

SLAVICA STAMATOVIC VUCKOVIC

**URBAN SPACE: THE PHENOMENA
OF UNFINISHED IN THE CITIES OF MONTENEGRO**

**1. THE PHENOMENA OF UNFINISHED
AS A DIALECTIC PROCESS**

The city is a changeable space and time system, composed of a number of historical and cultural layers, which implies transformation and thereby both unfinishedness and openness, indicating, in a sense, the principle of instability. In contrast to the changeable urban tissue, architectural structures are strictly defined, definitive, singular and “self-sufficient” structures that frequently do not hold an open dialogue with the physical, economic and social context.

The historical context of transformation of space lies in the manner of spatial organisation. Greeks, for example, supported the “natural” organisation of space, spatial compositions articulated in line with the empirical and contextual logic, optical adjustments and studied “incidents” in a “closed”, restricted form. Unlike Greeks, Romans had a stronger impact on space, the ethics of infinite extent, the idea of the city in its continuity, infinite development on an orthogonally defined matrix (*cardo* and *decumanus*), according to the system of measurement and control. The medieval city, however, is a rigid, closed, defensive structure, completely excommunicated from the context of wider space. The porous envelope of Gothic cathedral and openness to light indicate a need for the integration of indoor and outdoor space. The Renaissance adhered to the idea of producing “clean” edifices, immune to any contact with the environment and focused on their self-sufficiency and perfection. Unlike the Renaissance, the Baroque worked on developing a concept which goes from a closed towards an open form, from static towards dynamic, thus establishing spatial integration and a dialogue with the context (Monaco 2004: 32). In the 19th, and especially in the 20th century, as well as in contemporary architectonic and urban planning concepts at the beginning of the 21st century, both the concepts of “openness” and the phenomenon of “unfinishedness” of architecture and urban space were constantly present.

The principle of openness is not an “incidental” but purposely designed spatial concept providing for further spatial transformation. It is frequently seen as “an open work” (Eco 1965: 35) that is, contrary to a stable and clearly defined traditional form, composed of “open modules” (“moduli aperti”) that ensure the possibility for mutation and transformation. Modern art has considerably liberated space and enabled its transformation. Le Corbusier’s project, the Museum of Unlimited Growth (1939), allowing a possibility of infinite spiral extension, or the dynamic theatre – the Total Theatre – of Walter Gropius (1927) providing for transformation of interior space, present only a couple of such examples. Open forms also appear in urban development, as models for the development of large cities, especially during the 1960s and 70s (for example, Japanese metabolists – A Plan for Tokyo, 1960; the principle of “weaving” – Candilis, Josic and Woods, etc.).

The latter half of the 20th century also brings a new perception of reality reflected in architecture. Reality was no longer seen as a linear sequence of predictable events, as a state of “being”, but rather as “happening” (Gianni Vattimo). Translated into the language of the form, a reference is made to “roughness” (“rugosita”, Gilles Deleuze), as well as to the phenomenon of “incidents” (“random events”). Jean Nouvel, for example, does not accept universality, but defines architecture as “materialisation of the moment”, highlighting the very “incidents” and diversity of specific situations (Baudrillard, Nouvel 2008: 24, 83–84). The contemporary spatial concepts such as “cross-programming” (Koolhaas 1997: 162), “curve-linearity” and “parametricism” (Schumacher 2004: 5–7) and the like, maintain the idea of creating a continuous, fluid and transformable space, indicating that the highest quality of space is actually its potential to be transformed.

In contrast to the principle of openness that is a product of the 20th century, the phenomenon of unfinishedness has almost constantly been present throughout the history of architecture. Unfinishedness has as a background in the causal chain of events, predominantly of a socio-political, sociological and economic nature. These are forcibly interrupted processes of the construction of buildings that lose their original logic and sense over time, thus becoming open to further development and transformation in accordance with current urban development processes. There are many examples of such buildings throughout the history of civilisation and architecture, and those are, rather frequently, structures that presented, due to their dimensions and capacity, construction and materialisation, too great a challenge for the socio-political moments at which they were being erected. They turned out to be too expensive, and there were also changes in the political structures of power, and therefore the changes of the visions and priorities resulted in changes of the future destiny of those buildings.

Those buildings, however, although unfinished, have a specific meaning and significance, as well as a potential for further transformation. Harbison, for example, recognises the very importance and meaning of ruins (Harbison 2001: 105). He refers, *inter alia*, to the example of one Site's Shopping Mall in Houston (Best Products Stores) from 1975, which uses "a modern fake ruin" as a symbolic setting. Ruins always harbour a "story", true or not, placing them in a certain historical context, which makes them particularly attractive to visitors (photo 3).

Both the principle of openness and the phenomenon of unfinishedness may be perceived as a level of transformation of both the function and the form of an architectural structure, whereby they point to architecture as a dialectical process. Unfinished architectural structures that make up the urban space they are a part of, as remains of the past, became especially interesting at the very beginning of the 21st century.

2. UNFINISHED – MONTENEGRO'S CITIES

Instability of the social reality, especially of some socio-political systems from the latter half of the 20th century, such as the socialist form of government, in the course of idealising the idea of industrial and social well-being, provoked grand, unrealistic megalomaniac projects having resulted in the fact that they were never finished.

In Yugoslavia after the Second World War, the industry was in the middle of fast-paced growth, which altered the country's level of economic development and the composition of social product, bringing the country closer to the developed European industries (Petranovic 1988: 420–422).

In the early 1970s, Yugoslavia was under the spell of "consumerism", but joint consumption managed to exceed the country's economic capacities. This, too, was the period of the construction boom based on an increase in economic capacities as a consequence of uncontrolled loan-taking abroad (Straus 1991: 94). Monuments and numerous architectural and spatial-planning competitions for monuments throughout the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 50s and 60s were followed, as "enhanced secularised sacrality", by competitions for memorial halls and ambitious objects of culture, particularly in less developed parts of the SFRY where multi-purpose cultural centres were often built (Kosir 2010: 16).

In Montenegro, in the period following the Second World War, from 1945 to 2000, 25 buildings were constructed for cultural purposes in 19 towns and townships across Montenegro, including: community cultural centres, cinemas,

memorial centres, revolution memorial centres, youth centres, theatres and Yugoslav National Army cultural centres. Of those 25 structures, only a couple of more than a half – 13 buildings, were completed in full. Of the remaining 12 structures, 3 buildings were never fully constructed, while 9 structures were finished, excluding, however, the planned surrounding urban space that should have been their integral part.

The construction of buildings for culture as the first ones implied a new level of urban modernisation of cities and places in which they were constructed. The buildings for culture were the first nuclei of modern socialist cities, generators of a new urban set-up that implied wide boulevards with multiple lanes and greenery, residential buildings in the spirit of modern art, the establishment of adequate public places for gathering of citizens, etc. In the majority of Montenegro's cities, those very parts of the new urban matrix are particularly conspicuous, among other reasons also due to having remained unfinished.

The Community Cultural Centre in Budva (the building of "Zeta film") was constructed in 1966, and it was one of the first structures in modern architecture on the Montenegrin coast. It was designed as one of the three public buildings that were meant to fulfil the space of the central city square (in addition to the buildings of the People's Bank and the People's Committee). For the aforesaid reason, the main entrance into the building with a colonnade of pillars was meant to overlook the planned square, not the car park on the other side, as it is the case today. The two remaining buildings, however, have never been constructed, nor the square they should have formed, and thus the planned integration of the building and the surrounding space has never taken place. This space remains, even today, undeveloped in urban terms, whereby it still constitutes a potential for public city space (photo 13).

The Community Cultural Centre in Bijela (the Municipality of Herceg Novi) was built later, in 1986, in the place of the old building that had collapsed in the severe earthquake in 1979. The position of the building, amidst privately owned lots, generated the development of collective housing in its immediate vicinity, as well as the establishment of a promenade along the sea. This was certainly an indication of a modern urban matrix, but its further development has never taken place.

The Community Cultural Centre in Risan (the Municipality of Kotor) is the example of a fully unfinished structure that stands today nearly as a ruin of bricks and concrete, considerably choked with spontaneously grown vegetation. The construction of this building also started in the years following the earthquake, but it was stopped due to the lack of financial resources. Its central location in the main street and the promenade along the sea largely affects the overall landscape of the city, especially viewed from the sea (photo 14).

The Community Cultural Centre in Ulcinj was also undergoing construction for many years in the period following the earthquake in 1979, being built onto the existing health centre that changed its purpose. Its construction started in 1981 and was finally completed at the beginning of the 21st century, based on the use of less expensive materials and without the full technical equipment. The associate structures, in the forms of an open summer stage, a gallery and an artist's studio, have also never been constructed.

In 1980s, the process of construction of community cultural centres in the cities and towns in the underdeveloped northern region of Montenegro also started. Over the period of ten years or so, the following community cultural centres were built: in Pluzine (1982), Mojkovac (1983), Savnik (1983), Plav (1990), Rozaje (reconstruction, 1985). Originally, the structures with the similar purpose had already existed in Pljevlja (1949), Zabljak (1950, reconstruction 1968, 2003), Berane (1961) and Kolasin (Memorial Centre, 1975). Today, these buildings are in poor condition, some of them have been undergoing reconstruction for many years now.

Of the buildings in the North of Montenegro, the Community Cultural Centre in Plav may be taken as an example of unfinished modernism in urban space. Even though the building itself has been completely finished, and is rather successful in terms of architectural form and function, the surrounding space has been functionally blocked to a large extent. In a similar fashion to the example of the Community Cultural Centre in Bijela, the construction of this building generated the development of collective housing in its immediate vicinity. The modern urban matrix, however, has not developed further, and the developed urban space is isolated among the lots of individual residences (Stamatovic Vuckovic 2013: 198–203, 230–233).

The most significant and the most interesting unfinished structure in Montenegro by far is the Revolution Memorial Centre in the heart of Niksic, the construction of which completely ended after ten years in 1989.

3. UNFINISHED – THE REVOLUTION MEMORIAL HALL IN NIKSIC

Prior to the Second World War, Niksic was a small township with a little over 4,500 inhabitants. After the war, it grew at the speed seen only in a few other cities in Yugoslavia to become a primary industrial hub (Bulajic 1972: 130). The most important impetus for growth was provided to Niksic by the construction of a steel production plant (1951–1962), which had a profound impact not only

on the industrial development of the town itself, but also on the growth and development of the whole Montenegro, bringing about significant social and economic transformations. This dynamic development of the town resulted in the Municipality's having a significantly higher average income per capita than any other municipality in the northern part of the Republic (Vujacic 2008: 39).

The combination of such overall Yugoslav prosperity of the 1970s, which was the result of successful industrialisation of the country embedded in the heritage of the Revolution, and a generous distribution of loans from international banks had an impact on the citizens of Niksic who organised themselves in the Council for the Construction of Revolution Memorial Hall building and decided to pay yet another, the most monumental and most comprehensive, tribute to the Revolution and the legacy of NOB (the National Liberation Movement) – “to the decisive events for our people” (Petranovic 1988: 320). According to the construction programme, the Revolution Memorial Hall building should have had two basic functions – memorial and utilitarian, namely “it should be a worthy monument to those who fell for freedom in the course of the Socialist Revolution, but at the same time provide the necessary spaces for every day cultural, social, political, educational and entertainment activities” (Music 1976).

All the contents aimed at reviving the memory of the Revolution, from different spaces for “spontaneous discussion and gathering of citizens” all the way to the “symbolic nucleus” – the Memorial Hall. It was envisaged that the Revolution Memorial Hall building would be, based on a myriad of programme activities, an architectural and visual expression, and a carefully selected narrative motif, a “permanent” reminder of the events and persons from the rich revolutionary past of the freedom-loving region of Niksic (Vojvodic 1977: 2). The space was to become a representative point, a symbol of power of the social and economic reality based on an egalitarian, productivist and “work-based” system (Pittaway 2004: 9) (photo 15).

The construction of the Revolution Memorial Hall started in 1979, at the location of the old elementary “Olga Golovic” school in the centre of the city, the Lenin's Square. In the year 1976, a nation-wide competition in architecture and urban design was announced, in which the first prize, out of 22 submitted works, was won by Slovenian architect Marko Music (who had previously designed the Memorial Centre in Kolasin, 1971–1976).

In the process of developing design documents, however, the area of the structure increased from the planned 7,000 m² in the preliminary design for the competition nearly three times to around 20,000 m², which had a considerable impact on an increase in the funds needed. Arisen ground waters additionally raised the costs of the construction that was fully funded by the City, so building

eventually stopped in 1989. During the period of the construction, every employed citizen of Niksic had 2% of his/her personal income deducted and all investments in the city were suspended (40 million Deutsch marks were spent, which was a value equivalent to the construction of 2,000 flats).

Today, this unfinished “dead space” still continues to “live”, generating new “events in space”. Hence, during the 1990s, a wall of commercial facilities (“kiosk businesses”) appeared on its fringes, which has imposed a new function of space and lent it a new meaning. Resemiotisation of space is a product of “reideologisation” – a self-management concept of culture and “space where a social compact would be achievable”, becoming a space where a “spontaneous” economic compact evolves (Stamatovic Vuckovic 2012) (photo 16).

Due to the lack of funding needed for its demolition, the authorities made an attempt to change the purpose of the usable parts of the space and give it a new lease on life (the project of revitalisation was also made by architect Music in 2008), but this has not yielded any results.

4. POTENTIALS OF UNFINISHED – A NEW AESTHETICS OF THE CITY

What makes the Revolution Memorial Hall building, this “idea-object”, special is, among other things, the fact that it was hard to bring it to its completion, but at the same time it was hard to give it up. It is spacious – tangibly present.

The premises of this unfinished structure have always been inspiring to artists and the question what to do with this unfinished “mega-structure” has constantly been current both for architects and city authorities. One of the artistic performances carried out in the space of the unfinished amphitheatre was also a work of artist Nikola Simanic, “How to Deprive a Monkey of Its Power?” within the art project “Chain of Discovering”, 2000 (Racanovic 2009: 81). But, the most interesting by far, and probably most sustainable economically, is the project of a group of students of the Faculty of Architecture in Podgorica (students’ work for the 4th Congress of Students of Architecture – “Urban Recycling”, Belgrade, 2006). They came up with an idea to simply “bury” the Revolution Memorial Hall building turning it into a real, “live monument” in the open public space at the heart of the city (photo 17).

Decomposition of the building by removal of respective architectural elements – walls, slabs, steel structure, parts of the envelope and the like would result in the transformation of a “closed” space into an “open” space and its actual integration with the surroundings. “De-enveloping” of the building would reduce the domination of

volume, while the open space would become fluid and accessible, in continuation of the lines of movement of the surrounding urban matrix. The remaining, fragmented structure would be, partly or fully, covered by the ground, grass, vegetation and trees, while certain subterranean parts of the space would be open and transformed into aquatic areas that would additionally enrich the new landscape development. Numerous areas for gathering and sitting, as well as amphitheatres, which the building abounded in, would partly retain their functions, but now as parts of the open space that would be available to citizens, after many years of blockade.

The partly “buried”, recycled “mega-structure” would become a central memorial park space. Eventually, it would become a genuine monument, now of “double” meaning and significance: a monument to the time it was dedicated to (the Second World War and the National Liberation Movement), on the one hand, and a monument to the period in which it was unsuccessfully constructed (1976–1989), on the other hand.

REFERENCES

- Baudrillard, Jean; Nouvel, Jean (2008), *Singularni objekti – arhitektura i filozofija*, Zagreb: AGM.
- Bulajić, Zarko (1972), “Moderne osnove Niksica”, [in:] *Niksic*, edited by a group of authors, Zagreb: Graficki zavod Hrvatske, pp. 74–95.
- Eco, Umberto (1965), *Otvoreno djelo*, Sarajevo: Veselin Maslesa.
- Harbison, Robert (2001), *The Built, The Unbuilt and The Unbuildable – In Pursuit of Architectural Meaning*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Koolhaas, Rem (1997), *Delirious New York: a Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York: The Monacelli Press.
- Kosir, Fedja (2010), *Od ljudskog ka izvanljudskom: arhitekta Marko Music*, Ljubljana–Podgorica: CANU.
- Monaco, Antonello (2004), *Architettura aperta – verso il progetto in trasformazione*, Roma: Edizioni Kappa.
- Music, Marco (1976), “Spomen dom Kolasin”, *Arhitektura*, 158/159, pp. 95–98.
- Petranovic, Branko (1988), *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988: Socijalisticka Jugoslavija 1945–1988*, Vol. 3, Beograd: Nolit.
- Pittaway, Mark (2004), *Eastern Europe 1939–2000*, London: Arnold.
- Racanovic, Svetlana (2009), *Milenijum bag?! – crnogorska umjetnicka scena 2000: pristupnicka koalicija kritike i prakse*, Podgorica: Centar savremene umjetnosti.
- Schumacher, Patrik (2004), *Digital Hadid: Landscapes in Motion*, London: Birkhauser.
- Stamatovic Vuckovic, Slavica (2012), “Architectural communication aspects: Denotative and Connotative Meanings of Revolution Memorial Hall in Niksic, Montenegro”,

International Conference *Architecture and Ideology*, Belgrade, Serbia, September 27–29, digital proceed, pp. 165–172.

Stamatovic Vuckovic, Slavica (2013), “Architectural Communication Forms of Cultural Centers in Montenegro in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century”, Ph.D. diss., University of Belgrade.

Straus, Ivan (1991), *Arhitektura Jugoslavije 1945–1990*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost.

Vojvodic, Ljubo (ed.) (1977), *DNR–Dom Revolucije Niksic*, Niksic: Odbor za izgradnju Doma revolucije.

Vujacic, Maksim (2008), *Niksic nekad i sad*, Niksic: Opstina Niksic.