

**Critique architecturale
et débat public**

sous la dir. de **Hélène Jannièrè & Paolo Scrivano**

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Abstract By exploring a context of networks, critiques, debates, dialogues, and collaborative practices, this article challenges common understandings of the ideological dimension of architectural discourses of the period of the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia. It also considers the potential for rethinking theoretical issues involved in the critical dialogue with other currents of utopian urbanism and prospective thought that were influential at the time. The article investigates the reception of ideas and ideologies, from Lefebvre's theoretical studies and Habermas's thesis of modernity as an incomplete, i.e., unfinished project, to Fredric Jameson's arguments in a historical context of cultural modernity simultaneous with these texts, but in different conditions. The concepts of architectural criticism are analysed through representative practices of the period, from the first attempts to write and rewrite the history of architecture, which coincided with architecture in the expanded field of experimental and conceptual practices, to postmodernist narratives redefining the questions of identity by appropriating the strategies of performing arts in the public space throughout the early 1980s. The thematic framework is constituted by case studies on cultural transfer in the fields of philosophy, theory, sociology, spatial research, and architectural discourse, which played a key role in the strengthening of border-crossing networks. The theoretical and methodological point of departure is the analysis of the *Praxis circle*, a group of critical Marxist philosophers and intellectuals who gathered around the journal *Praxis* (1964–1974) and the philosophical-political *Summer School of Philosophy* held on the Adriatic island of Korčula (1964–1974). The aim is to document and contextualize the role of these activities in disseminating the intense intellectual exchanges of “creative criticism” between East and West. Although recent scientific historiography has expressed greater interest in the inter-

disciplinary area of cultural transfer, there has never been a thorough critical perspective of the politically charged debates on the history of Eastern European intellectual critical engagement, or systematic study of the theoretical achievements in the architecture of late socialism.

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Cultural Exchange as an Expanded Field of Architecture: The Decentering Architectural Criticism of the Yugoslav *Praxis Group* *

Since the beginning of the 1950s, journals such as *Casabella*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and *The Architectural Review* published numerous architectural designs and realizations from the other side of the so-called Iron Curtain, illustrating the vivid dialogue between Eastern and Western European countries during the Cold War, promoting in particular international modernism as a global phenomenon.¹ Therefore, the position of Yugoslavia can be compared, I claim, to that of Sweden and the Nordic peninsula when promoted by J.M. Richards (1940: 91–92) as one of the leading “brands of modern architecture”, so to say. The continuity of avant-garde constructive approach on the Croatian post-war art scene from EXAT 51 to the New Tendencies exhibitions and their aftermath in art practice, as well as in the corresponding critique,

theory and art life organization, constituted more than just a popular trend in this environment.² This socially engaged art was both the source and cause of a change in cultural climate. Architects, artists, and designers were yearning for change, wishing to see their environment undergo a great transformation occurring at the turn of a civilization that will be named “planetary”, in accordance with the spirit of their aspirations. Their aim was to create a common environment defined by McLuhan as the interconnected culture of a “global village” (McLuhan, 1962: 31). Yet, architecture from Yugoslavia was usually interpreted as unexpectedly modern and democratic. In his attempt to chart the state of the art of European architecture at the threshold of the 1960s, G.E. Kidder Smith concluded in the first survey of *The New Architecture of Europe* that if there was an architecture “... which stands in need of shrewd and deep interpretative study at present” it was precisely the Yugoslav one (Kidder Smith, 1961: 323). However, in this quote a part of the original text from *Architectural Review* (August, 1960) is omitted: “its geographical

* This article is based on a paper originally given at the third *Mapping Architectural Criticism* international symposium “Toward a Geography of Architectural Criticism: Disciplinary Boundaries and Shared Territories” (April 3–4, 2017: Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, Paris).

1 It was not incidental that the critique strongly supported the movements in interdisciplinary areas, in architecture, design and applied arts. This was particularly pronounced in the architectural magazine *Čovjek i prostor* (*Man and Space*), especially with Vjenceslav Richter as editor (1958–1961). At the same time, Richter became a correspondent for *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui* (1958–1971), where he regularly contributed articles about contemporary Yugoslav architecture, visual arts, and design.

2 German art historian Udo Kultermann was closely associated with the New Tendencies movement. His overviews titled *Neues Bauen in der Welt* (1965), and *Zeitgenössisches Architektur in Osteuropa* (1985), singled out a series of Croatian architects in the context of contemporary architecture of East Europe.



Fig. 1 Cover of the magazine *Casabella continuità* (1961), n°255 (special issue “Yugoslav architecture”). Source: © Mondadori Portfolio/Electa/Marco Covi.

and political intermediate position between East and West appears to be resolved in a very full comprehension of the culture of each, so that its architecture has a tendency to resemble the crucial phases of both (at least in their European aspects).” (“World. Yugoslav local Government Offices...”, 1960) Coincidentally, that same year a special issue of *Casabella continuità*, devoted to Yugoslav architecture, published a survey titled “Politics and Architecture in Yugoslavia: Revisionism and Orthodoxy” (Cortesi, 1961: 4–23): it conducted a comparative analysis of three case studies – the new cities of Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Belgrade –, focusing on the implementation of modernist architecture within the contemporary political situation of state socialism. (Fig. 1)

The *Praxis* phenomenon in the context of cultural exchange

The *Praxis* phenomenon can be best understood in the context of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, a period of societal modernization for Yugoslavia, coinciding with the rise of socialism. The journal *Praxis*

is closely connected to this period, in consideration of its symbolic status of a left-wing platform for cultural exchange between “East and West”.³ Because of its critical stance and pronounced activity, *Praxis* had a significant impact on all spheres of life, including politics, particularly during the crises of 1968 and 1971, when escalating conflicts between the journal and the authorities led to *Praxis* being banned from publication. The journal’s reputation was significantly reinforced by its international editions (published in as many as three languages) and the opening of a Summer School. The themes and the level of the discussions promoted by the journal were particularly appealing to students in 1968, the year of the “student movements”, when Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia and student demonstrations took place in Yugoslavia.

3 The philosophical journal *Praxis* was published in Zagreb, from 1964 to 1974. Editors in chief were philosophers Danilo Pejović (1964–1968), Gajo Petrović (1964–1974), Rudi Supek (1966–1974), and Ivan Kuvačić (1974).

That *year Praxis* Summer School was attended by more than 500 participants, and one of the most notable talks – “The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration” – was delivered by the New Left ideologist Herbert Marcuse.

Praxis and the annual symposium of the *Korčula Summer School* held in Korčula (1964–1974), with its list of guest speakers including Henri Lefebvre, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Lucien Goldmann, Jürgen Habermas, Ernst Bloch, Agnes Heller, Leszek Kolakowski, and other Marxist thinkers of critical orientation who took an active part in these meetings, became an essential focal point in discussions on the development of philosophical and sociological thought. It was a “testing ground” for a critical dialogue between thinkers from Yugoslavia and the rest of the world on the one hand, and it prompted critical contributions to recognising and solving Yugoslav-specific social contradictions on the other. Another important component of *Praxis* circle is seen in programmatic activities – books, articles, announcements, lectures published in the *Praxis* journal and mediated in daily and weekly newspapers. It is exactly for these reasons that the *Praxis* journal, and the *Korčula Summer School* were so popular among the intellectual circles (Lešaja, 2014: 46). *Praxis* initiatives’ platform was defined very early on, in the first issue of the journal that appeared in 1964, by a key concept taken from Marx on the criticism of all that exists, which served as the principal starting point of the *Praxis* philosophy. It was a criticism that corresponded with the needs of the epoch, focusing on the development of an alternative approach to socialism.

Starting from the late 1950s, Lefebvre’s writings were regularly translated, discussed,

and studied in Yugoslavia.⁴ His critique of modern urbanism in capitalist societies was used as an influential point of departure for the critique of the socialist city, or rather for a self-critique related to the importation of capitalist modern urbanism into socialism. Lefebvre’s concept of *autogestion* (or self-management) owes much to the intense interest and direct contacts and exchanges with the Yugoslav philosophers and intellectuals of the *Praxis* circle, probably owing to his participation in the *Korčula Summer School* starting from 1964 (Lefebvre, 1964). According to Lefebvre, urban space is a product of social relationships, but it also transcends the latter’s boundaries of social relationships, since it simultaneously plays a part in their production.

Lefebvre believed that the anonymous and immense apartment blocks, which characterize almost all new neighbourhoods of post-war modernist cities, may be resisted by laying claim to the public space by means of physical activity and the encouragement of longing (Lefebvre, 1968: 115–133). In the mid-1960s these claims found expression in a series of new theoretical approaches to architecture, as well as in exploring new urban visions. The so-called *megastructures* – spatial-structural frameworks home to interchangeable modules where inhabitants live and work – anticipated many of the characteristics of contemporary cities.⁵ They were also indicative of the creative discourses generally considered in the context of visual arts, design, and urban design. This critique of modernism was prompted in part by the opportunities offered by the

4 The first translation of *Contribution à l’esthétique*, published in 1957 (*Prilog estetici*), and the many that followed confirm how influential Lefebvre was in Yugoslavia at the time. The translations into Serbo-Croatian include: *Dijalektički materijalizam; Kritika svakidašnjeg života (Le matérialisme dialectique; Critique de la vie quotidienne)*, Zagreb, Naprijed 1959; *Antisistem: prilog kritici tehnokratizma (Vers le cybernanthropie: contre les technocrates)*, Beograd, Radnička štampa, 1973; and *Urbana revolucija (La révolution urbaine)*, Beograd, Nolit, 1974. This last work was published 30 years before the English translation.

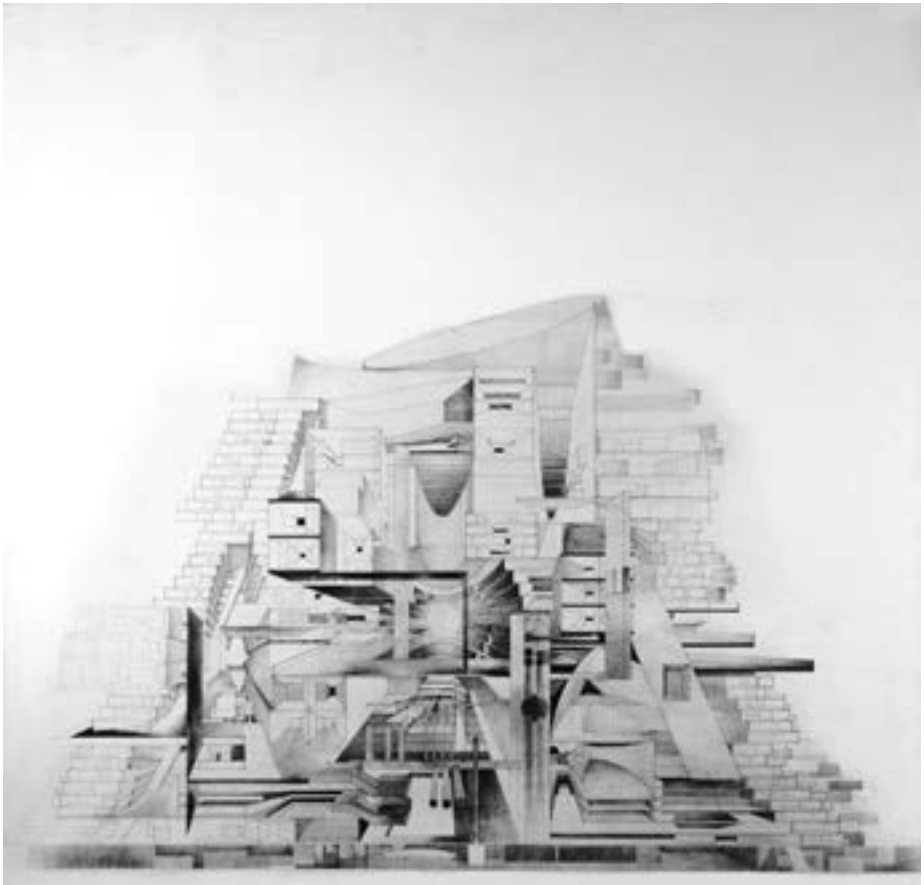
5 The term later came to popular attention in Reyner Banham’s study *Megastructures: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (1976).



Fig. 2
Cover of the Croatian version of the catalogue of *Visionary Architecture*, Arthur Drexler's MoMA exhibition hosted in 1963 at Zagreb's Museum of Arts and Crafts under the title *Vizionarna Arhitektura* (Radoslav Putar ed.). The drawing depicted being a detail from William Katavolos' *Chemical Architecture*, 1961.

Fig. 3
Project Synthurbanism. Simultaneous perspective of the synthurbanistic unit, 1962–1963. Arch. Vjenceslav Richter. B&W photograph. Source: Vjenceslav Richter Archive, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

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introduction of new technologies, by the new results of kinetics research, by the suspended structures, space frames, and other devices that were believed to be able to “harness” the unrestrained growth of urban areas in new ways. Such was the intellectual environment in which Lefebvre’s claims could be observed in Vjenceslav Richter’s radicalized reflections on architecture and urbanism. The presence of Richter, who was one of the key actors of contemporary Yugoslav art and architecture movements within the *Praxis* circle, confirms the latter’s political connotation within socially engaged cultural practice.⁶

However, in addition to the critically oriented Marxist intellectual circles, it was also the opening in 1963 in Zagreb and Belgrade of the *Visionary Architecture* exhibition that propelled the rise of radical reflections on architecture and urbanism in Yugoslavia (Fig. 2). Building on the premise that “social usage [...] determines what is visionary and what is not”, Arthur Drexler conceived this travelling exhibition – which premiered in 1960 at the MoMA – as an alternative history of utopian architectural ideas (*Visionary Architecture exhibition...*, 1960). This history was represented, among others, by El Lissitzky’s *The Cloudhanger* (1924), Vincent Korda’s set design for the film *Things to Come* (1936), Frederick Kiesler’s *City in Space* model and *Endless House* project, Kiyonori Kikutake’s *Marine City* (1959), and William Katavolos’ *Chemical Architecture* (1960). Although it was defined as the sum of “ideal projects” for cities and urban structures “considered too revolutionary to

build”, “inspired by criticism of the existing structure of society, as well as by the architect’s longing for a private world of his own, [which] may bring forth ideas that make history” (*ibid.*), the exhibition had another dimension. Within the context of American Cold War policies, which saw the MoMA playing a protagonist role, this exhibition carried a message of political propaganda in addition to a critical one.

Towards an expanded field of synthesis in architectural criticism

Starting from the determination of “architectural expression as a socially conditioned category”, Richter surpassed the format of an individually composed building, developing a non-hierarchical systemic approach applicable to a wider field of disciplines. Following the publication of *Synthurbanism* in 1965, Richter wrote an article for a *Praxis* thematic issue on Yugoslav culture, entitled “Assistance and Engagement: About Some Fundamental Questions of Our Architecture” (Richter, 1965). In this article Richter developed his critique of architecture within a programme of social harmonization. He argued for the re-politicization of the social role of architecture, and defined it as a cultural and ideational phenomenon. According to this criterion, the condition of contemporary architecture in Yugoslavia was evaluated as unfavourable, mostly because of the bureaucracy and commercialization that reduced architecture to a “service activity”. Richter believed that the solution for this unacceptable state of affairs lay in the concepts of “social living spaces”, that is, in the integrated environments where the lines between architecture, urbanism and design are blurred, and where “architecture becomes identical with urban planning, and both become the organizational promoters of social progress... The process of synthesis must acquire broader social proportions in terms of the conceptual and organizational unity of structure.” (*ibid.*: 578). Here the context and the reception of Lefebvre’s critique of the bureaucratized interpretation of space are very different from the political imperatives of controlled “space production” that dominated in

6 Vjenceslav Richter (1917–2002) graduated from Zagreb’s University of Applied Sciences with a degree in architecture in 1949. He was one of the founders of Exat 51 (Experimental Atelier 1951), Studio of Industrial Design (1956) and Centre for Industrial Design (1963) in Zagreb. Between 1950 and 1954, Richter headed the Architecture Department at the Academy of Applied Arts in Zagreb. In his activities, from designing exhibition spaces such as the Yugoslav Pavilion for EXPO 1958 and for the Milan *Triennale* in 1964, to painting, stage designs, and sculpture, Richter carried out the principle of artistic synthesis. Starting from the early 1960s, he developed a systematic approach to urban planning and sculpture.

socialist countries such as Poland and the USSR (Crowley and Read, 2002: 182).

At the same time, Richter articulated these theses in the utopian project of *Synthurbanism*, which should be assessed primarily as an illustration of the potentially condensed field of synthesis, as presented in the *Praxis* article.⁷ Conceptual projects of Vjenceslav Richter's megastructures from the late 1960s include coordinating the living functions of 10,000 residents within a single structure (which is the basic premise of his work *Synthurbanism*) and Heliopolis, a city in a constant state of flux that never remains the same. In *Synthurbanism*, Richter introduced the dimension of time as a conceptual unit that can be used to express the efficiency of urban organization, treating time as equivalent to space, reminiscent of the unity of the symbolic, semantic, and plastic components of Tatlin's iconic Monument to the Third International.⁸ He therefore concluded that all living functions can be considered and attended to within the structure of a ziggurat, the fundamental unit of *Synthurbanism* since it incorporates all living functions, a characteristic that renders distances negligible and that prevents the wasting of time (Fig. 3). To prove his propositions, Richter analysed how much time was wasted in the average human lifetime. "If the communication required for the sequential performance of all the living functions manifests itself in an uninterrupted flow of brief internal exchanges, which can be perfectly facilitated in this kind of structure, a whole lifetime may pass under one roof, without any time wasted," Richter concluded (1964b: 1833).

By definition, a *synthurbanist* structure should incorporate a political dimension; as an administrative unit, economically "independent" and self-governed, its politics essentially do not depend on the politics of

other similar units. "Because Synthurbanism was conceived in Yugoslavia, the self-governed structure corresponds to the way self-government is organized within the country," Richter made clear (*ibid.*). The concept of *synthurbanism* contains the integrating idea of an entity that operates as the essence of all the functions an urban space possesses – it is simultaneously a city centre, dependent on the creative powers of its citizens, a business centre, and a part of a larger synthurbanist landscape which relies on the concept of community as a genuine (not abstract) category of living. The spatial units of Heliopolis, for example, should have had almost identical functions as those of synthurbanist structures. The primary difference with the latter lay in the outer envelope, where Richter also envisioned apartments, schools, health institutions, and administrative offices (though they would have been rotating around the static inner core as if this last was an axis). The speed of rotation would have been negligible in that the outer envelope completed one rotation a day, while the units were always in different positions in respect to one another, allowing a constant change in the city's appearance. Richter also envisaged translatory motion within individual units – (apartment) space. He believed this would introduce an element of spontaneity and of personal choice, which would all impact the non-static appearance of the module, the unit, and the city.⁹

7 The work of Vjenceslav Richter has been brought into the spotlight in the context of recent historiography focused on Yugoslav modern architecture. Among others, see: Stierli and Kulić (2018).

8 For an analysis of the connections of Richter's work to constructivist tradition and the avant-garde, see: Denegri (2000).

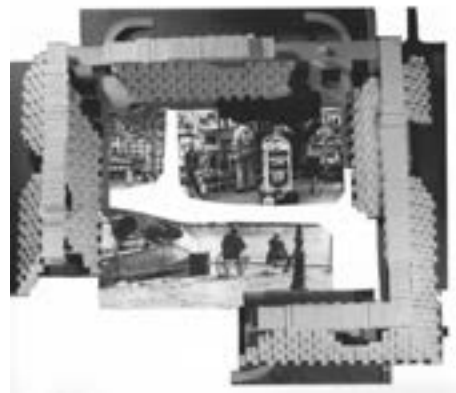
9 The project of Heliopolis is published as an article without illustrations (Richter, 1968).



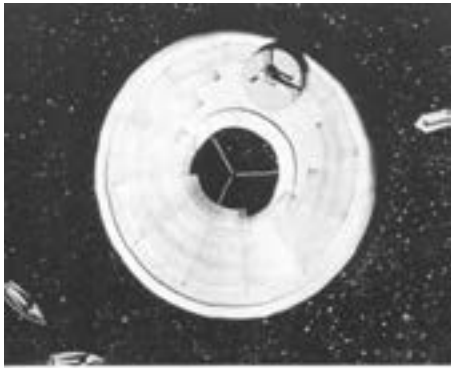
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Fig. 4
Trigon 69 biennale "Architektur und Freiheit" [Architecture and Freedom], Neue Galerie Graz, 1969. Detail of the display.
 Source: Ristić (1970: 44).

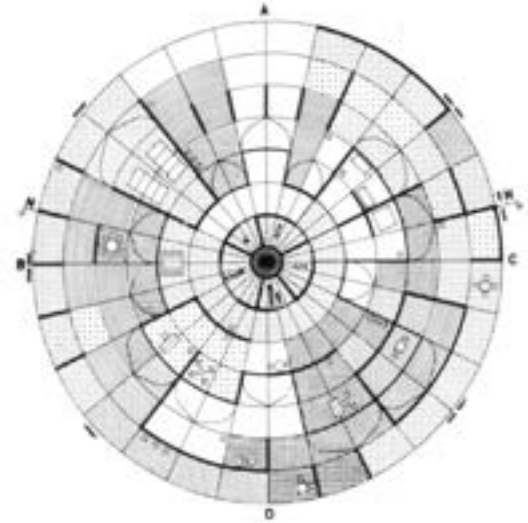
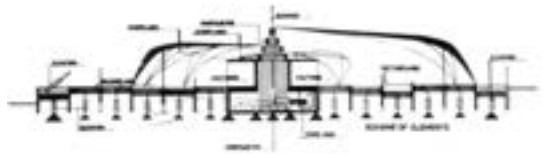
Fig. 5
Urbarchitecture project, photocollage, 1969. Arch. Radovan Delalle. Won first prize *ex æquo* at the Trigon 69 biennale's competition "Architektur und Freiheit" [Architecture and Freedom].
 Source: private collection.



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Fig. 6

Hydroid, 1966. Arch. Vojtjeh Delfin. Scale model, view from above. Source: ODAK (2006: 144).

Fig. 7

Homobil, 1964. Arch. Andrija Mutnjaković. Competition project for Hollywood villas, plan and cross-section. Source: ODAK (1986: 69).

Fig. 8

Homobil, 1964. Arch. Andrija Mutnjaković. Scale model
© Photo : Alexandar Karoly.



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New strategies of criticism in networking architectural ideas

The same year that saw the publication of *Synthurbanism*, Radovan Delalle developed the concept of *urbarchitecture* in an attempt to redefine the position and significance of architecture with regard to the urban context (Richter, 1964a).¹⁰ Starting from Lefebvre's view that urban space is a projection of social relations that realize their quality in public space, Delalle focused his critical reflections on the continuity of the urban form as opposed to isolated objects of modern architecture as generators of alienation (Delalle, 1988). Delalle also wanted the inhabitants to be involved in further development decisions. His work of the 1960s was the by-product of the ideas promoted by the *Praxis* journal, and culminated in the *Urbarchitecture* project, which he developed for the *Trigon* exhibition "Architecture and Freedom" curated by Wilfried Skreiner in Graz in 1969 (Fig. 4).¹¹ This was a radical venture into the field of the conceptualization of architecture, analogous to the contemporary experimental curatorial activity of Harald Szeemann, who relativized the boundaries between architecture, visual media and critique, counterculture, mass media, and conceptual art. Twenty-seven projects by *Superstudio*, *Coop Himmel(b)lau*, Hans Hollein, and other protagonists of radical architecture were submitted in response to an open call to design a hypothetical city in the year 2000, making evident that exhibiting architecture had indeed become a discipline accommodating a plurality of platforms, strategies, contexts, and actors.

Visitors were invited to record their impressions in a computer system, which projected those recordings in the exhibition space. The project designed by Radovan Delalle developed the concept of *urbarchitecture*, focused on the continuity of the urban form, as opposed to isolated objects of modern architecture as generators of alienation. In contrast to Richter's megacity concept, characterized by repetitive patterns, Delalle's *urbarchitecture* envisages the gradual development of an urbarchitectural core (a megastructure of sorts) within the wider city boundaries. This tendency towards a participatory approach was in accordance with the theories of self-management practiced in Yugoslavia. (Fig. 5)

Bringing together various public services within the city and underneath residential, terrace-like structures, as well as dividing the megastructure into a series of smaller interstices and interrelationships was not meant to constitute a complete or permanent process. Such proposals for megastructures indicated the need for a new and different type of city planning able to consider the needs of future users and the fact that, over time, the latter will alter the space in relation to their needs. Vojtjeh Delfin took an even more radical approach to introduce the sociological discourse into the city debate.¹² In the futuristic project of *Hydroid* – a floating system of circular structures planned for tourist use – he emphasized the need for new, high quality solutions to deal with the issues of alienation and leisure time, advocating for a new synthesis of the environmental values of urban structures. (Delfin, 1966: 3) (Fig. 6). Not incidentally, the early 1970s saw the advent of cybernetics and semiology, as well as a growing awareness of the questions of ecology and the environment (*ibid.*). From the early 1960s on, Andrija Mutnjaković designed biomorphic architectural shapes linked to *art informel*

10 Radovan Delalle (b. 1935), a Croatian architect, city planner and artist, studied at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb between 1956 and 1960. He graduated in 1972 at the Planning Institute of Paris (IUP–Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, then attached to the Paris Dauphine University [Université Paris IX Dauphine]: nowadays the Paris School of Urban Planning [EUP–École d'Urbanisme de Paris]), after having worked in Paris in the architectural offices of Jacques Labro (1967–1968), and Gérard Gobert (1971–1972). In 1969, he co-founded the architectural group Z (1969).

11 *Trigon* was the name given to a series of biennial exhibitions of radical forms of cultural production held in Graz between 1963 and 1991: the events hosted authors from Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia.

12 After the graduation from the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb in 1954, Vojtjeh Delfin (1921–1981) co-founded the architectural periodical *Čovjek i prostor* (1954) and then became the editor in chief of the journal *Arhitektura* (1965–1970).

and *kinetic art*:¹³ by introducing elements of mechanical engineering into the design process, he developed the idea of a mobile building whose structure is that of an open space lattice, while dwelling units may be adapted to the needs of the individual user and to the environment. (Mutnjaković, 1967) (Fig. 7-8). His projects for *Homobil* – the competition project for a Hollywood Villa (1964) and the competition project for Tel Aviv city centre (1963) – and *Urbmobil*, made for the competition in Luxembourg 1967, were displayed in 1975 at the solo exhibition *Engaged Architecture* in the Zagreb Gallery of Contemporary Art. Antoaneta Pasinović, curator of the exhibition, referred to Mutnjaković's work as criticism of the relationship between planning policies, its bureaucracy, and institutions (Pasinović, 1975). Mutnjaković was convinced that "the city had grown unworthy of man" (*ibid.*: 7–8) and, as a consequence, worked on numerous proposals, including urban plans for Tel Aviv, a glass and steel tower in Pittsburgh, a floating city where communication would take place in accordance with biotic principles, and several theoretical reflections on the post-industrial or tertiary city. This shift from experimental to radical thought and activity in architecture and urbanism was hardly surprising; it indicated the upheavals which characterized many creative fields at the time, such as the Situationist International and the group of theorists, architects, and urbanists known as *Utopie*, founded in Paris in 1967 (Buckley and Violeau, 2011). Elements of a flexible society were reflected in these non-static structures and dynamic spatial concepts. Nevertheless, their greatest value lay in the human dimension of spatial organization. Interest in space – in how it may be used in the public sphere, as well as in the problems posed by the discrepancy between a

politically proclaimed intention to shape a more humane environment and the anonymity of new urban zones – incorporated an undeniable ethical dimension. Similarly to the architectural avant-gardism such as that of architect Yona Friedman, these technology-oriented efforts managed the dynamic processes of urban growth through the projection of new spatial forms, and questioned the roles into which architects, sociologists, and urban planners had been cast. Still, one of the main themes that emerged during the 1960s covered multiple strategies of mediatization. The critique became a platform for new theoretical and methodological approaches to art and architecture. Particularly influential were the principles of information aesthetics developed by Max Bense and Abraham Moles, promoted by the interdisciplinary magazine *Bit International* published by the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. Concerns for "meaning" in architecture related to the "linguistic turn" became evident in the appropriation of structuralism when, at the end of the 1960s, Antoaneta Pasinović introduced semiotic analysis in architectural criticism. By shifting the focus of the argument from the criticism of urban ideology to the new philosophy of science, she contributed to the understanding of architecture as communicative phenomenon, based on cultural values comparable to visual art and literature.¹⁴ Building on the cybernetic theory of mathematician Norbert Wiener (Wiener, 1954), she initiated a debate on whether it is possible to decipher the field of architecture by means of semiotic analysis, or whether architecture exhausts and obliterates this universal scientific language, rendering it a mere methodological apparatus within the symbolic signs (Pasinović, 1969).¹⁵

13 After having studied architecture at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb, starting from the 1950s Andrija Mutnjaković (b. 1929) was active as a practicing architect, as well as in the fields of architectural history, theory, criticism and education. He was the author of numerous projects, focused on kinetic, organic and biomorphic concepts of architectural design.

14 Urban and architectural historian, critic, theoretician, curator and activist Antoaneta Pasinović (1941–1985) graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb. Selected essays and critiques by A. Pasinović are collected in a dedicated monograph (Križić-Roban, 2001).

15 Pasinović is referring to the 1964 translation of Wiener (1954): *Kibernetika i društvo: Ljudska upotreba ljudskih bića*, Beograd, Nolit.

Conceptualising architectural criticism in the public sphere

Interest in space, in how it might be used in the public sphere, as well as in the problems posed by the discrepancy between a politically proclaimed intention to shape a more humane environment and the anonymity of new urban zones, incorporates an undeniable ethical dimension. The political climate of the late 1960s and the early 1970s, with its frequent public gatherings and protests, called for the social engagement of architecture, which meant that the use of public space became a more complex and contradictory issue. These issues concerning the critical rethinking of the architectural discourse were closely related to Habermas's theory of public sphere, as well as to the dissemination in Yugoslavia of his ideas and works through the *Praxis* circle starting from 1965.¹⁶ Various socially engaged art events and urban interventions of the period supported liberal, creative, and radical modifications of the existing hierarchy of spatial relations, and were critical of the usual methods of imposing symbolic and ideological content on the urban fabric. They also unquestionably possessed a political dimension of critique to the socialist city. Examples of this ethically-motivated social engagement of the new artistic practice included the Student Centre Gallery projects – the section entitled “Proposal” at the 6th Zagreb Salon (1971), and the “Opportunities for 1971” exhibition at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. These endeavours originated from the premise that public space is a sphere of interest which all citizens share. Particularly interesting was the section “Proposal”, organized in the frame of an annual survey exhibition of art, design and architecture focused on an experimental curatorial practice in a public space. The section allowed the exhibition (as a medium) to become a testing ground for the most diverse initiatives into public space, including multimedia

interventions, performances, happenings, and architectural-urban actions (for example under the form of an incentive to engage in social interaction in order to create a shared living environment). Specifically, multimedia art was intended to possess a “broader social dimension” and become available to all the citizens of Yugoslav society, which by then had become considerably stratified. This, however, would have been possible only if art were to renounce its elitist character, and enter the streets, squares, and parks of the city, plunging into the “living organism that is the urban environment”. The artists were called to approach the city as “a place of plastic activities” in their work, and to propose new forms of public plasticity stirring the imagination of the city's residents.¹⁷

After President Tito's death, the beginning of the 1980s saw a deep crisis of the social, political, and economic system of Yugoslavia, something that announced the upcoming disintegration of the federation. The architectural discourse saw hybridity as a desirable characteristic, and this was reflected in the criteria used to select fractals of interwar architecture as references for narrating the modernist tradition.¹⁸ Building on the theories of Robert Venturi, Aldo Rossi, Léon Krier, Colin Rowe, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, and Oswald Mathias Ungers, which were internationally recognized architects at the time, architectural critics provided definitions for some original concepts in the general theory of architecture. Dismissing the modernist discourse, Croatian architect Nikola Polak attempted for example to give a political reading of postmodernism in the late socialist society. His thesis that “high” modernist cultural production lost relationship to the society led to the Jamesonian standpoint that postmodernism is a symptom of societal and cultural modification.¹⁹ Polak recognized

16 His work *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962) was published in Yugoslavia as early as in 1969, 20 years prior to the English translation (Habermas, 1969).

17 Introductory text to the catalogue for the “Proposal” section exhibition, 6th Zagreb Salon, 1971.

18 For a comparative analysis see Blagojević (2011).

19 Fredric Jameson became the most popular philosopher of postmodernism in Yugoslavia. His *Marxism and Form* (1971) was translated into Serbo-Croatian in 1974.

that in Yugoslavia, as well in the West, the “bureaucratic dictatorship” turned cultural production into its opposite, in the service of consumption (Polak, 1983). These theses were conceptualized in the “Details” exhibition at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 1982, indicating the potential complexity of meaning of urban space.²⁰ The referential model applied to the design of the remnant indicates the “details” which define not only the creative responsibility for the urban design but also generate the quality of space. Establishing a link to the experience of environmentalists, the architects participating in the exhibition proposed their interpretations of real existing urban space, where the only relevant architectural reality existed through a performative act in the gallery’s *white cube*.

In Yugoslavia, the debate on postmodernism found space in the pages of the architectural review *Arhitektura* in 1980 (“Postmoderna arhitektura”, 1980), involving many prominent architectural theorists, historians, critics, and architects. This debate raised the question of whether postmodernism indicated a “crisis within economic, social, artistic and ideological structures created in the omen of industrialism” (art historian Milan Prelog, quoted in *ibid.*: 24) of the Western capitalist society and then manifested in a socialist context. Thus, general criticism towards Yugoslav socialist society once more collided with a condemnation of the utopian nature of modernism. In these terms, architecture became more referential, in historical and environmental terms, as architects strived to contextualize their works, while simultaneously trying to relieve their ideas of any ideological nature. The result of these processes was the fragmentation of architecture as a discourse, a discipline, and a practice, which resulted from an absence of clear visions on how to continue to employ architecture as an ideological tool

and use its potential to strengthen Yugoslav society in political and cultural terms.

20 The authors of these installations were 12 young architects (Ivan Crnković, Nenad Fabijanić, Dražen Juračić, Krešimir Kasanić, Davor Lončarić, Neven Mikac, Boris Morsan, Nikola Polak, Dražen Posavec, Emil Špirić, Emil Šverko, and Dragomir Vlahović).

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