photo by the author



residential complex / block 29 / photo by Ogino Knaus

POPULAR IMAGE

Despite introduced innovations, the significance and the strong symbolic behind its construction, New Belgrade has never developed a positive public image. As influence of media and popular culture increased, the effects of such displays had a major impact on creation of **stereotypical** image and not leaving enough space for personal impression. Despite the strong and complex messages conveyed by the construction of New Belgrade, topic of this district wasn't an important one in the Yugoslav production. Until the late 1970s all criticisms came by sociologists, journalists and planners, while the artists have remained restrained from expressing their opinions. In a few movies from the beginning of the 1980s problems of New Belgrade as a new urban center referred to its changing population structure, inadequate housing and lack of facilities for a satisfactory social and cultural life. As the construction of New Belgrade went hand in hand with industrialization and political reorientation, the overture of numerous work places, facilitated a large migration towards the capital, causing a chronic homelessness and a significant change in the social structure. As a consequence, there was a generalized opinion that almost all New Belgrade inhabitants were newcomers, and therefore were often despised for their **lack of urban culture**.

In several movie achievements, the topic of New Belgrade is addressed through emphasizing the difference between housing in the old and new city, emphasizing the social status and class difference among their inhabitants. New Belgrade's residents were generally portrayed as working class, newcomers of provincial background whose everyday life is depicted in contrast to the one of elegant and educated, residents of the Belgrade's old town. Accordingly, movies provided an overview of the interior decoration of their homes: sunny apartments in New Belgrade's skyscrapers on one, and pre-war houses in the city center on the other side.



residential complex / block 63 / photo by Flickr: Ross McRoss

Similar topics were addressed in music: one of the rock groups famous for their lyrics critical of the regime, painted a dark grey neighborhood with problems of juvenile alcoholism, violent gangs of newcomers, empty streets already by 9 pm and an unnatural environment without trees to stop the wind between skyscrapers adorned only with concrete and asphalt.

Speaking more broadly, it is difficult to define the position Yugoslavia and New Belgrade on the global architectural map. The cause might be in its unique geopolitical context - "somewhere in between" was probably too complex for its architectural style to be clearly recognized and accepted. The international reputation of the socialist architecture of Yugoslavia seems to have been created to a large extent by photographers, with all the inherent strengths and dangers of such an approach.

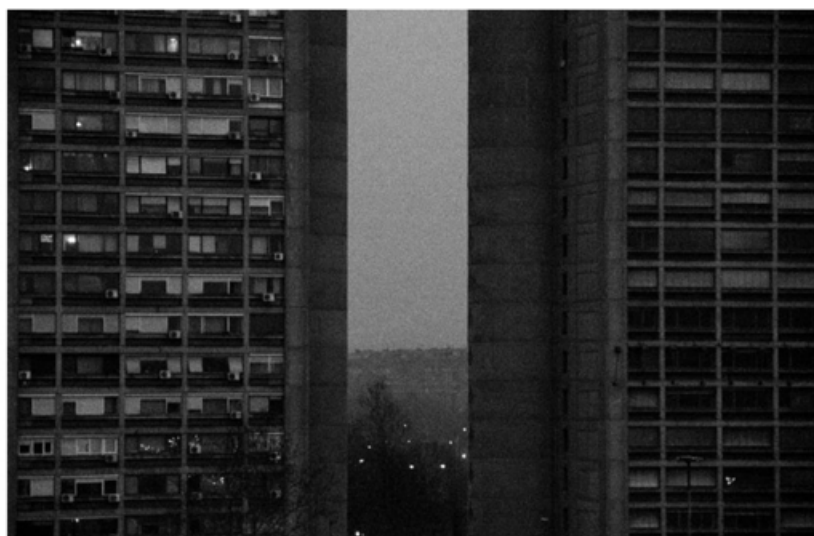
A recent wave of photographic monographs presents the buildings of the socialist East as if they were relics of some long-lost civilization: sad, dilapidated concrete mastodons, anonymous in their spectacular oddity, defying interpretation and lacking any meaning relevant for the present moment. These publications certainly have some merit, since they dispense with one entrenched stereotype that identified Eastern Europe with monumental figural socialist realism; but they fall into another trap by suggesting a certain uniformity of architecture across the region and across the period, offering far too simplistic interpretations. The socialist world and its concomitant architectural phenomena were in no way monolithic, either transnationally or within individual countries, not even within the same genre of architecture. Not all buildings from the socialist period are dilapidated; not all of them are enormous brutalist structures; and most are surely not stripped of meaning.

¹⁹

¹⁹ Vladimir Kulic, Maroje Mrduljaš, *Modernism In-between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*, p.17



winter / block 23 / photo by: Flickr



“Genex”, western city gate / photo by: Pawel Starzec

WILD CONSTRUCTION

The first wave of non-regulated transformations and infiltrations into the open spaces and structures of New Belgrade have been massive in number but small scale and individually driven. Despite the overall betterment of the standard of living, a persistent housing shortage left a portion of the population out in the cold. Additionally, peasants continued to come running after Belgrade in the search of a better life and employment. Many of them decided to settle on empty lots around the city in self-built homes instead of waiting to their turn to be allocated in some of the newly built apartments

The government’s attempt to respond to this problem was further intoxicating for wild housing. Realizing that the construction industry does not meet an enormous quota of housing units, they saw a solution in giving permission to wild builders to build on regulated plots.

On the one hand, this approach represented a quick solution to accommodate dramatically increased population in the city, while on the other it suggested their wish to keep this troublesome population on the margins on the city. Urban planners disagreed with the idea of self – built housing program, considering that it encourages peasants to migrate to the city and continue living in their traditional, primitive conditions. According to them this plan promoted physical and social backwardness, and as such it was standing in contrast with the idea of modernist functional city.



small scale trade facilities / block 63 / photo Bas Princen

Policy makers and urban planners hoped that Athens Charter will help modernizing mentality of its population, but the idea of living in a house rather than the apartment attracted an increasing number of people. These fantasies were further enchased by the American movies and western trends.

The crisis in socialist system since 1980s, led to the rapid de-collectivization of the housing stock, resulting in self-managed solutions to renew or expand one's home, although it still officially belonged to the public domain. This ability to respond to the system inspired the unpublished text of Henry Lefebvre on New Belgrade, written as part of the entrance to the International Competition for the New Belgrade Urban Structure Improvement in 1986 by the French architects Serge Renaudie and Pierre Guilbaud, and discovered by the architectural historian from the Architecture School of Belgrade University, Ljiljana Blagojević. "Because of self-management, a place is sketched between the citizen and the citadin, and Yugoslavia is today (1986) perhaps one of the rare countries country to be reliable to pose the problem of a New Urban." This "new urban" had different forms and typologies in New Belgrade, not always legal and not always pleasant, following the relatively negative image of the city inherited from the previous epoch. The transition period, convoluted in Yugoslavia by the destruction of the common state, brought the final destruction of the public image and the "criminalization" of public housing blocks. Especially blocks 61, 62 and 63 by the Marušić architects were presented as a city ghetto.²⁰

²⁰ Prokopljevic, Jelena. "Do Not Throw Concrete Blocks! Social and Public Housing in New Belgrade and their Representations in Popular Culture." *fusion*, no. 6, 2015



wild housing on the city periphery / 1990s / photo: Bas Princen

AFTER YUGOSLAVIA

The crisis of the ideal idea of zoning territory occurred parallelly with the **crisis** of the country and the loss of all ideologies on which it was based; the transition to a new social system and, ultimately, county's **breakdown**. Indeed, the end of the state meant the end of the progress and development of the entire region, as well as of New Belgrade.

Tito's death in 1980, marked the beginning of the collapse for the Yugoslav federation, through numerous **secession** and **rebellions**, and culminated with the up rise of individual states. The disagreements led to wars and then separation of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia – Herzegovina in 1995. The republics of Serbia and Montenegro maintained their status of Yugoslav countries until 2003, officially renamed to Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, destruction continued as conflict in Kosovo erupted in 1998 which ended with the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. As a result, much of the valuable architecture, monuments and historic urban areas was destroyed and damaged from 1991 to 1999.

As the socialist state descended into chaos, so did its cities. Instead of the cozy Baroque squares and fountains, the unplanned, illegal growth invaded the half-finished spaces of the modernist city. Everything that the socialist city was supposed to eradicate blasted back with a vengeance: land speculation, total lack of coordination, dominance of private interest over public. At the same time, the pasts that seemed safely buried for forty-five years were re - excavated, shaking up the sensitive ethnic balance that held the country together.

By the end of 1991, Yugoslavia was no more. The destruction of its most prodigious urban creations was just a visible mark for the lives that perished.

These regional differences and turmoil reflected in the architectural work during the last years of Yugoslav federation. As early as the 1970's there was a visible decrease in the number of large scale construction projects which was a direct parallel to the decreasing investment capital.²¹

Semi-legal structures began to grow in places envisioned in plans as free or park areas, the sidewalks etc. And the architecture within which it occurred provided enough space (broad sidewalks, park areas, haustors and ground floors of buildings), and after all, inhabitants' need for these contents. Hence, the problem of zoning only increased, and these places became **undefined**.

²¹ Sunny Milosevic, Seeking Identity in Former Yugoslavia's Socialist Architecture, 2013

Going back to 1958 and numerous competitions for masterplan proposals, we would find the initial questioning of New Belgrade's symbolic role within the city and the entire country. After the years of debate, it is decided to leave this matter undetermined, accepting it as an ongoing process, and focus the attention to industrialization, production and bettering the standard of life. Sixty years after, the question of New Belgrade's coherent vision is coming to life again. The sudden breakdown left the project of New Belgrade half – finished, to be completed within new ideology, conditions, standards and objectives. The new conditions of the country were devastating, and the “ideal zoning” of New Belgrade was finalized with illegal, semi-legal, investors', and “kiosk architecture”.

Le Corbusier's ideas of “open city” today are actually gaps created by the sudden interruption of a great enthusiasm and progress during the development of the new city. They are filled with the architecture of a new, and definitely less optimistic era, failing to solve the problems that it has inherited. It could be argued that the principal failure of New Belgrade is its functional incapacity, more precisely, its failure to develop as a complex spatio-urban structure of multiple functions, which has consequently put strain on the social life and movement of the community. The issue of re-functionalization, thus, predictably becomes central in the contemporary discussion on the future of New Belgrade.²²

²² Ljiljana Blagojevic, Back to the future of New Belgrade: functional past of the modern city



the map of development of New Belgrade / in red – the buildings built after 1990.

The map shows the logic in which the new architecture emerged – mostly along the busiest roads, undefined green areas within the block, or empty areas planned for housing blocks that remained incomplete. The function is mostly commercial, but architecture varies from small – scale, semi-legal “kiosk architecture” to conventional, fast – built, contemporary buildings.



“investor’s urbanism” after the 1990s / block 23 / photo by the author

After the period of urban idealism ended, during the last decade of the last century, under the influence of many disasters, the Belgrade community had lost control over urban development. A low level of functioning of the entire city, on the edge with chaos, anarchy and breakdown, contributed to increasing of the so-called “gray economy”. In urban planning of New Belgrade today exists a certain obsession for the commercial - residential structures, which is just one manifestation of the domination of the so-called “**investors' urbanism**”. Investors are mainly looking for greenfield investments or a large commercial space for shops and modern infrastructure, the quality that New Belgrade has to offer. Thus, we witness the gradual destruction of the aspiration of the Functional City, whose shortcomings are not corrected, but are upgraded by the urbanism of the market and for the needs of the business interests of the minority.²³

In the favor of increasing social differences, some 250 000 people from Bosnia and Croatia affected by war had migrated to the city and settled on its outskirts, most often without any legal permits and respect to the urban plans. This affected the infrastructure of the entire city and inevitably affected New Belgrade. The demand for housing had increased, although the construction of residential facilities was the least in this very period, the period of sanctions and transition. The consequences are seen in the increasing number of wild / self-built houses as well as changing social structure of the city.

However, the municipality of Novi Beograd is now the largest one in Serbia, while the prices and demand for the apartments is in constant growth. Commercial buildings, although emerged as a product of investors’ urbanism, are hosting numerous companies, shopping malls and hotels, all built after 2000. The architectural value of those can be questioned, but they do bring to life the long-desired idea of the functional city.

The problems of urban planning of New Belgrade today, are only the consequence of deeper problems that have taken much broader picture and had impact on all the domains of society. Unfortunately, many plans for New Belgrade remained at the level of ideas, which is why it’s often related to the notion of utopia.

²³ Slobodan Barlov, “Transformacija jednog grada – Novi Beograd”, Magazine “Built”, 2009.

A MUSEUM THAT WASN'T

In the context of the unresolved architecture of New Belgrade, an incomplete museum of revolution may speak most about it.

The Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities (MRYNE) in Belgrade, was founded in the formal session on 19th April 1959 by the Central Committee of Yugoslavian communists on the occasion of celebrating forty years of the Communist party. As a state institution, MRYNE was intended to explore and represent historical development, political, social and economic conditions in which it was created and in which the revolutionary labor movement had operated all the way from the period when it was founded, through the National Liberation War, up to the creation of self-managed socialist society. The first two years of museum work were dedicated to adoption of necessary legal acts, determination of preliminary concept and development Plan, organizing the Board for exploring the labor movement in the region, and the announcement of competition for architectural design of the new building.²⁴

According to the original plans, the building of MRYNE was supposed to be built by 1966, but already the end of competition was followed by the process of reviewing the previously made decisions, which were particularly related to the issue of building's location. According to the proposition of the control plan from 1960, construction of a new building was planned to be at the mouth of rivers Sava and Danube in New Belgrade, in the center of the urban composition containing Museum of Contemporary Arts (1965), Ethnographic and Museum of Natural History (never built at that location), the building of the Central Committee SKJ (1964), Political Party school (never built) and three other objects which were supposed to be reservations. Taking into account the inconsistent dimensions of the adjacent buildings and their geometry, Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade revised plans for MRYNE in 1964 and temporarily opted for one of the residential blocks nearby.

However, the process of building was at rest until 1977, when the question about disposition of the building arose again, and some new examinations and valorization of ten locations in New Belgrade were done, including the ones that were rejected back in 1964.

Finally, in 1977 Belgrade City Assembly has adopted the decision of the building's position – opting for the Block number 13, in the area between the building Central Committee of Yugoslavian communists, and the Palace of Serbia where the Representation of Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Federal Executive Council was (FEC in 1959, but today it is the Palace of Serbia). The area of Block 13 ensured the need for a long access avenue defined by the project, where the entrance was to have the monument of eternal flame in the memorial to fallen soldiers. The left side was to have the character of the Alley of National Heroes and at the front of the building the sculpture of Josip Broz Tito should have been set.

The building of MRYNE should have been finished and open for the public on 4th July 1981 on the occasion of 40 years of the uprising of the people of Yugoslavia against fascism. Before the deadline, only the funding and the underground space were finished, and in 1979 the work on the construction site was stopped, due to economic issues. Shortly after, already in 1980, the process of building was completely annulled.

This change of the location and placement of the building alongside the facilities of political power, meant that Museum of the Revolution has been stripped of its role in the politics of culture, and given exclusively the ideological role invested in the power of politics.

Today, the great vision of museum is lying tucked away between trees and layers of grass. The foundations and the basement part of this building reflect in the best way the end of the revolution and the collapse of an ideology. Instead of materializing monumentality, eternity, and the power, the construction of the museum remained on the basement, today accommodating the homeless.

Even though the MRYNE has never got its space, the thematic exhibitions were displayed in the Military Museum, in the building of FEC, in the Belgrade Youth Center and in the Museums in many major cities in Yugoslavia, as well as in the Yugoslavian agencies in SSSR, Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam, Angola etc. In 1996 the Government of Yugoslavia brought the decision for it to be included into the Museum of Yugoslavian history, together with the Memorial Center – Josip Broz Tito. The exhibition was closed

²⁴ <http://andreapalasti.com/following/andreapalasti.com/Kolekcija-MRNNJ>

for visitors and dismantled, and few of those saved exhibits are kept in depot of the Museum of Yugoslavian History.

Vjenceslav Richter's 1961 project exposé for the building of the Museum of the Revolution starts thus:

"The purpose and idea of this museum is to safeguard the truth about us.
From this follows its extraordinary importance, which has found its confirmation in the assigned location.
Thus, it is impossible to approach solving this problem with an arsenal of conventional notions about museums, no matter how valid the solutions that follow from them may be.
The embodiment of the Museum of the Revolution
must express a pervasive and great idea.
Our idea and the idea of us.
It is as much ours, as it is new and authentic.
New ideas arise from fundamental truths and build upon them."

However, the fate of the museum was different. The idea of the museum's monumentality and heroism stands in contrast with the fact that its materializing remained unfinished, neglected and forgotten. All the beliefs that museum was supposed to symbolize died along with the collapse of the country itself. With the disappearance of the country, at least one million five hundred thousand Yugoslavs vanished, like the citizens of Atlantis, into the realm of imaginary places and people. The Yugoslav ideology of "brotherhood and unity" was replaced with exclusionary ideologies that sought to divide former inhabitants of SFRY along cultural, linguistic, religious, and economic lines. It can be argued that these ideologies didn't really have a firm ground, thus were all a part of an artificial ideology. It produced the system which was ineffective and unsustainable, and the consequences of this are still felt today.

On the other hand, the Museum of Revolution is still the **site of the memory**, representing both literally and metaphorically the rise and destruction of one country and an idea that marked an epoch. Its foundations are one of many tangible "leftovers" of ex-Yugoslavia.

Whether being unfinished projects or successful city's landmark, the modernist architecture of ex-Yugoslavia outlived the ideology which produced it, had merged with the city, and today witnesses a new system and age.

Speaking about the intangible heritage, it is largely influenced by **memory** of former Yugoslavs. The fall of the country led to manifestation of the so-called "**Yugonostalgia**" among them. Its anthropological and sociological aspects have not been clearly recognized, but the term and the corresponding epithet "Yugo-nostalgic", is commonly used by the people in the region in two distinct ways: as a positive personal descriptive, and as a derogatory label²⁵. The notion of Yugo – nostalgia through perspective of socialist workers and their stories might be interpreted as the tragic story of failed transition. On the other hand, workers' memories, and themselves as the actors of modernization and industrialization, are preventing the remnants of a modernist utopia to be forgotten as part of an unsuccessful socialist project.

One form of Yugo – nostalgia is driven by imposed, romantic fantasies about the country itself. It is manifested among former Yugoslavs through their belief that "their country was the most beautiful, the Adriatic Sea was the bluest, the fish was the freshest, the people were the warmest, the self-management was the most efficient, the brotherhood and unity were the strong, and the army was the most courageous."

But, perhaps the most common form of Yugonostalgia is the most ordinary: nostalgia for a past that appears better than the present. For many former Yugoslavs, faced with the present-day realities of rampant unemployment, social dislocation, and weak states marked by widespread corruption - any existence might appear better than the present.²⁵

²⁵ Nicole Lindstrom, Review essay on: "Yugonostalgia: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia in Former Yugoslavia.", 2004, p.23

On the other hand, nostalgia can be seen as a nationalist reaction to the contemporary political situation. Especially during 1990s, right after the collapse of the country, people were often forced to forget their Yugoslav past, and then again, forced to remember it, but within imposed, often negative connotation forcibly creating a feeling of bitterness. This form of Yugonostalgia is self-consciously ambivalent and critical, recognizing the always elusive, inconclusive, and fragmentary nature of memories and fantasies of the Yugoslav past.

The notion of Yugonostalgia could be seen as an opportunity for a reflective approach towards the past – one that is not afraid of remembering its contradictions. Complexity of such feeling and its dual character provide an opportunity for diverse and numerous interpretations of the facts, and the question of the real past of the former state. Materialized into the topic of museum, these feelings could help creating an open program policy that takes into account visitors' points of view, opinions and feelings. It should help museum to focus its attention to still living (Yugoslav) heritage and allow the constant redefinition the Museum's content. Museum as an art institution should be relieved of the imposed norms of the past times and practices, free to convey the story that isn't bound to a specific personality or regime. The story of the state and its collapse can be expressed through individual feelings, and as a visitor, by human nature, one will accept as truth only the one that seems most bearable.

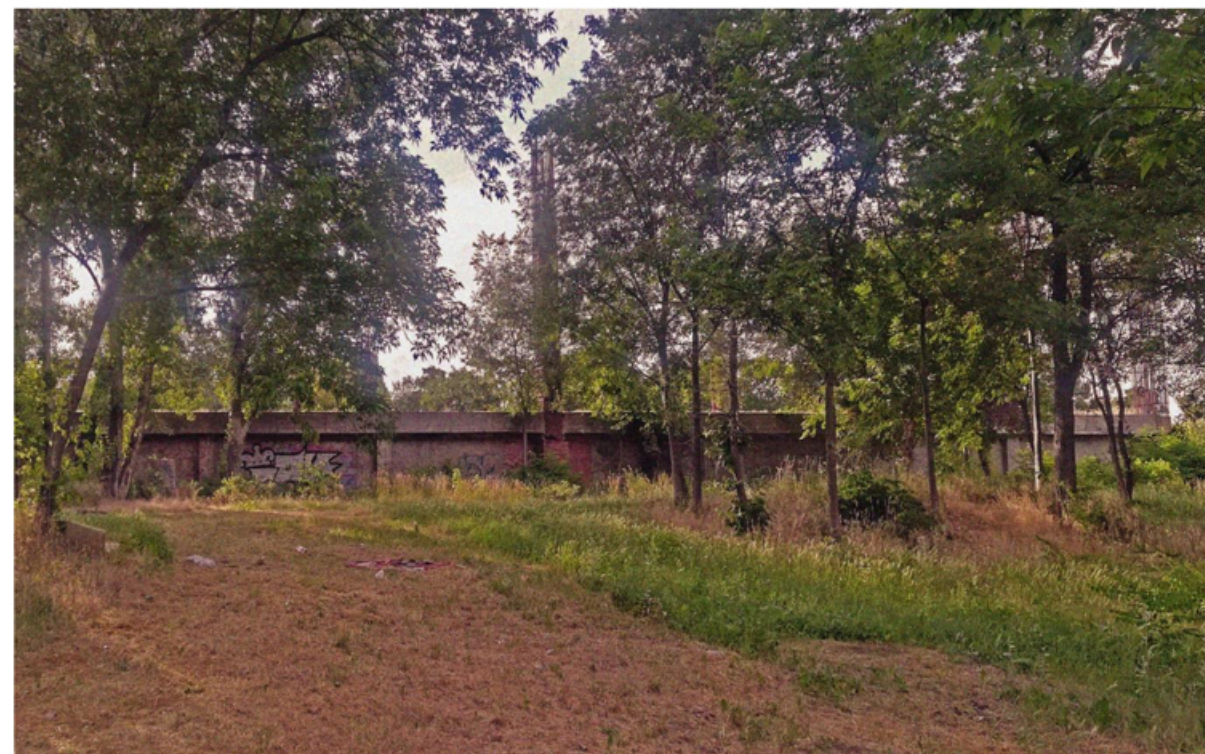
For all of this, building a new museum on the foundations of the old raises many ethical questions. In order to honor the architecture that had inevitably become a part of one cultural heritage, the task of an architect is finding a new purpose for this architecture. On the other hand, dealing with dual memory shouldn't imply the right approach to the topic. Instead, by following the tricky memory lane, idea is to keep the truth about the country somewhere **in between**, where it actually was.



foundations of Museum of Revolution



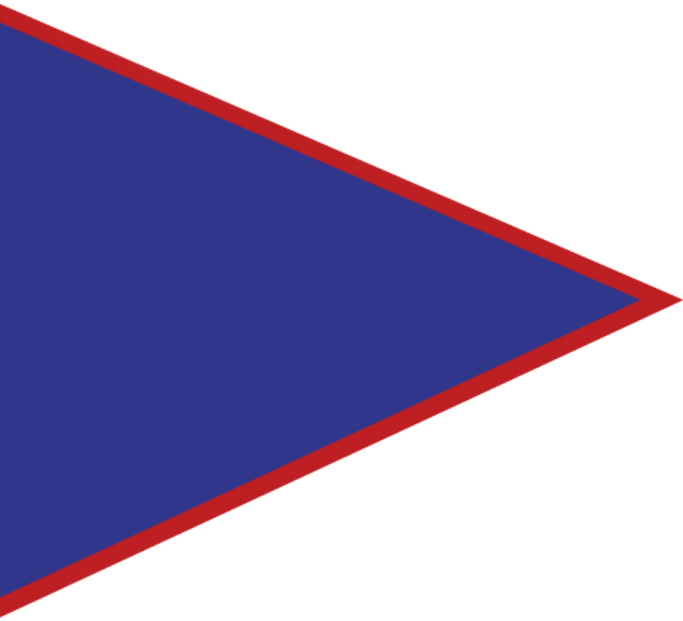
foundations of Museum of Revolution / photo by the author





“These spaces were only able to resound with a message as long as such a message was provided by the state. Now the stage is still set, but the actors have gone. Now the cathedrals have been abandoned by the priests, just as they have been stripped of their robes. And so we are finding that it is actually the interior spaces which look like the skins they have shed, while the buildings remain standing as sculptures, as monuments. They are quickly being absorbed by the newly growing urban texture. Scars which may have disturbed a little, but which no longer hurt. It looks as if nobody finds it necessary today to hate these buildings, to destroy them. Sheer relics of a forgotten history, they encounter nothing but clueless indifference. ”

Tobia Bezzola



PROBLEM DEFINITION

DESIGN

/ TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

Building of the Museum of the lost country was designed at a location marked as block 13 in New Belgrade, covering almost 210,000 m². In general masterplan site is treated as a green area, without dense construction planned.

The planned area is about 9000 m². Total floors of the building are underground, groundfloor and 1 floor. and the building is free-standing in a natural environment. The new museum is being built on the top of the initiated, basement part of the previous museum. The project consists of two segments: **reconstruction of the existing part** and **construction of the additional two new floors**. Car parking is planned in the underground section, with access from the main boulevard that defines the block.

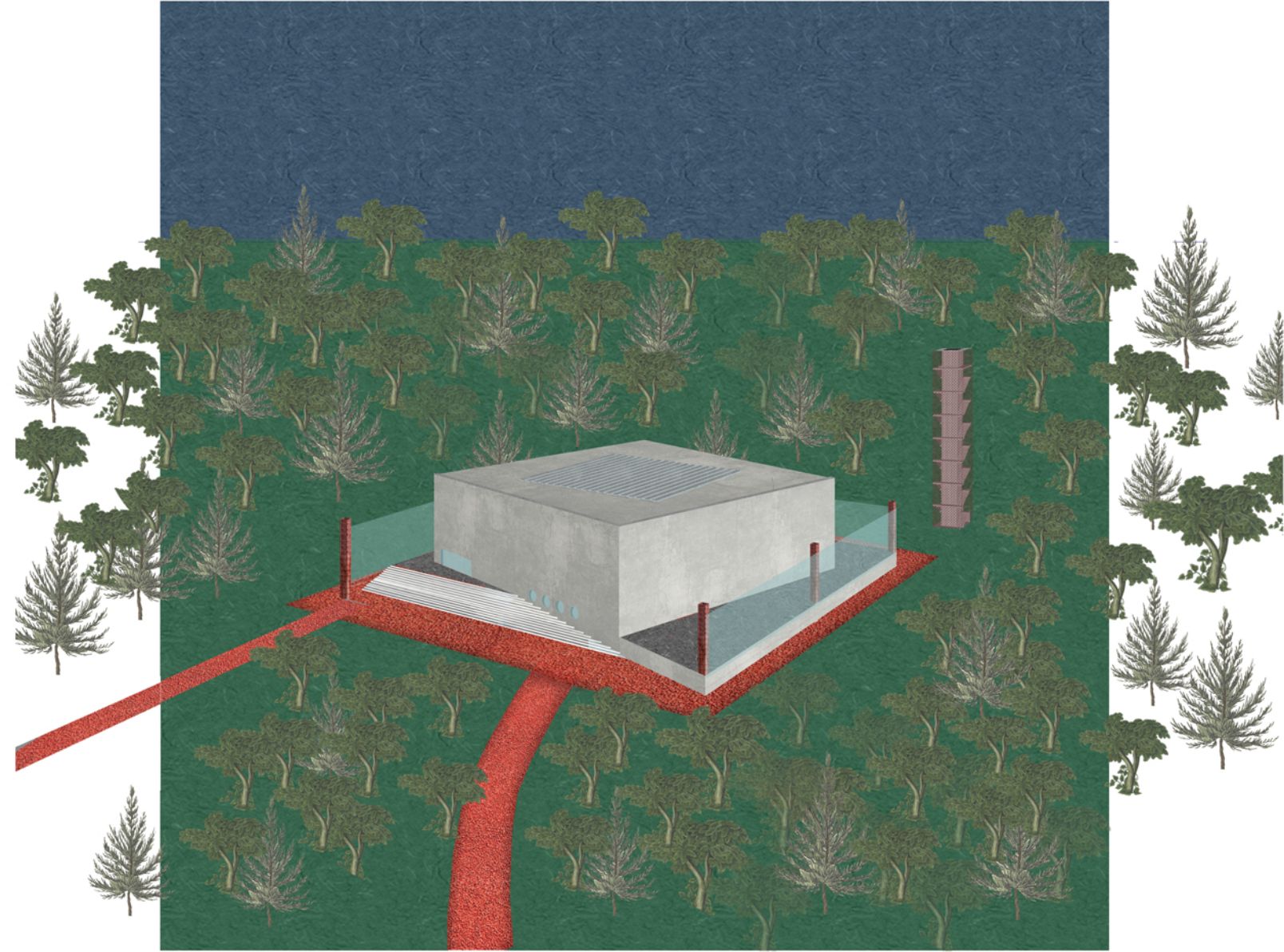
The existing basement part is made of concrete skeletal system with columns in the range of 34.65m, which are connected by the peripheral base reinforced concrete walls (d = 20.0 cm). Pillars and beams are 70h70 cm. The existing part is of square shape, dimensions 70.0 x 70.0 m. The new part of the building is made of reinforced concrete, with walls of thickness ranging from 20cm to 50cm. the outer wall is made of 200mm glass.

/ THE EXHIBITION

Towards the new symbolism is the main exhibition of the museum, based on the analyzed phenomena of **Yugo-nostalgia**. It is an opportunity for a reflective approach towards the past – one that is not afraid of remembering its contradictions. Complexity of the feeling and provide an opportunity for diverse and numerous interpretations of the facts, and the question of the real past of the former state. Twenty years after the country's collapse seems like a safe distance to approach emotions and examine the way things were. The idea is that the main exhibition consists of two elements – a **personal object**, which dates from the period of ex - Yugoslavia, that people would donate to the museum, followed by the **story** - their personal memory related to the object. These two elements, real (object) and personal (story) together make a balanced, yet individual truth. Range of the emotions could go from sadness, disappointment and anger to fascination, joy and optimism but the visitors themselves choose the truth, derived from all the stories. Personal objects could be replaced by new ones over time which makes the exhibiton temporary, while the topic remains permanent.

/DESIGN

Collage as media was chosen after following the nature of modernism in exYugoslavia - numerous overlapping conditions and ideas in one place. Since it's impossible stripping them all to one single premise, these designs contain all the important **architectural, political and ideological elements**. Apart from that, bright colors and often unrealistic views go hand in hand with the notion of **utopia** and on the other hand, stand in **contrast** to the massive, monumental concrete jungle of New Belgrade.



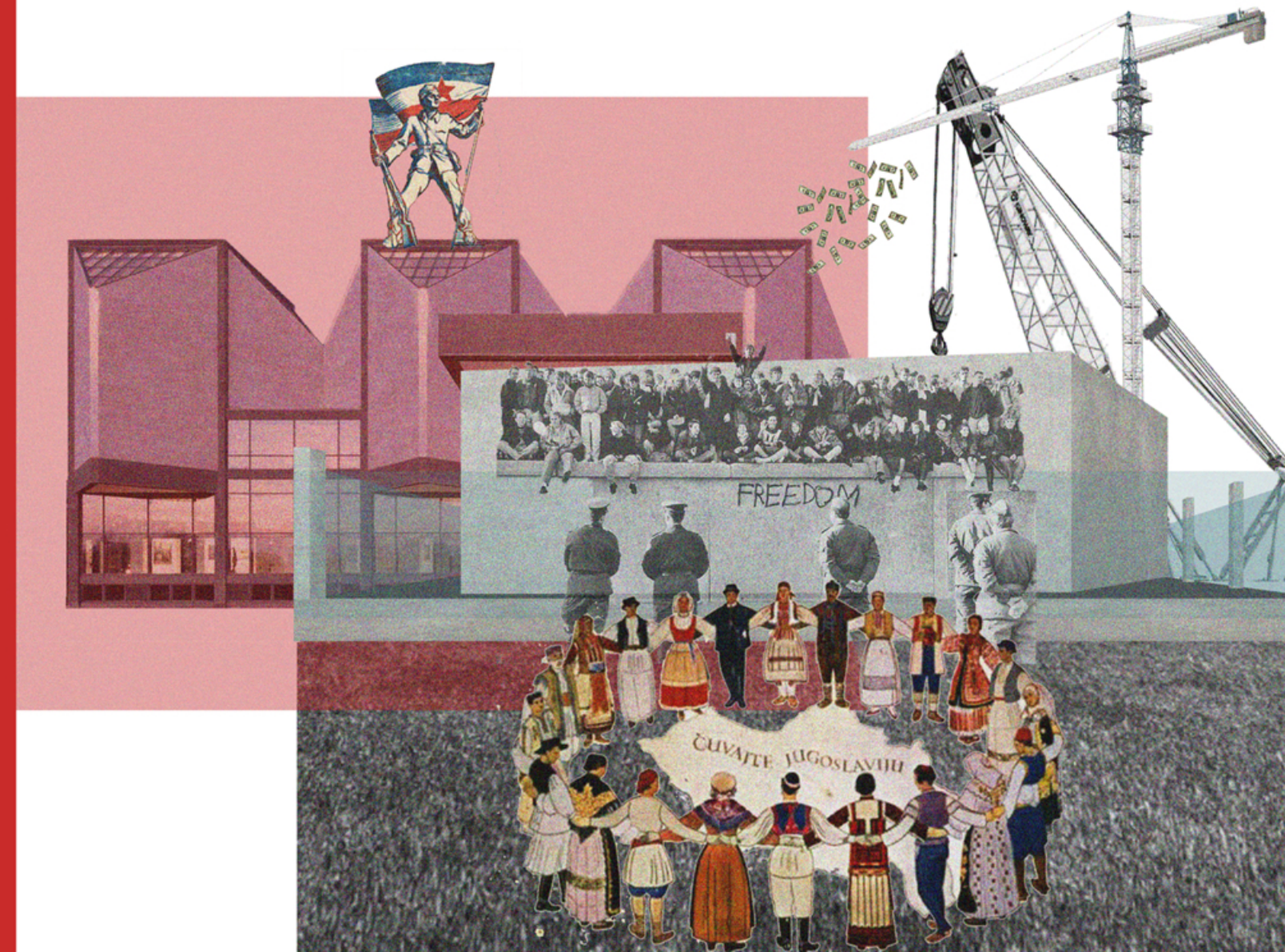
MONUMENTALITY

Perhaps the most important and most common characteristic of not only modernism in Yugoslavia, but the entire socialist state. Monumentality was reflected in the massive use of concrete, large proportions, omnipresent sculptures of Tito, as well as landscape architecture and the appearance of Yugoslav monuments (*spomenik*). It was also a feature of Tito's politics and habits which formed the style by which he was well-known. Trying to maintain the imagined monumental character of this area, the new museum is accompanied by the observation tower next to it. Its symbolic lies in a decision to pay homage to this important characteristic of the unbuilt museum. Its functional role is related to the planning concept of the surrounding housing blocks, where each one contains at least one skyscraper. The top of the tower offers a view of both old and New Belgrade.



REVOLUTION

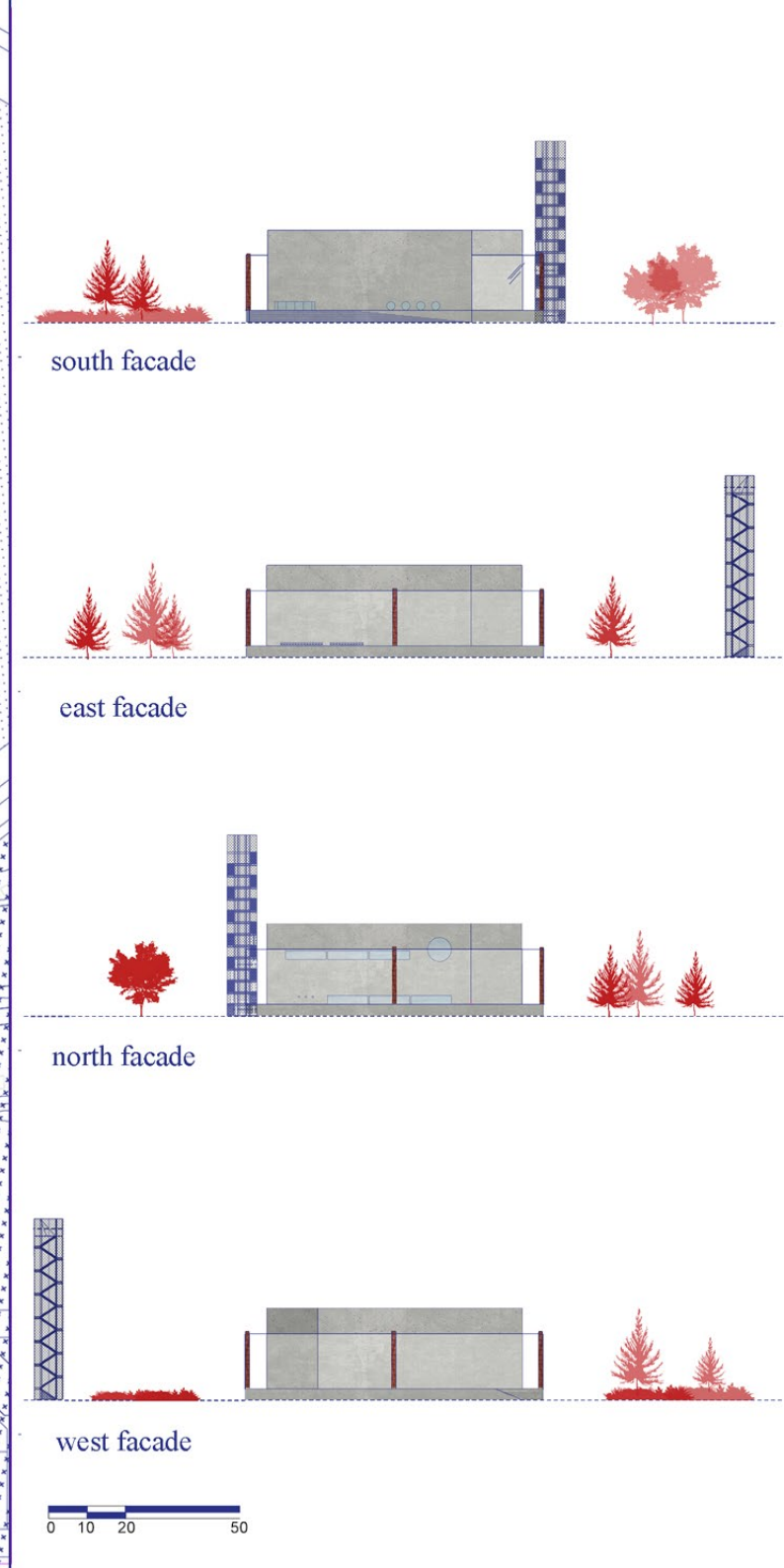
Certain revolutions occurred shortly after the fall of the former state, erasing everything that the previous one had glorified. Also, they are everyday occurrences, emerging in many forms. Although changing the initial theme of the museum, the notion of revolution opens a series of topics related to the general concept, thus can't be easily ignored. The revolution of the new museum is not a political, but a cultural one, reflected in shifting the orientation from the existing foundations. Instead of being aligned with objects of political importance, the new museum would be facing the nearby museum of contemporary arts. This twist of basis should imply the freedom of art instead of being a tool for expression of political power. The existing foundation will honor the past and everything it presents, but the art of today is and should be less regulated, as well as art institution themselves. This is the shift towards the era of freedom of being, feeling, thinking and creating.

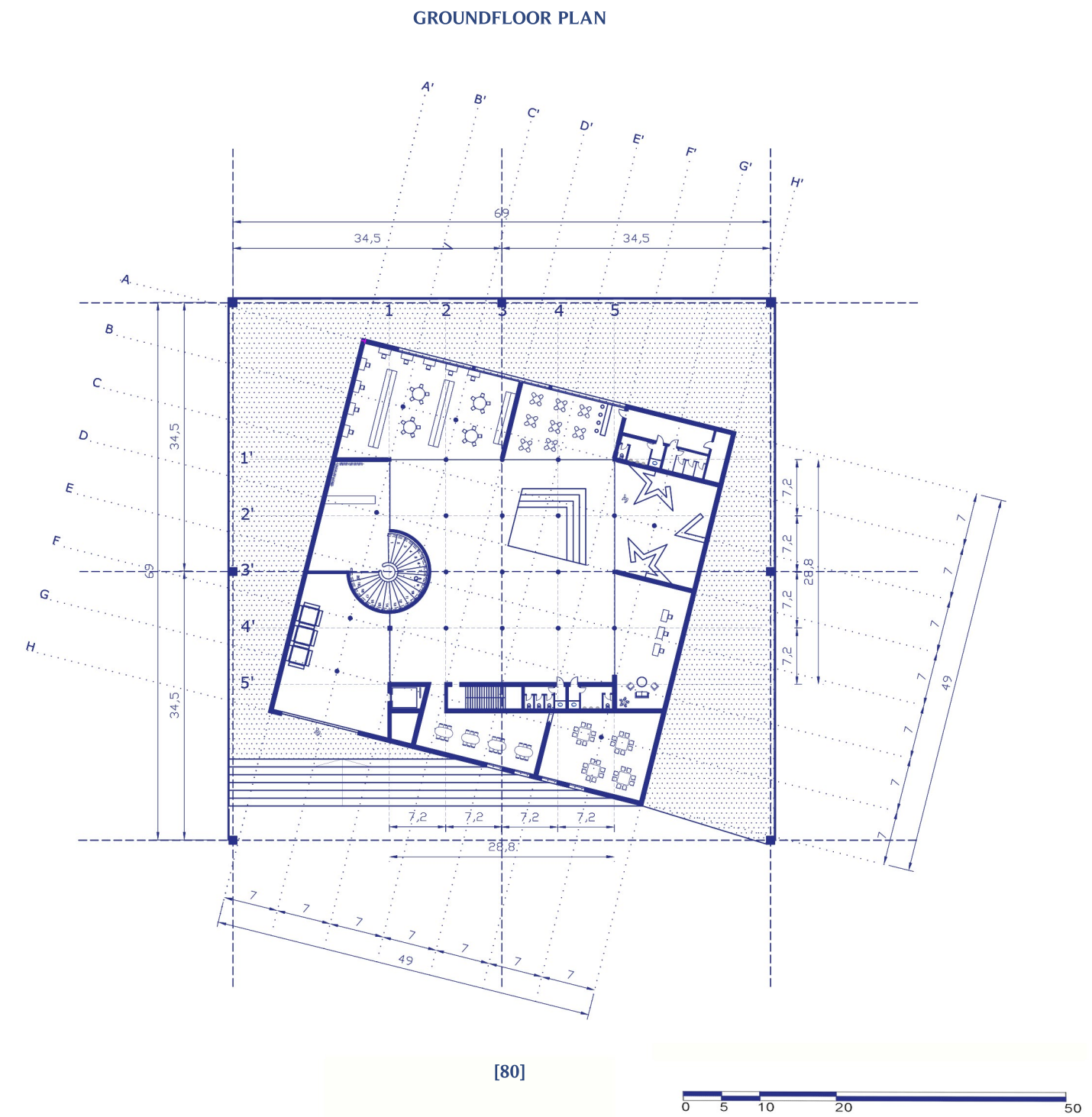
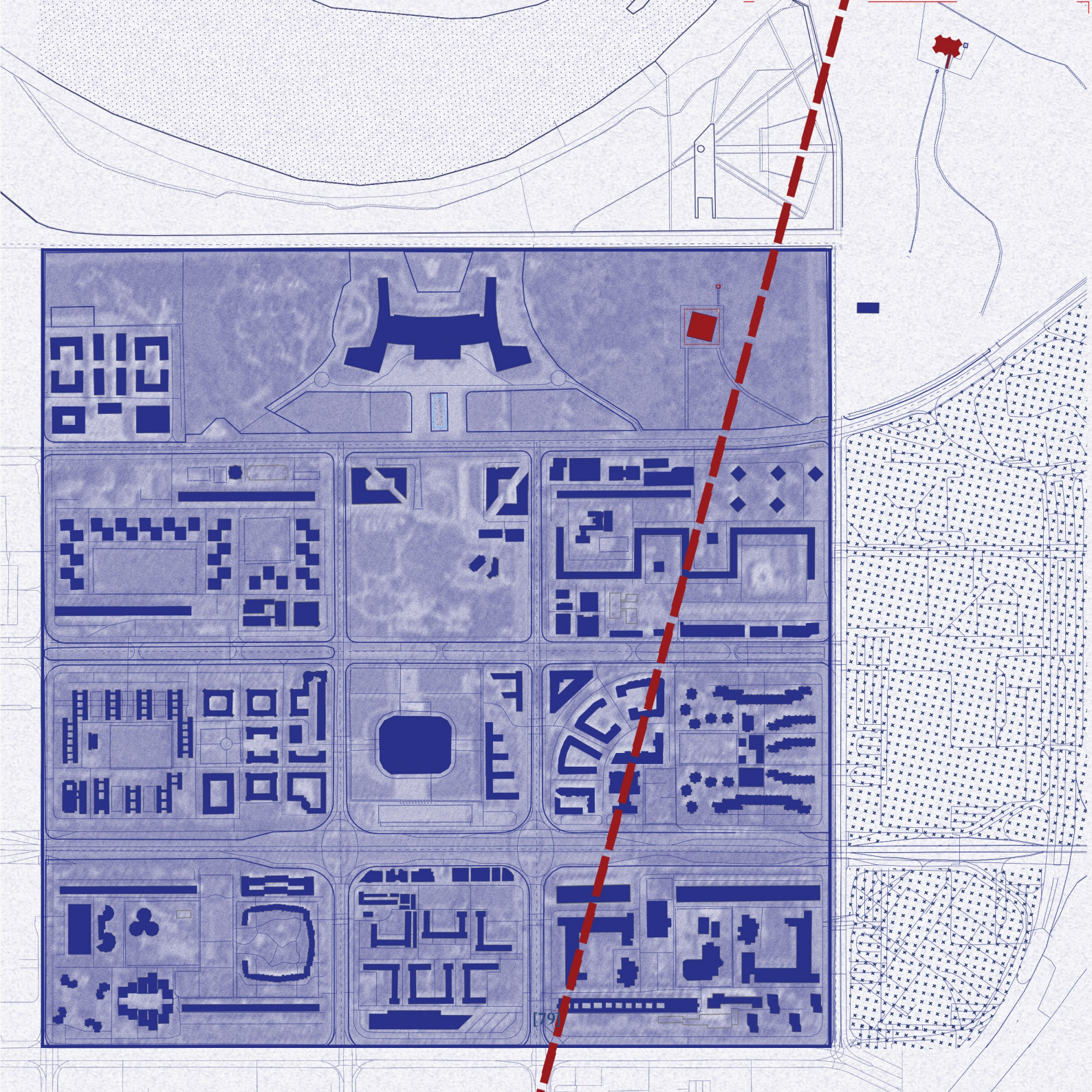


APATHY

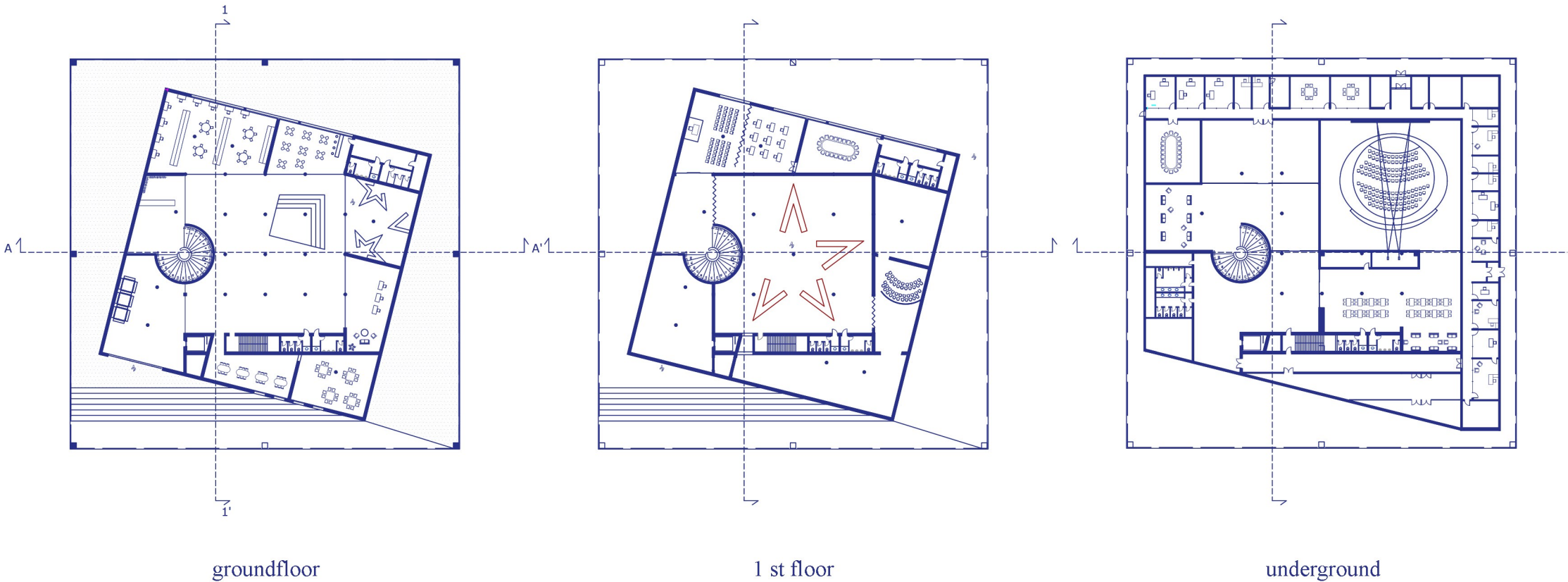
Paradoxically, despite the widespread feeling of Yugo-nostalgia, the apathy has also evolved among people over time, especially towards the architectural achievements of the ex - country. Part comes from the rejection of this period as part of the historical past, which consequently reduces the importance of achievements themselves. However, the fundamental problem is the lack of knowledge of one's own past which is boosted as a way to confront with the sensitive topic and thus choose the safe, neutral approach. As a result, often not even the residents of New Belgrade are not aware of the context in which they live, but their attitude is formed under the strong influence of the most common negative images imposed by the media. Thus, the outlines of the old foundations are accentuated and outlined by raising the glass membrane. This act should indicate the widespread neglection of importance of one's own history and point out to the presence of the museum as a part of the unfinished historical point.



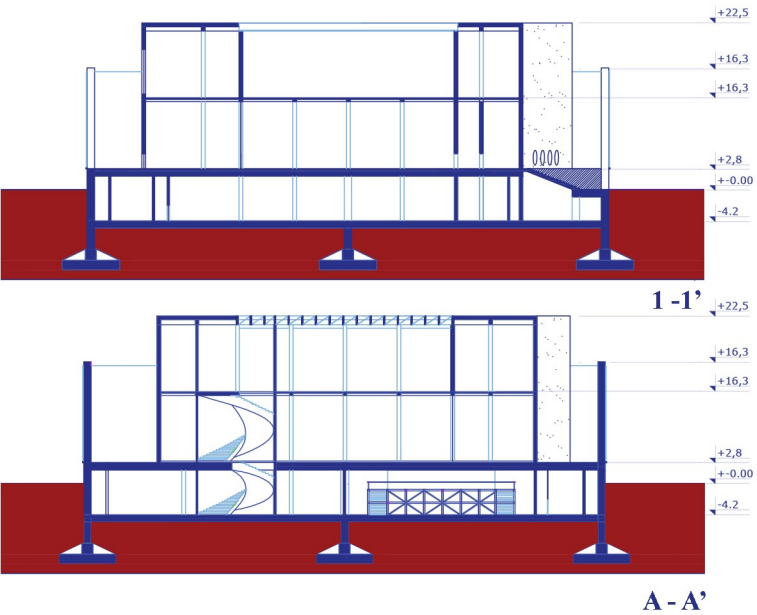


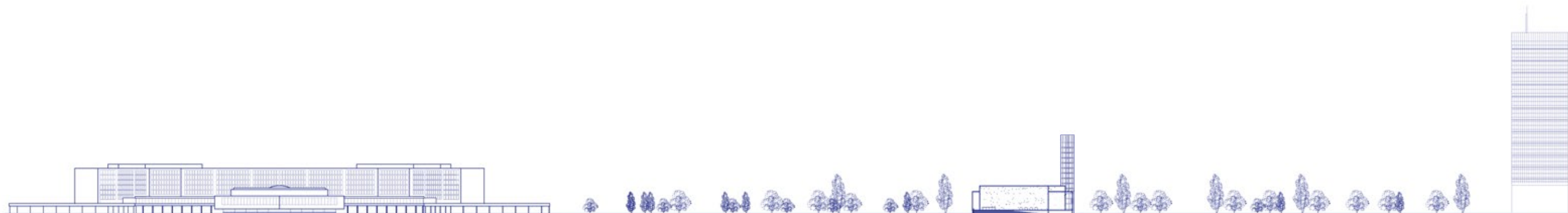


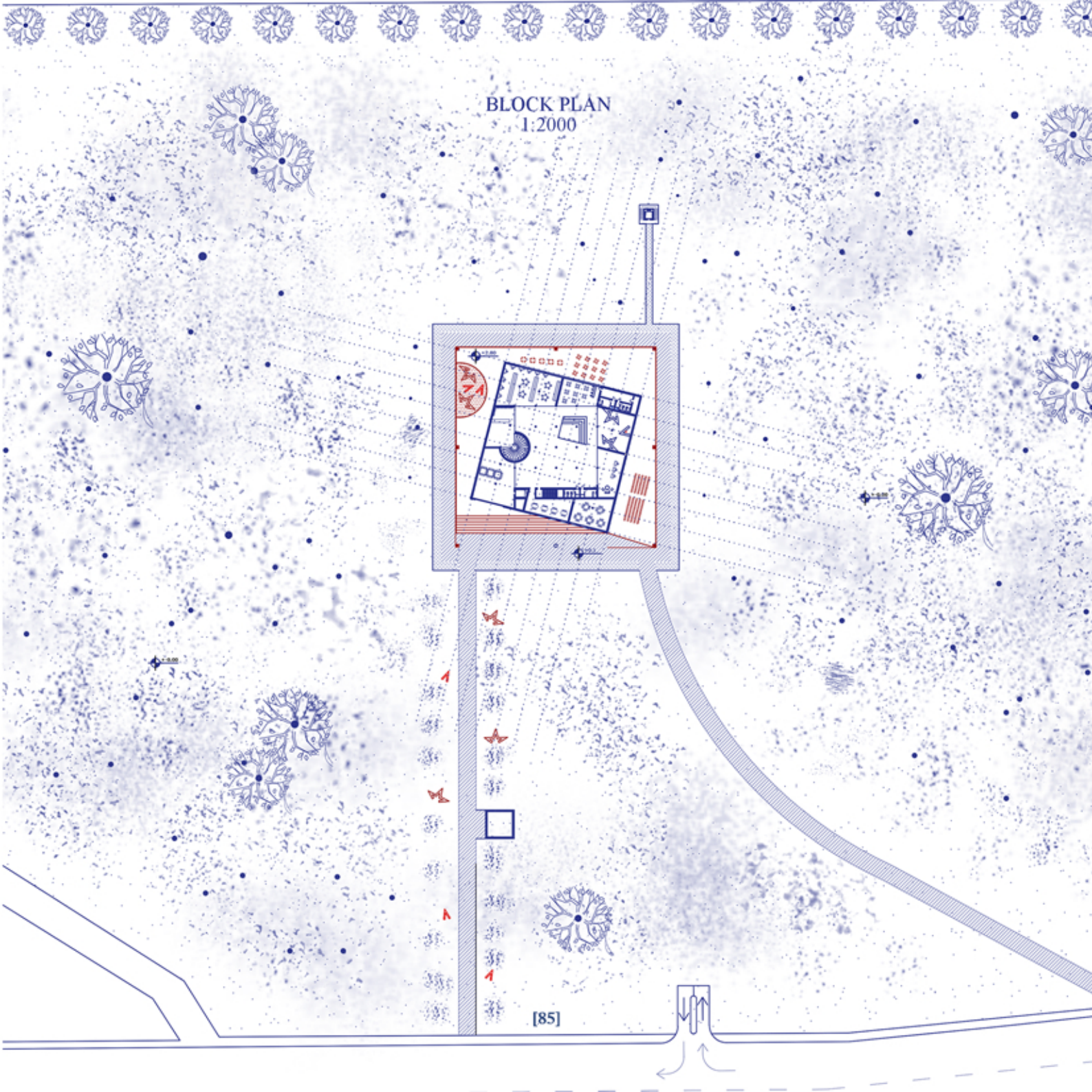
FLOOR PLANS



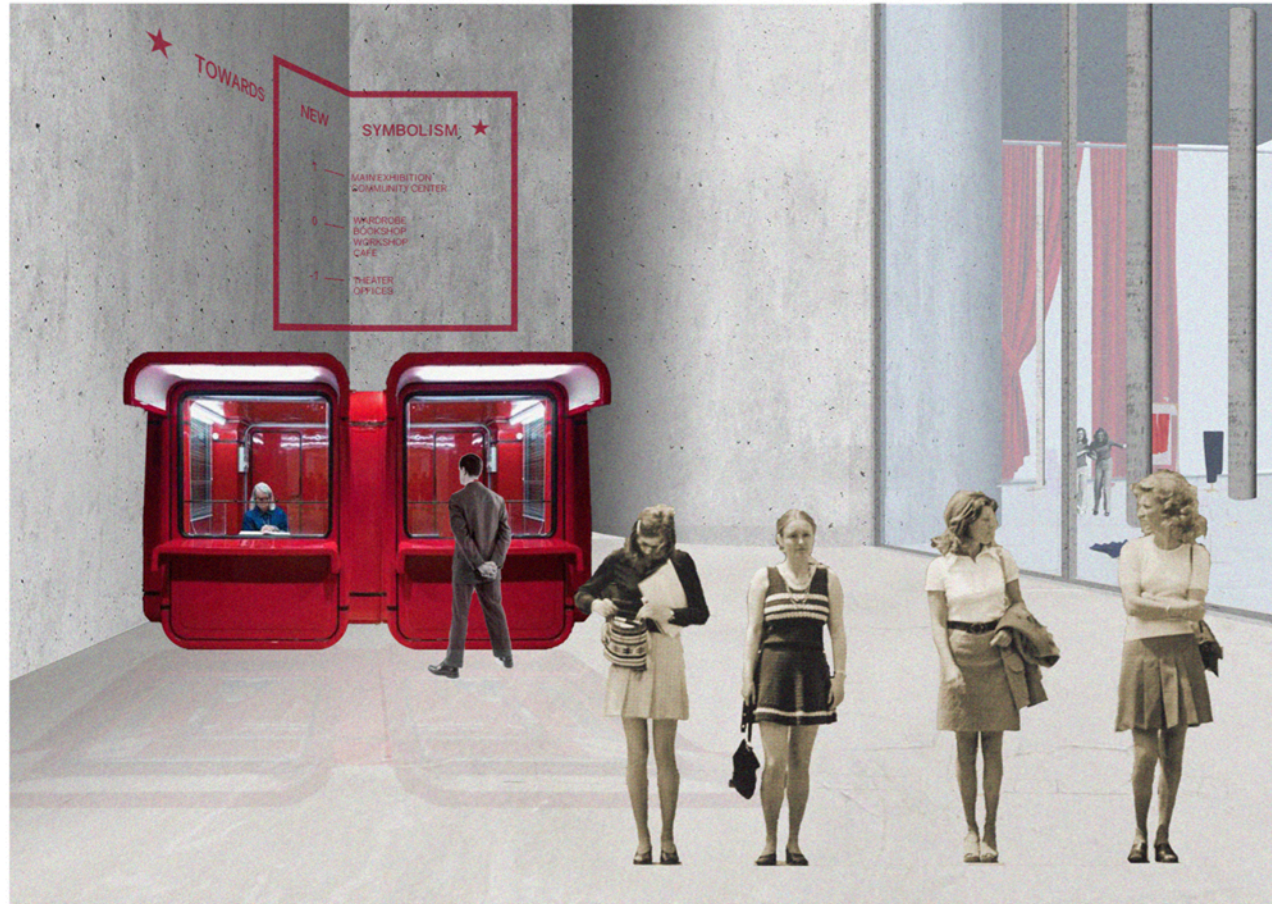
SECTIONS



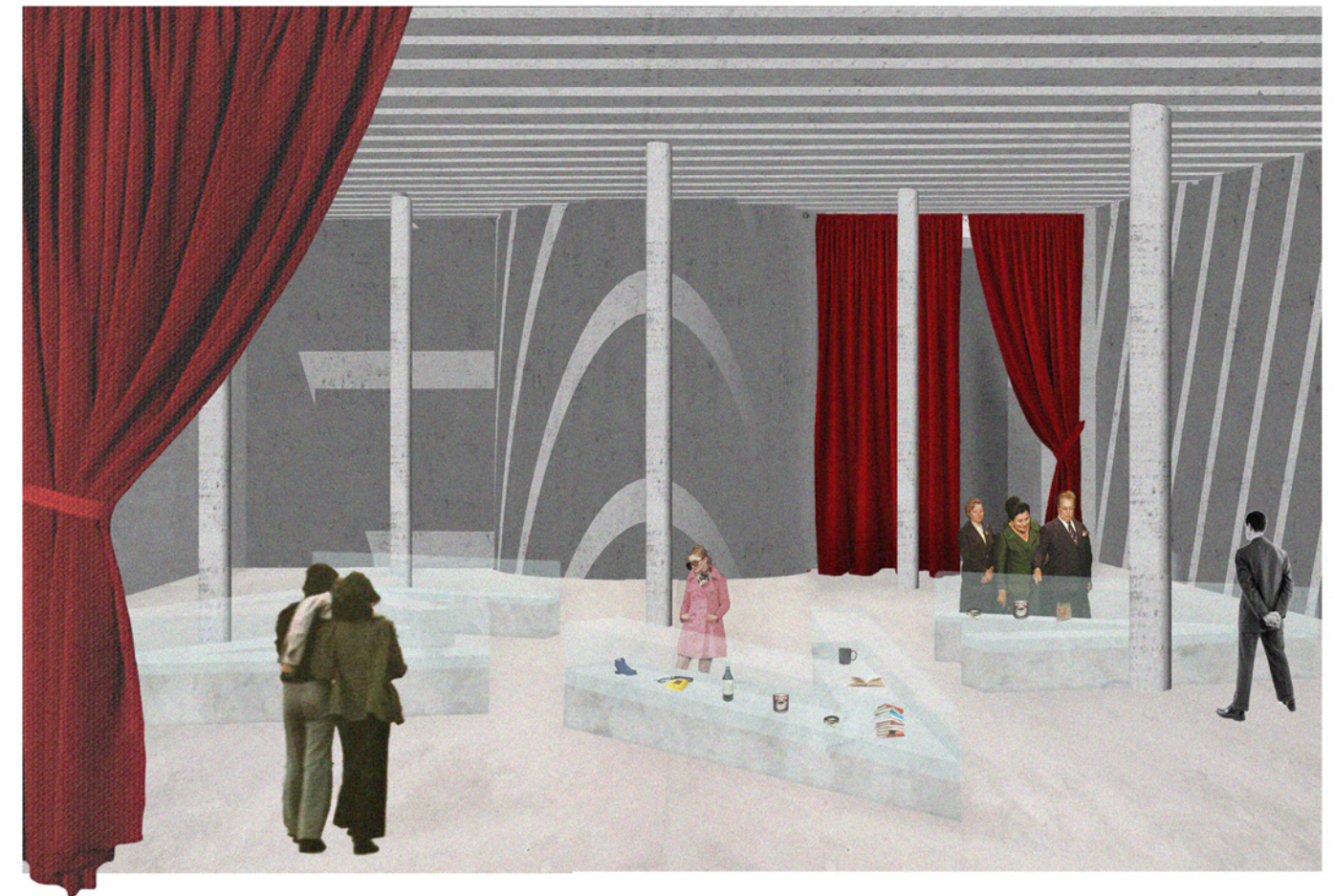




Platform should represent the extension of the museum and its exit outside the frame of the building. One of the façades serves for an open-air cinema where movies from the Yugoslav cinematography could be played, and occasionally part of the platform could be dedicated to large artifacts of the museum and provide an introduction to the exhibition.



The entrance to the museum is supposed to introduce the audience to the journey of ex-Yugoslavia's history. Ticket point is one of the most recognizable symbols of the Yugoslav design, the famous "kiosk k67", introduced in 1966, as a revolutionary modular design which was cheap, fast and easy to produce. It used to inhabit the cities as newspaper kiosks, copyshops, market stands, shelter booths, student cafes or lottery stands, easily visible and accessible, in different colours and combinations



The central room of the museum hosts the main exhibition area. The idea is that this room should occupy the central part of the plan, and be the one with the most natural lighting. The roof is consisted of series of inclined beams, with glass between them. Showcase furniture is in the shape of the broken star symbolizing the broken country, also the symbol of the museum. Other rooms dedicated to the exhibition are all permanent, representing history, heritage and culture of the ex - country.



The upper floor of the museum, apart from the exhibition area, also hosts several rooms dedicated to community center. Since several groups related to the period of communism in Yugoslavia still exist, these rooms should provide a space for their gatherings, debates, lectures, exchanging opinions, memories and goals in order to foster the sense of belonging.



The tower, as a symbol of monumentality, stands in the immediate vicinity of the main building, with the idea of highlighting this important characteristic, common to all projects from the age of communism. Rising from layers of vegetation it alludes, quite literally, to the ideas of Le Corbusier's tower in the park. Like a lighthouse, with its height it points out and guides from the distance to the existence of the museum.