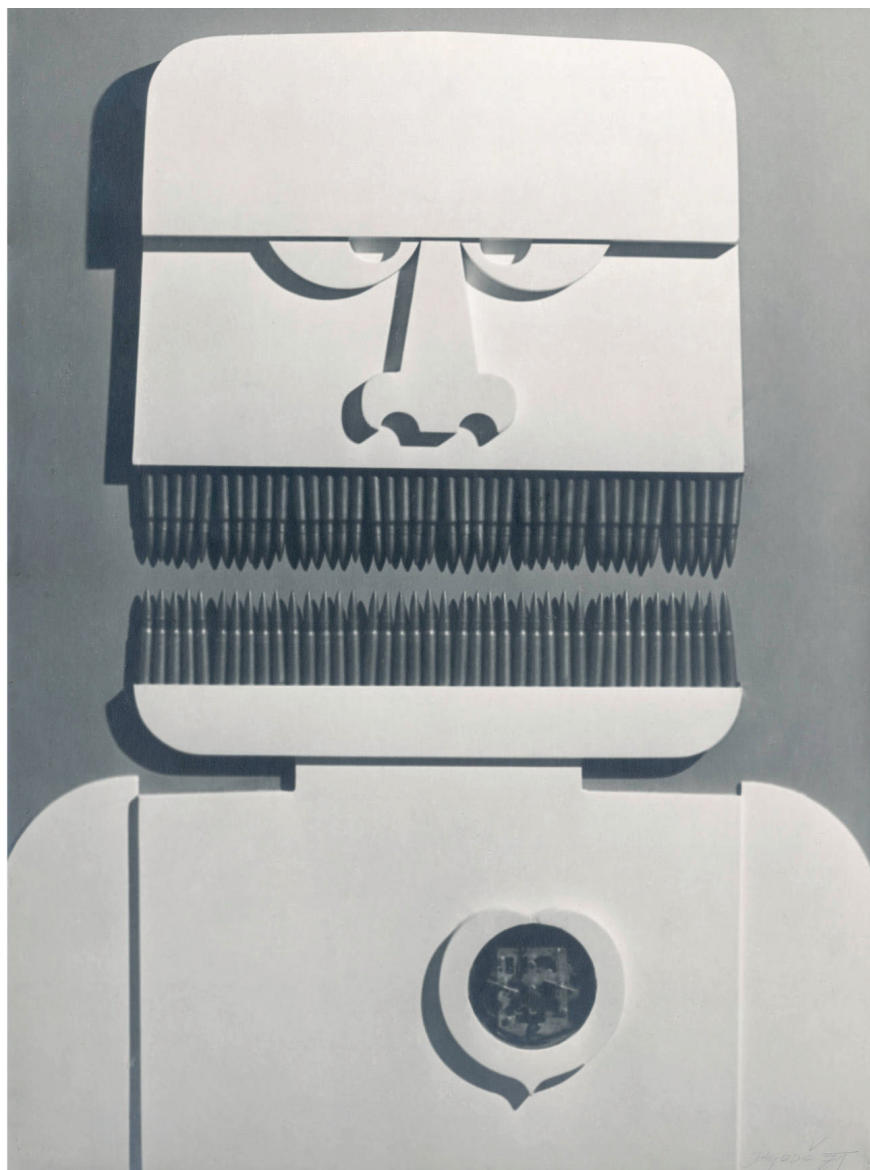


Peace Policies and Practices in Yugoslavia and Beyond



PEACE, UNCONDITIONAL!

Edited by
Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

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UNCONDITIONAL!



Institute for Recent History of Serbia
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in Yugoslavia and Beyond

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Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

Belgrade, Ljubljana
2025

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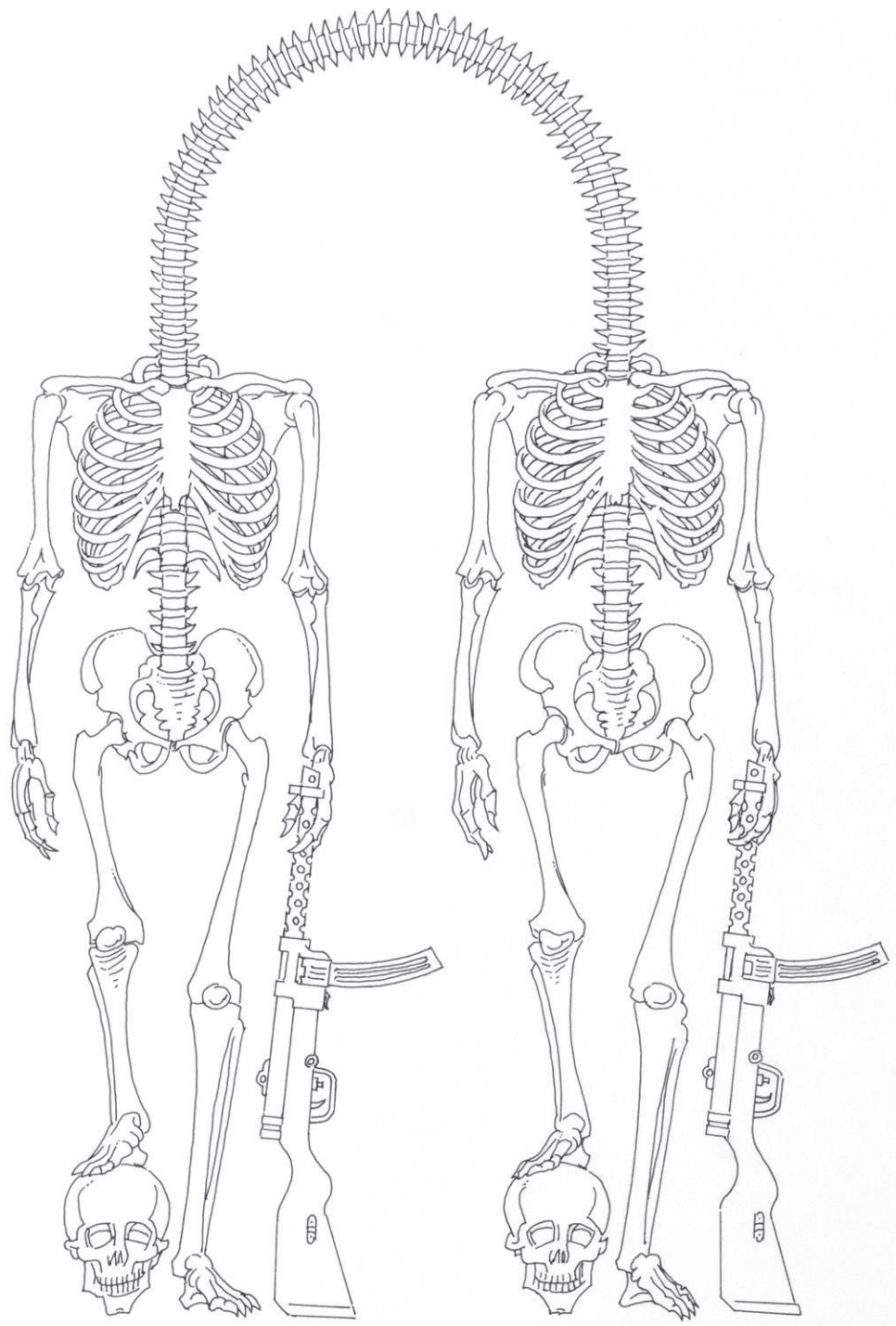
Building Non-Peace

Abstract The paper explores the intersections of peace, development and democracy through the lens of architecture, urban planning and historical memory, with a particular focus on the Pioneer Railway in Ljubljana. This frames two key case studies – the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the American-Yugoslav Project (AYP) – to illustrate how democracy was both imagined and contested within socialist and capitalist frameworks. Although framed as neutral knowledge transfer, both initiatives reveal how planning was inherently political and often driven by geopolitical agendas. Architecture and urbanism emerged not only as tools of modernisation but as mechanisms for promoting competing socio-economic visions and reshaping territories. These dynamics were further complicated by the presence of the Military-Industrial Complex (MIC), which entwined civilian infrastructure with defence priorities. Postwar reconstruction and investment, influenced by MIC strategies, blurred the lines between peacebuilding and militarisation, exposing how even ostensibly non-military projects were shaped by Cold War imperatives.

Keywords architecture, Pioneer Railway, International Union of Architects, American-Yugoslav Project, knowledge transfer

The walk

Children's railways, originating in Moscow, USSR, in 1932 and spreading across the Eastern Bloc after the Second World War, were designed to promote socialist values. In Yugoslavia, following those in Belgrade and Zagreb, Ljubljana's Pioneer Railway opened



Stane Jagodič, *For the Fatherland*, india ink, 1993

* Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4310-2011>

in 1948.¹ Built by working brigades in March, it connected Ljubljana districts Rožna dolina, Koseze and Podutik. Despite its initial popularity, interest quickly declined, leading to its closure in 1954. While the tracks were removed soon after, some stations remained for years, often abandoned or repurposed. On 25 May 2019, the Nonument Group, a multidisciplinary artist collective, revived the forgotten railway at its original site with a performative sound walk *From Nowhere to Noplace*.² This artistic intervention temporarily reactivated the Pioneer Railway, bringing its nearly vanished history back into Ljubljana's urban and collective memory.

Conceptualised as an artistic intervention, the event was planned as part of the MAPS (Mapping and Archiving Public Spaces) project,³ supported by the Creative Europe Programme, one of the main EU mechanisms for supporting the cultural and creative sector. European cultural initiatives often emphasise values such as cooperation, mutual understanding and historical reconciliation, which are integral to both peacebuilding and sustainable development. As such, they entail the idea of peace. Creative Europe programmes, in particular, promote cross-border collaboration, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

Europe's cultural and historical narratives have been shaped by the pursuit of peace – particularly after the Second World War when institutions like the European Union were founded to ensure long-term stability through economic and cultural cooperation. However, while the EU provides dedicated funding for cultural projects, the proportion of the overall EU budget allocated specifically to culture-focused initiatives is relatively modest.⁴ The MAPS project, which supported the described walk, connected international partners to research and interpret poignant structures that have become obsolete, ruinous, demolished or neglected in different ways. In a period of two years, international partners from six countries organised symposia, conducted research, staged art interventions and established an online platform. Fragments of the past re-emerged in a new setting.

1 Pioneers were all primary school children in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) included in the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia (Zveza pionirjev Jugoslavije, ZPJ). It was an extracurricular organisation that aimed to educate children in the spirit of the National Liberation Struggle (NOB) and socialist values such as comradeship, solidarity and patriotism. The organisation was founded in 1942 in Bihać, at the congress of the United Alliance of Anti-Fascist Youth of Yugoslavia (Združena zveza protifašistične mladine Jugoslavije, USAOJ). In Slovenia, the Pioneer Union began operating in 1947 as the Union of Pioneers of Slovenia (Zveza pionirjev Slovenije).

2 "From Nowhere to Noplace, the Pioneer Railway," Nonument, https://nonument.org/nonument_groups/from-nowhere-to-noplace/, accessed 15 June 2025.

3 "MAPS – Mapping and Archiving Public Spaces," Center ustvarjalna evropa, <https://stara.ced-slovenia.eu/en/project/maps-mapping-archiving-public-spaces/>, accessed 15 June 2025.

4 While Creative Europe is a significant source of funding for cultural initiatives, it represents a relatively small portion of the overall EU budget. Beyond Creative Europe, cultural projects also receive funding through other EU mechanisms, such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). However, culture is not a primary focus of the ERDF, and investments in cultural sites are not treated as a priority, as the ERDF primarily supports economic and social cohesion. In "EU investments in cultural sites: a topic that deserves more focus and coordination," Special report 08/2020: EU cultural investments, European Court of Auditors, <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/cultural-investments-08-2020/en/>, accessed 15 June 2025.

The performative walk was organised on the evening of the former Youth Day and took place along the present-day cycle track.⁵ It was led by three female performers through the woods where light interventions were set up. The experience was interwoven with a sound essay, combining the testimonies of pioneer rail workers with contemporary reflections and historical facts. On arrival at the site of the former Railway, the group of participants had the opportunity to watch documentary footage of the construction of the line. The walk ended at a burning light filament sign signalling the word "vision". Thus, the event established several levels of interaction – among the participants, between the participants and performers, between the participants and the site of the former railway line, with historical facts and testimonies – around which a temporary community formed. And this community walked along the former railway track from, so to speak, the "historical facts" towards the burning word "vision."

Today, not many traces of the former pioneer railway can be seen along the cycle path, and the remaining few, in the form of commemorative plaques, are frequently vandalised, destroyed and re-erected. The latent tension in the space, which is evident when the signs are removed and put up, is linked to different groups of people who experience the memories of the post-Second World War period, marked by ideological differences, in very different ways. The very label "pioneering" can be controversial. At the same time, the community of pioneer rail workers is still extraordinarily strong and is actively working to preserve its memory.

The performative walk at the site of the railway was not organised to pacify passions, encourage historical reconciliation or anything of the sort. In the MAPS project, this obsolete infrastructure was identified by the term *nonument*, which refers to architecture, monuments, public spaces and infrastructures whose meaning has changed as a result of social or political transformations.⁶ This means that the object of questioning in the research process, and then in the context of the artistic intervention related to the Pioneer Railway, was the railway's meaning, its symbolic framing, in relation to the space of then and now.

Furthermore, this meant reflecting on ideological shifts. The distanced view allowed reorienting the focus from the meaning-laden details to a broader historical perspective through the prism of space planning and directing it to the contemporary moment. At the same time, it thematised a nearly vanished cultural heritage. In the evening, the community walked through the forest along the bicycle track – mindfully connected to the pioneer railway and accompanied by light installations. The walk was guided by performers dressed in silver clothing, evoking futuristic tales, bearing signs with slogans from a bygone era.

5 The performance took place in the framework of the Ljubljana international festival Svetlobna gverila (Lighting Guerrilla), which is dedicated to the production and presentation of works of contemporary visual and new media art dedicated to light.

6 Nika Grabar, "Nonument Now! An Essay on the Visibility of a Disappearing Collective Remembrance," *Nonument* (Ljubljana: MoTA, 2020), 10–20.

The event

Events have become an important medium of expression in art. The notion of an art event encompasses various actions, performances, gestures, happenings and interactive projects that take place inside or outside art institutions – sometimes without an audience, but always with the intention of situating themselves in the artistic sphere. Events establish various connections with the art world and are usually documented for the purposes of inscribing them in art history or displaying them in a gallery.⁷ Events have become both a key service and means of communication between art institutions and their diverse audiences. Today, contemporary art institutions are expected to be “vibrant”, a demand that paradoxically drives both constant changes in the form, content and format of events and the standardisation that comes with institutional production. This dynamic is reflected in the discourse of visual arts, with increasing emphasis on art events, while other works, although integrated into the institution’s common language, receive less attention. As art institutions evolve, they foster interactions with visitors, transforming into spaces where new social structures emerge. Through gallery events, they connect individuals within temporary or lasting communities, using events as a medium. At the same time, institutions curate events within structured discourses, demonstrating how, across different parts of the world, artistic, theoretical and interpretive practices are often shaped into increasingly similar formats.⁸

The shift toward event-driven engagement in art institutions today enhances public interaction, fosters social spaces and shapes cultural narratives. Institutions are expected to be dynamic places, driving constant reinvention while also conforming to familiar formats that align with global artistic discourse. This mirrors broader issues in urban development and architecture. As art institutions navigate the tension between being vibrant, dynamic and standardised, while at the same time being predictable, cities and architectural projects face similar pressures – balancing social issues through innovative, inclusive projects and efficiency demands dictated by GDPs predicting a particular form of urban living and development. Although both aim to create inclusive spaces, they often contribute to gentrification and exclusivity. The rise of temporary art events today parallels trends in the built environment, such as pop-up spaces and flexible-use buildings, while the global uniformity and homogenisation of art discourse reflect how cities worldwide increasingly adopt similar urban planning models. Ultimately, both art institutions and urban development projects grapple with the challenge of fostering genuine community engagement while resisting commercialisation and uniformity.

The Pioneer Railway walk was not organised by an art institution, but by an art and research collective. Defined as an art intervention, it aimed at intervening in the art

sphere while at the same time being conditioned by the contemporary urban reality. The research methodology and art practice of the Nonument Group work with and around the question of space, development, its meaning and histories, which make tangible the fractures of visions of the past and present ideologies by addressing their imagined futures. Reflected past and present meanings of particular sites addressed in projects deal with imagined territories that become present either in discourse or in the experience of an event or art intervention, engaging with broader tensions in art and urban realities.



A collage from Neja Tomšič and Martin Bricelj Baraga’s visual essay thematising the performative sound walk at the former Pioneer Railway site in Ljubljana on May 25 2019. Color background photo: DK. Documentary photo: Photograph of the opening of the Pioneer Railway on June 13 1948. Author unknown. Ljubljana: Slovenian Railway Museum Archive, Box 5, Inv. No. 2345. Source: Neja Tomšič and Martin Bricelj Baraga in Nika Grabar, “From Nowhere to Noplace, The Pioneer Railway,” *Nonument*, eds. Miloš Kosec et al. (Ljubljana: MoTA, 2020), 158–193.

⁷ Beti Žerovc, *Dogodek* (Ljubljana: Mednarodni grafični likovni center, 2011), 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 220–221.

The participants walked through the forest, observing the performers' gestures and the light interventions and following the audio narrative recounting the Railway's history – all in a landscape where its physical remnants no longer exist. A key element of the event was the community's reflection on the past, serving as a bridge between history and the present. However, the experience of those who built the Railway more than seventy years ago was radically different. For the Railway pioneers, what began as an idea on paper became a tangible reality, driven by a vision of the future rather than a reflection on the past. As they laid the tracks, they forged new bonds – connections that would only gain historical significance with the passage of time.

Tensions

Did the railway pioneers really believe in the project at the time of its construction? Was the project merely a means of indoctrination? Did working on the Railway open doors to a better future? What attitude would they have had towards it if the Railway had not been shut down? Could it have persisted? Under what conditions? Would the tensions over preserving its memory be less or more intense today if this were the case? Isn't the Pioneer Railway interesting precisely because it symptomatically mirrors issues related to the socialist project and the one of Yugoslavia? And is the walk through the forest not simply a metaphor for our questioning of past visions for the future?

The tensions associated with the Pioneer Railway today can be related to the broader question of development that emerged in the tumult after the Second World War. As competing visions of the future were shaped by distinct ideological frameworks, these tensions became intertwined with debates over infrastructure and urbanisation. Simultaneously, the postwar situation demanded peaceful cooperation for the sake of sharing technological know-how and investments. The processes set up to enable reconstruction and stability were also to be the processes that would foster peace and prosperity.

Due to different ideological perspectives, the effort to bridge differences in planning development was closely linked to preserving peace as one of the core principles of the United Nations (UN) since its foundation in 1945.⁹ However, material realities matter more than rhetoric. While the UN played a role in humanitarian aid and rebuilding efforts, the primary vehicle for the reconstruction in Europe after the Second World War was the Marshall Plan, which was organised and funded by the United States rather than the UN.¹⁰

⁹ "Peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet," United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-7>, accessed 15 June 2025.

¹⁰ United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), a UN-affiliated agency, provided immediate humanitarian aid in the immediate aftermath of the war (food, medicine and refugee assistance) but was not responsible for long-term reconstruction.

The Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Program, ERP) was launched in 1948, and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) helped coordinate the distribution of funds. While the UN was involved in relief efforts, the large-scale economic reconstruction of Europe was primarily managed through the Marshall Plan and other US-led initiatives.¹¹

When the US introduced the Marshall Plan in 1947 to provide economic aid to European countries, the Soviet Union saw it as an attempt to expand Western influence and contain communism. In response, the USSR rejected the Marshall Plan and instead launched the Molotov Plan in 1947, named after Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov.¹² It aimed to provide economic assistance and trade agreements between the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries, consolidating Soviet influence in the region. This later evolved into the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) in 1949, which formalised economic cooperation among several socialist states.

The Marshall Plan and the Molotov Plan were both crucial in shaping the postwar economic landscape in their respective spheres of influence. The Marshall Plan facilitated the rapid recovery of Western Europe by investing in its economies, fostering industrial modernisation, infrastructure rebuilding and economic cooperation through the OEEC. Similarly, the Molotov Plan aimed to strengthen the economies of Eastern Bloc nations, ensuring their integration into the Soviet-led economic system.

Both plans contributed to economic stability and growth, but they also played crucial roles in shaping the military-industrial complex (MIC).¹³ By tying economic aid to political and strategic alliances, they reinforced the division between East and West and also laid the ground for Cold War militarisation. The Marshall Plan indirectly benefited the US defence industries by aligning Western European economies with American industrial output, including military production, while the Molotov Plan ensured that Eastern European economies prioritised Soviet industrial and military needs. As both sides funnelled resources into their military and defence sectors, they deepened the arms race and embedded military production into their economic systems, cementing the MIC as a defining feature of the Cold War era. Even though postwar development was framed as a peaceful effort rhetorically, in reality, it was conditioned by the MIC, which fuelled Cold War tensions.

¹¹ "Marshall Plan," National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/marshall-plan>.

¹² Geoffrey Roberts, "Moscow and the Marshall Plan: Politics, Ideology and the Onset of the Cold War, 1947," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 8 (1994): 1375–1377, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/152768>.

¹³ For further reading on the Marshall Plan in relation to US Cold War strategy and military-industrial interests, see: Michael Swanson, *The War State: The Cold War Origins of the Military-Industrial Complex and the Power Elite, 1945–1963* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013). The book focuses on the rise of national security infrastructure and defence contractors in the early Cold War period. In doing so, it also examines how the Marshall Plan functioned as a vehicle for secret operations and contributed to the institutionalisation of US influence in Europe, helping to co-shape what became the military-industrial complex (MIC). In Chapter 2, Swanson details how the Marshall Plan was not only used for European economic recovery but also covertly channelled funds through the CIA into anti-communist operations.

Although the Marshall Plan was to be the means to secure “democracy and prosperity” and the Molotov Plan was to support “socialist solidarity”, beneath the rhetoric, both initiatives were deeply intertwined with military and strategic goals. The MIC became such an important driver of development that US President Dwight Eisenhower (1953–1961) warned against it on 17 January 1961 in this farewell address:

A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. ... The conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military–industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.¹⁴

Should we then today understand postwar development in the context of peace since building infrastructure contributed to economic stability and growth? Or rather, in the context of war, since this same development tied economic aid to strategic alliances and thus laid the ground for militarisation? What are the consequences of different interpretations, and what role did democracy play in this context as an endangered value, as highlighted by Eisenhower? Is this schism present in how we experience demolished infrastructures connected from the same past?

Imagined democracies¹⁵

Ensuring peace after the Second World War depended largely on establishing a stable environment and the conditions for socialist and capitalist development that also had material consequences for the production of space. Both plans brought large-scale investments in reconstruction and building infrastructures, which opened a new wave of industrialisation in Europe. Technological progress represented a path to a better future in the visions of both blocs. Consequently, development was based on transforming

landscapes, and it established new modern infrastructures. This type of progress depended on strategic resources and new markets, which, in turn, depended on the international collaboration of experts across the Iron Curtain. How did it play out in space? Wartime development of prefabrication construction technologies in the Anglo-American context was interesting for urban planners globally, and different ideologies were no reason to stop them from collaborating. Findings related to prefabrication were, for example, presented at the American-Soviet Building Conference in New York in May 1945.¹⁶

Such events were telling, as were the many rhetorical deadlocks within the discourses they produced. They often manifested the basic contradictions of postwar endeavours that were directed towards peace and stability while simultaneously encouraging intense militarisation and divisions. How can the traces of the Cold War be further discerned in spatial planning, where both sides called for peace?

An exemplary occasion was the establishment of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in 1948 in Lausanne, Switzerland.¹⁷ Pierre Vago, a French architect and publisher, was the key figure behind the organisation.¹⁸ Originally from Budapest, he moved to Paris, where he worked while maintaining ties with Eastern Europe. He aimed to integrate Soviet architects into the UIA after the Second World War with the help of Luben Tonev from Bulgaria and Polish CIAM leader Helena Syrkus, both of whom were architects.¹⁹ This was no easy task. While the UIA sought to function as a bridge-building institution, it encountered ideological and political contradictions from the outset. A particularly contentious issue during the drafting of its statutes was the concept of democratic governance, with members expressing diverse views on its definition and significance.

The divide was especially evident in discussions about the structure of the organisation, as the USSR and Eastern European delegations advocated for democratic

¹⁴ “President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Farewell Address (1961),” Milestone Documents, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-dwight-d-eisenhowers-farewell-address>.

¹⁵ Part of the article dealing with the background of the UIA’s activity and exhibitions was produced in the context of the research project Art and Architectural Exhibiting Between Art and Ideological Concepts. The Case of Slovenia, 1947–1979 (J6–3137), funded from the state budget by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

¹⁶ The topic of the cooperation between the USSR and the USA during the 1930s and 1940s was also partly explored by Jean-Louis Cohen in his book *Architecture in Uniform*, where it is discussed in the context of architectural and technological exchanges. Cohen analyses how – in the 1930s, during the economic crisis and the rise of modernism – specific ideas about the industrialisation of construction and urban planning spread between countries, including the USA and the Soviet Union. During the Second World War, the cooperation became strategic, mainly in the form of technological innovation exchange, industrial production and construction technology methods. Architects in both countries faced the tasks of mass production and standardisation, influencing the development of architecture during and after the war. Although the ideological context was often divisive, the ideas of technological progress were usually accepted as universal. More in: Jean-Louis Cohen, “Producing Production and Workers’ Housing,” *Architecture in Uniform* (Edition Hazans and CCA: Paris, 2011), 81–141.

¹⁷ After Lausanne, congresses were held in Rabat, Morocco (1951), Lisbon, Portugal (1953), the Hague, the Netherlands (1955), Moscow, USSR (1958), and so on, all over the world. From “World Congress of Architects,” UIA, <https://www.uia-architectes.org/en/architecture-events/world-congresses-of-architects/page/3/>.

¹⁸ Vago’s efforts to enable all architects, without exception, to be involved, were marked by personal experience. He was born in Budapest in 1910 and later studied at the École Spéciale d’Architecture (ESA) in Paris, where he collaborated with Auguste Perret and worked for the magazine *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*.

¹⁹ Katherine Zubovich, “Debating ‘Democracy’: The International Union of Architects and the Cold War Politics of Expertise,” *Room One Thousand*, no. 4, 2016, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1h99r3k0>.

principles, whereas delegates from France, Switzerland, Italy, and Belgium adopted an anti-democratic stance. The argument for a democratic organisation was emphasised by the USSR's representative Karo Semenovič Alabjan's desire for the UIA to become an international bulwark for the authority of the architectural profession. This was accompanied by his observation that architects in capitalist countries did not have the opportunity to develop their social goals through creative enterprise. Alabjan's, one of the first Soviet architects working within the UIA and the chief architect of the reconstruction of Stalingrad, appealed to the leadership to make the UIA "an association of progressive democratic organisations of workers in architecture who are fighting for lasting peace, the establishment of democracies and the development of culture". He saw the UIA as a key player in advancing these values.²⁰

However, Western architects, including Paul Vischer and Ralph Walker, opposed any political agenda, fearing it would limit open discourse.²¹ The role of culture in postwar socialism and capitalism differed significantly. In socialist societies, culture was envisioned as a transformative force – an instrument for shaping a new socialist future and redefining everyday life. In contrast, in capitalist systems, culture operated within the constraints of the market economy, while institutions played an important role in preserving the autonomy of cultural and academic fields. These differing cultural frameworks incited ideological tensions in debates over democracy, urban planning and infrastructure funding.

At the Lausanne Congress, debates over the final UIA resolution were intense. For example, Tonev argued that the reconstruction of Europe required architects to work side-by-side with technicians, engineers, specialists and, at the same time, with economists, sociologists and politicians. And yet, the final text of the UIA resolution was worded differently. Architects were to work with engineers, economists, sociologists, lawyers and others.²² Politics and ideology were clearly topics to be avoided.

Eastern "people's democracies" referred to regimes where the means of production were publicly owned and politically structured around the Communist Party. Their economies were driven by five-year plans, which also guided spatial development. In contrast, "Western democracies" operated under a free-market system, with private ownership of production and political representation through elections. There was no societal planning in the US. Spatial planning was conditioned by the free market economy. The battleground in this sphere was really about the imaginary space of future development framed by the Cold War. In this context, the architects reinvented the production of space on a large scale with planning methodologies for urbanisation. It was the visions that posed divisions, and these were not discussed democratically in either sphere of influence.

²⁰ Zubovich, "Debating Democracy."

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Socialist architecture in colonial context

Yugoslavia's position was symptomatic of the situation. After the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, Yugoslav architects' actions reflected the broader political shift, redirecting their focus from the East to the West while preserving their socialist vision for the future. What did it mean for the architects that the country was not included in either the Marshall or Molotov plan, and how can the traces of the Cold War be discerned in spatial planning? Weren't both sides arguing for peace and democracy?

Yugoslavia joined the UIA in 1948 after it had been expelled from the Cominform and started to reorient its politics, which made UIA's fractures even more visible.²³ When organising the Second Congress, originally planned for 1949 in Warsaw, the Polish members halted preparations, partly because they opposed Yugoslavia's entry.²⁴ The main criticism was directed at the organisation and content of the second congress by Helena Syrkus, who opposed Yugoslavia's participation in the UIA.²⁵ The situation was resolved in 1951, when the location for the venue was relocated to Rabat, Morocco, rather than Warsaw. Under the title "How Does the Architect Perform His New Tasks?", architectural production results were showcased at an exhibition by representatives from Brazil, Greece, England, the Netherlands, Italy, Morocco, Mexico and Yugoslavia.

Rabat emerged as a more suitable location for the UIA Congress. At the time, Rabat was officially part of neither a socialist nor a capitalist country but a French protectorate undergoing rapid political transformation in its pursuit of independence from French colonial rule. The exhibition, a staple of UIA congresses, notably excluded projects from behind the Iron Curtain, with Yugoslavia being the sole socialist country to present its work. As Yugoslavia began fostering ties with the West, its architectural achievements and development projects no longer aligned with exhibitions and congresses in the Eastern

²³ Many Yugoslav organisations in this period tried to establish connections with the West. For example, in 1949, the Association of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia (Savez inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije), which included many architects, established a Commission for International Relations (Komisija za međunarodne veze), which linked up with a number of Western associations: the International Association of Structural Engineers in Zurich, the International Association of Architects in Paris, the International Commission for High Rise Defences in Paris, the International Commission for Large Electric Networks in Paris, the World Energy Conference in London and the Society of Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering in Cambridge, USA. The Archives of Yugoslavia, Savez inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije (496), Box 50, Folder 50, Komisija za međunarodne veze [Commission for International Relations], 1949–1973, Zapisnik sa sedmice Sekretarijata za Međunarodne veze Saveza Društava Inženjera i Tehničara Jugoslavije [Minutes of the Meeting of the Secretariat for International Liaison of the Federation of Associations of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia], 24 November 1949.

²⁴ Marcela Hanáčková, "CIAM and the Cold War – Helena Syrkus between Modernism and Socialist Realism," (doctoral dissertation, ETH Zurich, 2019), 228–229, 450, <https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/handle/20.500.11850/359365>.

²⁵ Tamara Bjažić Klarin in Marcela Hanáčková, "Networking into the International Union of Architects (UIA) – Poland vs. Yugoslavia," lecture abstract from the conference *Transnational Networking Practices of Central and Southeast European Avant-garde*, Liljana Kolešnik (ed.) (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2014), 26–28, <https://www.bib.irb.hr/723165>.

Bloc but were considered relevant in a colonial context. Namely, Yugoslavia's focus on modernisation, spaces of social inclusion and infrastructural development resonated with the developmental priorities of regions undergoing political transition. Rabat, as a less politically charged setting, allowed ideological concerns to be set aside more easily in favour of addressing pressing local issues.

In 1951, the architect Edvard Ravnikar curated the exhibition *Architecture of Yugoslavia* in Rabat, Morocco, which went beyond showcasing buildings – it presented the very organisation of the state, emphasising modernisation, vernacular architecture (interpreted as a blend of Eastern and Western influences), the landscape, folk customs, and more. In essence, the exhibition highlighted how modern technology and folklore, along with Eastern and Western elements, seamlessly intertwined within the realm of architecture.²⁶ The exhibition featured several renovation projects and broader urban concepts that emphasised social inclusion while showcasing the architects' sensitivity to local conditions. As a non-aligned country, Yugoslavia operated within a framework of social ownership of land and a self-managed economy, shaped by extensive nationalisation. However, such political and economic contexts were notably absent from the exhibition itself, making Ravnikar's unpublished commentary – excluded from the official catalogue – even more significant.²⁷

In the text, Ravnikar portrayed cultural heritage – shaped by both Western and Eastern influences – as something architects had adapted, transformed and enriched to meet new conditions, positioning it as the foundation for future architectural endeavours. He connected advancements in spatial design to broader efforts aimed at improving people's living conditions, framing them as tangible outcomes of the societal, economic and cultural progress driven by the revolution. However, he expressed regret that he was unable to showcase the economic achievements at the venue, which he saw as fundamental to the overall development of socialism.

Without an accompanying text addressing architecture, society, economy and technology, the exhibition had a markedly different impact on its audience. Architectural form was not interpreted within its broader context; instead, it became associated with prevailing themes of the congress, such as Mediterranean space, urban morphology, horizontal density, climate adaptation and the pursuit of identity and social inclusion. These topics resonated with many architects engaged in shaping European cities, including

several CIAM members, including Adalberto Libera, who was then working on the reconstruction of Rome's Tuscolano district.^{28, 29}

In the post-war context, where the urgency for reconstruction and technological progress led to a rapid pace of building, architects played diverse roles in addressing social issues through design. While international networks were not new, the Cold War introduced a fresh context for architectural projects, reshaping how architecture was framed and making democracy a contested term in relation to creative practice. For architects in socialist countries, creativity was closely tied to pursuing social goals through architectural forms. They sought a democratic international association for cultural workers, as their countries' realities allowed them to operate within the rigid constraints of five-year plans. The UIA represented an opportunity for greater recognition, as architects aimed to advance architectural culture. In contrast, Western architects struggled to comprehend the notion of cultural workers and were uninterested in initiating political discussions about their role. For them, autonomy meant the freedom to collaborate as professionals within the capitalist (welfare) state, with formal issues and technology providing ample space for debate within the UIA.

The UIA was not a platform for critiquing ideologies or systems – particularly those dependent on large-scale investments that enabled architects to develop and realise their projects. By focusing primarily on formal issues, architects inadvertently reinforced existing patterns of social divisions in space. The contexts in which societies modernised varied greatly, and because the social conditions that significantly influenced architectural outcomes were not addressed at the congress, the situation in Morocco served as a clear example. It demonstrated how socialist projects, among others, could simply become another set of formal ideas, detached from the deeper social realities they aimed to address. This disconnect highlighted a broader issue: the need for architectural discourse to engage more meaningfully with the pressing social and political challenges of the time, including peace and the role of the MIC in shaping development.

²⁶ UIA, *RPF Yugoslavie – exposition internationale d'architecture de l'union internationale des architectes / Rabat Maroc 1951* (Ljubljana: Associations des Architectes Yougoslaves, 1951).

²⁷ Ravnikar was not present at the opening, but the exhibition catalogue (previous footnote) included the text of his welcome address at the opening of the exhibition. Given that the tone and content are congruent with the introduction of the catalogue, it may be assumed that the author of this text is also Ravnikar, although the text is unsigned.

²⁸ Letizia Capannini, "Habitat collectif méditerranéen et dynamique des espaces ouverts. Cas d'étude en Europe et en Afrique du Nord (1945–1970)," Abhatoo, 3 April 2024, <http://www.abhatoo.net.ma/maalama-textuelle/developpement-economique-et-social/developpement-social/logement-et-habitat/type-d-habitat/habitat-collectif-mediterreneen-et-dynamique-des-espaces-ouverts-cas-d-etude-en-europe-et-en-afrique-du-nord-1945-1970>, accessed 15 June 2025.

²⁹ Morocco, like Europe, faced challenges stemming from mass migration from rural areas to industrialised cities, leading to the creation of improvised settlements (Bidonvilles) since the 1930s. Michael Ecochard, head of the Urban Planning Service, attempted to restructure these areas using new technologies. However, the development strategies at the time were incomplete and failed to address pressing social issues. For the French authorities, the Moroccan population after the war became a cheap labour force to aid in the country's modernisation, driven by internal migration and Europe's unstable economic situation. Ecochard adapted building designs to suit local cultural lifestyles, contributing to the creation of distinct architectural typologies for different populations. However, these typologies were ironically based on predefined cultural and racial distinctions, which influenced the spatial organisation of housing and urban plans in the 1950s. These plans segregated the Moroccan population by religion (Jews and Muslims) and categorised Europeans by class. For instance, factory workers were separated from the "upper-class" population. Serhat Karakayali, Marion von Osten, "This was Tomorrow: The 'colonial Modern' and its blind spots," *Postcolonial Displays*, Tim Sharp (trans.), June 2008, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0708/von-osten-karakayal/en>, accessed 15 June 2025.

American-Yugoslav Project

The exhibition of Yugoslavian architecture at the UIA in Rabat highlights the challenges of fostering a democratic reflection of diverse ideological positions, where architects' actions within the association for spatial planning had tangible impacts in real-world contexts. Since spatial planning is a generative process, investment strategies evolved to meet new realities. As Yugoslavia reshaped both its foreign policy and internal structure, spatial development planning was not immune to these changes. The dynamics shifted in the 1960s in Yugoslavia with the changing legal framework that paved the way for constitutional reform in the 1970s. In the early 1960s, the Urban Planning Institute (UPI, Urbanistični inštitut) engaged in a bilateral project with the US academics supported by the Ford Foundation that reflected similar issues as noted in the UIA's proceedings.

The East European exchange program, a fellowship initiated by the Ford Foundation as early as 1951, enabled Vladimir Braco Mušič of the Urban Planning Institute (UPI) to visit the USA in 1964 and establish connections with American academics, notably John W. Dykman. By 1966, the foundation supported a project between the US and Yugoslavia, the American-Yugoslav Project (AYP) (1966–1972), which aimed to transfer American planning methodologies to Eastern Europe as part of a Cold War “democracy-building” initiative. The project involved a two-year grant for Cornell University faculty to collaborate with UPI on regional planning, with key participants including Mušič (Yugoslavia), Dykman (US) and, later, Jack Fisher (Cornell and Wayne State University).³⁰

The Ford Foundation saw the project as an opportunity to expand its influence in socialist countries behind the Iron Curtain, a long-standing goal. Initially, the AYP was intended as a short-term, politically neutral technology transfer to showcase Western science and promote American urban planning globally. However, it evolved into the Ford Foundation's largest project in Eastern Europe before the Berlin Wall's fall, highlighting the deeply political nature of urban planning.³¹ The intersection of ideology and spatial planning during the Cold War was perhaps best exemplified by a remark from Louis Winnick, the economist who played a pivotal role in the Ford Foundation's investments:

All things considered, American-Yugoslav collaboration presented Ford with an exceptional opportunity “to open doors and minds” within Marxist Europe, a basic Foundation goal since the inception of its East European programs. Looking

back, one could also adduce a certain irony in the notion that a Communist domain, where systemized planning approached a secular religion, was willing to concede a deficit in a critical dimension—spatial arrangements at the regional level. The irony heightened by the fact that Yugoslavia sought assistance not from the socialist or labor party regimes of West Europe, Scandinavia or Great Britain, or even from dirigiste France, but from what was, arguably, the Western world's most free-wheeling and least planned society.³²

The spatial planners in Yugoslavia sought collaboration with Western experts for their advanced methodologies, but the situation revealed a more intricate dynamic. As Yugoslav planners adapted and refined their approaches to develop socialist spaces, the knowledge exchange simultaneously granted Western investors a deeper insight into the organisation of socialist societies. This enabled them to adjust their methodologies to better resonate with socialist regimes. The discursive framework of the AYP, therefore, redefined the meaning of development projects, making them appealing to both Western investors and Eastern European planners. This fostered an imagined professional reality where, despite lingering ideological differences, socialist contexts increasingly embraced Western-style development models.

How did the project evolve, and what challenges arose? The project was initially launched in the summer of 1966 to establish a regional planning research and training centre in Ljubljana, bringing American expertise in regional planning to Yugoslavia. From 1966 to 1967, the project's objective was to “contribute to the development of spatial planning in Yugoslavia by addressing the challenges faced by Yugoslav experts through the application of American academic concepts and experiences in the field”.³³ The goal was to create professional plans focused on quantifying economic and social factors for the Ljubljana region as a case study. Ford aimed to establish an interdisciplinary training and research programme for young planners across Eastern Europe. The UPI of Ljubljana managed the project, with the Association of Yugoslav Institutes for Regional and Urban Planning (Zajednica istraživačkih organizacija na području prostornog planiranja i urbanizma) providing federal sponsorship and setting up a national advisory committee for the initiative.

One key aspect of the project was the establishment of the International Centre for Regional Planning Studies, recognised as a Yugoslav legal entity. Its charter called for a board of directors made up of representatives from Yugoslav planning institutions as well as international professionals, including regional planners, researchers and experts in various fields. The centre's mission was to conduct research on regional planning issues and train professional planners, regional scientists, economists, geographers,

30 Nika Grabar, “Planning and Ideology: American-Yugoslav Project,” Rockefeller Archive Center *Research Reports*, 20 July 2024, <https://rockarch.issuelab.org/resource/planning-and-ideology-american-yugoslav-project.html>, accessed 15 June 2025.

31 Tracy Neumann, “Overpromising Technocracy's Potential: The American-Yugoslav Project, Urban Planning, and Cold War Cultural Diplomacy,” *Journal of Planning History*, 22(1) (2023), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15385132211060041>. For further reading about international entanglements related to the AYP see also Vladimir Kulić, “Ford's Network: The American-Yugoslav Project and the Circulation of Urban Planning Expertise in the Cold War,” *Planning Perspectives* 37, no. 5 (2022): 1001–1027.

32 Rockefeller Archive Center, Ford Foundation Records, FA 601, Box 2, Folder 4, United States International Affairs Program, Conferences, 1957–1969, *Louis Winnick's travel notes, itineraries and correspondence*, Louis Winnick, “The American-Yugoslav project,” 7.

33 Rockefeller Archive Center, Ford Foundation Records, FA 7321, Grants U-Z 06800493, Reel 2871, Secretary to Keast, 13 June 1968.

demographers, sociologists, architects and administrative experts. This autonomous think tank aimed to serve as a scientific foundation for regional development, fostering international cooperation and connecting local urban planners with American experts.

Problems emerged almost immediately, revealing fundamental differences in the planning approaches of socialist and capitalist contexts, which were believed to shape space in contrasting ways. At the outset, specialists faced a seemingly irresolvable situation. According to American planners, urban land value was derived from the incremental benefits of its location and should be allocated to the most productive users based on the principle of “highest and best use”. This concept, however, was deemed entirely irrelevant in Yugoslavia, where urban land was publicly owned and administratively distributed. The notion of assigning value or price to land was foreign and caused significant difficulties at the start of the AYP, as the two parties struggled to reach consensus on the basic starting point for planning.³⁴

This was not the only predicament. To the US contingent, un-priced land provided no clues to the rational spatial arrangement of economic activities. Likewise, housing, which, in a market system, is an economic good rationed by price and rent, was treated by socialist planners as a public good provided at a nominal charge, slated to be a free commodity in the future. To the Yugoslavs, rent-income ratios of 25%, typical for the US context, seemed like exploitation by landlords and renters. Conversely, to the Americans, Yugoslavia’s closely packed three-generation households and the 10-year housing queue were evidence of underinvestment in housing, which, in a capital-short state, could be remedied by higher consumer outlays.³⁵

The described difficulties had to do with the question of property and profit, so it was necessary to establish a new common ground through methodologies in which it would be possible to overlap the interests of both Western investors and socialist governments. This overlap enabled the expansion of the Marshall Plan logic, which, in the long run, became an economic success for the Americans. Yugoslavia needed the economy to recover; it needed investments but could not engage a free market economy with socialism. How could it modernise and implement a societal plan at the same time?

Within the AYP research on regional planning, procedures were based on a multi-parameter analysis of the region. One set of parameters (represented as top-down in the diagram) included economy, population, physical conditions and other factors. Simultaneously, the region was evaluated through a second, bottom-up set of parameters, which included housing, work, transportation, agriculture, services and infrastructure. These two analytic frameworks can be interpreted as reflecting the two different

perspectives of the American and Yugoslav planning teams. Broadly speaking, while both sides recognised the economy as a foundational condition for planning, Yugoslav planners placed greater emphasis on the immediate social dimensions of spatial development. The analysis was to be reconsidered and studied further via problems, objectives, indicators and measures (horizontal parameters). This planning framework defined key parameters for initiating the planning process and for generating data for the region of Ljubljana. In this second phase, they used the Lowry model, developed by Ira S. Lowry, adapted for the AYP, which quantified economic and social factors.³⁶

Looking closely at the Lowry model and the computational link between the two views, it too quantified the analyses of the regions through its own set of parameters. These included additional aspects of development: travel time; population, employment, land use, attractiveness factors for the population and the population serving employment; work, shopping, special shopping, social recreation. Though the planners tested out different spatial patterns (corridors, linear, polycentric) when studying supposedly all possible factors that influenced urban growth, the Lowry model seemed the most efficient to them. In this process, computing helped sort out different sets of information. The inputs included details about the future transportation networks, location of the future non-population serving employment (industry) and projected population estimates for the region. Outputs included the distribution of population, the population serving employment (services) and the amount of land consumed by various urban activities.³⁷

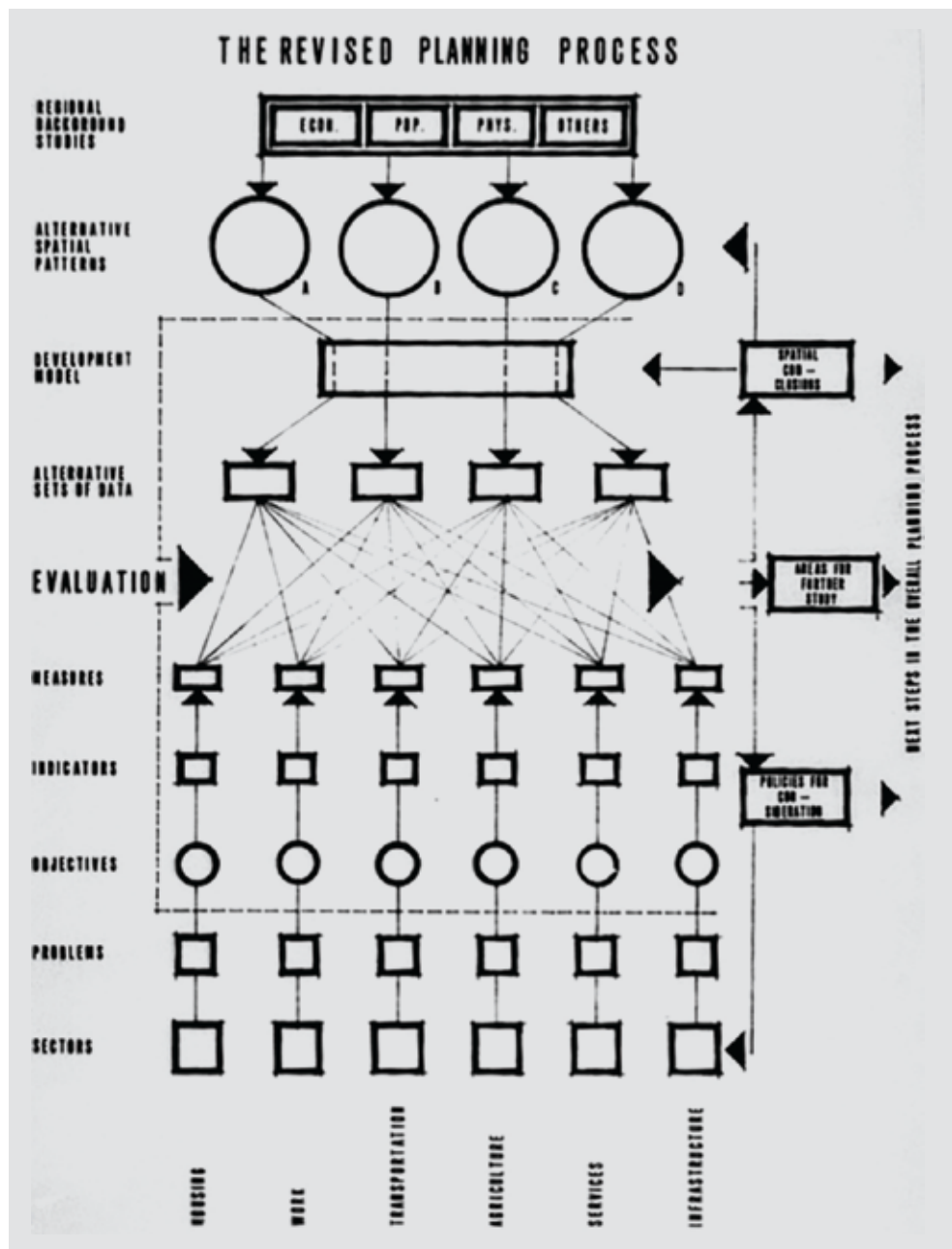
The results of the Lowry analysis were presented as regional maps in which the program defined urban, suburban and rural areas in several stages. In the case of AYP, regional development meant imagining urbanisation for a wider Ljubljana metropolitan area. The boundaries of the computerised schemes did not in any case correspond to the boundaries of zones, municipalities, republic or the state in which people could potentially politically organise and democratically state their opinion in a self-managed society about different types of development transforming their immediate surroundings. Instead, this planning strategy envisioned a region in which intense urbanisation was managed by experts whose decisions relied on pre-determined factors. Did it enable democratic decision-making? Regional planning as such had little to do with democratic processes. It did, however, appear scientific, progressive and appealing.

34 Winnick, “The American–Yugoslav Project,” 19.

35 Ibid.

36 In 1964, Lowry had advanced a computer model for the spatial organisation of human activities within a metropolitan area for the RAND (research and development) corporation. Ira S. Lowry, “A Model of Metropolis,” RAND, 1964, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_memoranda/RM4035.html, accessed 15 June 2025.

37 For a more detailed explanation of the process see Nika Grabar and Jelica Jovanović, “Prostorne politike i proračuni Hladnog rata: Američko-jugoslovenski projekat,” in *Uspori in padovi, domašaji i promašaji i neno što smo zaboravili*, eds. Jelena Vesić, Ana Sladojević, Ana Miljanić (Beograd: Centar CZKD, 2021), 44–65. Or Nika Grabar, “Promišljanje ‘Američko-jugoslovenskog projekta’,” filmed by CZKD, 14 October 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNGQTB4UbWg&t=2s>, accessed 15 June 2025.



A diagram illustrating the starting parameters, processes and decision-making stages in the coordination of regional planning methodologies within the American-Yugoslav project. Source: Rockefeller Archive Center, Ford Foundation Records, FA 7321, Grants U-Z 06800493, Reel 2924, Draft for review—"Spatial Policies for Regional Development, Final Report," 1970, 47–48.

Infrastructures reimagined

The reconstruction efforts following the Second World War were deeply intertwined with political ideologies, economic strategies and infrastructural advancements. While the rhetoric of peacebuilding framed much of the development discourse, the reality was far more nuanced, often entangled with military-industrial interests and Cold War power struggles. Architects' engagement in UIA and AYP clearly illustrates the complex interplay between peace, development, democracy, and the role of architecture in shaping postwar societies.

The Marshall Plan and the Molotov Plan, both positioned as vehicles for economic recovery, were in essence instruments of geopolitical influence, setting the stage for ideological divisions that manifested spatially and architecturally. The investments in rebuilding infrastructure created economic stability, but they also reinforced spheres of influence, thereby contributing to the militarisation of both blocs. In this sense, peace was not merely an absence of conflict, but a carefully managed equilibrium sustained through development projects that were, in many cases, tied to strategic alliances and military priorities. In this context, the role of the MIC cannot be ignored. Both superpowers, while advocating for peace and stability, also funnelled resources into defence industries, intertwining economic growth with military expansion. Infrastructure projects often had dual purposes, serving civilian needs while bolstering strategic defence capabilities. This paradox highlights the extent to which the MIC influenced not only military advancements but also urban development and architectural planning.

Architects played a crucial role in this process, often acting as mediators between ideologies and the practical realities of urban planning. As demonstrated in the Yugoslav experience, architecture was not merely a technical discipline but a deeply political practice that sought to bridge socialist and capitalist visions of development. The AYP exemplified how planning methodologies were transferred across ideological boundaries, creating a new language of spatial organisation that was both scientific and political.

In an unexpected reversal of influence, the AYP also opened the opportunity to reimagine planning processes of American urban planning strategies by introducing methodologies that emphasised collective well-being, social cohesion and equitable access to resources. While the US urban planning tradition was largely market-driven, Yugoslav architects brought a different perspective, advocating for the integration of social factors as key parameters to consider at the beginning of a planning process. Their emphasis on state-led regional planning, long-term infrastructural investment and social equity in urbanisation introduced new frameworks for American planners to consider in the decision-making process. Through their engagement, Yugoslav architects encouraged discussions about the role of planning beyond capitalist market forces, highlighting the need for public involvement and policy-driven urban strategies. In this way, the AYP was not just a one-

way exchange of knowledge but a dialogue that influenced both sides, challenging the assumptions of American urban planning and encouraging a more comprehensive and democratic approach to planning.

Architects and planners have played a significant role in shaping not just physical landscapes but also the ideological frameworks through which societies conceptualise development and peace. Whether through large-scale infrastructure projects or localised architectural interventions, their work has influenced how communities navigate their historical legacies while envisioning different futures. Understanding progress as a vehicle for peace and, at the same time, a tool for strategic influence remains a defining challenge, one that continues to shape the socio-political landscapes it inhabits. Thus, the role of architecture extends beyond mere design; architecture culture is much wider than building: it is operative in constructing narratives, shaping collective memory and negotiating the delicate balance between historical reflection and progressive development. In this way, architecture becomes a medium through which peace and development are not only envisioned but actively constructed, often in the shadow of the MIC, whose influence continues to define global development trajectories.

The *From Nowhere to Noplace* intervention can serve as a metaphor for the broader processes analysed in this document. It was rooted in the present and echoed the fractures of historical and ideological shifts in spatial planning. Originally built to materialise a socialist vision of the future, the Railway's erasure and subsequent reactivation through art revealed the tensions between past ideologies and present realities. In its reactivation, the site became an analogy for contested narratives, where different historical interpretations coexist and clash, mirroring the complexities of progressive visions after the Second World War and their legacies in evolving contemporaneity.

Summary

The paper examines how architecture and spatial planning intersect with peace, development and democracy, focusing on Ljubljana's Pioneer Railway as a metaphor for shifting ideologies in Yugoslav and global contexts. It analyses two Cold War-era initiatives – the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the American-Yugoslav Project (AYP) – to show how spatial development was shaped by competing ideological agendas. While both projects were framed as neutral exchanges of technical knowledge, they reflected broader tensions between socialist and capitalist planning models. The paper also considers how postwar reconstruction and infrastructure were influenced by the Military-Industrial Complex, revealing the blurred lines between development and militarisation.

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