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# Housing Yugoslav Self-Management: Blok 5 in Titograd

*Mass housing, Self-management, Montenegro, Socialism, Mileta Bojović*

**/Abstract**

**Self-management was one of the ideological foundations in socialist Yugoslavia. The paper argues that Blok 5 (1977–1984) — a mass housing settlement in Titograd, Montenegro, designed by Mileta Bojović — can be considered one of the theoretically and practically most enduring examples of self-management in Yugoslav mass housing. The concept can be traced from the urbanist blueprint, to the project proposal, the flexible floor plans and (over)stretched facades — exploring varying depths and levels of innovation. Furthermore, it outlines key differences between Yugoslav and Western Marxist understandings of agency, highlights frictions between different stakeholders in the construction process and explores the diverging post-socialist afterlives of self-management.**

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## Why Blok 5?

> I am moving to the smelly Blok 9 with my mom. That is a new ugly neighborhood built just behind Blok 5 where I live right now & Blok 5 is the best place ever on the planet.[1]

In the contemporary novel *Jana, just temporary in the Blok 9* by Sonja Ražnatović, a teenage girl from Podgorica mourns the move from an apartment in a highrise of the mass housing estate Blok 5 to an unfinished post-socialist Blok 9. Although the walking distance between Blok 5 and Blok 9 is barely 15 minutes, they seem to be worlds apart. Jana's contempt for Blok 9, a post-socialist urban development in Podgorica, is partly rooted in the trauma of her parent's divorce. It is however, also provoked by the contrast between socialist and post-socialist housing models.[2] On the one hand, the Blok 9 represents a "settlement without image & soul." As the narrator tells us, it suffers from a lack of meaningful public spaces as, "no kids hang out in front of the buildings with their bikes & skates, or play tennis in the recesses between the entrances… [n]o girls walk around in groups." On the other side, the "joyful, colorful, lively, optimistic" Blok 5 is Jana's idealized home.[3] Even with a dose of novelistic exaggeration, Blok 5 still enjoys a considerable reputation in Podgorica and resists the all-too-common stigmatization of mass housing estates.

A significant part of Blok 5's success story lies in an expedient legacy of self-management built in the project from the very beginning. Using Blok 5 as the specific case study, I discuss how self-management, an inherent ingredient of Yugoslav socialism, translated to the field of architecture, and more narrowly, mass housing, past the "golden era" of the 1960s and closer to late socialism.[4] By unraveling the entanglement of investors, architects, construction firms, as well as past and present residents, I make the case for a more sympathetic assessment of both late socialist architecture and self-management. **[Fig. 1]**

Why is Blok 5 so interesting for the study of self-management? Before the Second World War, Podgorica was a sleepy little town in provincial Montenegro. When in 1944 Yugoslav partisans liberated this shrunken, heavily damaged city, only 6 207 inhabitants were left.[5] The provincial town got a new name — Titograd — and the status of Montenegro's capital. By 1991, when the last all-Yugoslav census took place, the city had undergone a massive process of modernization and had grown to the size of 117 875 inhabitants — 18 times more

1 Sonja Ražnatović, *Jana, samo privremeno u Bloku 9* (Cetinje: OKF, 2016), 12. All translations are mine, if not otherwise stated.

2 For a more comprehensive analysis of post-socialist quarters in Podgorica and the example of City Kvart see Sonja Dragović, "From block to city, and back: post-1989 transformation of residential neighbourhoods in Podgorica," in *Three Decades of Post-Socialist Transition: Conference Proceedings*, eds. Nebojša Čamprag and Anshika Suri (Darmstadt: TUprints, 2019), 326-340.

3 Sonja Ražnatović, *Jana, samo privremeno u Bloku 9* (Jana, only temporarily in Block 9) (Cetinje: OKF, 2016), 13-14.

4 Hannes Grandits and Holm Sundhaussen, "Jugoslawien in den 1960er Jahren: Wider einen teleologischen Forschungszugang," in *Jugoslawien in den 1960er Jahren. Auf demWeg zu einem (a)normalen Staat?*, ed. Hannes Grandits and Holm Sundhaussen (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2013), 7.

5 Danilo Burzan, *Istorija Podgorice. Kronologija događaja* (History of Podgorica. Chronology of events) (Sektretarijat za kulturu i sport glavnoga grada Podgorica, Podgorica, 2016), 473.

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than in the aftermath of the Second World War.[6] Blok 5 was a certain crescendo of socialist modernization — the biggest mass housing project in Montenegro's capital up to that date. In 1975, an anonymous concourse for a mass housing neighborhood, departing from the urbanist design by Vukota Tupa Vukotić, was announced. **[Fig. 2]** The winner was Mileta Bojović, a 34 years old Montenegrin architect trained in Belgrade and France. The thirteen slabs and towers constituting Blok 5 in the west part of Titograd were built between 1977 and 1984. The Self-Managed Interest Group for Housing Titograd (*Samoupravna interesna zajednica stanovanja — SIZ Titograd*), identified as the main investor throughout the historical material, was an essential organ of self-management in the realm of housing since mid-1970s which pooled resources from the labor organizations, organized both concourse and the process of construction.[7]

Fig. 1

Blok 5, central area, undated. (Source: Mileta Bojović's personal collection)

Fig. 2

Blok 5, undated. (Source: Mileta Bojović's personal collection)

6 Burzan, Istorija Podgorice, 473–474.

7 Strictly speaking, the investor were workers financing the construction through their salaries, but here the term will be used for SIZ, the instance which collected and managed financial contributions.

Blok 5 was designed and built in a period when self-management was allegedly already in a downward spiral.[8] Situated in Yugoslavia's smallest republic, the complex did not get much attention beyond Titograd and it is still rather under-researched. A rich and ongoing engagement of both architect and the project with the concept of self-management is vital to the understanding of the project. Mileta Bojović was (and still is) very vocal and articulate about Blok 5's commitment to the idea of socialist self-management. I argue that the theory of Yugoslav self-management contributed to the architect's design in several aspects — most importantly to the understanding of the resident as an active member of the society whose agency is fostered through flexible apartment layouts and expressed in daring architectural forms. Finally, a peculiar afterlife of the estate highlights the long-lasting architectural legacy of self-management.

My analysis of the importance of Blok 5 for the architecture and legacy of self-management is predominantly based on archival materials, observations on the current state of the buildings, and the insights provided by the architect in a number of conversations I had with him and interviews published elsewhere. The analysis moves from an overarching conceptual and theoretical base as articulated in the competition entry, to the interpretation of plans and forms, and finally to the post-socialist afterlife of the neighborhood to tell the story of ups, downs, successes, unresolved conflicts, and unexpected turns in the history and present of the architecture in its relationship to self-management.

In terms of methodology, I am relying on a combination of 'thick description' and close reading. As famously outlined by Clifford Geertz, 'thick description' starts with a "general bewilderment", but not "intellectually empty-handed."[9] Educated guess, a mixture of assumptions and knowledge, is indispensably intertwined with the process of describing: we need to know in order to see. Geertz's plea "not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" clearly states the value of a case study to the thick description.[10] Instead of entering a rather abstracted realm of large-scale models and theories, a case study grounds the concept more specifically in a context. Close reading is an interpretive practice "alert to the details of narrative structure" developed within the US-American school of New Criticism in the 1930s and 1940s.[11] It can be transposed to architecture in order to grasp the nuances on the level of the project, to pay attention to details such as phrasing in the main project and drawing details in the plans. By focusing on one case study I intend to explore the essential role of self-management in the realm of socialist mass housing in Yugoslavia — in enhancing the architecture's human aspects, while at the same time creating visually compelling built environments.

8 Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, "Self-management, Development and Debt: The Rise and Fall of the 'Yugoslav Experiment'," in *Welcome to the desert of post-socialism: radical politics after Yugoslavia*, eds. Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks (London: Verso, 2015), 21—44.

9 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 26—27.

10 Ibid.

11 Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 51.

## Architectures of self-management

Until the outbreak of war in 1991, self-management constituted one of the key ingredients of Yugoslavia's homegrown variant of socialism. After the Tito-Stalin break in 1948, Yugoslav Party leaders were searching for alternative forms of socialism in order to counter the effective alienation from the USSR and other socialist countries. This resulted in the development of the Yugoslav 'third way' which had internal and external structure: in foreign policy leading to the Non-Aligned Movement peaking in the 1960s, and the concept of workers' self-management. "Social self-management extended rights of participation and management from the workplace to a myriad of social institutions and local self-government, passing authority, at least in theory, from career officials to elected groups of experts and citizens," writes Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, emphasizing the centrality of the workplace for participation.[12] In essence, workers became *de facto* owners of their workplaces, entitled to direct involvement in decision making processes in regard to planning and structuring of production. Although the practice of self-management stayed limited to Yugoslavia, the concept was extensively discussed as a theory and sparked a vivid interest among leftist parties across the world.[13]

Self-management was a dynamic concept which was restructured several times over the decades between the 1950s and the end of Yugoslavia. As a result of the market liberalization reforms in 1964 and 1965, enterprises and factories gained increasing autonomy and responsibility for investments; the reforms fostered the idea that, "workers share the destiny of their products" and, accordingly, get a fair share in company's profit.[14] However, first weak spots of the reform soon became visible: a rising unemployment rate, but foremost the growing influence of banks. As Unkovski-Korica shows, self-management was from early on "part of the regime's attempt to legitimize Yugoslavia's turn to the West" and economical liberalization.[15]

The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution introduced the term "associated labor" (*udruženi rad*) together with the Basic Organization of Associated Labor (*Osnovna organizacija udruženog rada*) as the basic arena of self-management, replacing the previous scale more strictly defined by the workplace (factory or firm). As a result, the relationships between organs of self-management formed a differentiated and complicated "contractual economy," characterized by slow, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and blurred jurisdictions.[16] At the same

12 Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia: From World War II to Non-Alignment* (London and New York: Tauris, 2016), 13.

13 Benedetto Zaccaria, "Learning from Yugoslavia? Western Europe and the Myth of Self-Management (1968–1975)," in *Planning in Cold War Europe: Competition, Cooperation, Circulations* (1950s-1970s), eds. Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott, Ondrej Matejka (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 234.

14 Dušan Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije: glavni procesi 1918-1985* (History of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia: main processes 1918-1985) (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1985), 310–313.

15 Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*, 71.

16 Branislav Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia*, 1945-91 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 13.

time, the comprehensive delegate system relied on the participation of several million elected citizens.[17]

Self-management started in the factories and was rather "slowly transmitted" to the field of urban planning and architecture.[18] Architects offered a variety of ideas for a self-managed built environments, from exhibition models[19] to radical techno-utopian propositions.[20] Most importantly, self-management incited institutional restructuring, turning from centralized, state institutions to smaller self-managed enterprises and research institutes.[21] Accordingly, Yugoslav mass housing apartments, the "most desired product of self-managed socialism," came in astonishingly diverse shapes and forms, bearing little resemblance to series implemented nationwide in most European socialist countries at the time.[22]

With the exception of a short initial period of centralized housing budgets (1945–1954), public housing was financed by the workers through a decentralized system of mandatory (*doprinos*) and voluntary contributions (*samodoprinos*).[23] Through a form of taxation—a percentage of their salary—workers were directly involved in funding public projects and infrastructure in their communities. The firms would purchase apartments and the workers were eligible to apply for occupancy through their workplace. In this way, the system offered tools for redistribution — workers with higher salaries would contribute more, while, in theory, those in need would get an apartment. In 1976, a new instrument of self-management was established: a Self-Managed Interest Group that would bring together interested parties (enterprises acquiring apartments for their employees, planners, construction firms, local municipality), define their obligations in a self-managing contract, pool investments, commission or purchase buildings, and distribute apartments among the workplaces. One such creation, the Self-Managed Interest Group for Housing Titograd, was the main investor for Blok 5.[24] While the conglomerates of this kind made large-scale projects possible in the first place, the dense entanglement of interests fostered bureaucratic nuisance and frictions stemming from an unclear division

17 Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*, 446–447.

18 Zdenka Vasić, "Samoupravno planiranje (Self-managed planning)," *Urbanizam Beograda* 8, no. 37 (1976): 20.

19 Vjenceslav Richter built a 3D model of self-management shown at the Palazzo del Lavoro in Turin 1961. Vladimir Kulić and Maroje Mrduljaš, *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Berlin: Jovis, 2012), 43.

20 Another project by Richter, an utopian organization of dwelling into immense ziggurats, envisioned them as self-managing units, with an assembly hall (capacity: 6 000 people) for a "referendum-plebiscitary" decision making. Cfr. Vjenceslav Richter, *Sinturbanizam* (Synthesis Urbanism) (Zagreb: Mladost, 1964), 87.

21 Cf. comprehensive research activities at the Housing Center founded in the 1970s by the Institute for the Testing of Materials in Belgrade. Kulić and Mrduljaš, *Modernism In-Between*, 28–29; Mrduljaš, "Architecture for a Self-Managing Socialism," 48—50.

22 Mrduljaš, "Architecture for a Self-Managing Socialism," 48.

23 For a more detailed account on the housing policy prior to 1976 see Shaun Topham, "Housing Policy in Yugoslavia," in *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. John A. A. Sillince (Abington: Routledge, 1990), 402—439.

24 Others were of military background — Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and the Army Postal Service.

of responsibility among its actors.[25] In theory, employees had a right to housing, but in practice their rights were met with varying (construction) speed: while some enterprises purchased plenty apartments for their workers, others were not as eager to fulfill their responsibilities.[26] Nevertheless, the scope of mass housing construction in socialist Yugoslavia remains impressive: more than 3.6 million dwelling units were built between 1945 and 1983, more than 70% of the housing stock.[27] Considering the starting point of socialist Yugoslavia in 1945 — a predominantly rural country with heavily damaged housing stock and poor urban infrastructure — the self-management approach to housing was indisputably providing palpable results.

Financing was an a continuously contentious issue. Already in 1957, Edvard Kardelj, the chief architect of the self-management system, linked the increasing autonomy of local communities (*m(j)esne zajednice/stanovanjske skupnosti*) to the mobilization of private funds and argued for a solid self-participation with occasional help of the commune.[28] Disputes between construction firms, municipalities, and enterprises regarding construction costs were followed by tensions between municipalities and local communities around the payment for housing maintenance. After the economic reform in 1965 and market reconfiguration, Kardelj acknowledged the growing "problem of financing" in the neighborhoods, but did not offer any definite answers beyond a vague remark on the need for a flexible, context-dependent distribution of financial burden between local communities and municipalities.[29] Changes surrounding the new constitution in 1974 laid ground for a transformation in the role of the planners from the "main agents" to the "expert services for the subjects of planning".[30]

Theoretically articulated and introduced in a "top-down spirit," Yugoslav self-management was not without internal contradictions from its very beginnings.[31] Serious misconducts and abuse of power in everyday self-management are well-documented.[32] The subject was never exactly the individual. S/he became one by being a worker and engaging in the self-managing units at the workplace or in the local community; the status had to be activated through the process designed "to harness but also channel and limit popular participation."[33]

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25 Cf. the critically acclaimed Split 3, a neighborhood built in the 1970s on the Adriatic coast, and the role of the Enterprise for the Construction of Split (*Poduzeće za izgradnju Splita*) in planning and building process. Even this success story was not devoid of frictions between architects, construction firms, and investors, as architect Frano Gotovac vividly recalled. Višnja Kukoč, "Split 3," in *Soseske in ulice: Vladimir Braco Mušič in arhitektura velikega merila,* ed. Luka Skansi (Ljubljana: MAO, 2016), 92—165; Vesna Perković Jović, *Arhitekt Frano Gotovac* (Architect Frano Gotovec) (Split: Sveučilište u Splitu, 2015), 124—129.

26 For example, Jugovinil, a major Yugoslav plastics factory based in Split, purchased just three apartments in the period of five years (1965–1969). Slobodan Bjelajac, *Bespravna stambena izgradnja u Splitu: sociološka studija* (Illegal housing construction in Split: a sociological study) (Split: Urbanistički zavod Dalmacije, 1970), 54.

27 Topham, "Housing Policy in Yugoslavia," 403—407.

28 Edvard Kardelj, *Problemi naše socialistične graditve. Knjiga V* (Problems of our socialist construction. vol. V) (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1963), 91.

29 Edvard Kardelj, *Problemi naše socialistične graditve. Knjiga VII* (Problems of our socialist construction. vol. VII) (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1968), 274.

30 Vasić, "Samoupravno planiranje," 20–21.

31 Unkovski-Korica, "Self-management, Development and Debt," 23.

32 Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*, 449—450.

33 Unkovski-Korica, "Self-management, Development and Debt," 25.

Decentralization and self-management also "strengthened horizontal struggles between republics at the expense of vertical struggles between the state as employer and the working class," a tension that escalated in the context of the nationalist crisis of the so-called Croatian Spring and eventually led to the deepening of the "confederalising federalism."[34]

Nevertheless, the example of Blok 5 shows not only one imperfect and oscillating variety of implemented self-management, but also serves as a proof for its vitality in late socialism and beyond, contrary to the models constructing the period between 1976 and 1991 as the most faulty and dysfunctional period in the development of socialist self-management[35] characterized by the "widening gap between practice and theory."[36]

## Ideal commitment to self-management

The urbanist solution by Vukota Tupa Vukotić, produced in 1975 as a base for the Blok 5 concourse, was diligently planned and implemented, did not bring much fresh air into the concept of a mass housing estate. The outline of the neighborhood did not significantly depart from the already heavily criticized and largely abandoned commonplaces of high modernist planning. However, the plan still made more space for the crucial infrastructure for a self-managing commune — public amenities provided on the level of the local community such as an elementary school, kindergarten, community health center, lush and plentiful green surfaces, and small shops on the ground floor of apartment buildings.

The common practice in Yugoslavia of organizing architectural competitions for a vast array of projects paralleled the spirit of self-management by opening up the realm of design to a wide range of professional agents and ideas. Instead of a centralized institution designing major projects, the competitive framework fostered a diversity of projects and more architects could participate. Bojović named his competition entry *Praxis*. Already the entry title gives important clues about the theoretical scaffold and sets out a very specific stage for Blok 5.

In Yugoslav context, *Praxis* was first and foremost known as a group of Marxist philosophers set out to push Yugoslav socialism more to the left. Starting in 1964, they published an eponymous journal and cultivated ties with western Marxists, culminating in famed summer schools on the island of Korčula, a unique Cold War meeting point for European Marxists. Henri Lefebvre, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm and Jürgen Habermas met not only Yugoslav philosophers like Rudi Supek, Zagorka Golubović, Gajo Petrović and Mihailo Marković, but also intellectuals from other socialist countries. Similar to the ideological reassortment of socialist Yugoslavia after 1948, *Praxis* followed the ideas of early Marx and, with a pinch of existentialism, sought for a humanist socialism

34 Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*, 223.

35 Unkovski-Korica, "Self-management, Development and Debt", 38-42.

36 Rory Archer, "Imaš Kuću — Vrati Stan. Housing Inequalities, Socialist Morality and Discontent in 1980s Yugoslavia," *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 20, no. 3 (2013): 120.

resistant to alienation, based on a new validation of the individual asking for a radically democratized self-management. In effect, this made them "Marxist heretics in a socialist country whose hallmark has been the rejection of Marxist dogma."[37] From the perspective of the Yugoslav League of Communists, the Praxis group, although fairly heterogeneous and confined to the academia, posed a possible threat to the ideological authority of the ruling apparatus. In the context of growing authoritarianism emerging as a response to the events of the Croatian Spring in 1971 (a call for more decisive decentralization, but also inextricably connected with nationalist positions and separatism), the Praxis movement was repressed in the 1970s.[38] The publication of Yugoslav issue of *Praxis* ended in 1975, several university professors from the group were suspended and eventually lost their jobs.

Choosing the name *Praxis* for a competition entry in the very year of the practical *Praxis*-ban, was bigger than a casual *homage*; Bojović sent a clear message and aligned his project with Marxist humanism.[39] Not surprising in the context of the peculiarly liberal Yugoslav variant of socialism, this provocative statement did not stand in the way of winning the competition. Born in the hilly northern Montenegro, Bojović studied architecture in Belgrade, moving to Paris in 1964 to continue his education — first at the architectural practice of Jean Faugeron in Nancy (1964–1969), then at the Institute for Urbanism in Paris (1967–1969). As Henri Lefebvre's doctoral student in the 1970s, he was well-informed about Western Marxism and urban sociology. His dissertation project at the Paris X Nanterre University, *Urbanism and Architecture in Yugoslavia between Self-Management and the Withering Away of the State*, was devoted to his ongoing focus — the possibilities of a self-managing architecture. Although the thesis remained unfinished and Bojović returned to Montenegro in 1978, his work continued to be dedicated to self-management. His abandonment of pure theory, partly motivated by external circumstances (Lefebvre's retirement), opened a path for more applications in praxis, most thoroughly in Blok 5. "To offer a project solution which enables, within the conditions of our economical, social and cultural development, to realize basic propositions of social self-managing orientation in the domain of housing" was prominently placed among main project goals of Blok 5.[40]

One could interpret commitment to *Praxis* in its literal meaning — of practice (in this case, of housing). This would also mean close contact with future residents, as initially imagined by the architect, an unalienated building model, *Praxis* members would argue. As Bojović stated in the project description, "Conducting preliminary surveys, including future residents in the planning (which unfortunately did not take place this time) and implementation stages of the building

37 Gerson S. Sher, *Praxis. Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (London and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, London, 1977), xi.

38 Cf. Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije,* 438–445.

39 Mileta Bojović, conversation with author, February 26, 2019 .

40 Main project, Republički Zavod za Urbanizam i Projektovanje, Podgorica.

process, as well as creating conditions for active relationship towards built environment, all produce conditions under which residents truly effect the formation of their lived space."[41]

In order to include prospective residents more substantially in the planning process, they have to be known before the construction starts. Through the reform of financing structure for mass housing in the 1970s, the conglomerate of interested investors pooled the funds and commissioned apartments (or purchased them on the market) to be distributed among a number of employees. Therefore, it was possible to tailor the process in order to make the connection between prospective residents and architects. This approach was wholeheartedly supported by Yugoslav urban sociologists who made a case for a decisive centering of the "known user" in the construction process as a crucial gesture of humanization.[42]

The term 'user' is a commonplace of modern architecture. As Adrian Forty showed in his critical vocabulary of modern architecture, "user" in a sense of an unknown, abstract, universal resident, was an approximation based on the average demographic characteristics, popular in European welfare states in the late 1950s and 1960s.[43] Forty interprets the inflation of the term as a part of the architect's self-understanding as a contributor to the (underprivileged) citizens, while actually working for the state.[44] Departing from the context of the French welfare state after the Second World War, Nicole Rudolph showed how, following the rise of urban sociology, the designation "user" was replaced by the term "inhabitant", encapsulating in the process more agency for the residents.[45] A category of the "known user" in Yugoslav socialism was in a way a middle ground between Forty's 'user' and Rudoph's 'inhabitant': it could be used as a parameter in decision on the general size and type of apartments, but it could, as in the case of Blok 5, be interpreted as a request for more thorough communication with individual residents.[46]

At the core of the conflict between the architect and the investor lies the question of the subject. If we transpose the concept of a state that has to wither away (the bottom-up self-organizing intended to disperse the power structures on the top) to architecture, does it mean that the architects will be ultimately replaced by residents? While Bojović definitely sees the resident as a key interlocutor, in the vision of the existent socialism the 'associated labor' or the initiator of the project has the last word.

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41 Ibid.

42 Dušica Seferagić, *Kvaliteta života i nova stambena naselja* (Life quality and new residential settlements) (Zagreb: Sociološko društvo Hrvatske, 1988), 89-90.

43 Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames&Hudson, 2000), 312.

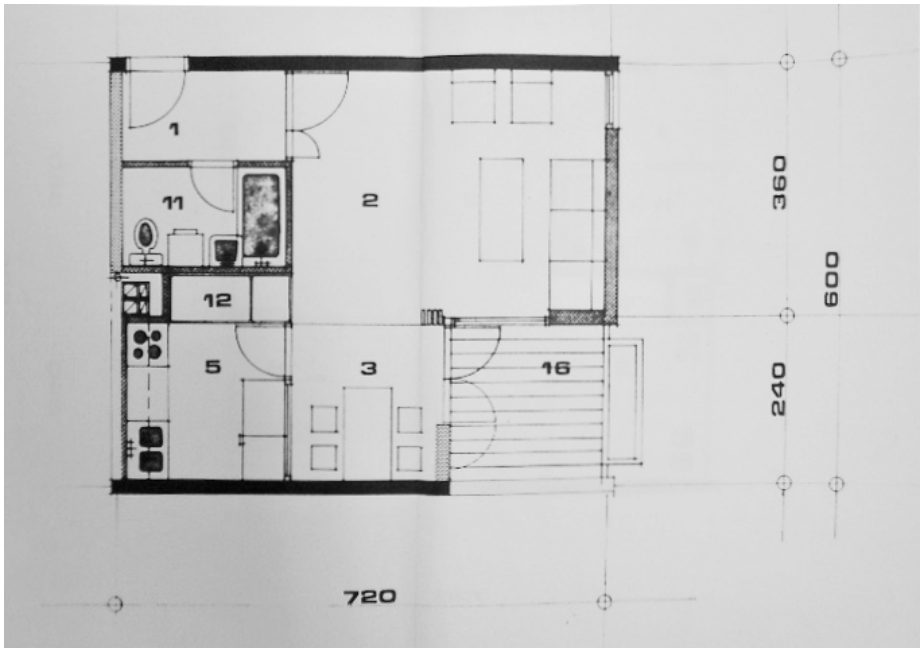
44 Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 314.

45 Nicole C. Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2015), 151.

46 This approach was followed in Split 3 — the Enterprise for the Construction of Split surveyed interested workplaces to get an idea of preferred apartment features and sizes. Poduzeće za izgradnju Splita, *Split 3: problematika, analiza, dileme* (Split 3: problems, analysis, dilemmas) (Split, 1973), 49-50.

## Layout

If one is to single out the aspect of the project for Blok 5 most committed to the core values of self-management, it would be the apartment floor plans. Through the reduction of load-bearing walls to the necessary minimum—a skeletal structure—the majority of partitions became optional and flexible. This was visually articulated in the drawing of layout types, as the examples of a *garconniere* and a 2-and-a-half-bedroom apartment show. [Figs. 3-4]

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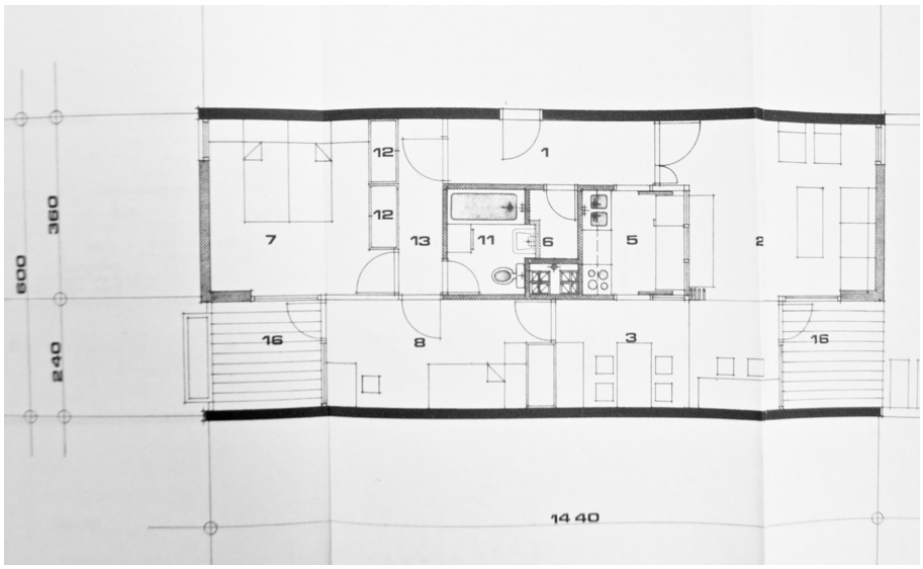


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The walls around the bathroom were hatched in the plans, while other spatial divisions were drawn with thin lines, which indicated that they were the architect's suggestion rather than a definite outline.[47] Unspecified bedroom names

Fig. 3
Garçonnière G', building D3, 1978. (Source: State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica)

Fig. 4
Two and a half room apartment D 1/2, building D3, 1978. (Source: State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica)

47 Apartment layouts G1 and D 1/2 in Blok 5, building D3, August 1978, SO-Titograd-19786, box 126, SO Titograd fonds, State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro.

('room 1' and 'room 2' in the two and a half room apartment) instead of the usual children's room and spousal room gave residents freedom to designate rooms as they wished. Only the shift in flooring — parquet in all rooms except kitchen, entrance, and bathroom (finished in ceramic tiling) — suggested where the architect divided, for example, the kitchen from the dining area. The apartments did not follow the ascetic formula of *Existenzminimum* — bathtubs instead of showers in the bathroom, a built-in wardrobe in smaller apartments or walk-in closets in bigger rooms allowed for greater spatial comfort.

The aim of "maximum flexibility" was enhanced by the use of the structural spans of 580 cm, which were unusually large in residential architecture in Titograd.[48] This span provoked resistance from construction companies (according to Bojović "literally everybody who worked in this field in Montenegro"),[49] but it was crucial to enable considerable spatial flexibility for the residents. Spatial flexibility was a common modernist trope that by the mid-century mutated into the visions of total flexibility in a variety of 1960s techno-utopias, such as those by Yona Friedman and the Situationist Constant Nieuwenhuys. The latter had been in close contact with Lefebvre, Bojović's supervisor, and it is plausible that Bojović's radical explorations of flexibility were in part galvanized by his training in France. Such pushing of structural limits could also be interpreted more broadly as an unavoidable effort in pursuit of a self-managing built environment. Or, as Bojović commented recently: "My starting point was that all the building materials had to be used functionally, that the structure had no elements that did not contribute to its stability. Let's say that I wanted all members of society and all parts of the house to be active and functional."[50]

Following the earlier, simpler mass housing systems such as Jugomont's JU-59, JU-60, and JU-61, the push for flexibility in design emerged as a pan-Yugoslav phenomenon also explored in other contemporaneous instances, such as the housing estates Blok 19a and Cerak-Vinogradi in Belgrade.[51] We see the same trend in Blok 5 where in just one building with two hundred and twenty four apartments (D3 in the north-west corner of Blok 5), twenty seven different layouts were employed, spanning from a 36,78 $m^2$ *garçonnière* to a 116,16 $m^2$ four-room-apartment. A two-room-apartment appeared in no less than six variations, predominantly differing in orientation and a portion of terrace or *loggia*.[52] Due to "total typification of the structural system," and design's partial reliance on traditional construction methods, however, "the building was still compatible

48 Main project, Republički Zavod za Urbanizam i Projektovanje, Podgorica.

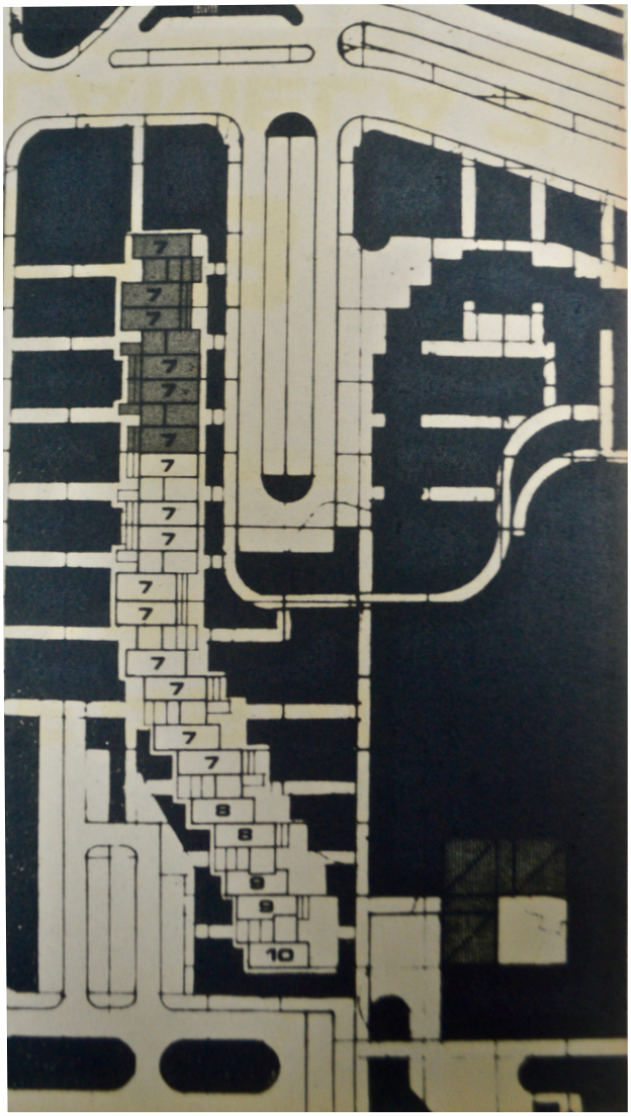
49 Sonja Dragović, "Budite realni — tražite nemoguće! Razgovor s autorom arhitektonskog rješenja Bloka 5: arh. Mileta Bojović (Be realistic — ask for the impossible! A talk with the author of the Blok 5 architectural solution: arch. Mileta Bojović)," in *Pristup izradi planskog dokumenta: Učešće javnosti u planiranju Bloka 5 u Podgorici*, ed. Milica Vujošević, Jelena Rabrenović and Sonja Dragović (Podgorica: KANA, 2017), 24.

50 Ibid.

51 Tamara Bjažić Klarin, "Housing in Socialist Yugoslavia," in *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia*, 1948—1980, ed. Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić (New York: MoMA, 2018), 95.

52 List of layout types in Blok 5, building D3, "Stanovi (struktura i površine) [Apartments (Layouts and Surface Areas)]," 3 January 1979, SO-Titograd-19786, box 126, SO Titograd fonds, State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro.

with prefabrication employed in mass housing."[53] By allowing coexistence of prefabricated and hand-crafted construction, Bojović acted as a mediator "between the pragmatic means and the ethical goals of socialist modernization."[54] Thereby, he assumed the role and responsibility for considering both the capacities of the local construction industry as well as the overall economical situation.



Bojović's offer to to assist in adapting the plans for specific family situations was ultimately not communicated to future residents due to the rejection by the Self-Managed Interest Group for Housing. Siding with Bojović, local press wholeheartedly embracing "the idea of an open apartment, a flexible space where the particularities of the solution are left to the user" and expressed regret that this approach was "unacceptable" to the Interest Group.[55] This friction can be seen as a case of disrupted communication and conflicting interests between different actors in the process of self-managed building. Unlike the architect, the Interest Group was not willing to put additional effort into the already administratively burdensome process and, as a consequence, the full unfolding of the open plan was obstructed in practice. However, according to Bojović, some residents indeed reached out and he made adjustments to their apartments.[56] One could say that, within the framework of informal "economy of favors," they were awarded for their initiative.[57] In turn, self-management in this case did not mean withering away of the architect.[58] On the contrary, the architect was more present than ever and the process of design was envisioned as a closer, more focused collaboration between residents and architects, connected with a necessary loosening of the hierarchies between experts and practitioners.

## Form as a metaphor of self-management

Blok 5 still stands out in the cityscape of Podgorica, not least because of its striking facades. Through asymmetric, visually rich, relief-like fronts they com-

53 Main project, Republički Zavod za Urbanizam i Projektovanje, Podgorica.

54 Maroje Mrduljaš, "Architecture for a Self-Managing Socialism," in Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948—1980, ed. Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić (New York: MoMA, 2018), 41.

55 Slobodan Vuković, "Stan po mjeri čovjeka (A man-sized apartment)," *Pobjeda*, 4236, February 4, 1979, 3.

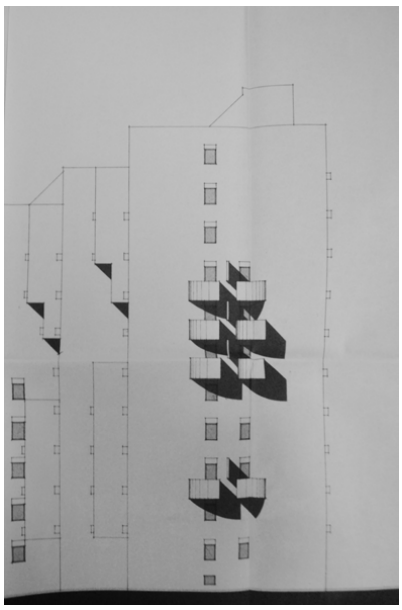
56 Mileta Bojović, conversation with author, February 26, 2019 .

57 Cf. Alena Ledeneva, *Russia's Economies of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

58 Cf. Cerak-Vinogradi housing estate (1977–1987) and similar dedicated presence of architect Milenija Marušić in the development of customized flexible-plan schemes for various family structures and scenarios.

Fig. 5

Building D3, 1978. (Source: State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica)



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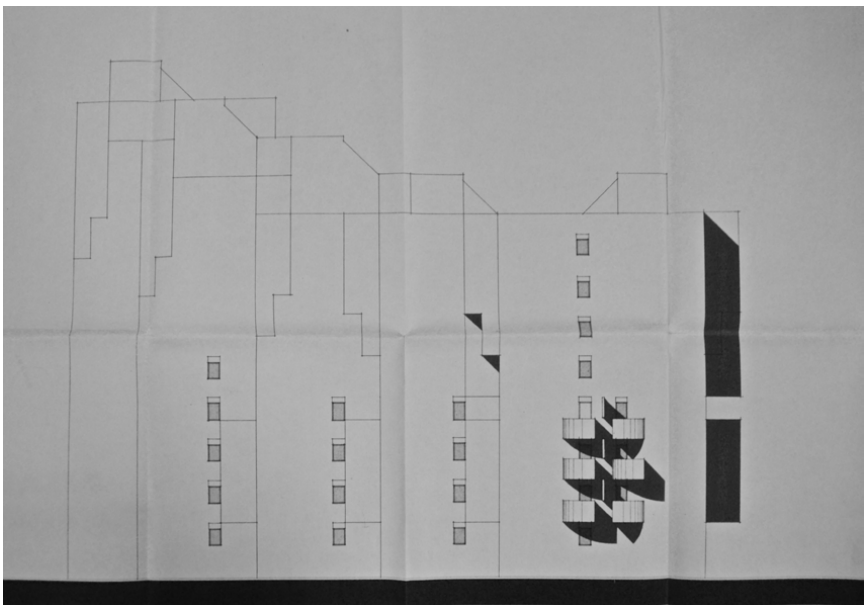

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municate a symbolical image of diversity and individuality, a counterpart to the still lingering and pervasive stereotype of mass housing estates as monotonous and repetitive. Metaphorical and speculative explorations of self-management proliferated in Yugoslav techno-utopian projects of the 1960s: their main strength was speculative, radical spatial thinking.[59] However, even the realized projects were more often than not quite ambitious and visually distinguished, despite all their unavoidable imperfections and hybrid results.[60]

To explore the dense imagery of self-management in Blok 5, I will take a closer look at just one building — a randomly selected slab named D3 in the northwestern part of Blok 5 **[Fig. 5]**. The height of the building varies between seven floors on the northern, and ten on the southern side. No two house fronts were designed identical or symmetrical in regard to any axis — balconies with the layout of a quarter of a circle and rectangular niches bring ongoing visual dynamics into the picture.[61] A thin wall partition between the balconies on the same level gave some privacy to the residents. A provision was made for three pairs of balconies on the north façade, while on the south facade, the balconies start on a higher floor (in comparison to the north façade) and the distance between balcony clusters has two instead of one floor. Again, they were arranged in a manner that did not follow a legible, uniform pattern of symmetry or mathematical order. The same principles — variations, expressive plasticity — can be found on the west and east house front. **[Figs. 6-7]**

59 Cf. theoretically ambitious, sophisticated unrealized projects such as Vjenceslav Richter's *Sinturbanizam* and later works, as well as Andrija Mutnjaković's experimental housing projects. In Western Europe, Situationist International worked on the emancipation of the individual in a similar techno-utopian ductus. Maroje Mrduljaš, Vladimir Kulić, "Richters Synthurbanismus. Die erweiterte Synthese: Urbanismus, Kunst, Politik," in *Ein rebellischer Visionär: Retrospektive Vjenceslav Richter*, ed. Gudrun Danzer (Graz: Neue Galerie Graz and Universalmuseum Joanneum, 2018), 68—69.

60 Some notable examples built in the 1970s and 1980s include the mass housing estate BS-3 in Ljubljana, the formal richness and urbanist innovativeness of Split 3 on the Adriatic coast, the variations of New Belgrade blocks (19A, 61-64), and the terraced settlement Đuro Đaković in Sarajevo.

61 Projects for north and south facade in Blok 5, building D3, November 1978, SO-Titograd-19786, box 126, book 5, SO Titograd fonds, State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro.

Fig. 6
D3, north facade, 1978. (Source: State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica)

Fig. 7
D3, south facade, 1978. (Source: State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica)

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The facade design seems to tell a story of ideal-typical self-management. A daring construction with protruding consoles could stand for materialized concept of efforts necessary in a society shaped by all of its members. In accordance with the ideals of community, equity, and social welfare in socialism, everyone carries the burden of the system and is actively involved in the process [Fig. 8]. Bojović's construction was increasingly perceived as too risky; the final permission came only after an intra-Yugoslav arbitrage process in which Macedonian engineers, leading Yugoslav experts for earthquake-resistant construction, gave the green light.[62] The construction site also passed the unexpected test of the 1979 earthquake without significant problems. However, minor concessions to the doubts of local architects and engineers were made — the height of the towers was reduced by four floors, the slabs lost 1–2 floors in the final version.[63]

It is important to note that the resistance to Bojović's initiative did not come from the politicians, but from his colleagues. As he puts it: "The concept of Blok 5 in the self-managing system required a major spatial intervention, against what could have resulted in monotony, die-cutting, prefabrication, and formal simplification. In other words, it could have meant forcing buildings, apartments, and residents all into the same mold. My ambitions were contrary to all that. I wanted to individualize the structures and to produce distinctive buildings and neighborhoods. Luckily, this vision was accepted and supported, but not by my colleagues – builders, planners, and architects – but by politicians. It was a paradox of sorts that the politicians in the era of self-managing socialism were more progressive, more advanced than the rest of us, whether users, urban designers, or planners."[64] Together with other examples from socialist urbanities,

62 Dragović, "Budite realni — tražite nemoguće," 24.

63 Ivan Jovićević, "Blok 5 u Podgorici — istorijat i značaj (Block 5 in Podgorica — history and meaning)," in *Pristup izradi planskog dokumenta: Učešće javnosti u planiranju Bloka 5 u Podgorici*, ed. Milica Vujošević, Jelena Rabrenović and Sonja Dragović (Podgorica: KANA, 2017), 15.

64 Dragović, "Budite realni — tražite nemoguće," 20.

Fig. 8

D3, east facade (detail), 1978. (Source: State Archives of Montenegro, Podgorica)

this case sheds a new light on the allegedly politically hindered agency of professionals under socialism.[65]

The fine balance between the individual and the collective—one of the socialism's core issues—was found in the idea of unity in diversity, a recognition of both variations in households and the need to incorporate them into a bigger whole. As Shaun Topham observes, "such an elaborate system [self-management in the realm of housing] requires strong participation all round to make it work."[66] The architect pushed the limits of the materials and technologies available not for the sake of the experiment or to break records, but in order to offer maximum flexibility and comfortable spaces to the future residents. Through their contributions, workers stretched their financial resources and financed such ambitious construction projects. The future residents were expected to act as active members of the community. In this case, it was the self-managing agency in charge of coordinating such actions, the SIZ, fell short of the ambitions.

Furthermore, the architect made an effort toward a fair distribution of space among residents. Ground floor apartments were compensated for the possible lack of privacy through access to gardens in front of the building. The niches and balconies were distributed as evenly as possible; if an apartment did not have a balcony on the north or south, it got a niche.[67] Diversity did not go hand in hand with inequality, as was sometimes the case in the context of Yugoslav mass housing.[68]

However, varied facades were not co-created with the residents as a micro-unit in self-management, but were entirely a product of the architect's design. One of the imaginable alternatives would be the inclusion of future residents in the final works, or, as proposed by Andrija Mutnjaković in his speculative project for one of New Belgrade's neighborhoods, a fortunate union of "personal joy and engagement of individual means."[69] The example of Blok 5 makes clear how self-management in practice can dive to different depths, and can fill in the space between a consequent *laissez faire* ethos in regard to the residents and the authoritative presence of the architect.

From the 1990s through the present, the facades ultimately acquired unforeseen additions. Many buildings got suprastructures (*nadogradnje*) — additional floors, enclosures of balconies etc. The slender dividing walls between balconies on the north facade in all but one case lost their initial function of subtle sight

65 Cf. Brigitte Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism in Belgrade* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014) and Virág Molnár, *Building the State: Architecture, Politics, and State Formation in Post-War Central Europe* (Routledge: Abingdon and New York, 2013).

66 Topham, "Housing Policy in Yugoslavia," 417.

67 Mileta Bojović, conversation with author, February 26, 2019.

68 Archer, "Imaš kuću — vrati stan," 121.

69 Andrija Mutnjaković, *Biourbanizam* (Biourbanism) (Rijeka: Izdavački centar Rijeka, 1982), 143.

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protection and plastic articulation; they became incorporated in apartments as an outer wall **[Figs. 9-10]**. Some of the balconies on the highest level got a roof and a series of plastic window frames of varying sizes were added. As Dubravka Sekulić states in the case of Belgrade, the practice of *nadogradnje*, at least in the early post-socialist period, was embraced "equally by those hunting for profit and by those following vital interests."[70] Worried about the structural stability of the buildings and with a continuing sense of responsibility for Blok 5, Bojović appeared on public TV at his own initiative to warn against such interventions, but to no avail.

Commenting on the informal construction in Kaluđerica, the biggest informal settlement in former Yugoslavia, Džokić, Neelen, and Milikić pose a provocative dilemma — "is Kaluđerica the top or the bottom of the philosophy and practice

Fig. 9

D3, north facade, February 2019. (Photo: Lea Horvat)

Fig. 10

D3, west facade, February 2019. (Photo: Lea Horvat)

70 Dubravka Sekulić, "Legitimacy and the Extralegal: Expanding the Thin Line Between Legal and Illegal in the Densification of Post-Yugoslav Cities," in *Nadogradnje: Urban Self-Regulation in Post-Yugoslav Cities*, ed. Sven Quadflieg and Gregor Theune (Weimar: M Books, 2015), 135.

of self-management, acclaimed in Yugoslav times?"[71] In a way, such "making do" was essential to Yugoslav socialism in general and widely tolerated by the government — from informal housing to labor migration to Western Europe.[72] From this point of view, the interventions and the initiative of the builders may be understood as an afterlife of the zest of action, the drive of the ongoing revolution self-management was so eager to spark. Spectacular facades with cubic niches which jut out were questioned already during the construction period as a potentially overstretched and therefore dangerous element. With additional, unforeseen weight, the danger is growing and an additional weight is put on the infrastructure.

Overstretching, pushing its own limits in order to be an active part of the whole society, an ideal essentially shaped by the self-managing ethos underwent a significant neo-liberal turn in the post-socialist period. The limits were not pushed for the society or community, but for the individual to prosper and profit, in direct and violent opposition to the ideals of solidarity and social welfare in socialism. Still, the buildings absorbed this unplanned activity quite successfully — up to this date without deadly victims and dramatic collapses — socialist mass housing proves to be much more resilient and durable than its harshest critics expected.

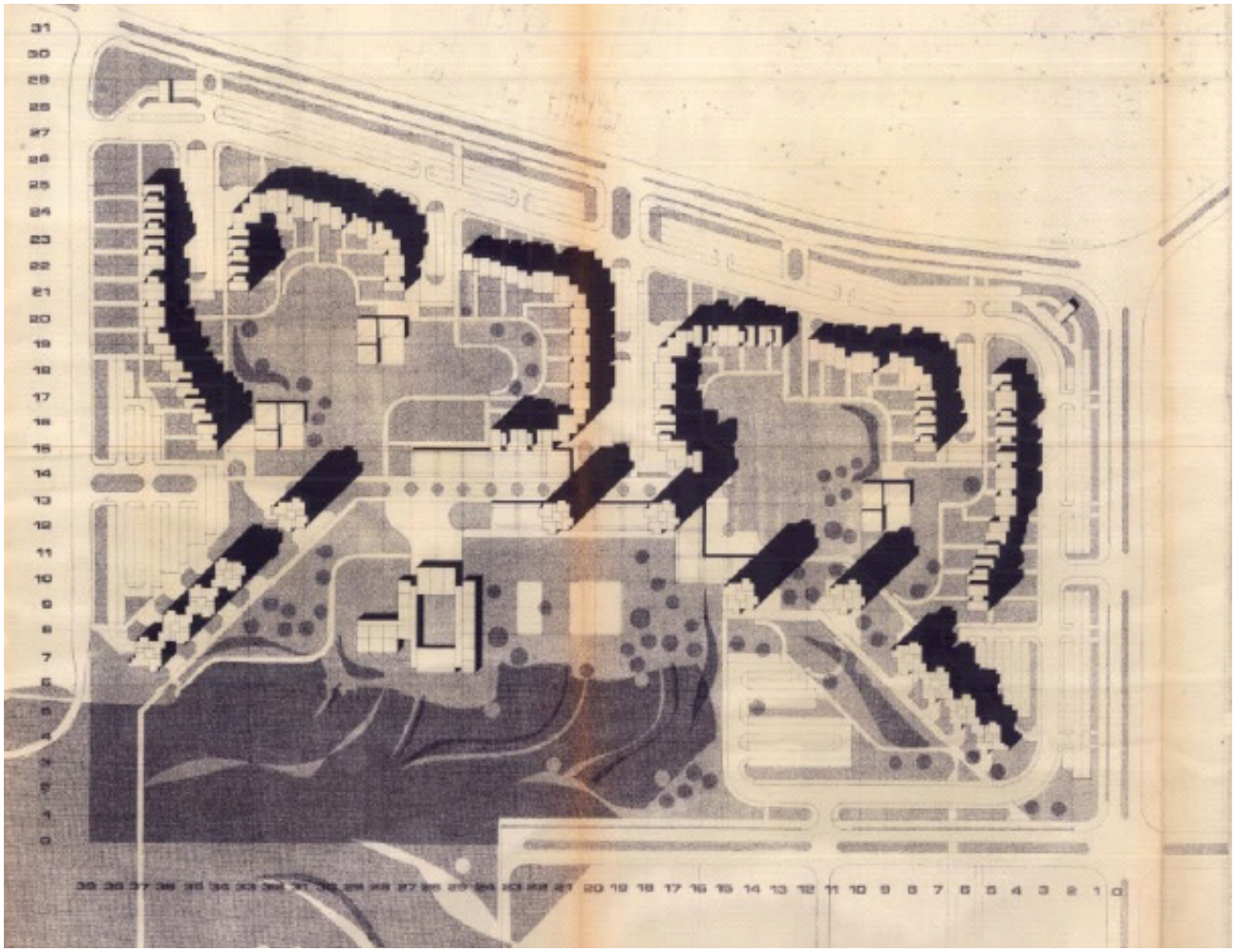
According to the architect, the building scape of facades should be reminiscent of the mountainous landscape so characteristic of Montenegro. Uneven massifs, variations in height and width, dramatic peaks and recesses do indeed bear resemblance with the topography of the mountains. Bojović's other projects — like Grudska Mahala in Nikšić, Montenegro — also contain a strong regionalist note and take local architectural heritage into account. Nurturing regionalist tendencies was in tune with the growing decentralization of Yugoslavia and the idea that republics could largely be self-managed was pushed even further in the 1974 constitution.

At the same time, dramatic "concrete baroque" was rather common in major mass housing estates across Yugoslavia, such as the "Sails" in the Bloc 63 in New Belgrade and "Cruiser Ship" in Split 3.[73] Finally, a comparable formal ductus was also found on the international architectural scene; most prominently articulated in Habitat 67 by Moshe Safdie and its exclusive elite apartments. Titograd as a capital of the smallest republic was at the same time peripheral enough to nurture its own tradition of informal, anonymous architecture and central enough to have a palpable connection with the national and global developments. As in the case of the prominent Montenegrin architect Svetlana Kana Radević and her work between Philadelphia, Tokyo, and Montenegro,

71 Ana Džokić, Marc Neelen (Stealth. Unlimited) and Nebojša Milikić, "Kaluđerica From Šklj to Abc: A Life in the Shadow of Modernisation," in *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, eds. Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić (Zagreb: Udruženje hrvatskih arhitekata, 2012), 291.

72 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 29—42.

73 Tanja Damljanović Conley and Jelica Jovanović, "Belgrade Residential Architecture 1950-1970: A Privileged Dwelling for a Privilege-Free Society," in *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, eds. Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić (Zagreb: Udruženje hrvatskih arhitekata, 2012), 302.



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Bojović's path from Montenegro to Belgrade, Paris and back "contravenes the dichotomies of centre and periphery," and establishes "the architect as a mediating force across societal registers."[74] Radević's and Bojović's remarkable paths and multifarious projects effectively counter a stereotypical perception of Montenegro as poor, static backwater of Yugoslavia, a periphery of periphery, and showcase the transformative potential of self-management (especially) in decentralized regions.

## To be continued?: self-management in post-socialist times

In recent years, Blok 5 became a showplace and a contested arena for citizens exercising their spatial rights and agency. Although the urbanist solution for Blok 5 did not bring striking innovations in the spatialization of self-management, it created a solid base and standard equipment for self-management on the level of the commune. Its most distinctive feature was a generously sized Mediterranean park-forest in the southern part **[Fig. 11]**. When, in 2017, plans to build a 22-storey skyscraper in the park-forest of Blok 5 were announced, locals vocally protested against the project. Under the motto "The block is ours! It's up

Fig. 11

Detailed urbanist plan for Blok 5 by Vukota Tupa Vukotić, 1976. (Source: Milica Vujošević, Jelena Rabrenović, Sonja Dragović (eds.), *Pristup izradi planskog dokumenta: Učešće javnosti u planiranju Bloka 5 u Podgorici*, 2017, 14.)

74 Anna Kats, "Svetlana Kana Radević (1937-2000)," *The Architectural Review*, March 13, 2020, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/reputations/svetlana-kana-radevic-1937-2000/10046572.article

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to you, too!" (*Blok je naš! I ti se pitaš!*), a small local NGO KANA ("Who if not the architect") started a campaign to bring more transparent, accessible information about the project to the citizens, to encourage residents to know their rights and make use of them, and to facilitate a more participative debate.[75] **[Fig. 12]** The ties to socialist heritage go far beyond symbolic tribute to Svetlana Kana Radević. KANA explicitly evokes the legacy of self-management and combines it with the concept of collaborative, communicative planning articulated in the 1990s by Anglo-American urban planners Patsy Healey and Judith Innes.[76] The main goal of KANA's involvement in Blok 5 — "activation of participants in the planning process"[77] — echoes the transition from an individual to a self-managing subject. As distinguished from NIMBY-ism in the West which usually departs from private interests and fears of homeowners, KANA self-identified as a part of "the movement for preservation of the public good", and continuously grounded protests in the protection of public space and common good from deregulated privatization. Despite the restricted scope, the protest was

75 Milica Vujošević, "Učešće javnosti u urbanističkom planiranju — primjer Bloka 5 u Podgorici (Public participation in urban planning — the case study of Block 5 in Podgorica)," in *Pristup izradi planskog dokumenta: Učešće javnosti u planiranju Bloka 5 u Podgorici*, ed. Milica Vujošević, Jelena Rabrenović and Sonja Dragović (Podgorica: KANA, 2017), 41—70.

76 Vujošević, "Učešće javnosti u urbanističkom planiranju — primjer Bloka 5 u Podgorici," 50.

77 Vujošević, "Učešće javnosti u urbanističkom planiranju — primjer Bloka 5 u Podgorici", 48—51.

Fig. 12
Pop-up information point established in Blok 5 by members of the NGO KANA, 2017. (Source: KANA private collection)

by no means a depoliticized issue confined to the micro-level of neighborhood: it connected the local issue with the problem of deregulated, uncontrolled capitalism and proliferation of private interests which endanger the public good by cutting it into commodifiable pieces.

The skyscraper project was ultimately ditched, at least in part due to the intense resistance by the local community. The residents of Blok 5 recognized the value in the initial project and decided to stand in defense of it. The organized and interconnected community has its roots in the socialist self-management and, as the protests of locals in Blok 5 demonstrate, can again be activated under certain circumstances. Even though the principles of self-management were the least elaborate and inventive on the level of urbanism, they nevertheless left a productive legacy which can be used as a template for resistance.

## Conclusion: Real legacy of ideal self-management

Self-managed built environment does not have a uniform, singular appearance. It is rather a set of variables, a wide spectrum of possible outcomes. One of them, Blok 5, entails a set of self-managing instruments: from the declarative or symbolic self-management reflected by the facade, the organizational scaffolding of the existing socialism, the organization of construction, to the self-management conveyed in terms of Western Marxism as freedom and agency of the individual in the encouragement to include future residents to design their own floor plans.

While the state promised to wither away with the advancement of self-management, the path of Blok 5 shows that the architect did not necessarily have to disappear as well. On the contrary, the architect seemed to be more present, to extend his work both to the pre- and post-construction phase, into the engagement with prospective residents. In Blok 5, two conflicting understandings of the primary subject of self-management collided. On the one hand, the architect, inspired by the ideas of Western Marxism around Henri Lefebvre, who sees the urban subject as "the individual member of a given social group," clearly identifies the individual resident as an important figure.[78] On the other hand, he does ask for more channeled engagement from them and sets the limits of the common good (the well-being of the whole — building, neighborhood) to their interference and therefore adds a more decisively socialist touch. However, the context of homegrown self-management was paramount to the very existence of Blok 5. Bojović left for France as a young professional who received his architectural training in socialist Yugoslavia. His return to Montenegro is in part an acknowledgement of the framework of socialist self-management as *conditio sine qua non* for a mass housing project of such scale and ambition, which would not be imaginable in France at the time.

78 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 40.

As Barbara Jančar-Webster noted in her case study analysis of environmental self-management in Yugoslavia during late socialism, "localization" ("the project is contained within well-defined local boundaries") was among key ingredients for a successful project.[79] The modest size of Titograd and its peculiar position on the map of Yugoslavia — a peripheral center — made it possible to narrow down the protagonists to a manageable scale. The versatile engagement of the architect, his persistence in navigating local conflicts and limitations posed by the investor, significantly shaped traces of self-management in the project. At the same time, it went largely unnoticed beyond Montenegro and accelerated the process of forgetting.

While self-management in both theory and practice undisputedly had built-in flaws, it also produced a noteworthy, livable space. Learning from early, more schematic Yugoslav mass housing projects, Blok 5 could build on and avoid some of their shortcomings. Therefore, self-management of the late socialism was not broken beyond repair — it managed to convey and execute a project on a such scale. Finally, many of the built-in self-managing features could be or already were activated in post-socialist period, led by either individuals or small, mobilized groups. The inner walls can still be (re)moved, the basis for an organized collective action can still take place. And it was, going in both directions — benefiting the community and the collective as a whole and emphasizing individual advancement. The legacy of self-management built in Blok 5, with all its unevenness, continues to offer a meaningful incitements to self-organization.

79 Barbara Jančar, "Ecology and Self-Management: A Balance-Sheet for the 1980s," in *Yugoslavia in Transition: Choices and Constraints*, ed. John B. Allcock, John J. Horton, and Marko Milivojević (Oxford: Berg, 1992), 345.

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