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The City in Transition.
Transformation Processes in Southeastern Europe since the 1980s

edited by

Daniela Simon

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Dragan Damjanović and Željka Mikložević

Zagreb's Architectural and Urban Development— From Tito's Death to the 2020 Earthquakes

The aim of this chapter is to present the basic features of the architectural and urban development of the city of Zagreb (Agram in German, Zágráb in Hungarian) from the early 1980s to the 2020 earthquakes from a perspective of art history, or more precisely, architectural history. Tito's death stands as the symbolic starting point for the analysis since it marked the beginning of both an economic and subsequently political crisis and the intensification of ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia. The endpoint of the analyzed period is defined by the earthquakes that hit Zagreb and northern Croatia on 22 March and 29 December 2020, respectively.

The history of Zagreb during this period was marked by major political turning points. In the early 1980s, Zagreb was the second largest city in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the capital of one of its federal constituent states—the Socialist Republic of Croatia. The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the transition to capitalism in 1991 turned Zagreb into the capital of the independent Republic of Croatia and its largest economic, educational and cultural center. These political and economic shifts, the Croatian War for Independence (1991–1995), and the new government system dramatically changed attitudes toward spatial planning and architecture. This chapter interprets the main features of Zagreb's architectural and urban growth to underline the links between the final years of socialism, the first decades of transitional period to capitalism in the 1990s, and the turn of the millennium to 2020.

The theoretical and historical framework for understanding individual works of architecture and approaches to urban planning in Zagreb is based on a number of publications produced in the last forty years, among which special mention should be made of Jelena Zlatar's book that looks at Zagreb's development after 2000 from a sociological perspective (2013). Ivo Maroević (1992; 2002; 2007), Maroje Mrduljaš (2007), Tihomir Jukić, Ivan Mlinar, Borka Bobovec, Krešimir Galović, and numerous others have also dealt with the architecture and urban development of Zagreb in the final de-

cades of socialist Yugoslavia and the first years of independent Croatia in a number of papers and monographs. Contemporary architecture has been covered in articles published in journals such as *Oris*, *Prostor [Space]*, *Čovjek i prostor* [Man and Space], in daily newspapers and online. In the interest of brevity, this chapter focuses only on the main characteristics of the city's architectural and urban development during these four decades.

Residential Architecture—Planned Housing vs. Illegal Construction

The contemporary city of Zagreb originally expanded from its two medieval centers—the Upper Town and the Kaptol located on the slopes of Sljeme mountain. Zagreb's first planned area, based on an orthogonal grid, was the Lower Town, built south of the medieval core in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the interwar period, the city rapidly grew with new suburbs emerging all around the historic center. The railway that connected Budapest with the Adriatic Sea from 1873 until the end of the World War II formed the border of a densely urbanized area of Zagreb, south of which were only factories, a few planned estates and numerous substandard residential buildings. Due to the rapid development of the city in socialist Yugoslavia (1945 to 1991), this area was urbanized and extended both towards and across the Sava River, whose frequent flooding was restrained by a system of canals and embankments in the 1960s and 1970s. South of the Sava River, several planned housing estates formed a new part of the city called Novi (New) Zagreb. At the same time, rural settlements on the outskirts of the city north of Sava, such as Susedgrad, Markuševec, Horvati, Trnje, Brezovica, Gračani, and Dubrava among others, merged with the city, mostly through the construction of a great number of partly legal, partly illegal, family homes. Owing to the one-party system and the planned economy in second Yugoslavia, Zagreb's growth was (largely) planned, based on urban plans from 1949, 1953, 1965, 1971 and 1986, which were adapted to the contemporary economic and political circumstances (Bencetić 2020). At that time, the largest proportion of public funds for new building projects was invested in mass housing estates that were built all around the central part of Zagreb, but mostly in the areas south of the railway. Although a total of

220,000 new apartments were built from 1945 to 1990, this was not nearly enough due to the rapid growth of the city (Bencetić 2020, 409).

In the 1980s, socialist Yugoslavia faced increasingly acute economic problems: unemployment was steadily rising, especially among the younger population, and an increasing inflation led to economic stagnation and eventually to a decline in living standards and increasing political tensions (Goldstein 2013a, 278–280). Despite the economic difficulties, Zagreb continued to invest a great deal in the construction of new residential, commercial and public buildings, especially in the early 1980s. The year 1983 saw the construction of the largest number of new apartments—about 11,000—of which nearly 6,000 were so-called social housing units (built by public companies and state institutions, that granted rent-free occupancy rights to individuals and families), while the remaining were private residential units. From 1984 until the end of the decade, housing construction, especially social housing, gradually declined, which only heightened the need for new residential units in the still growing city (Perković 1990, 72–76).

In the 1980s, as in 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the centrally planned economy enabled a comprehensive architectural and urban design of new housing estates. In addition to residential buildings, these estates included schools, kindergartens, commercial facilities, (usually very spacious) outdoor areas, promenades and access roads. At that time, the architecture of Zagreb was marked by the strong influence of postmodern tendencies that shifted the previously dominant concept of orthogonal avenues connecting the housing estates with the main roads into a more dynamic urban concept with curved streets and buildings with multi-sided apartments, irregular shapes and differently designed facades. In contrast to earlier decades, apartments in residential buildings became significantly more spacious, and efforts were made to provide at least one room per apartment tenant (Bencetić 2020, 403). The major examples of this new approach south of the Sava are the Dugave and Sloboština housing estates in Novi Zagreb, and the Jarun and to some extent Špansko, Gajnice, Ravnice and Klaka housing estates north of the Sava. Each of these settlements was built in keeping with the Technical Requirements for Design and Construction of Apartments in the Social Housing Construction in Zagreb, which were issued in 1979 by the Self-Governing Interest Community for Residential Affairs of Zagreb (Bobovec, Mlinar and Pozojević 2016, 218; Zlatar 2013, 88).

Unlike earlier decades, the construction projects in the 1980s were not centered mainly in Novi Zagreb, the new part of the city south of the Sava River, where most of the buildings were built on completely unurbanized areas, allowing urban planners and architects to freely design these spaces. A growing number of projects began to be realized in the so-called periphery of the old city, north of the Sava, where certain existing buildings had been demolished to make space for newly planned housing estates, all with the aim of "completing the city" (Zlatar 2013, 88) namely subjecting hitherto partially urbanized, neglected or substandard neighborhoods to planned construction (Perković 1990, 73–74).

Shortly before the 1991 War, the last census carried out in Yugoslavia revealed that Zagreb's population had grown by more than 165,000 people in the 1980s.[1] Both the emigration of people from Zagreb and Croatia in response to the war, ethnic intolerance, political attitudes or economic reasons on the one hand, and the immigration of (mostly) Croats from other parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and neighboring countries, on the other, significantly changed Zagreb's demographic composition, making the city more ethnically homogeneous. After 1991, despite a large number of both refugees and economic migrants, Zagreb stagnated demographically, partly because the new population settled in the towns around Zagreb, such as Dugo Selo, Zaprešić, Velika Gorica that boasted a lower price per residential square meter, and partly due to stagnating population growth and further emigration of Zagreb's residents abroad. According to the 2001 census, Zagreb had 779,145 inhabitants, which was only about 2,000 more than in 1991. In the following decade, the city grew slightly to 790,017 inhabitants registered in the 2011 census, only to drop to 767,131 inhabitants in 2021 as a result of new economic crises and subsequent emigration (Šiško and Polančec 2022, 31 and 66).

The stagnation and decline in population numbers did not, however, slow down investment in housing projects. Since Zagreb was largely spared from destruction during the wars in the 1990s, numerous residential buildings were built in that decade, and after 2000, with the stabilization of the political and economic situation, there was an explosion of housing con-

[1] According to the administrative division at the time (*Statistički ljetopis Zagreba 1994*, 43).

struction. The immigration of a large number of refugees in the 1990s led to the proliferation of illegal construction, which was mostly left unsanctioned to maintain social peace. Although the problem of illegal construction in Zagreb became drastic in the 1990s, it was not a new phenomenon. It had also been present in the nineteenth century and the interwar years, which both saw a large population influx from the countryside to the city in search of work in the city's growing industrial sector. In this period, due to the absence of legally binding urban plans as a regulatory mechanism, the illegal construction of residential buildings flourished, especially south of the railway line. The main areas of partly illegal, partly semi-legal, and in most cases substandard construction, were Trešnjevka and Trnje (Bjažić Klarin 2022, 3–6).

After 1945, the construction of large-scale planned housing estates ran parallel to the construction of illegal or semi-legal, larger or smaller, architecturally unpretentious family houses that were intended to support the communal living of multiple generations, which started springing up on the city's outskirts. In the 1980s, as the construction of social housing was dying down, the Dubrava district witnessed the construction of a large number of such private houses, some of them built without a valid permit (Perković 1990, 73–74). Like other eastern suburbs of Zagreb, such as Kozari Bok and Peščenica, Dubrava remained a major area of illegal urbanization during the 1990s. Numerous buildings were also erected on the northern edge of Zagreb, partly within the protected zone of the Medvednica nature park, and on the southern edge, in the Sveta Klara, Remetinec and Jakuševec neighborhoods.[2]

Illegal construction after 1991 emerged also because state investment in mass housing complexes was, for the most part, replaced by private investment in the housing market. Although, in the 1990s, the 1986 Master Plan was still valid, and a number of new urban plans and amendments had been adopted after 2000 (in 2003, 2007, 2013, 2016...), the comprehensive planning approach for new city neighborhoods and housing estates was largely abandoned. Instead, all initiative was left almost entirely to private investors who strove to maximize their investment (sometimes in accordance with current

[2] A map marking main the areas of illegal construction was published in *Zagrebplan* (2013, 121).

regulations, sometimes not), and engaged in so-called plot by plot urbanism in which comprehensive designs for large, planned, housing estates have become a rare occurrence (Goldstein 2013b).

In response to the collapse of communism, some of the architectural and engineering companies with experience in the design and construction of large residential complexes simply disappeared or were privatized (such as the Urban Planning Institute of Croatia), and a large number of new private architectural companies began to fight for their share of the market. All this led to the fragmentation of housing construction, with the prevailing approach involving the design of buildings as single structures, whose construction was entrusted by investors to various architectural firms.

Uncontrolled construction was commonplace in the areas closer to the city center, which in the 1990s was dotted with buildings, which, in the Vrbik neighborhood, Krešimir Rogina has referred to as "palanački" (provincial)—a term that denotes structures in small Balkan towns (2004). Soon thereafter, the Trešnjevka neighborhood became a synonym for "wild" urbanism in Zagreb, and a similar situation could also be seen in Kajzerica in Novi Zagreb, in parts of Dubrava, in Trnje between the railway line and the Sava River, and around the city center (neighborhoods such as Gračani, Markuševec, Šestine, Susedgrad, Sveta Klara, Buzin, Lanište, Stenjevec, Sesvete, Peščenica, Remete, Gajnice, Dubrava). In these areas, earlier modest, sometimes even rural individual houses, undeveloped green areas or industrial brownfield sites, farms and arable land, were overbuilt with multi-apartment buildings or structures with mixed residential and commercial use.

Pejorative terms such as provincial, unruly, uncivilized and the like have been used to describe these districts and neighborhoods, not because the new buildings there were (always) illegally built, but rather to stress the fact that they represent a type of construction approach that does not take into consideration the features of surrounding structures. Each building has its own dimensions and façade treatment, and plots often do not match the street alignment. They are also often characterized by a combination of commercial and residential facilities. Ground-floor offices, cafés and restaurants, which sometimes also occupy the public space, alternate with residential units. Some of the problems in these areas include the overdevelopment of plots, insufficient green or parking spaces, a lack of playgrounds or sport

facilities, insufficiently wide roads, and in some cases inadequate (or even non-existent) sewage and water supply infrastructure.

Although they are of far lower quality in terms of urban design, the new (fragmented) neighborhoods have proven to be attractive not only to investors, but also buyers. The proximity of new buildings in Trešnjevka, Vrbik, Trnje and neighboring areas to the city center, and the lower price per residential square meter in more peripheral parts of the city (Dubrava, Kajzerica, Lanište, and in recent times especially Sveta Klara), have made a large number of residential building projects in these areas commercially successful or at least sustainable.

In late 2001, a large increase in real estate prices and the consequent need to provide a part of the population with opportunities to acquire an apartment or a house led the state government to launch the state-subsidized Housing Construction scheme (Društveno poticana stanogradnja, POS) throughout Croatia, which was intended to ensure more affordable housing prices and to return, at least partially, to the concept of a comprehensive urban design for estates as it existed in socialist Croatia (Bobovec, Mlinar, and Pozojević 2016, 220; Agencija za pravni promet i posredovanje nekretninama, 2023). In the ten years of the scheme's implementation, more than 5,500 apartments were built all over Croatia (Bobovec and Mlinar 2013).

After the adoption of the new Master Plan in 2003, the Zagreb City Administration launched architectural design competitions for several planned residential estates—Špansko-Oranice, Sopnica-Jelkovec, Vrbani III, Podbrežje, Borovje-Tigrovi, Borovje-Savice, Munja, Blato-east and Sopnica-south—as part of the POS scheme (Mlinar 2009, 160). Only two of them (Podbrežje and Blato) are located south of the Sava River, which shows the same tendencies in construction as in the 1980s, that is, the concentration of new housing estates on the edges of the historic center and a declined expansion of Novi Zagreb. The 2008 economic crisis halted the projects and only the settlements of Špansko-Oranice, Sopnica-Jelkovec and Vrbani III were realized, while Podbrežje was completed more recently (Mlinar 2009, 166).

The new estates were planned mostly on the sites of former demilitarized barracks or industrial factories and farms, and less often on undeveloped land, making them an indicator for the city's ongoing deindustrialization. Their urban design varies significantly, although the majority of designers returned to the orthogonal grid, sometimes introducing only mi-

nor curves in order to adapt their design to the building sites. Most of the buildings have a rectangular floor plan, and in addition to residential and public buildings, the majority of the estates also include commercial facilities, as can be seen in the largest new residential complex Sopnica-Jelkovec (encompassing as many as fifty-three buildings). Unlike the housing estates built during the socialist period, here, the ground floors of the buildings are intended mainly for commercial use, and greater attention was paid to securing parking spaces in response to the growing number of cars (Mlinar and Krunoslav Šmit, 2008). While the granting of tenancy rights to individuals and families of different economic status in Yugoslavia successfully prevented the transformation of residential areas into urban ghettos of the poor, a concentration of socially vulnerable population groups has developed in the newer Sopnica-Jelkovec estate. In addition to social problems, the new estates also suffer from a shortage of public buildings and traffic connections with the city center. Despite these and various other problems with the construction and sale of the apartments, the POS estates, unlike the areas built exclusively by private investors, reveal a higher quality of urban design, and the apartments financially more accessible to broader sections of the population.

In addition, the state attempted to boost the housing market and ease the financial burden of an apartment purchase by subsidizing housing savings plans or the interest on housing loans. The subsidies were met with sharp criticism among some economists who claim that they drive up the price of apartments (Slišković, Solenički, and Beg, 2021). Since the absence of a real estate tax in Croatia encouraged the purchase of apartments, this, in turn, led to an additional increase in prices and stimulated the construction of new real estate, which basically still continues in Zagreb despite the acute demographic crisis.

Elitization of Residential Architecture

In socialist Yugoslavia, the most common type of (private) residential structure on the outskirts of Zagreb was the detached family house. They were built mostly based on simple architectural designs that replicated forms of other buildings and reflected the needs and financial capabilities of their in-

vestors only in their size. The final socialist years saw a gradual elitization of individual residential building projects in Zagreb. With the slow democratization of Yugoslav society and the activation of a growing number of market economic mechanisms, it became possible to display higher economic status through impressively designed residential buildings, which were mostly built by individuals in medical, law, business or similar professions. Examples of such projects include the Lazić-Raše house on 55 Gornje Prekrižje Street designed by architect Branko Silađin, 1980–1984 (Maroević 2002; 2007, 172) and the Raubar Kolovrat house at 94 Srebrnjak Street, designed by Dragomir Maji-Vlahović, 1986–1990 (Mrduljaš 2006), both of which can be considered early examples of urban villas, that were often the preferred type of housing for the new economic elite after the transition to a market economy.

The northern edge of Zagreb contained most of these urban villas. Due to the hilly terrain and widespread greenery this area is less densely built, with (more or less) spacious gardens and driveways surrounding the villas. In most cases, they were built in a neo-modernist style, sometimes as multi-apartment buildings and sometimes as single-family houses. Many of them belong to some of the most successful accomplishments of contemporary Croatian architecture. Although they are not as numerous as the standardized family houses, they still exist in large numbers—too many to list here due to the limited scope of the paper (Damjanović 2013).

Just as in other parts of Zagreb that have been rapidly built up in the last three decades, the villa neighborhoods also "suffer" from architectural design inconsistency, with neighboring plots containing buildings with completely different designs that reflect the different approaches of individual investors. In some cases, an attempt was made to deal with this by building small-scale neighborhoods of "urban villas" or groups of buildings—which was sometimes more, and sometimes less successful.[3] However, due to poor construction regulations, the "elite" parts of Zagreb have replicated an urban chaos similar to that in the eastern and southern suburbs.

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[3] Examples of such estates include "… This Familiar Feeling" by Hrvoje Njirić in Gračani, built from 2004 to 2006, the Rural mat estate in Markuševac by the Njirić+arhitekti architectural office and the urban villas in Šestine by Zoran Bošević and Boris Fiolić (Vukić 2007; Blažević 2009).

Commercial Architecture

Yugoslavia's planned economy allowed a certain degree of private entrepreneurship and introduced certain market mechanisms that not only led to an increase in the living standards of the population, but also enabled some Yugoslav companies to enjoy considerable prosperity. Their success both within Yugoslavia and in foreign markets led to a flourishing of office building construction, which became a niche for postmodern architectural experiments in Zagreb from the mid-1970s onwards. Some of the most remarkable architectural achievements from the final years of socialism include Elektra by Milan Šosterič (1975–1981, 7 Kršnjavi Street), INA-Naftaplin Research and Development Center by Ines and Nikola Filipović (1979–1983, 29 Šubićeva Street) INA-Trgovina by Velimir Neidhardt (1986–1988, 10 Većeslav Holjevac Avenue), the Cibona building by Marijan Hržić, Ivan Piteša and Berislav Šerbetić (1986–1990, 30 Savska Street) and the Chromos skyscraper by Marijan Turkulin and Petar Vovk (1986–1989, 271 Vukovarska Street). They feature different forms and entirely or partially glazed facades, and are distinguishable from other buildings either by their height (some are high-rise buildings) or their sumptuous building materials, such as marble or other types of stone.

After the transition to capitalism in the 1990s, the war and the subsequent economic crisis that lasted in Croatia until 2000 prevented the realization of any ambitious commercial projects. However, in the period between 2000 and the 2008 global economic crisis, the privatization of banks, state industries and numerous other public companies gave rise to a construction boom. The new buildings were most often inserted into the existing urban fabric south of railway line in Vukovarska Street, Slavonska Avenue, and around the central streets of New Zagreb, all of which had, for the most part, received their enduring shape during socialist Yugoslavia.

New construction was mostly built in undeveloped spaces along the roads and next to existing residential and public buildings until then surrounded by spacious green surfaces. In 2000s, the main traffic routes in such urban environments became dotted with shopping centers, fast food restau-

rants, office buildings and churches, along with new parking spaces and residential complexes.[4]

Although the post-2000 buildings violated (late) modernist concepts of urban planning, and caused an excessive increase in the total built-up space, which resulted in an inability of the existing traffic infrastructure to sustain the emerging needs of residents, they increased the attractiveness of these parts of Zagreb and consequently raised the price of apartments, which is particularly evident in the central parts of New Zagreb (the housing estates of Središće, Siget and Sopot).

When 2003 Master Plan allowed office and residential buildings to extend to more than nine floors, it drove up land prices and increased the desire of investors to leave a mark on the Zagreb skyline through the construction of a number of high-rise office buildings (Zlatar 2013, 116). Although they can be found all over the city, the new high-rises were mostly built near the sites of similar structures from the communist period, namely, along Savska and Vukovarska Streets, and Slavonska Avenue, while the junction of Vukovarska, Heinzlova and Radnička Streets on the eastern edge of the city center encompass the highest density of new high-rises, earning it the nickname of Zagreb's Manhattan or the City (Dugandžija 2004). This area has not yet been fully developed, leading to a mix of a few commercial high-rises, alongside architecturally modest fast food restaurants, supermarkets, and multi-story residential complexes.

A large number of projects for high-rises was created, however, only part of the buildings was eventually realized. The relatively small number of realized high-rise buildings in Zagreb can be explained by the fact that only a small number of Croatian companies have grown into multinational corporations and that most foreign multinational companies decided to situate their headquarters in the capitals of other former Eastern or Southeastern European communist countries, leaving Zagreb, due to the Croatian War for Independence, as branch office location. In addition, the construction of high-rises was regularly accompanied by harsh criticism from experts, espe-

[4] State or city authorities only infrequently participated in erecting new public buildings in these places; one of the rare cases was the Museum of Contemporary Art which represents the most prominent public building built in Novi Zagreb after 1991.

cially art historians, in light of careless treatment of the surrounding space by investors (Galović 2004; Horvat 2005).

The first group of high-rise office buildings in Zagreb was built in the short period between the adoption of the new Master Plan in 2003 and the economic crisis in 2008. The most important structures include the Zagreb Tower by Otto Barić Jr. on 80 Radnička cesta, built between 2003 and 2006 (Ivanišin Barić 2007), Erste Bank's Eurotower by Marijan Hržić at 2 Ivana Lučića / Vukovarska / Humboldtova Street (2003–2006), the Hoto Tower by Marijan Turkulin at 32 Savska (2003–2004) and the Almeria business tower by Marijan Pivac and Miroslav Dragomanović at 284 Vukovarska / Heinzlova Street (2007). This group, and the first period of high-rise construction more broadly, was concluded with the construction of two connected buildings—the Sky Office Tower, built between 2007 and 2012 according to the design of Ante Anin, at Robert Frangeš Mihanović Street (Nadilo 2010).

Since the economic recovery in Croatia in the 2010s was not very rapid, the second group of high-rises, built before 2020 earthquakes, contains far fewer examples. Two works by the Proarch studio stand out: the VMD Traffic complex with a high-rise on Strojarska Street (which, at 96.15m, is the tallest in Zagreb, and—until 2023—in all of Croatia), completed in 2014 according to the winning design submitted during the 2011 public tender by architects Davor Mateković, Tomislav Stojan, Mirna Malez, Ida Ister and Vedran Pavličević (Nadilo 2014, 361); and the hotel attached to the Croatian Ministry of Defense, built at the intersection of Ilica and Sveti Duh Streets, erected from 2017 to 2020 according to the design of Proarh Studio (Proarh 2023).

The designs of office buildings did not necessarily have to come in the form of high-rises. A number of companies decided instead to build what turned out to be very monumental or attractively designed buildings that were more modest in height, among which, two buildings stand out—the Hypo Bank complex at 6 Slavonska Avenue, 2001–2007, partially executed according to the deconstructivist design of California-based Thom Mayne (Bešlić 2007), and the Spectator office building at 45 Radnička cesta (2010), particularly well-designed by Toma Plejić and Lea Pelivan from UP Architectural Studio, who collaborated on the project with artists Ivana Franke and Silvio Vujičić. These new office buildings typically have facades that are either completely or largely glazed. Their designs often manifest the archi-

tects' desire to play with color contrasts and unusual building forms, such as pointed corners, ovals, concave, convex and the like. With their remarkable appearance, they represent a clear signal of a new type of economy in the area.

Shopping centers are another sign of the transition to capitalism. With the development of consumerism in the final decades of Yugoslavia's existence, department stores began to spring up in the centers of almost all larger cities (Maroević 1981). The transition to a market economy led to a boom in the construction of new "palaces of consumerism" as early as the 1990s, during the war. At that time, just as in the early twenty-first century, new shopping centers were mainly built in the historic center of Zagreb—in various parts of the Lower Town and Kaptol. The Importanne Center was opened in 1994 next to the main railway station and the underpass that connects the Lower Town with Trnje and southern parts of Zagreb. It was followed by the Rotonda in Jurišićeva in 1994, the Importanne Gallery on Ibler Square in 1999, the Kaptol Center in Tkalčićeva Street in 2000, the Branimir Center in Branimirova Street in 2003, the Cascade Center/Prebendar Gardens in Tkalčićeva Street in 2009 and the Cvjetni Center on Petar Preradović Square in 2011 (Zlatar 2013, 120). After 2000, the construction of large-scale shopping centers expanded to the outskirts. In contrast to the same type of structures in Zagreb's historic center, which were entrusted to renowned architects and, consequently, built based on original architectural designs, the periphery usually features a greater number of buildings with more modest, largely standard designs. This is partly because they are owned by international or Croatian retail chains, who choose to use the same visual identity for most of their stores.

The transition to capitalism, free trade and access to almost unlimited imports, is inscribed in the very names of the shopping centers built in 1990s (Importanne centar, Importanne galerija), indicating that they could sell imported goods, which in those years represented a guarantee of quality. Recently, however, a change is visible in terms of consumer products, with an increasing shift toward domestic production as a marker of quality. This change is also reflected in the shopping center architecture, most clearly in the Designer Outlet Croatia in the industrial and commercial zone on the eastern edge of the city, which, with its eclectic architectural design, emphasizes the Croatian national tradition by combining motifs from the archi-

tecture of Dalmatia and northern Croatia (even though the shopping center almost exclusively sells goods produced outside of Croatia).

Public Architecture

The economic crisis in the 1980s slowed down, or in some cases canceled, the realization of numerous public building projects in socialist Zagreb, although certain projects managed to be completed. The crematorium built next to the historic Mirogoj cemetery in Zagreb, designed by Marijan Hržić, Zvonimir Krznarić and Davor Mance (1982–1985), stands out for its quality, both in terms of architectural and landscape design (Maroević 2000, 201–203). At the same time, there were also large construction projects related to cultural facilities, including the conversion of the former Jesuit monastery and military barracks on Jesuit Square in the Upper Town into a museum-gallery center (1983, architects: Vahid Hodžić and Igor Emili), the conversion of the grammar school on Roosevelt Square into the museum of Ante Topić Mimara, a collector who donated his art collection to Croatia, and the construction of Zagreb's largest late-twentieth century public building, the new National and University Library in Trnje, designed by Velimir Neidhardt, Marijan Hržić, Zvonimir Krznarić and Davor Mance (4 Hrvatske bratske zajednice Street, 1978–1995) (Hržić, Krznarić, Mance, and Neidhardt 1979; Vukić 2001).

After Croatian independence in 1991, state institutions mostly continued to operate in buildings built from the late-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Plans to move the offices of the Croatian Government and the Croatian Parliament from the Upper Town into a planned new complex of buildings along the Sava River in the Prisavlje area were never realized due to a lack of funds. Nevertheless, from the late 1990s to the present, numerous new public buildings were built in Zagreb. Many of them rank among the greatest accomplishments of Croatian architecture, which might be due to the public tenders conducted for their designs, which made it possible to obtain architecturally interesting proposals. Some of the public buildings were financed by the city and some by the state. Educational buildings, such as kindergartens, schools and university facilities, stand out in particular for their quality.

The large number of kindergartens constructed was a response to the increase in number of kindergarten children as a result of the migration of young people to the city, and the need for both parents to work because of the economic crisis and depressed incomes. However, these facilities were neither then, nor now, sufficient to meet the needs of the Zagreb population, despite the decrease in birth rates and the wider demographic crisis in the country. The kindergarten buildings that stand out for their architectural design include "Vedri dani" by Miroslav Geng (Šubićeva 12, 1996–2000), "Jarun" by Vinko Penezić and Krešimir Rogina (Bartolići 39A, 2002–2006), and "Šegrt Hlapić" by Goran Rako, Nenad Ravnić and Josip Sabolić (Sesvete, 2004–2007), "Medo Brundo" by Hrvoje Njirić and Davor Bušnja (Dubrava 185, 2007), "Sunčana" in the POS Španska – Oranica settlement by Damir Novoselec and Damir Vitković (Dječji trg 2, 2007), and "Remetinec" by Mija Roth-Čerina and Tonči Čerina (Lanište 1D, 2005–2008) (Rister 2007; Turato 2009).

The need for educational facilities was also addressed with the construction of new schools, especially in densely urbanized neighborhoods. The most architecturally prominent school buildings include those in Borovje by Hildegard Auf-Franić and Tin Sven Franić (7 Davora Zbiljskog Street, 2005), in Sesvetska Sopnica by Vedran Duplančić (69 Sopnička Street, 2007), in Vrbani by Proarh d. o. o. (8 Listopadska Street, 2013), and Kajzerica by Emil Špirić, Erick Velasco Farrera, Juan Jose Nunez Andrada and Vedran Pedišić (9 Žarka Dolinara Street, 2014) (Mrduljaš 2008).

Among other public buildings, Davor Katušić's Medical Emergency Service (88 Heinzlova Street, 2005–2009) stands out for its quality (Mrduljaš 2009), but the most monumental and expensive public building constructed in Zagreb after 1991, funded jointly by the city and the state, is the Museum of Contemporary Art. It was built between 2003 and 2009 according to the award-winning design of architect Igor Franić at the intersection of the two main roads in New Zagreb, Dubrovnik and Većeslav Holjevac Avenues (Franić 2004). Raised on a high plateau, this building encompasses simply designed facades that look more attractive at night than during the day. Franić's building stylistically follows the neo-modernist tendencies that dominates post-2000 Croatian architecture. Although the space north of the museum was expected to be filled with other public buildings, this has not yet occurred, and the urbanization of that part of the city has been left to pri-

vate investors who have built residential and office buildings and shopping centers there (Arhitektura Zagreba 2023).

As in other ex-communist countries, the lack of funds forced the Croatian state authorities to resort on several occasions after 2000 to the privatization of public assets or their concession in order to realize ambitious public infrastructure projects. One example of such an approach was the new airport building, which was built by the Croatian government in cooperation with a private concessionaire. As the old airport building from the 1960s became too small to cater to the growing needs of Croatian economy, the new one was built between 2013 and 2017 according to the design of Branko Kincl and Velimir Neidhardt (Kincl and Neidhardt, 2018). Unlike the majority of the previously mentioned public buildings, it draws stylistically on organic forms and high-tech interior design. In a country that is largely dependent economically on tourism, it was clearly important to clad the airport, as the main gate of the capital, in the most attractive garment possible.

Sports Architecture

A special chapter in the history of public architecture in Zagreb must be reserved for sports architecture. The 1987 international student games, *Univerzijada*, sparked the construction of a sports complex in Jarun, a western neighborhood situated along the Sava River, centered on a pool designed by architects Vinko Penezić and Krešimir Rogina (1987, 5 Jarunska Street) (Rogina, Whiteley, Kuma and Valentić, 2003). It was the beginning of major investments in sports architecture that would continue in later decades. Despite the poor economic and social situation in the early years of independent Croatia, it might seem paradoxical that a large segment of the public investment in the entire country—and in particular in Zagreb—was designated for building new and expanding existing sports facilities. It was the result of political circumstances. In a now ethnically more homogeneous, but politically highly divided nation, sports successes turned into an important vector of national integration and the awakening of patriotism. Decisions about what sports (and recreational) facilities should receive funding depended primarily on the international success of Croatian athletes, and sometimes also on the sports preferences of the ruling elite. In the 1990s, the first Croa-

tian president Franjo Tuđman's obsession with football and the major international success of Croatian football players at the 1998 World Cup in France were two major reasons for the reconstruction of the stadium of the Dinamo football club in Zagreb. The late modernist stadium, designed by Vladimir Turina and one of the most important works of 1950s Croatian architecture, was partially extended in 1998 according to the design of Branko Kincl and Nikola Filipović, despite the protests of numerous architectural historians (Karač, Žunić, Körbler, Vukadin-Doronjga and Bešlić 2016). The project was never completed, nor was an adequate use of the newly constructed section of the stadium ever found—the same destiny met by numerous other projects launched after 1991.

After 2000, following the international successes of Croatian athletes, the construction of new handball and skiing facilities began. From 2007 to 2008, the huge Arena building, the largest post-1991 sports facility in Croatia was built in Lanište according to the design of Zagreb-based UPI-2M d.o.o. architectural office for the world handball championship (Mrduljaš 2008). Its completion coincided with the start of the 2008 global economic crisis, which caused problems for its use and funding. Although it was not intended to be used exclusively for sports competitions, but also for concerts, fairs and other similar events, it could not turn a profit in the initial years of its operation, especially with extremely high maintenance costs.

At the same time, a ski complex was built on the northern slopes of Zagreb's Sljeme hill at the initiative of city authorities—following major successes of Croatian skiers in international competition. Sljeme has since been the venue of the Snow Queen Trophy skiing competition, held each year in January.

In the last few years, the successes of the Croatian national football team brought the problem of the incomplete stadium in Maksimir to the forefront and encouraged the planning of a new national stadium; several locations have been suggested, but the most likely site is the Kajzerica neighborhood in Novi Zagreb. Time will tell whether sports facilities will remain a priority in a city deeply affected by the earthquake and pandemic. It is to be hoped, however, that priority will be given to the realization of other, more vital building projects for the city.

Catholic Religious Architecture

A special place in Zagreb's contemporary architecture is occupied by the buildings of religious communities, especially Catholics. Since communism did not look favorably on the engagement of religious communities in public activities and their investment in new buildings, the period after the fall of communism saw a revigorated construction of church infrastructure. Catholic churches and other buildings intended for administrative, pastoral or charitable activities have been built in almost all new neighborhoods in Zagreb, and in numerous older ones. The spacious facilities of the Croatian Episcopal Conference, built according to the design of Nenad Fabijanić (in collaboration with Sonja Tadej, Marija Grković, Zvonimir Pavković, Željko Pavlović and Davor Pavlović, at 12 Ksaverska cesta, 2004–2007) stands as a kind of architectural manifesto pointing to the newfound position of the Catholic Church in Croatian society. Its monumentality, size and facade partially covered with onyx panels (which have since partially deteriorated) suggest not only the high social status, but also the affluence of the Catholic Church.

Of all the new Catholic churches, which were largely built on green areas between buildings in Zagreb's neighborhoods and consequently engendered the disapproval of some residents, only a small number stand out for their originality or design qualities. Among the earliest are the church of St. John the Evangelist with the pastoral center in the Utrine neighborhood in New Zagreb, by Andrej Uchytil and Renata Waldgoni (Hrastin prilaz Street, 1991–2007) (Mrduljaš 2008), the church of St. Matthew and the rectory in Dugave by Vinko Penezić and Krešimir Rogina (St. Matthew Street, 1989–1995) (Rogina, Whiteley, Kuma, Valentić 2003) and the parish church of St. Paul the Apostle with the pastoral center in Retkovec by Tomislav Premerl (3 Aleja grbova, 1990–1998). Most of the new churches were built in a contemporary architectural style and feature almost a sculptural approach to form. Although in terms of the urban landscape, the new churches and rectories are not always ideally integrated into the existing environment and have increased the built-up ratio, most of them have invigorated the older neighborhoods with elements of contemporary architecture.

Architectural Heritage and New Construction

Finally, when speaking about architecture and urban planning in the last forty years, it is necessary to touch upon their relationship with the architectural heritage in Zagreb. This relationship has largely been conditioned by various social, political and economic circumstances. In the communist period, the confiscation and nationalization of the private property in Zagreb's historic center and older districts (Kaptol, Upper Town, Lower Town, the residential areas on the slopes of Medvednica), significantly changed the composition of the population in those areas. Housing units created through confiscation and nationalization were provided to people of different economic statuses, who started adapting them to their living conditions through numerous renovations. As the government's large housing projects focused on newer parts of the city, numerous older buildings in the city center often remained neglected. Notwithstanding, many of them were preserved, owing to monument protection services and, ironically, the lack of funds for large-scale demolition.

The protection activities can be said to have reflected international tendencies in heritage protection from the 1970s onwards, which were related to both economic commodification and the formation of different identities drawn on historic evidence (Harvey 2001). Additionally, the 1970s were also a period that saw the shift in definitions of "cultural asset" and protection for individual monuments to historic centers (Smith and Luque-Azcona 2008). In the 1980s, Zagreb started investing in the historic renewal of the city center, which was prompted by an awareness of increasing tourism and the development potential of architectural heritage.

The aforementioned 1987 student games (*Univerzijada*) were used as an occasion for the reconstruction of Zagreb's central Ban Jelačić Square which, in accordance with European trends in urban design at the time, was turned into a pedestrian zone. Many building facades were repaired to present Zagreb in the best possible light to the international athletes participating in the games (Zekić 2007).

Furthermore, in the 1980s large investments in new buildings in the city center were made, out of a desire to raise the living standard of inhabitants, as part of a form of state-encouraged gentrification. A section of the

historic Tkalčićeva Street, in the immediate vicinity of the main square, was thoroughly rebuilt. The formerly modest and extremely neglected houses, mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were replaced by postmodern residential and commercial buildings designed by architect Miroslav Begović, which, in spite of their contribution to a higher quality of housing, undoubtedly damaged the street's earlier picturesqueness (Maroević 2002, 45–49). A similar postmodern intervention was carried out from 1984 to 1986 on the central 81 Ilica Street with the construction of a three-story building according to the design of Radovan Tajder (Maroević 2000, 205–207). The development of tourism, which had become the cornerstone of the Croatian economy, led to the construction of new hotels in the center, among which Hotel Dubrovnik II (Gajeva 1, 1979–1982) by Ines and Nikola Filipović stands out for its size and design quality (Paladino 2015).

However, as a whole, the city center, and especially the Lower Town, remained neglected, suffering from acute problems, such as buildings with dilapidated facades, disheveled inner courtyards, traffic congestion and parking scarcity. These problems were further exacerbated by the collapse of communism. Some of the nationalized apartments and commercial premises were returned to their previous owners, some were sold to the tenants who lived in them during communism, which in some places caused complicated ownership-related legal disputes. In addition, the aging of the population, the migration from the city center and the poor economic position of some tenants resulted in the further abandonment of a large number of buildings (Zagrebplan 2013, 132; Jukić, Mrđa, and Perkov 2020). The shift to a capitalist economy also led to the decline of small-scale craftsmen and artisans whose premises were occupied by multinational companies and the service sector.

Owing to numerous texts and monographs by art historians and architects on Zagreb's nineteenth and early twentieth-century heritage, which helped to create the city's brand, and due to an elaborate system for the protection of individual cultural monuments and larger urban areas, major demolitions and new construction in the historic center were prevented.[5] Unfortunately, the protection system and the awareness of the city center's

[5] In addition to a large number of individual buildings, the city's core—Kaptol, Upper and Lower Town are protected as a historic urban complex.

heritage value did not lead to the renewal of the majority of the protected buildings. Some of the facades were renovated through a monument annuity—funds collected from the users of protected buildings (cultural assets)—but this process proved to be very slow.[6]

Before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquakes, tourism and Airbnb services propelled the renovation of a great number of individual apartments and public spaces. However, in that process, the rest of these buildings (including the facades and courtyards) was ignored. Among the only exceptions to this rule were those buildings that were wholly adapted into hotels, as shown by the recent case of the Amandria Park Hotel in Jurišićeva Street or Art'Otel on the corner of Amruševa and Petrinjska Streets (SUPER 1, 2023; Pavlović 2002). Although the tourism industry has revived the center, especially in the summer months and during Advent, this commercialization of real estate assets and public spaces has been met with sharp criticism from art historians, architects and members of other professions because it fails to guarantee any long-term sustainability and leads to an increased emigration of residents from the center (Knežević 2018).

Although the existing legal framework has made new construction in the protected city center difficult, some projects have, nevertheless, been realized. Among the most controversial new structures are shopping centers and garages, of which the latter are usually not visually intrusive because they are located below ground, but nonetheless contribute to traffic congestion (Zlatar 2013, 127–131). One such project that sparked protests by civil and professional associations was the Cvjetni shopping center, and especially its entrance to the subterranean garage on Varšavska Street, which usurped part of the public space. The city administration allowed the project to go ahead, claiming that it was in the interest of both the private investor and the city (Gotovac and Zlatar, 2008; 2015, 34–35). The investor entrusted the design of the center to Boris Podrecca, a Slovene-Italian architect and urban designer living in Vienna, which is a rarity in contemporary Zagreb, considering the fact that most building projects have been entrusted to local architects (as can be seen in this text). By hiring an internationally renowned architect, the investor undoubtedly tried to legitimize his project and make it

[6] For more on the monument annuity, see https://gov.hr/hr/spomenicka-renta/1458, accessed 9.8.2023.

attractive both for the architectural profession and the public, though he did not manage to silence the project's critics.

Another, more recent, controversial structure whose design was selected through a public tender was the residential house Vlahović at 11 Preradovićeva Street, designed by architect Eduardo Suoto de Moura (Souto Moura Arquitetcos) from Portugal in cooperation with the Zagreb architectural studios 3LHD, Up and Jedannajedan Studios (Orešković 2021). Its disputable facade contains almost no window openings. This bizarre feature is reminiscent of (southern) Mediterranean architecture and establishes a sharp contrast to the surrounding nineteenth-century buildings. However, it effectively helps to isolate the private space of one of the richest people in Croatia from unwanted views from the street.

Other new structures in the protected areas, both public and private, have also proved controversial, mainly because they were claimed to be disruptors in the historic environment of the city center. Criticism befell the buildings of the Music Academy, designed by Milan Šosterič (12 Republic of Croatia Square, 2009–2015), or the Ban Center by Svebor Andrijević, Otto Barić and Senka Dombi (architectural team Arhitektura Tholos) (Europski trg, 2010–2013). Furthermore, a misunderstanding about the value of modern and contemporary architecture resulted in the removal of or significant changes to a large number of buildings by reputable architects, despite protests from intellectuals.[7] The 2020 earthquakes further aggravated the problematic relationship between the modern and the old in the city center. By the removal of the more severely damaged buildings the historic environment of the city center became more disturbed. Only strong resistance and advocacy against these activities prevented major demolitions.

Concluding Outlook: Zagreb's Architectural and Urban Development

The architecture and urban development of Zagreb from the early 1980s to 2020 reflects the major political, economic, social and demographic changes in the city and in Croatia during this period. Until 1991, the growth of the city was quite strictly defined by urban plans and largely controlled by state

[7] More about lack of care for heritage in Paladino (2017).

authorities. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the transition to capitalism, new urban plans were adopted, but planning was largely limited to individual locations, while the power of urban planners and other related professions as a whole decreased.

The power to decide the fate of public (and other) city spaces has increasingly been given to private investors, which risks leading to the devastation of the relatively well-preserved historic core and the value of individual historic buildings. However, despite funding issues, a lack of skilled human resources, and corruption, some of the post-1991 public buildings show a quality in architectural design, primarily due to the implementation of public tenders and the involvement of various types of professions in the implementation of building projects.

Conversely, larger projects, especially more ambitiously conceived road systems and urban areas, often fail to see the light of day. Numerous ambitious urban plans and architectural designs created in Yugoslavia, which were put on hold for lack of funds, were mostly abandoned after 1991, such as the University Avenue, a wide north-south street that was supposed to connect the city center and the Sava River. Connecting the city on a north-south axis with new bridges over the Sava also remained largely unrealized, except for one, the Homeland Bridge, which was built on the southeastern outskirts in 2007.

Although certain city districts have been successfully renovated through landscaping, such as Bundek Park in Srednjaci, Novi Zagreb, numerous projects that were announced or anticipated have remained unrealized, such as the burying of the railway line south of the Lower Town underground, the construction of a metro or roads that would connect the southern bypass around Zagreb with the city roads via the interchange near Sarajevska Street (Ožegović 2023). A large number of public buildings and public areas, owned by the city or the state, have been neglected or remained unused (the Vjesnik building, the pavilions of the Zagreb Fair, the Paromlin and Gredelj buildings close to the railway station in the city center, among others).[8] The earthquakes that hit Zagreb and Northwest Croatia in 2020 damaged the city, which had already been heavily damaged by neglect

[8] For more on projects launched by the city administration, see Tihomir and Cvitanović (2011).

and disorder. Funds from the European Union will likely solve some of the earthquake-caused problems, but what this will mean for the architectural heritage and further urban development of the city remains to be seen.[9]

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