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## **NEW URBANISM AS A VITAL ELEMENT IN SHAPING SERBIAN ARCHITECTURE OF THE 21ST CENTURY\***

### *Abstract:*

Ranging from the most modest to the most prominent examples of this architecture in the capital of Serbia, Belgrade, typified architectural structures devoid of human scale and any harmony with the existing local building and planning traditions dominate. This marketing-driven mainstream type of architecture, akin to Hollywood film production, operates on the principle of identical and proven patterns. The primary task of these architectural structures, often under the guise of concern for sustainable development and public interest, is essentially instant and assured profit. The notion of the city as a place for living, enjoyment, and education, rather than merely a site for economic gain, has been decisively lost under the influence of new urbanism. This paper explores architectural trends that reduce the ideal of multiculturalism to marketable and trendy architectural-urban complexes designed for both mass and elite consumption. Furthermore, it examines their role in the transformation of the visual identity of Belgrade and other Serbian cities.

### *Keywords:*

architecture, urbanism, culture, Serbia, globalization, consumerism

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## Introduction

Capitalist globalization is not concerned with authorial architecture; rather, it produces and disseminates what has become widely known among architectural and urban planning professionals as the “production of successful iconic typologies.” These architectural forms serve, among other things, to harmonize the national identity of citizens with the transnational, globalized identity of consumers.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, the transnational nature of global flows is publicly proclaimed, exemplified by architectural edifices designed by renowned global architects and the instruments of the egocentric logic of urban spectacle. This logic has been widely adopted by global cities across the world as they attempt to adapt to new and complex economic and social conditions by shifting their policies from urban governance to urban entrepreneurship (Skler 2023, 21–27; Stupar 2019, 116; Ričards & Palmer 2013, 20–21). These spaces of global society—iconic buildings, urban mega-projects, or entire cities—are financed by powerful investors and carried out by architects, urban planners, and teams of other experts with the intention of establishing symbolic power within the city. Their aesthetic expression exceeds the mere programmatic (functional) purpose of the architectural structure, but above all, through their visibility in the matrix of world cities striving for “global status” (Skler 2023, 277), they aim to fulfill commercial interests and promote the ideology of consumerism that serves the capitalist class (Skler 2023, 27–28). These structures are most commonly intended for international business, sports or cultural activities, transportation hubs, housing, and other purposes. Corporate towers and mega-skyscrapers, as urban landmarks and symbols of global society, have gradually replaced public symbols in the skylines of world cities, including Belgrade. In this context, the meaning and life of public space have been transformed into so-called pseudo-public space. This

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1 We have adopted the categorization made by Leslie Sklair, which distinguishes between *pre-global era icons* (before 1960) and *global era icons* thereafter, with the indication, as Sklair notes, that the idea of buildings and architects becoming iconic emerged in the 1980s and has since rapidly spread via the internet. Among these are buildings defined by Sklair as “unique icons,” authentic works of art with a distinct authorial signature (Frank Gehry, Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid). On the other hand, there are many more buildings that copy elements of these “unique icons” to promote the culture and ideology of consumerism, whether created by a group of thirty or so architects with distinctive styles or by a larger group of firms that produce “successful typical icons” (Skler 2023, 18–19). Sklair also conceptualized the drivers of iconic architecture as the *transnational capitalist class* (TCC), composed of four strongly intertwined factions: corporate, political, professional, and consumerist, which have evolved into a complex system where capitalist corporations increasingly dominate the built environment and promote the trend of globalized consumerist cities. In his view, the explanation for this lies in four key elements of what he calls generic globalization: the digital revolution, postcolonialism, the creation of transnational social spaces, and new forms of cosmopolitanism (Skler 2023, 37–38). For further details, see his seminal work: Skler, Lesli. *Projekat ikona. Arhitektura, gradovi i kapitalistička globalizacija*. Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 2023.

refers to spaces that are publicly accessible but privately controlled, constituting yet another challenge of capitalist globalization and consumerism, where the process of urban expropriation unfolds almost silently overnight. Up until the 1960s, following the division proposed by Leslie Sklair, during the first—pre-globalization period, the commissioners and often the investors in such architectural endeavors were religious and political elites. However, with the advent of capitalist globalization, the primary drivers of this architecture have become those in possession of economic resources, political influence, and strong media support worldwide. Capitalist corporations increasingly dominate the built environment, promoting the trend of globalized consumerist cities, largely driven by the technological revolution, which has directly given rise to the “Icon Project.” Digital technology, advancing by the day, ensures new patterns of architectural production and communication, facilitating the rapid execution of projects that can be distributed globally in real time. Remote business relations between successful global firms and small offices with cheap labor in Third World countries have now become common practice, including in Serbia (Skler 2023, 16–39). As a result, urbanized spaces around the world are shaped by the ideas of unknown architects, often from distant parts of the globe, thanks to the application of new concepts in city design and the use of innovative construction systems and materials. The classical understanding of space and time, in today’s world where the boundaries between the material and digital realms no longer exist, has been entirely redefined, along with our everyday lives, which are marked by numerous paradoxes in the fields of physical and virtual reality.

In the vast repository of collective and personal images that define Belgrade, and through which it can be identified—much like other cities in Serbia, whether those where we were born, reside, or simply visit and cherish—authorial architecture has always held a special place. Within these “highly significant repositories of imaginative energy” (Bogdanović 1978, 2), specifically in the forms of transpositions of Belgrade’s urban spaces, there has always existed a strong core of clear logic. This logic serves as a guide for understanding and preserving the city within our consciousness, but it is equally vital for defending the city from the daily forces of destruction and oblivion. Unfortunately, today, we find these spaces—or the testimonies of their existence—solely in family albums, where the life of the city or its builders has been halted and preserved in photographs, in epistolary materials, and in their legacies (which, regrettably, have been preserved only sporadically). These are primarily responsible for ensuring that the “flash of memory” can be passed on to those distant in both time and space. When it comes to the need to defend the city from the paralyzing absurdity of the everyday, to understand and preserve it from oblivion, every photograph, drawing, correspondence, or any written trace serves as a powerful incentive and light on the path to explaining and perceiving the city within the context of various phenomena, processes, forces, or currents, which also foreshadow potential outcomes.



The “Belgrade Waterfront” Architectural and Urban Development Project within the Panorama of Belgrade. Retrieved from: <https://beogradske.rs/siri-se-beograd-na-vodi-i-na-drugu-obalu-mapa/> (September 12, 2024).

In the development of this study, as well as in the consideration of achievements that, for various reasons, have been unjustly erased from the repository of Belgrade from the “pre-globalization period” to the “emergence of iconicity” in the 1980s, all ephemeral actions that have entered the “material repository of memory, belonging to the archive of culture” (Asman 2011, 9–10) hold a particularly significant place. On the other hand, all of the aforementioned must be understood within the context of the “sudden emergence” of an egocentric and acontextual logic of urban spectacle within Belgrade’s city network, where a megalomaniacal project of this type, in countries with economic and social tensions between the techno-elite and marginalized groups, almost inevitably triggers additional political, socio-economic, as well as ecological issues (Stupar 2019, 82).

### **Belgrade from the end of World War II to the present day— urban and architectural undertakings**

Belgrade still retains vestiges of its royalist role from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and its republican governance from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The frameworks of the city as a capital, along with its ideological underpinnings, evolved and dissolved at an even faster pace within a relatively short period of time, shaped by names reflecting new systems of ideas, beliefs, and practices—specifically ideologies that provided a well-defined order. These ideologies were reflected in all segments of Belgrade’s physical structure as the capital of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), and finally, as the capital of the Republic of Serbia today. From 1946, when the federal Yugoslav union was constitutionally proclaimed, to 1963, when it formally became a socialist state, represents the era that witnessed profound transformations evident not only in its material and industrial advancements but also in its social and cultural development (Докнић 2011, 10–11; Кадијевић 2017, 11–24; Кадијевић 2019, 115–133).

After the conclusion of World War II, Belgrade's authorities embarked on a wide range of projects and initiatives, including the development of Master Plan of Belgrade in 1950 and 1972, as well as Changes and Amendments to the Master Plan of Belgrade up to 2000 from 1984 (adopted in 1985). These efforts also included detailed regulatory plans for the entire city territory, its largest settlements and areas, along with comprehensive, large-scale studies, among others (Вукотић Лазар 2018, 141–150).

Master Plan of Belgrade from 1950 outlined the spatial development concept for Belgrade's expansion on the left bank of the Sava River, leading to the construction of New Belgrade (Благојевић 2007, 58–83). On the other hand, the potential of the waterfront area in the old part of Belgrade to serve as a new city center remained underutilized. The investors behind the representative “architectural icons” of Yugoslavia in the 1960s were, in fact, the very authorities who governed and controlled the state. At their initiative, palaces, buildings, public monuments, and similar structures were erected. On the other hand, religious institutions also played a role in financing the construction of temples, cathedrals, mosques, and other religious edifices. Given that the federal system guaranteed the existence of three types of property—state, cooperative, and private—and that private property was placed under state supervision, the state was predominantly the primary investor in nearly all aspects of life and work.

Among the most significant achievements of the Five-Year Plan, or the so-called “Five-Year Plan” after 1945, were the Regulatory Plans for cities and settlements in Serbia—22 urban regulatory plans and 25 settlement regulatory plans. These plans were developed by experts from the Urban Planning Institute of the People's Republic of Serbia between 1946 and 1952 (Момчиловић & Кортуц 1953, 11–26; Милашиновић Марић 2018, 51–70).

In 1957, a significant number of architects from the leading architectural centers of Yugoslavia visited the Berlin architecture exhibition “Interbau”, where they were introduced to the works of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Oscar Niemeyer, Alvar Aalto, and other renowned figures. This period also saw a steady influx of new and comprehensive information on the latest architectural and urban planning innovations reaching the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) through international architectural publications. The issue of housing, particularly residential construction, became a central focus, prompting a series of competitions, exhibitions, and public forums. New Belgrade ushered in a revival of high-rise construction, marked by iconic projects such as the Belgrade Fair, tourist facilities

throughout the country, and numerous engineering feats that came to define this period. Leading the way was Nikola Dobrović's landmark creation at the intersection of Kneza Miloša and Nemanjina Streets in Belgrade, now known as the General Staff Building Complex (1954–1963). This was followed by the rise of architectural masterpieces that epitomized the core principles of Yugoslav architecture, meeting the most rigorous international standards. Notable examples include the Belgrade Fair (1957), designed by Milorad Pantović, with structural engineers Branko Žeželj and Milan Krstić; the Press House on Republic Square (1958) by Ratomir Bogojević; and the awe-inspiring Avala Television Tower, conceived by Uglješa Bogunović and Slobodan Janjić (1965, with Milan Krstić as the structural engineer). This era also witnessed the creation of a modern architectural masterpiece in Serbia and Yugoslavia—the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, designed by Ivan Antić and Ivanka Raspopović (1965), which seamlessly aligned with the trajectory of European modernism.

In the highly productive era of residential construction, particular significance is attributed to Mirko Jovanović's interpolated building on Pariska Street in Belgrade, featuring both apartments and artists' studios (1960), as well as Ivan Antić's residential tower on King Alexander Boulevard (formerly Revolution Boulevard) (Štraus 1991, 39–46). By the mid-1960s, following Yugoslavia's first economic reform, architectural activity significantly slowed, with the ban on investments in high-rise construction further affecting the nation's architectural output. Despite this downturn, two exemplary residential complexes from this period stand out: Edvard Ravnikar's Ferantov Vrt in Ljubljana, situated in a prime urban location (1966), and the Julino Brdo residential complex in Belgrade (1969), developed from a prize-winning competition entry by architects Milan Lojanica, Borivoje Jovanović, and Predrag Cagić, which was grounded in a structural-expressive vision. A key shared characteristic of these complexes is their rejection of conventional linear massing in favor of dynamic compositions that create a sense of movement both horizontally and vertically, resulting in highly distinctive sculptural façades and spatial markers that define and emphasize the skyline of both cities (Štraus 1991, 67–68).

The fundamental doctrine of the 1972 Master Plan of Belgrade was founded on several core principles: “a city amidst a sea of greenery,” with a well-defined traffic scheme dominated by longitudinal (northwest-southeast) and transverse (northeast-southwest) routes, based on comprehensive transportation studies. The plan emphasized Great War Island as the *genius loci* of Belgrade, the expansive Ada Ciganlija Recreation Center, and two major sports complexes—Veliko Blato with its lake and Progar in the Bojčin Forest, located across from Umka. The primary objective of the 1984 Changes and Amendments to the Master Plan of Belgrade up to 2000 (adopted 1985) was to consolidate the city's spatial organization, increase urban density, introduce new zoning regulations, and streamline the network of primary roads compared to the more extensive roadway proposals of the 1972 Master Plan of Belgrade (Вукотић Лазар 2018, 141–150).



To remain aligned with European architectural trends during the 1970s, Yugoslavia's construction industry was significantly stimulated by a series of high-profile social, political, and sporting events of international scope. Notable among these were the 1977 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Belgrade, the 1979 Mediterranean Games in Split, the reconstruction of Skopje and Banja Luka after devastating earthquakes, and the 1971 launch of Yugoslavia's first international architectural competition since World War II, for the Belgrade Opera House. For the World Swimming and Water Polo Championships, several indoor pools with accompanying facilities were built in Belgrade. Among these developments, the most enduring project—due to its remarkable architectural and structural ingenuity—is the “25th May” Sports and Recreation Complex along the Danube, designed by Ivan Antić (1973). This complex stands as a testament to a defining feature of Antić's architectural approach: the capacity to seamlessly blend diverse forms and functions within the natural landscape. (Маневић 1992, н.р.).

During this period, two monumental high-rise buildings were constructed, each representing significant architectural achievements. In the historic core of Belgrade, following a competition win in 1963, the project for the “Belgrade Palace”



Branko T. Pešić, Belgrade Palace (Beogradanka), 1963, 1969–1974.

Published in: Milosavljević, Pedja & Ivo Eterović, *Beograd koji volim, Beograd*. Beograd: Turistička štampa, 1977, 67. Photograph by: Ivo Eterović.



Mihajlo Mitrović, Genex Center Building, detail, Novi Beograd, 1970–1980.

Published in: *Cultural mosaic. Experience Serbia*. National Tourism Organisation of Serbia, Belgrade 2023, 44 ([www.serbia.travel.com](http://www.serbia.travel.com)) Photograph by: Dragan Bosnić.

(Beograđanka, 1974) by Branko T. Pešić was approved and realized, marking the first true skyscraper in Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, in New Belgrade, the “Genex Tower”, a residential and commercial complex designed by architect Mihajlo Mitrović, was completed in 1980. Its twin towers, of unequal height and connected by a two-level bridge, stand as an imposing architectural beacon, heralding the entrance to Belgrade from the west.

### **The transformation of Belgrade from the period of intensified investment activities in 2009 to the present day**

The transformation of Belgrade from the period of intensified investment activities in 2009 to the present day reflects a significant and ongoing evolution. The Belgrade Master Plan 2021, adopted in 2003, continued the framework established by the 1985 Master Plan of Belgrade, while placing particular emphasis on major urban projects, opportunities for individual construction, the development of peripheral neighborhoods, the reduction of industrial and commercial zones in the city center, and the optimization of traffic and transportation infrastructure. Among the major projects envisioned were comprehensive planning studies and public design competitions for key areas, including the Sava Amphitheater on both banks of the river, the Belgrade Fortress, a new commercial zone along the highway, a proposed island and recreational zone on the Danube, the “Centar” railway station in Prokop, Ada Huja, Autokomanda, the Makiš water source, and Avala. During this period, numerous analyses and studies were initiated to support urban planners and assist the City Assembly in making crucial decisions regarding Belgrade’s spatial development. The production of these studies intensified particularly during periods of targeted investment, especially from 2009 onward, marking a crucial phase in the city’s transformation (Тилингер et al. 2018, 172; Ђорђевић Цигановић & Михаљевић 2018, 182). Around the planning table, these three cores were recognized as essential areas for development: the city’s authentic natural core, the historical urban cores formed around it, and the industrial or undeveloped waterfront zone located between them. This strategic identification provided a foundation for shaping future projects and investments in Belgrade’s urban landscape (Тилингер et al. 2018, 172).

The Belgrade Master Plan designates the Sava Amphitheater as a future central urban area of the highest rank. It was initially analyzed in the first phase of the Belgrade Waterfront Study conducted in 2008. Subsequently, in 2009, at the initiative of the Directorate for Construction Land and Building of Belgrade, work began on developing a program for a detailed urban plan for this area. From a spatial perspective, the Sava Amphitheater represents the core of Belgrade,



serving as a connection between the historic and New Belgrade banks of the Sava River. It constitutes the most significant central part of the city, facilitating direct interaction between the urban fabric and the river. This strategic location underscores the potential for revitalization and urban development in a way that enhances the city's relationship with its waterfront. Historically, the Sava Amphitheater has consistently been recognized for its exceptional potential, influence, and importance in shaping the overall physical structure of Belgrade. Its location represents an optimal site for the formation of a new city center and focal point for urban development. In addition to serving as the core of the city, the space was envisioned to incorporate various elements that would enhance its attractiveness and multifunctionality. This area was also viewed as a space with the potential for the introduction of vertical landmarks, though confined to specific zones defined by visual perspectives and surroundings deemed worthy of preservation or emphasis. In 2014, at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the development of planning documentation commenced, laying the groundwork for the "Belgrade Waterfront" project, which was subsequently declared a project of national significance (Вучићевић & Јоксић 2018, 194). Today, the area is rapidly transforming into the largest urban development project in the Balkans—Belgrade Waterfront—drastically altering the structure of Belgrade's central area along the right bank of the Sava River. This construction venture, fiercely criticized during the urban planning and architectural design phases, has gradually attracted less attention from its former critics. The architectural community now appears to have largely resigned itself to the reality of a new city center emerging along the riverbank.

Significantly taller buildings in Belgrade began to emerge during the construction of New Belgrade and other residential areas in the 1960s and 1970s, when the city saw the development of high-density residential blocks 61, 62, 63, and 64. However, exceptionally tall buildings remained sporadic initiatives of individual investors and were not a part of Belgrade's architectural tradition. This trend began to change after 2009, as Serbia opened up to foreign investment, prompting city authorities to demand that planning institutions establish criteria, zones, and regulations for the construction of exceptionally tall structures. This resulted in the Study of High-Rise Buildings (adopted in 2011), following professional and public debate as part of the amendments to the Master Plan of Belgrade 2021 (adopted in 2003). The term "tall buildings" referred to all commercial, office, and residential structures whose height exceeded the limits established by the existing General Plan of Belgrade. The renewed interest, along with growing pressures for the construction of high-rise buildings, has been a common trend across most European cities from the 1990s to the present day. The development of the high-rise study for Belgrade lagged more than a decade behind other European cities, which had already begun to strategically address the growing interest of investors



Investor Proposals for High-Rise Buildings in Belgrade. Published in: Ђорђевић & Михаљевић, Поглед на Београд са висине (eng. A View of Belgrade from Above), ИИФО-Урбанистички завод Београд (eng. INFO-Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade) No. 33, Belgrade: Урбанистички завод, 2011, 9–51 (18).

and developers in constructing very tall architectural structures, particularly towers. This study specifically analyzed the location and constraints surrounding the realization of projects in the block or complex formerly housing the Federal Secretariat of Internal Affairs (FSIA), a prime example of Belgrade's modern architectural achievements, which suffered significant damage during the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) bombing of Belgrade in 1999. The analysis was based on all available data at the time—traffic, infrastructure, cultural-historical preservation, planning conditions, green spaces, and more—and focused on the spatial and programmatic possibilities for construction in the block between Knez Miloš, Drinska, Sarajevska, and Durmitorska streets. Special attention was given to the possibilities for building within the former FSIA complex at 90–92 Knez Miloš Street. At the time, all proposed solutions appeared unfeasible and, at the very least, unsustainable for that part of Belgrade. Within the system of urban centers, this block is situated on the periphery of Belgrade's central zone, at the intersection of major city thoroughfares that connect the heart of Belgrade to the center of New Belgrade, as well as other key urban areas such as Autokomanda, Voždovac, Čukarica, and Zvezdara. It is located adjacent to the international highway linking Belgrade with other major cities in the region—Thessaloniki, Sofia, Skopje, Budapest, Zagreb, and others. In terms of cultural heritage preservation, the block in question falls within the protected “Old Belgrade” area and is positioned between

two cultural landmarks of exceptional significance: Kalemegdan and Topčider. Morphologically, the area belongs to the slope extending from Karadorđev Park toward the Sava River, which has been significantly urbanized and along which the traditional historic core of Belgrade was formed. The combination of built structures and the terrain's morphological features created a unique urban panorama that distinguished Belgrade from other cities in the region. In the context of the two most important international waterways, the Sava and Danube rivers, this area is part of the broader Sava Riverbank, specifically its most attractive section, stretching from Ada Ciganlija to the confluence of the Sava and Danube. Both the left and right banks of the Sava represent the greatest developmental potential for the future growth of Belgrade.

Kneza Miloša Street, historically, is a crucial element of Belgrade's urban matrix and functions as one of the city's longitudinal axes, extending toward Topčider, Dedinje, Banjica, and further into Šumadija. Culturally, urbanistically, and functionally, it stands as a distinguished area characterized by architecturally significant state and administrative buildings, residential villas, and a multitude of embassies and foreign missions. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, renowned architects left their mark here, including Russian imperial figures such as Nikolay Krasnov and Wilhelm Baumgarten, alongside prominent Serbian architects like Nikola Nestorović, Milenko Turudić, Dimitrije T. Leko, Nikola Dobrović, Ivan Antić, and others. From an urban perspective, Kneza Miloša Street is one of the most vital public spaces within Belgrade's network, with its entry from the Mostar interchange and Boulevard of Stefan the First-Crowned serving as a particularly significant gateway—not only to the street itself but also to the entire historic urban core of Belgrade.

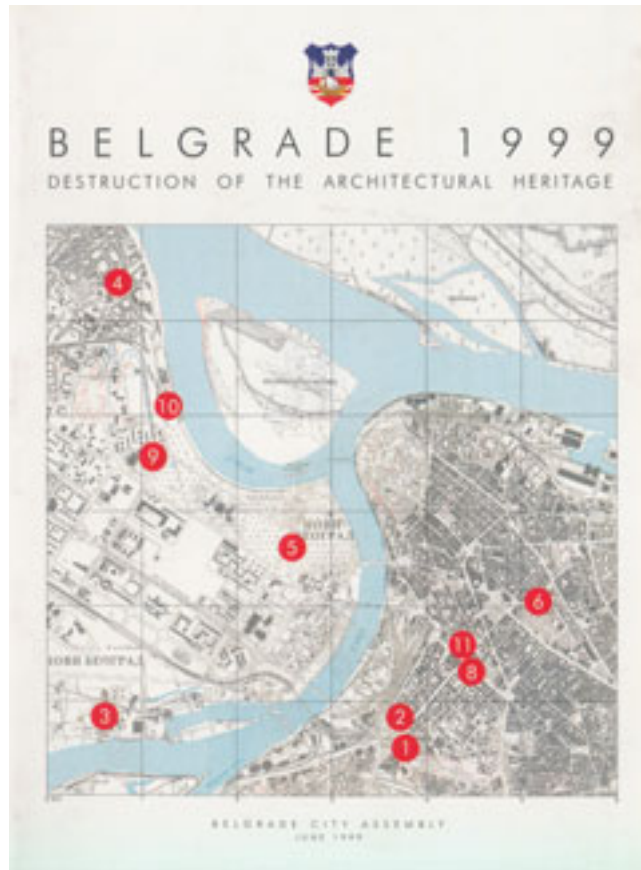
In 2007, when the Republic of Serbia sold this complex to a private investor through a public tender (Ђорђевић, Михаљевић 2011, 9–52), it was unclear to many that the numerous paradoxes manifesting across all realms of physical and virtual reality were clear indicators of new approaches to urban growth and transformations, which were rapidly shaping Belgrade at the forefront, and subsequently influencing cities across Serbia. In this context, the Belgrade City Assembly initiated in 2007 the process of drafting, harmonizing, and adopting the “Development Strategy of Belgrade”—a medium-term developmental document designed to guide the planning, regulation, and development of the city for the period of 2011–2016 (Савић 2012, 5–28). Concurrently, in the same timeframe, following the adoption of the new “Law on Planning and Construction” in 2009, work commenced on the new Master Plan of Belgrade 2021 (adopted in 2016), referred to in the Decision on the Plan's drafting as the “harmonization of the General Plan of Belgrade 2021.” However, the extremely short timeline for its preparation, the lack and inadequacy of essential input data (such as population census results and the degree of implementation of previous planning solutions), as well as insufficient funding for the preparation of specialized studies and expert analyses, were fundamentally at odds with the strategic and long-term planning and thoughtful consideration necessary for the city's development (Јоксић 2018, 216).

After the sale of the building that housed the State Security Administration, designed by architect Ludvig Tomori, the structure was demolished down to its foundations, making way for the construction of the *Skyline Belgrade* tower, a thirty-one-story skyscraper completed between 2020 and 2022. Following this, in 2022, the development of the *Skyline Belgrade* complex continued—a project comprising three towers that feature residential, commercial, and retail spaces, all developed by AFI Europe Serbia.

Opposite the designated block on Kneza Miloša Street lies the Clinical Centre of Serbia, established through the integration of the clinics and institutes of the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Medicine (1983, Clinical Centre of the Faculty of Medicine). The 20th-century vision for the development of healthcare facilities in Belgrade, along with the corresponding planning documentation, underscores the selection of Vračar as the most suitable location for this purpose. A key testament to this is the building at 101 Kneza Miloša Street, the Ministry of Social Policy and Public Health (1933), designed by Dimitrije M. Leko—one of Serbia's foremost architects and a professor at the University of Belgrade—regarded as his most prominent work (Roter Blagojević 2014, 74–92; Станојевић 1974, 485–489).

In the prime location where the left front of Kneza Miloša Street concludes, known in Old Belgrade's topography as Guberevac (Голубовић 2006, 81), stood the Republic Secretariat of Internal Affairs (RSUP) building at 103 Kneza Miloša Street. This iconic structure, often referred to as the headquarters of the Serbian Police Administration (1979–1983), was designed by renowned architect Ivan Antić. The site, perched on the Vračar Plateau above the Mostar Interchange, showcases remarkable natural features, such as the slope descending towards the highway and sweeping views extending toward Topčider Hill and the Sava riverbanks. These attributes are especially pronounced here. Furthermore, the RSIA building, with its spatial and formal qualities, ranked among Belgrade's most distinguished architectural works. Despite its prominence, it subtly blended into the cityscape, much like the Traffic Control and Communication Centre (1981), designed by Spasoje Krunić, a noteworthy example of high-tech architecture; the building of the Social Accounting Service (SAS) in New Belgrade (1987), designed by architect Petar Vulović, stands as a paradigm of late modernism. The architectural and urban ensemble of office buildings at the intersection of 27<sup>th</sup> March Street (now Queen Marija Street) and Starine Novaka Street, conceived by architect Uroš Martinović, alongside notable structures such as the Museum of Aviation in the area of Surčin Airport, designed by Ivan Štraus (1969), showcase a refreshing vitality and relevance that transcend their years of construction (Štraus 1991, 20). The building at 103 Kneza Miloša Street suffered multiple bombings and significant damage during the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Belgrade in 1999. It was sold in 2007,<sup>2</sup> but not until 2023 was it completely demolished down to its foundations, and the site cleared.

2 The Sale of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Building, *Политика*, Wednesday, March 28, 2007. For further details, see: <https://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/23909/Prodata-zgrada-saveznog-MUP-a>



Map of Belgrade Highlighting Structures Destroyed in the NATO Bombing of 1999.

Published in: Perović, Miloš. *Belgrade 1999. Destruction of the Architectural Heritage*. Belgrade: Belgrade City Assembly, 1999.

Until recently, the buildings designed by Tomori and Antić were significant elements in shaping the entry (or exit) portal to the most beautiful urban avenue, Kneza Miloša Street. The original and intended purpose of this location, which housed Antić's Republic Secretariat for Internal Affairs (RSIA), was public in nature. However, questions remain unresolved: Will a Master Plan be developed for the Clinical Center of Serbia, leading to the expansion of existing health facilities or the construction of new ones for similar purposes? Or will the fate of this location mirror that of the sites across the street?

In the same Kneza Miloša Street, several architecturally significant buildings were destroyed as a consequence of the NATO aggression, including the Government of the Republic of Serbia building at number 20 and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building at numbers 24–26, both designed by architect Nikolai Krasnov. These



structures have since been restored; however, the future of one of the most valuable examples of modernist architecture in Southeast Europe—the complex of buildings housing the General Staff of the Serbian Army and the Ministry of Defense at numbers 33–41, designed by Nikola Dobrović—remains uncertain. On one hand, the professional community advocates for the restoration and reconstruction of the complex to its original design, emphasizing the need to assign it a public function that reflects its importance. Unfortunately, this perspective is not shared by representatives of the political establishment (Вукотић Лазар 2018, 218–230). There remains a deep-seated concern that this architectural landmark, much like Antić’s Republic Secretariat for Internal Affairs, could vanish from the urban landscape of Kneza Miloša Street. This apprehension persists despite the fact that the Government of Serbia has designated this area as a cultural heritage site, recognizing it as a significant cultural-historical entity based on the project undertaken by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the City of Belgrade.<sup>3</sup>

### **In lieu of a conclusion**

Urban planning and construction in Belgrade during the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by a strong intertwining of architecture and local consumerism, driven by the imperative to exploit every conceivable consumer opportunity for maximizing urban space utilization. All three urban cores, identified at the beginning of the century as spatial potentials for new activities, investments, and urban development, transformed almost overnight. The authentic natural core of the city, along with historical urban centers formed around the natural and industrially underdeveloped waterfront, became sites for the construction of globally branded shopping malls, organized waterfronts, thematic parks, and extensive infrastructure expansion. This development has led to the creation of iconic structures, such as bridges, airports, ports, and power plants that double as museums, as well as infrastructure for megaplex cinemas, themed restaurants, casinos etc., all contributing to the urban landscape’s distinctive character. Spectacular forms, previously seen in entirely different parts of the world and “selected” from the array of global architectural styles for the city of Belgrade, are now influencing smaller towns throughout Serbia. These adopted projects are typically designed for environments of varying geographic, ethnic, cultural, and class origins, which has often resulted in a dissonant impression within the local context. However, what these “transnational social spaces,” as Leslie Sklair refers to them in his seminal work *The Icon Project: Architecture, Cities, and Capitalist Globalization* (2017), offer is an enticing experience of consumption, comfortable living, and entertainment-based education, as well as culinary cultures. This creates an illusion of erasing differences

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3 Kneza Miloša Street and Its Surroundings – A Cultural Heritage Site, *Политика*, Tuesday, January 12, 2021. For further details, see: <https://www.politika.rs/sc/clanak/470623/Ulica-kneza-Milosa-i-njena-okolina-kulturno->





Belgrade Waterfront – “Galerija” Shopping Center and “Belgrade” Tower, Today.

Retrieved from: <https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-> (September 12, 2024)

between local and global communities, which largely explains their widespread acceptance both globally and within various local communities in Serbia. It is crucial to emphasize that, in the context of Belgrade’s architecture, and particularly that of smaller towns in Serbia, we are not dealing with “unique icons” recognized worldwide as works of art. A pertinent example is the city of Bilbao, renowned for its “unique architectural icons” and regarded as one of the most significant cultural centers on the Iberian Peninsula, solely due to its contemporary architecture (such as Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum, Santiago Calatrava’s bridge, and Norman Foster’s metro station etc.). In Serbia, however, the situation involves copies of elements from these “unique icons,” produced by architectural firms globally and promoted through mass media. The underlying message conveyed is that the



Belgrade Waterfront – A Portion of the Residential Stock Constructed to Date.

Retrieved from: <https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-> (September 12, 2024)

essence of life lies in consumption, entertainment, and the possession of everything one desires, ultimately reducing meaning to mere financial transactions.

In addition to their socio-economic impact on the city, architecture and urbanism play a significant role in facilitating quicker and easier connections to cities with strong brands, such as New York, London, or Tokyo. In this context, the network of cities must also be viewed as a marketplace, where cities are treated as products. To enhance their positioning in this market, cities must possess distinctive brand characteristics (Milić & Đokić 2006, 293).

The transitional period, which sparked optimism that the memories and experiences associated with wartime events in the former Yugoslav republics would soon dissipate, posed significant challenges and demands for the cities of Serbia, especially Belgrade as the capital and a benchmark for others. Chief among these challenges was the urgent need for swift adaptation to new economic and social conditions, alongside the implementation of reforms in urban policy that shifted the focus from traditional urban management to a more dynamic model of urban entrepreneurship.

In the process of globalization, cities position themselves within a hierarchical network of urban centers, differentiated by their unique characteristics. The primary motive for the interconnection of cities lies primarily in economic interests. The new millennium not only heralds the advent of the first urban age, with globalization at its core, but also represents an era in which urban residents are progressively forming a distinctly interconnected global community (Milić & Đokić 2006, 291).

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## **NOVI URBANIZAM KAO BITNI ELEMENT U OBLIKOVANJU SRPSKE ARHITEKTURE 21. VEKA\***

### *Apstrakt:*

Od najskromnijih pa do gromoglasnih primera ove arhitekture u Beogradu – u Srbiji dominiraju tipizirani arhitektonski objekti lišeni čovekomernosti i bilo kakve harmonije sa zatečenim lokalnim graditeljskim i planerskim tradicijama. Ovaj marketinški unosni main stream tip arhitekture, poput filmova holivudske produkcije, deluje po principu istovetnih i proverenih šablona. Glavni zadatak ovih arhitektonskih objekata, često pod plaštom brige za održivi razvoj i javni interes, suštinski je instant i zajemčeni profit. Ideja o gradu kao mestu za život, uživanje i obrazovanje, a ne samo mestu za zarađivanje novca, prema novom urbanizmu definitivno je izgubljena. Rad se bavi arhitektonskim temama koje proklamovani multikulturalizam svode na tržišno isplative i pomodne arhitektonskog-urbanističke sklopove za masovnu i elitnu upotrebu, kao i njihovom ulogom u transformaciji vizuelnog identiteta Beograda i gradova Srbije.

### *Cljučne reči:*

arhitektura, urbanizam, kultura, Srbija, globalizacija, konzumerizam.

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