Building the Socialist Balkans

Architecture in the Global Networks of the Cold War

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Abstract

This article introduces the special issue of *Southeastern Europe* dedicated to architecture in the Balkans produced in the networks of socialist internationalism. The built heritage of socialism has suffered several waves of erasure, most spectacularly exemplified by the current remake of Skopje, but it is also undergoing a surge in popular and scholarly interest. Focusing on Bucharest, Skopje, Sofia, and the activities of the Belgrade company Energoprojekt in Nigeria, the issue contributes to the growing scholarship on socialist and postsocialist space by analyzing architecture's global entanglements during the Cold War. "Architecture" is understood here not only as the built environment in its various scales, but also as a regulated, organized profession, a field of cultural production, an art, and a technical discipline. It thus opens up a broad range of phenomena that cut across the fabric of society: from the representations of specific global imaginaries, to the transnational exchanges of expertise, services, and material goods.

Keywords

architecture – the Balkans – socialism – Cold War – globalization – modernism
socialist realism – Bucharest – Sofia – Skopje – Energoprojekt

1

In 2010, the government of Macedonia initiated an ambitious project named *Skopje 2014*, motivated by the dual goals of "nationalizing" the center of the country's capital and boosting the economy through tourism. New historicist facades, triumphal arches, and dozens of statues of national heroes, including

a gargantuan equestrian sculpture of Alexander the Great on the central square, have come to populate the city, projecting an image of Macedonian-ness as rooted simultaneously in classical antiquity and modern nationalist revolts. The theme-park aesthetic of the intervention, complete with multi-color LED lighting and “music fountains,” has indeed caught the attention of locals and visitors alike. But the effect is controversial, to say the least: locally, numerous critics have objected to the exorbitant cost of the project, which reached €560 million by 2015, and the apparently rampant corruption in contracting its design and construction (Jordanovska 2015). The new facades are now targeted by balloons filled with paint whenever the citizens of Macedonia wish to express their anti-government sentiments. In turn, the worldwide attention that the makeover has attracted is not of the kind that the government had hoped for, as its gaudiness and the laughably illiterate design have inspired leading international media, including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Der Spiegel*, to ridicule Skopje as Europe’s “capital of kitsch” (Crevar 2016, Gillet 2015, Mayer 2013).

Unsophisticated, corrupt, parochial, and ultra-nationalistic: the architecture of *Skopje 2014* appears as an “invented tradition” gone awry, a parody deliberately designed to confirm all of the stereotypes that Maria Todorova famously identified as balkanism, allowing the “civilized world” to relish—yet again—in its own superiority over the region (Todorova 1997). However, what is omitted from the various accounts of the project and left only to local architects and activists to lament is the fact that the new facades and buildings aim at concealing another massive urban project, one facilitated by a socialist government: the reconstruction of Skopje after the 1963 earthquake. Conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, the reconstruction was an intensely international endeavor, which brought together some of the leading minds in architecture and urban planning from across the world. As Ines Tolić shows in her article in this special issue, post-earthquake Skopje was imagined as the exact opposite of the hard-line exultation of nationalism characteristic of *Skopje 2014*: it was to be a symbol of international cooperation and Cold War détente, a “world city” where global expertise and culture would come together as a practical and symbolic gesture of international cooperation and good will—the very values that the “civilized world” claims as its own.

The current erasure (or, more precisely, cover-up) of that cosmopolitan moment is motivated in part by aesthetic reasons. Before its new appearance arose, Skopje was often identified with the so-called brutalist movement in architecture, which reveled in the sculptural use of exposed reinforced concrete and which fell out of popular favor by the mid-1970s. But the political

connotations of the makeover are difficult to miss: brutalist Skopje is also inseparable from the socialist period, the *bête noire* for the current crop of right-wing governments all over Eastern Europe, which they use as the ultimate scarecrow in their struggle for illiberal transformation of postsocialist societies. In that sense, the makeover of Skopje is an intervention in historical memory that is not simply a case of an invented tradition; it is a radical rewriting of memory, similar in motivation and effect—even if different in its methods—to the systematic demolition of antifascist memorials in the 1990s, when only in Croatia some three thousand monuments were destroyed as symbols of socialism (Hrženjak 2002). Ultimately, it is part and parcel of the broader discursive turn in European politics in the past decade that has successfully reframed the officially sanctioned memory by equating communism and Nazism as “two totalitarianisms” of identical standing (Ghodsee 2014). In short, *Skopje 2014* is much more than provincial kitsch to be observed with bemused smiles—it is an extreme symptom of Europe’s own current political moment.

In contrast, on a more grassroots level, the past several years have also witnessed a surging interest in the architecture of socialism, both at the scholarly and at the popular level. If one is to judge by recent exhibitions, coffee-table books, specialized websites, blogs, and enthusiast projects, the former socialist world is the latest “hot thing” in architecture on a global scale. I will here mention just a few topics covered by recent exhibitions and publications, all of them abundantly illustrated and written in English, and thus obviously intended for international consumption: Yugoslav monuments (Kempenaers 2010), socialist modernism across Eastern Europe (Bezjak 2011), Soviet brutalism (Chaubin 2011), disappearing socialist architecture in former Yugoslavia (Linke and Jovanović Weiss 2012), socialist tourism facilities in Bulgaria and Croatia and their postsocialist destiny (Zinganel, Beyer, Hagemann 2013), Romanian Black Sea resorts (Șerban 2015), Soviet bus stops (Herwig 2015), and Bulgarian monuments (Mihov 2015). In addition, brutalism is undergoing a revival, not only in the former socialist world, but also globally, with its own crop of publications and initiatives (for example, Pasnik, Grimley, and Kubo 2015). In light of this changing tide, Skopje’s makeover is not retardataire only for its historicist aesthetic, but it is also hopelessly out of sync with its own cultural moment.

The contradiction between the increasingly virulent conservatism in politics and the aesthetic fascination with socialism is not easily solved. It clearly manifests itself in some of the popular representations of socialist architecture that reveal persistent stereotypes even when they appear to be affirmative of their subject matter. The latest phenomenon in this vein is the fascination with “alien architecture,” an interpretation that sees late socialist buildings as

exotic, otherworldly objects devoid of any social meaning, top-down products of dictatorial imagination that bear no discernible cultural lineage.¹ This is an entirely new trope, replete with science fiction and popular culture references, and it replaces the old stereotypes of socialist architecture, namely, pompous Stalinist monumentality and Khrushchev's drab functionalism. However, such accounts often rely on old assumptions, the same ones that underlie the conservative politics that equate communism and Nazism: the "totalitarian paradigm," forged into an ideological weapon during the Cold War with the goal of deflecting the specter of socialism. This is apparent when all agency in the production of buildings is collapsed and ascribed to the very top of the state—to the point that sometimes even the names of the architects are ignored.² The totalitarian paradigm is thus kept alive in the popular celebrations of socialist architecture, at the same time paradoxically reinforcing the very same mindset that seeks to erase the physical traces of socialism.

2

This issue of *Southeastern Europe* probes deep beneath the surface of the region's buildings to explore the intersections of architecture, socialism, and internationalism in the Cold War Balkans. The four articles collected here exemplify the recent turn in architectural historiography that parallels the aforementioned popular fascination with socialist architecture, yet at the same time strives to problematize the new, as well as the old, stereotypes. Breaking the almost two-decade-long silence that followed the collapse of socialism, this new wave of scholarship offers nuanced insights into the social dynamics governing the production of urban space. It comes on the heels of the previous generations of historians who have studied early socialist urban spaces in order to question the validity of the totalitarian paradigm, perhaps most influentially Stephen Kotkin and his groundbreaking book *Magnetic Mountain* (1995). Focusing on the construction of and everyday life in the Soviet flagship industrial city of Magnitogorsk in the 1930s, Kotkin proposed "Stalinism as civilization" and persuasively established the city as the prime site for the

1 Paradigmatic in this respect are *Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed* (Chaubin 2011) and *Spomenik* (Kempenaers 2010).

2 A case in point is Jan Kempenaers' project *Spomenik*, which completely ignores any history behind the monuments it shows, including the name of the architects. It was enthusiastically received by the media, which were quick to ascribe the agency for the several thousand Yugoslav monuments in it to Tito himself (Surtees 2013).

negotiation of what it meant to be socialist. By highlighting contingency and open-endedness, he contributed to the dismantling of the view that life under socialism was controlled entirely top-down, as the proponents of the totalitarian paradigm would have it. A much more diffuse agency thus emerges, shaped in a large measure by unforeseen events and the lack of coordination, in direct contrast to one of the more outlandish corollaries of the totalitarian paradigm: that the socialist states were so “total” that they even eradicated chance itself (Belletto 2012).

The past several years have produced a great deal of new scholarship on socialist cities and buildings that takes Kotkin’s conclusions as its point of departure and expands study to the postwar period and to the rest of Eastern Europe. Exploring the triangle between the state, society, and professionals, scholars have opened the discussion of such new themes as the construction of mass housing (Smith 2010, Zarecor 2011, Harris 2013, Fehérváry 2013), the construction of new cities and neighborhoods (Bittner 2008, Lebow 2013, Le Normand 2014, Barenberg 2014), or professional organization (Molnár 2013, DeHaan 2013). Despite such a great range of themes and geographical settings, the image that always emerges is one of intense negotiations between the various groups of stakeholders, rather than of unmediated top-down dictate. Among these stakeholders, professional architects and planners acquired unprecedented powers in shaping the human environment. In much of Eastern Europe and especially in the Balkans, during the earlier capitalist waves of modernization much of the construction occurred outside of the realm of professional designers, most conspicuously the vast slum neighborhoods for the poor. Despite considerable differences between the various socialist countries and the persistence of informal construction in some of them, the professional control of the environment was greatly expanded with the socialist ambition to plan the entire environment. In addition, the ranks of the architectural profession—which in some areas, such as Macedonia, had been minuscule before the war—expanded as well with the establishment of professional education.³ Highlighting these expanded professional powers and responsibilities is not meant to discount the impact of political incursions; however, even the politicians with the greatest architectural ambitions do not really design buildings themselves, but inevitably have to rely on professional architects to translate their vague ideas into reality. Various counterintuitive reversals of the supposedly typical positions of the state and architectural professionals

3 In the case of socialist Yugoslavia, for example, new schools of architecture were founded during the socialist period in Sarajevo, Skopje, and Prishtina, in addition to the three existing ones in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana.

further illustrate the extent of the professional control of space: in repeated instances across the former socialist world, we thus find the state opting to open up to individual initiative, only to encounter opposition from the professionals. For example, as Brigitte Le Normand discusses in her book on the planning of Belgrade, it was the Yugoslav state that pushed for the provisions to boost the individually funded construction of single-family homes as a way of relieving the pressures of persistent housing shortages. However, Belgrade architects and planners largely succeeded in thwarting this initiative, insisting instead on high-rise collective construction in order to reduce the need for infrastructural investment and, more importantly, to keep at bay the supposed “ruralization” of the capital city (Le Normand 2014). Despite its apparent material solidity, then, architecture and the frequently contentious ways in which it was imagined, constructed, occupied, and ascribed meaning reveal socialism’s fluid shapes and fuzzy borders.

A word on terminology: I use “architecture” here in an expanded sense, to encompass not only individual buildings, but also cities, landscapes, infrastructural systems and objects, etc., i.e., most of the physical infrastructure that organizes modern life. The somewhat inelegant term “built environment” may be more appropriate for such broad usage, just as the term “urbanism” connotes the scale of the whole city. But despite its seemingly narrower scope, “architecture” in this case has the advantage of a useful ambiguity that opens a much broader window onto society. Significantly, the word architecture transcends the tangible material form to invoke several other meanings: a regulated, organized profession, thus allowing us to discuss agency; a field of cultural production, thus offering a perspective on cultural representations; an art, thus highlighting individual creative achievements; and a fundamentally technical discipline, thus focusing attention on technology. In addition, architecture as a discipline was historically the source out of which much of modern urban planning developed, and its scope thus expanded far beyond the scale of an individual building; and it involves the expenditure of substantial amounts of human labor and material resources, thus intersecting with economy and politics vitally, and more obviously than most other fields of culture. When referring to “architecture,” we open up an extremely broad range of phenomena and processes that cut across and deep into the fabric of society, forcing us to engage with the complexity of their entanglements like few other terms do. It is no wonder, then, that architecture in this broader sense has attracted an increasingly interdisciplinary attention, which includes, in addition to traditional architectural historians, scholars trained in social and cultural history, anthropology, sociology, and so on (see, among many others, Fehérvári 2013, Molnár 2013, and Schwenkel 2014).

To add to such complexity, the effects of architecture are remarkably persistent across time: buildings continue shaping our lives for decades, sometimes even centuries, after they were originally constructed, in the process acquiring ever denser social meanings. Most cities are indeed the palimpsests that we live in, inescapably incorporating the physical layers of the past into our everyday existence. In this respect, the socialist period in the Balkans and in much of Eastern Europe bears special significance, because it was then that the decisive wave of modernization occurred, including the most intensive urbanization. As a result, vast amounts of the existing inhabitable spaces in the region are socialist in their origin, including a large percentage of the urban housing stock. Despite the inherent flexibility of human occupation, these spaces still determine the physical framework for everyday life in a myriad of ways, also bearing with them the traces of their original purposes. As Elitza Stanoeva demonstrates in her article in this issue, for example, historical continuity with socialism “shines through” even in the representational heart of the postsocialist Bulgarian state, which appropriated the former Party House for its current Parliament after the merely cosmetic intervention of removing the red star at its top. It would thus be difficult to find a more explicit way in which the existing city of Sofia, the capital of democratic Bulgaria, was defined at the height of the country’s Sovietization.

3

Ever since the late nineteenth century, architecture has been defined as a discipline charged with configuring and organizing space, in contrast to the more traditional focus on its material, constructive nature. But architecture also exists within a multiplicity of larger social and geographical spaces that determine its character just as decisively as does its immediate physical vicinity: the broader cultural landscapes, legislative frameworks, the networks of the circulation of technology and knowledge, etc. These spaces are mutually interlocked through a series of nested scales: from the scale of the neighborhood and the city, to regional, national, and continental scales and beyond, defining how buildings are shaped and used in ways that are not always immediately obvious, but are nevertheless critical. As Manfred Steger has argued, it was precisely in the period during and after the Second World War that the relevant frame of reference for everyday life expanded to encompass the entire globe, producing a “global imaginary” that has replaced the smaller previously dominant scales, such as the national (Steger 2009). Coming on the heels of the various colonization projects and the nineteenth-century wave of

internationalist movements, this new global scale became an inescapable fact of life, whether for the denizens of the two superpowers fearing nuclear annihilation, Western businesspeople seeking to expand their opportunities in untapped distant markets, Eastern Europeans participating in the networks of socialist solidarity, or the citizens of the newly decolonized developing countries looking for support and cooperation in the Non-Aligned Movement. Conventionally understood as the most situated of human activities, architecture was deeply implicated in this new, global scale of life, as ideas, theories, aesthetics, technical expertise, labor, and material became dislodged from architecture's seemingly static and permanent existence.

Socialism, of course, critically contributed to the post-World War II emergence of the global scale. It defined one of the pillars of the "three-world-system" of the Cold War, the Soviet bloc, but it also played a significant role in the so-called Third World and its struggle for decolonization. As György Péteri has argued, Eastern European communism was "the largest deliberately designed experiment in globalization in modern history" (Péter 2004: 117); more recently, Elidor Mëhilli proposed the so-called "Second World" of socialism as a full-fledged project of globalization in its own right (Mëhilli 2011). That project determined life not only in socialist countries, but it also inserted itself into the minds of the citizens of the West as a threat, or of those in the developing world as a source of solidarity and development. Architecture in the socialist world fully participated in such globalization. For example, from early on in the Cold War, the influence of the Soviet Union emanated across the world through the doctrine of socialist realism, which defined the benchmarks of socialist culture in the most visible terms. In the West, on the other hand, socialist realism served as the negative standard of illiberalism; it was customarily compared to Nazi architecture, thus not only contributing to the ideologized deployment of the totalitarian paradigm (paradigmatic in this respect is Lehman-Haupt 1954), but also allowing the variation of modernism known as the International Style to finally ascend to the status of "official architecture" of Western liberal democracy. After destalinization, mass-produced, standardized prefabricated housing acquired a similar role, either as a model to be disseminated and replicated across the socialist world or, in the West, as yet another visible sign of the deficiencies of socialism, due to its perceived monotony and drabness. In the past several years, architectural historians have also discovered the degree to which architecture in socialist countries participated in post-war globalization not only on the level of symbolic representation, but also as a material currency. Socialist countries exported architecture prodigiously to developing countries, especially those in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, with the combined goals of spreading

socialist internationalism and advancing their own economies (Stanek 2012, Schwenkel 2014). Łukasz Stanek, who has done the most extensive research in this direction, uses the term “mondialization,” adopted from Henri Lefebvre, in order to distinguish this process from the current neoliberal globalization, but the message is still the same: through the circulation of architecture across the planet, the socialist world created its own global project (Stanek 2015).

In this newly globalized world, the geopolitical position of the Balkans was thoroughly revised. The region, of course, is stereotypically synonymous with the fragmentation of political space—infamous “balkanization”—dating back to the decline and collapse of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such political fragmentation parallels the physical fragmentation due to difficult topography, which over the centuries has greatly impeded communication across the peninsula (Mazower 2002: loc. 312–24). And while balkanization would not be evoked again until the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, it might be argued that the Balkans as a geopolitical space actually experienced the pinnacle of its fragmentation during the Cold War, precisely at the time when balkanist stereotypes were temporarily suspended (Todorova 1997). In a way, the region epitomized the geopolitical borderlands of the Cold War more than any other part of Europe: Greece and Turkey were firmly allied with the West and NATO, Romania and Bulgaria with the Soviet bloc and the Warsaw Pact, and Yugoslavia and Albania fluctuated wildly in their positioning and established unprecedented geopolitical alliances on a truly global scale. Indeed, Yugoslavia started as a staunch Soviet ally, only to be expelled from socialist orbit in 1948, come to the brink of joining NATO in the mid-1950s, and finally establish itself as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, which put it in direct contact with far-away countries in Africa and Asia. Albania experienced an even more astonishing trajectory: from a war-time Italian protectorate, to a satellite of Yugoslavia in the late 1940s, a faithful participant in the Soviet bloc and the Warsaw Pact in the 1950s, then the Chinese ally in the struggle against Soviet “revisionism,” and finally, a largely isolated country devoted to “self-reliance” in the 1970s and 1980s. Even Romania, which officially remained in the Soviet fold, forged a largely independent foreign policy under Ceaușescu, thus making the geopolitical mosaic even more complex.

If the Balkans remained to a certain degree on the “periphery” of the world during the Cold War, the centers to which this periphery gravitated moved farther away than ever before: from Rome, Constantinople/Istanbul, Vienna, and Venice during most of history, and the capitals of Western Europe between the world wars, to Moscow, Washington, and Beijing after the Second World War. In that sense, the collapse of socialism and the ensuing “balkanization” of Yugoslavia resulted in what should be understood—at least in geopolitical

terms—as the opposite of the fragmentation of the Balkans: it brought about a geopolitical unification of sorts, because all of the Balkan countries, despite their continuing mutual animosities, are now firmly oriented towards Brussels, such orientation either already institutionalized through EU membership or embodied in the aspiration to join the Brussels bureaucracy.

4

Architecture in the Balkans was deeply affected by geopolitical fragmentation during the Cold War and, in turn, it gave tangible form to such fragmentation, most visibly during the 1950s. It was in that period that architectural culture and expertise coming from the geopolitical centers of the world started arriving and transforming the existing native traditions. On the socialist side, it was the aesthetics of socialist realism that became the visual manifestation of Sovietization, as Juliana Maxim and Elitza Stanoeva demonstrate in their articles in this issue. With their grandiloquent historicist style and monumental symmetrical organization, Bucharest's Casa Scînteii ("House of the Press") and Sofia's Largo presented eloquent statements of allegiance to Moscow, mimicking the icons of Soviet postwar reconstruction. In contrast, the same decade saw the sleek corporate modernism of Hilton International Hotels bring Americanization to Istanbul and Athens in an intermingling of capitalist entrepreneurship and political propaganda through Conrad Hilton's expressly stated mission to demonstrate to the local population the pleasures of American-style capitalism (Wharton 2001). The US Embassy in Athens, designed by the famous German modernist Walter Gropius, at the time a professor at Harvard University, was another instance of International Style modernism at the service of American Cold War propaganda initiated at the highest state level (Loeffler 2010). Meanwhile, Yugoslavia upset this clean stylistic division between the East and the West through its own version of socialist modernism, which highlighted the country's independence from either bloc. It was used to the greatest geopolitical effect in the new capital, New Belgrade (Kulić 2013), and in the striking modernist pavilions at international exhibitions.

Of course, architecture and (geo)politics are entangled much more profoundly than just through simple aesthetic equations. But even at the level of representation and aesthetics, the transfer across national borders is far from unproblematic. The center of Sofia is an exemplary case of Stalinist city-building, but the supposedly direct process of "Sovietization," as Elitza Stanoeva's article shows, was fraught with ambiguities, complexities, and

contradictions. In this process, short-term political expediency often thwarted long-term ideological goals, representation trumped the more profoundly transformative plans, and inter-institutional frictions further slowed down and impeded the implementation of these plans. In that sense, the highly conflicted nature of “Stalinism as civilization,” which Kotkin identified in the case of Magnitogorsk, was extended across the chasm of the Second World War and across the national borders of the Soviet Union.

Sovietization affected architecture not only through the imposition of specific models of representation, but also through a radical transformation of the professional organizations and the programs that architects were supposed to bring to life. In her article, Juliana Maxim explores the Sovietization of Romania through the shift to mass social housing as one of the chief building types of socialist modernization. In the process, architectural design itself became “industrialized” through standardization and typification, methods that were amenable to different aesthetic articulations, including modernism and socialist realism. These methods were first introduced during the Stalinist period, but their continued implementation after the reforms initiated under Khrushchev points to a degree of continuity where conventional narratives based on aesthetic concerns usually see an unqualified break.⁴ In addition, neither standardization nor typification was necessarily specific to socialism: they dated back to the interwar period and they belonged to the general corpus of modernist ideals, which were successfully developed and applied in capitalist contexts as well.⁵ The same could be said of urban planning models, which also circulated relatively freely across ideological borders. Indeed, by the time the Soviet bloc renounced socialist realism in the wake of Stalin’s death, an easy geopolitical identification merely through a building’s style became all but impossible. The prefabricated mass housing of the Khrushchev era does not differ so much from its counterparts built by the Western welfare states through its aesthetic articulation, but rather through the standards of size, equipment, execution, and maintenance, which were much more the result of the level of economic development than of any ideological intent.

4 Other scholars have observed similar continuity in other socialist countries (Smith 2010, Zarecor 2011, Harris 2013).

5 Kimberly Elman Zarecor, for example, demonstrates how much the postwar industrialization of housing in Czechoslovakia owed to the experiments conducted before the Second World War in the development of the industrial town of Zlín, built for the shoe company Bat’s, the most successful case of capitalist entrepreneurship in the country (Zarecor 2011).

The reification of architectural difference between the East and the West, or between capitalism and socialism, obscures some fundamentally similar processes that occurred simultaneously on both sides of the geopolitical divide. In the case of the Balkans, for example, the Adriatic, Aegean, and Black Sea coasts of the peninsula were all transformed into mass tourism destinations at roughly the same time, in the late 1950s and 1960s. Whether in socialist or capitalist countries, these efforts required the construction of an extensive new infrastructure that would facilitate the greatly accelerated circulation of people and goods, thus opening a whole new field for architecture. As one can surmise from recent scholarship, the process was also more complicated than one would expect based on ideological assumptions. The Bulgarian and Romanian coast of the Black Sea developed in parallel with the Yugoslav coast of the Adriatic, with the similar goals of not only facilitating socialized vacations for the local populations, but also for commercial reasons, in order to attract international tourists and thus acquire much-needed foreign currency (Zinganel, Beyer, Hagemann 2013, Šerban 2015, Tchoukarine 2010). In capitalist Greece, it was not through entrepreneurial initiative, as one would expect, but through concerted efforts on the part of the state that the mass tourism industry on the Aegean coast received a decisive boost, most notably through Xenia, the first local chain of elegant modernist hotels, which was built by the government (Aesopos 2014: 52–85).

If mass tourism stimulated the transnational circulation of people, other networks stimulated the circulation of architecture itself, spurred most notably by the logic of developmentalism and its parallel and often competing networks. As Ines Tolić shows in her article, the involvement of the United Nations in the post-earthquake reconstruction of Skopje in the 1960s was a breakthrough moment in that respect, because it facilitated an unprecedented flow of expertise both within and into the Balkans. One of the chief planners responsible for the reconstruction, Konstantinos Doxiadis, came to Skopje from neighboring Greece, but via New York, because he had been previously active on the Ford Foundation projects in India and Pakistan, which then recommended him for this collaboration with the UN. His closest collaborator was Adolf Ciborowski, the Chief Architect of Warsaw, whose work in Yugoslavia was facilitated by the Polish government in solidarity with a fellow socialist and Slavic country; Poland also funded the construction of the Museum of Contemporary Art, which was designed by Polish architects. Among the many buildings that various other countries donated to Skopje, a Romanian hospital and a Bulgarian performing arts center deserve mention here as examples of inter-Balkan exchange. Most famously, however, it was the UN-brokered hiring of the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange for the plans for the center of the city

that attracted the lion's share of international attention, indeed a spectacular demonstration of both cutting-edge design and of internationalism. But Skopje was not the only site in the Balkans to host experts from far-away lands; around the same time, just slightly further to the west, another long-distance transfer occurred as Albania began receiving technical and material aid from China and North Korea, not long after it ceased being helped by the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia (Méhilli 2011: 415–20). In short, the influx of architectural expertise, labor, and materials into the Balkans acquired a whole new set of paths in the 1960s, replacing or complementing the more traditional ones established by the various powers that had dominated the region in the past.

Another novel path of transfer emerged as the Balkan countries themselves began exporting architecture, in most cases for the first time in their respective histories. As a large number of colonies declared their independence and joined the United Nations in the early 1960s, the so-called Third World became the grounds for the competition between the rival ideological blocs, which sought to buttress their political and economic influence by extending various forms of aid in development and modernization. Most socialist countries participated in these efforts, motivated in part by the pragmatic need to acquire foreign currency on the international market. The construction industry, including architectural design and urban planning, constituted a large segment of the resulting exports. Romanian experts and companies were present in several African and Middle Eastern countries, such as Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, and Iraq (Vais 2012), whereas the Bulgarian company Bulgarproject worked in more than a dozen countries in the same region, including Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Angola, Ghana, Syria, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates (Doytchinov, 2012).

Developing countries were not merely the recipients of foreign aid, but they also sought to establish their own geopolitical agency, most notably through the Non-Aligned Movement, which facilitated political and economic collaboration between the member states in order to reduce their dependency on the superpowers and their satellites. As Dubravka Sekulić shows in her article, as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia was especially active in these new networks of exchange, including through the export of architecture. The Belgrade construction company Energoprojekt was one of the most active agents of such exchange, its projects stretching across four continents, from Indonesia to Peru, but particularly active in the Middle East and Africa. Energoprojekt's engagement in Nigeria was especially complex, because it involved a range of activities, from ethnographic research to urban and regional planning, architectural design, and physical construction. Its modus

operandi was equally complex, because it combined design and construction with active entrepreneurship in acquiring new commissions across the world. The founder of Energoprojekt's architecture department, Milica Šterić, is exemplary in this respect: one of the most prominent women architects in socialist Yugoslavia, she expertly balanced the roles of a designer, manager, and entrepreneur, in the process acquiring a worldwide experience, which took her from Yugoslavia to the Netherlands and all over Africa and Asia. The entrepreneurial spirit she cultivated among Energoprojekt's architects, which encouraged them to take the initiative to actively search for and negotiate global commissions for the company, is certainly another counter-example to the rigid view of socialism promoted by the totalitarian paradigm.

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This issue of *Southeastern Europe* deals with historical themes, but ultimately it should be read with an eye on today's state of affairs. The accelerating rate of globalization is a determining fact of life today, and it is highly significant that much of the Balkan Peninsula first became globalized under socialism, even if the geopolitical networks that made that process possible have undergone radical reconfiguration since the end of the Cold War. Much of socialist globalization manifested itself in the physical space of the city and through the agency of the professions in charge of its shaping. All of the architectural cases analyzed in this issue thus embody the duality between socialism and postsocialism: their material permanence ensures that the socialist period continues shaping everyday life in a myriad of ways, but the many social, economic, and political reconfigurations that have occurred in the meantime on multiple scales continue transforming both the usage and the meaning of physical space. Sofia is no longer a node in the hierarchy of the Soviet bloc, but its representational city center clearly embodies the memory of such a hierarchy. Even if socialist mass housing is no longer either socialized or egalitarian, it still serves large segments of the Romanian population. Skopje is still physically defined by the effects of global expertise that arrived there in the wake of the earthquake, even if a misguided cosmetic intervention demoted it from a "world city" to a pitiful provincial capital. And if Energoprojekt is today only a shadow of its former self and of the global outreach of the once-powerful Yugoslav construction industry, it still survives as one of the few companies in today's Serbia with operations abroad, largely based on the reputation and networks established in the heyday of non-alignment. The past thus still shapes the present even when the present tries hard to forget the past.

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