

Roof construction of the Litostroj  
factory, Miroslav Gregorič, 1947  
Strešná konštrukcia výrobného závodu  
Litostroj, Miroslav Gregorič, 1947



Photo Foto: Miran Kambič

## SLOVENIAN POST-WAR MODERNIST ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AS A TOURIST PRODUCT

## ARCHITEKTONICKÉ DEDIČSTVO POVOJNOVÉHO MODERNIZMU V SLOVINSKU AKO TURISTICKÝ PRODUKT

Architektonické diela povojnového modernizmu predstavuje neoddeliteľnú súčasť kultúrneho dedičstva. Napriek tomu sa rozsiahle odborné vedomosti, ktoré sú už k dispozícii zo strany bádateľov v Slovinsku stále nedostávajú k širšiemu publiku v dostatočnej miere. Dôsledkom toho je absencia dostatočnej argumentačnej platformy vo vzťahu v oblasti pamiatkovej ochrany moderného architektonického dedičstva a nedostatok stratégií pre udržateľnú obnovu tejto architektúry.

Paralelne s týmto procesom vznikajú v širšom európskom kultúrnom kontexte iniciatívy kultúrneho turizmu, ktorých cieľom je presmerovať hlavné turistické toky z tradičných destinácií do alternatívnych ale atraktívnych lokalít. Záujem turistov o alternatívne kultúrne zážitky možno vnímať ako novú príležitosť pre mnohé takmer zabudnuté miesta. Je teda možné prepojiť koncepciu kultúrneho turizmu s potrebami dedičstva modernej architektúry, najmä pokiaľ ide o diela, ktoré vznikli v období socializmu?

Príspevok nastoľuje možnosti ochrany a obnovy povojnovej modernej architektúry prostredníctvom stratégie tvorby turistického produktu. Opiera sa pritom o hlboké poznatky výskumov zameraných na architektúru povojnovej moderny v Slovinsku a o aktuálne výsledky výskumu kultúrneho turizmu, ktoré priniesol medzinárodný

európsky projekt ATRIUM. Štúdia sleduje dva hlavné ciele: 1. identifikovať potenciál dedičstva modernej architektúry pre udržateľný kultúrny turizmus, ktorý môže byť novým zdrojom jeho využitia a rozvoja, 2. ukázať, že regionálny a nad-regionálny kontext kultúrneho turizmu môže v špecifických podmienkach stimulovať lokálnu propagáciu dedičstva modernej architektúry relatívne nezávislú od jeho ideologických konotácií. Hlavný problémom z hľadiska metodológie pritom predstavovala integrácia dvoch odlišných perspektív skúmania. Jednu predstavoval etablovaný vedecký a profesii vlastný prístup k identifikácii a interpretácii moderného architektonického dedičstva, druhú zase charakteristické nástroje propagácie určitého typu kultúrneho dedičstva pre účely turizmu.

Potenciál moderného architektonického dedičstva vo vzťahu k udržateľnému kultúrnemu turizmu sa v procese skúmania identifikoval prostredníctvom konštruovania európskej kultúrnej cesty, vychádzajúcej z lokálnej slovinskej situácie a súčasne sa opierajúcej o širší regionálny kontext juhovýchodnej Európy. Prípadové štúdie, na ktorých stojí tento príspevok možno považovať za reprezentatívnu vzorku troch úrovní koncepcie povojnovej modernej architektúry ako turistického produktu.

### INTRODUCTION

#### RESEARCH AIMS AND GOALS

The aim of the paper is to illustrate the tourism potentials of modernist architectural heritage dating from the period of the socialist regime in Slovenia.

To define the potentials of modern and post-modern architecture – not only from the aspect of its significance for architectural development, but also in terms of its future significance for economic development – we decided to examine its potentials through the use of a methodology that defines its potentials within the domains of culture and tourism promotion. We have studied three

sites (one from Velenje, one from Ljubljana, and one from Maribor), for which we assessed and addressed their development from the standpoint of their inclusion into the range of cultural and tourism offerings, aspects which have, so far, not been examined.

Consequently, our goal is to identify the potentials of modernist architectural heritage for sustainable cultural tourism as a new resource working towards its reuse and redevelopment, based on the three case studies from Slovenia. In accordance with the ATRIUM project, which is described in the next chapter, we aim to show that the regional and transregional context of cultural tourism may stimulate the development of local

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actions towards the promotion of modernist architectural heritage, regardless of potential political or historical connotations.

PROJECT ATRIUM: AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF POST-WAR MODERNISM AND ITS TOURISM POTENTIALS

The project entitled ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th century in Urban Management <sup>1/1</sup>, under the SEE Transnational Cooperation Programme within the EU research framework, which concluded in October 2013, was one of the opportunities that addressed the potentials of architectural heritage that was directly determined by specific political contexts. The project itself combined a wide variety of non-comparable ‘totalitarian’ contexts, and explored, among others, the many notions of modernism within this issue. Accordingly, the present article addresses the problem of modernist architecture associated with the sensitive notions of non-democratic politi-

cal orders, and the difficulties that arise in connection with these extra-architectural concepts.

One of the main project goals was to explore the possibilities of their opportunities for economic development, and to include this category of built heritage as a cultural tourist product within the ATRIUM Cultural Route that has been formulated as part of the project.

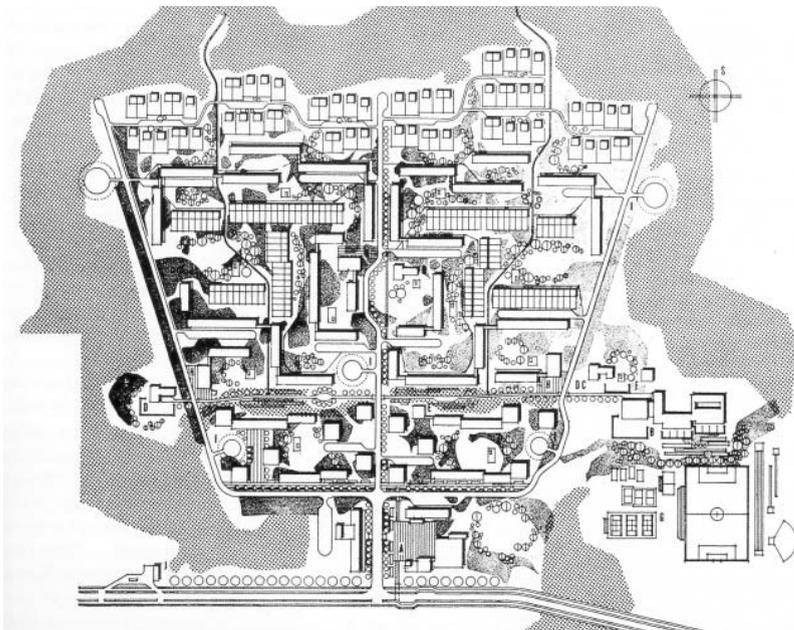
THE DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT OF SLOVENIAN POST-WAR MODERNISM

The end of World War II witnessed substantial political changes in Slovenia, which became one of the republics of the new socialist Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. Tito’s conflict with Stalin in 1948 and the resulting termination of all contact with the Soviet Union significantly influenced the cultural environment. Despite its pursuit of its ‘own path towards socialism’, the country had to start cooperating with the West, as the total economic embargo on the part of all socialist countries meant complete international isolation. Indirectly, the latter aspect provided several advantages, particularly the opening of the borders, and hence broader international cooperation and the possibility of education and dissemination of western trends, which was also reflected positively in the field of architecture.

To understand the post-war situation, it is important to emphasise the main developmental characteristics of the pre-war situation, the era dominated by Jože Plečnik (1872 – 1957), Slovenia’s most internationally renowned architect, who significantly influenced even the post-war generations with his logical and highly original reinterpretation of the classical architectural language in a modern way. His influence was evident especially in the best works of the following generations, which speaks of his remarkable creative and pedagogic influence.

Plečnik studied in Vienna at the Kunstakademie from 1895 to 1898 under the tutelage of Otto Wagner. In 1921, the Department of Architecture was established at the Technical University in Ljubljana. Its first full professor was Ivan Vurnik (1884 – 1971) who invited Jože Plečnik to teach there. At that time, Plečnik was already an

Edvard Ravnikar and collaborators: Plan of an ideal housing estate for 5 000 inhabitants, 1958  
Plán ideálneho sídliska pre 5 000 obyvateľov, 1958, Edvard Ravnikar a spolupracovníci



Source Zdroj: F. Ivanšek (ed.): Hommage a Edvard Ravnikar 1907 – 1993. Ljubljana 1995, p. 70

internationally recognized architect, and in fact returned to Ljubljana from Prague, where he had been working on the restoration of the Prague Castle. At the university, Plečnik established a studio workshop, following Wagner's system of atelier training. Vurnik also followed his idea and established his own studio forming a pattern of organization that has been a characteristic of the Ljubljana School of Architecture up to the present. Vurnik was the teacher who introduced the ideas of functionalist principles to the mid-war generation, while Plečnik was interested in experimenting with a modernized classical language.

Even though the young generation of architects was interested in the latest trends, the more ambitious students chose Plečnik's studio and pursued further education on their own. In the 1930s, eight of them went to Le Corbusier's studio in Paris; indeed, the current architectural ideas were brought home by those who studied abroad. In short, before World War II there were several excellent realizations of functionalist architecture; however, this architectural style achieved completely new dimensions after the war.

The post-war period, which begins with Plečnik's retirement from active practice, was marked by two architects who were both Plečnik's students, i.e. Edvard Ravnikar (1907 – 1993) and Edo Mihevc (1911 – 1985). Even before the war, and immediately after, both architects were involved in major construction projects and both became professors of architecture at the university.

The beginning of the era started with large-scale reconstruction and industrialisation, characterised in Slovenia by the construction of the new socialist cities of Nova Gorica, Velenje and Kidričevo, and the development of model urban formulations for intensive urbanisation.

At the outskirts of Ljubljana, the industrial complex of Litostroj, for the production of hydroelectric turbines, started to operate as early as 1946 and it can thus be considered as a pioneering example of socialist industrialisation in Slovenia. The design is modelled on the idea of the socialist combine ('kombinat'), based on the Soviet concept, and was designed by architects Edo Mihevc and Miroslav Gregorič. Immediately after the war, Mihevc was head of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Economics, and played a key role in designing

the concept of the factory. Besides the production facilities, an extensive residential area was erected for employees, as well as an education centre. The significance and range of the concept is underscored by the designation of the complex as Litostroj City.

Despite the political ties with the Soviet Union until 1948, the era was notable by the near-total absence of the aesthetics of Socialist Realism, which was otherwise dictated by Moscow in practically all Eastern Bloc countries. Evidence of this situation can be found even in the Litostroj project, where innovative construction solutions were applied.

In the post-war period, Edo Mihevc designed a few other major commercial complexes in Ljubljana, while later his work focused on the coastal area, for which he elaborated regulation plans and many design projects. We can say that his legacy includes the development of a unique Slovenian Mediterranean regionalism, yet he could not avoid large-scale interventions, which resulted in the demolition of many historical buildings along the coast, particularly the destruction of much of the medieval architectural fabric of the city of Koper.

The view of the Litostroj company from 1950s, designed with the idea of a factory in greenery

Pohľad na výrobný závod Litostroj, päťdesiate roky 20. storočia, navrhnutý v zmysle myšlienky továrne v zeleni



Photo Foto: Ljubljana Historical Archive



Photo Foto: Miran Kambič

Edvard Ravnikar: Main facade of the Town Hall of Kranj, 1958 – 1960

Priečelie radnice v meste Kranj, Edvard Ravnikar, 1958 – 1960

Edo Mihevc was an extremely productive author, with a built legacy of over one hundred projects in various scales, i.e. from interior designs to regional plans, in addition to his pedagogic activities at the architectural faculty.

Another key figure at the architectural department was Edvard Ravnikar, who also received many important state commissions, but was also highly active as a theoretician and a writer. Through his intensive engagement, he became a highly prominent figure of Slovenian post-war architecture of the twentieth century. His focus on teaching and writing in the 1950s helped to create a circle of young architects who travelled abroad to be educated and to familiarise themselves with current European developments.

An important part of his teaching was the work in his design studio. The Town Hall of Kranj (1958 – 1960), is one of the key works that influenced the young generation of architects; in fact, as early as the 1960s it was recognised as the most important achievements in architecture of the entire 1950s.

According to Aleš Vodopivec <sup>/2/</sup>, its key quality lies in its recognizable environmental identity. The re-interpretation of the classical language, as taught by Plečnik, is easily recognisable in the design, which Ravnikar upgraded with a clear, yet subtle, modernist idiom.

In the next two decades, a group of young architects created a special Slovenian interpretation of modernism. For some authors, this language relied on the spatial context and reinterpretation of spatial and architectural elements (Oton Jugovec, 1921 – 1987 and Janez Lajovic, 1932), while others embraced a type of structuralism originating from the reinterpretation of building construction, headed by Savin Sever (1927 – 2003), Stanko Kristl (1922) and Milan Mihelič (1925).

Typically for the socialist era, many standardised residential districts were erected in the time, which transformed from the free-standing functionalist concepts into more condensed forms, first introduced by Edvard Ravnikar with the Ferantov vrt (Ferant Garden) residential quarter, at the time

situated at the urban edge of the city centre.

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the arrival of the next generation of Ravnikar's students, who were becoming increasingly successful in the wider area of Yugoslavia, among them urban designer and planner of residential areas Vladimir Mušič and architect Marko Mušič. The latter is important for his successful reinterpretation of the language of modernism by introducing traditional elements, thus finding his own stylistic idiom, characterised by Stane Bernik as 'half way between brutalist expressivity and post-modern design'<sup>13/</sup>.

The whole period – at the time of established doctrines of international styles – was characterised by the development of a subtle form of regionalism in Slovenia. Plečnik's legacy in personal creativity and an ability to reinterpret both the classical and traditional Slovenian construction, distinguished itself in the excellent work of his successors, who developed their solutions in the language of modernism – in both the spatial and architectural levels, representing the key potential of the era.

#### MODERNIST ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AS A TOURIST PRODUCT

Treating modernist architectural heritage as a tourist product is closely related to the notion of cultural tourism. For such tourism to flourish, a triangle of basic elements has to be established to support a successful tourist product. Ograjenšek<sup>14/</sup> cites attraction, infrastructure and experience as the three crucial elements of cultural tourism. These aspects are not only important for the visitors/consumers but also for activating the local population, whose involvement and awareness of concrete benefits are crucial when dealing with cultural tourism.

The Slovenian sites and buildings described in the Introduction can be regarded as individual entities and tourist products per se, but their cultural, historic, economic and tourism significance is increased if they are included into larger contextual frameworks and networks. The concept of the Cultural Route is an established way of connecting several sites that bear similarity or share a common theme, cultural background or history into one or several interrelated tourist networks,



Photo Foto: Museum of Architecture and Design, architectural collection

Janez Lajovic: Hotel Prisank, 1961 – 1962, was one of the best examples of Slovenian modernism. Its demolition launched intensive work on legal issues of preservation of Slovenian modern architectural heritage

Hotel Prisank, 1961 – 1962, Janez Lajovic. Jeden z najlepších príkladov slovinského modernizmu. Jeho zbúranie odštartovalo intenzívnu prácu na legislatíve vzťahujúcej sa k ochrane moderného architektonického dedičstva v Slovinsku

combining efforts, sharing organizational infrastructure, promotion strategies and marketing concepts. We argue that both methods, the sites and buildings approach and the cultural routes idea, can be viewed in terms of the three cited cultural tourism pillars, thus establishing them as tourist products. Our subsequent aim is to demonstrate this thesis through the intersection of Slovenian post-war modernist heritage and the ATRIUM Cultural Route concept of which the former is a major component.

#### THE SITES AND BUILDINGS OF POST-WAR MODERNISM AS TOURIST PRODUCTS

The attraction of modernist architectural heritage sites and buildings usually stems from their

unique design and architectural significance, artistic, historical, cultural value, building technology, location, etc. For the Slovenian cases, the attraction, besides the functional and timeless design, lies in the accomplishment of making a transition from the landmarks of the past social and political order into the symbols of the new and present Slovenian state. The guidelines<sup>/5/</sup> within ATRIUM in this sense first seek similarities and appropriate practices in comparison to other kinds of architectural heritage management, followed by an inventory of the resources that define the management context: human and financial resources, legal and legislative frameworks, political factors, stakeholder competences, etc. Participatory urban management can also be considered in terms of involving users in the process at an early stage and inviting them to become co-producers of the policy, using formal and informal forms of public participation, avoiding politics and focusing on ideas of consumerism. Citizens are more likely to participate as consumers rather than as citizens, making the heritage and its reuse 'usable' for the local population as well. This process happened with the Slovenian sites discussed, i.e. through the historic events taking place in and around them, they became included into the daily lives of inhabitants, affirming them in (sometimes unplanned) 'public participation' events. As a result, they soon became recognised as part of our culture and thus given at least some fundamental value which is a stepping stone on the path towards full recognition.

The material aspect of the site and the built heritage is, due to its nature, unavoidable and part of the physical infrastructure. The analysis of the material state of the site, the proposed preservation and the re-use interventions form one of the essential building blocks of the management plan under the guidelines and are associated with issues of duration and financial projections. Construction standards in Slovenia have been traditionally high, stemming from the Austrian tradition. For this reason and the fact that the buildings are only half a century old, they are reasonably well preserved, the details meticulously executed. They were also slightly over-dimensioned in terms of size, space, parking and infrastructure, which today mean fewer problems considering the

Edvard Ravnikar:  
Construction of the  
Ferant'ov vrt residential  
area in Ljubljana,  
1964 - 1973

Výstavba sídliska Ferantova  
záhrada v Ljubljane, 1964  
- 1973, Edvard Ravnikar



Photo Foto: Janez Kališnik

increase of demands for suitable infrastructure.

For visitors to be able to visit the site and enjoy it fully for the duration of their stay there is another aspect of the infrastructure to consider as a prerequisite: transportation, accommodation and catering with other optional services provided, such as postal, financial and medical services. As is the case in Slovenia, the traditionally good connections originating in early railroad infrastructure from the Austrian empire onward and efficient further development of road networks in the post-war period ensure good transport access.

It is the aspect of experience that completes the first two aspects and brings an added value for the potential visitor, but also for the local inhabitants who are the crucial component in supporting events, activities and the exchange connected with the heritage site. A variety of services and activities are to be considered:

- services directly connected to the route (such as information, guided tours, opening hours – access to building interiors, periodical events in and around the buildings, souvenir shops etc.) that have to be available on the site or its immediate vicinity;
- services indirectly connected to the route (such as accommodation, tours, dining, transportation services, etc.) with good distribution and location in the vicinity of the sites;
- services that reflect local particularities (such as arts and craft shops, restaurants with local cuisine, etc.);
- activities and events directly connected to the route (such as education for children, artistic and historical study workshops for parents, symposiums, etc.);
- tourist packages (such as organization of the proposed visits to several ATRIUM sites in the vicinity, accommodations, food, transportation, guidance and meeting of local citizens, getting to know local customs/ included in the package/ price);
- typical ATRIUM products on offer: from the unified ones typical of the whole route (such as calendars, notebooks, models of buildings, books, etc.) to local and particular products bearing the ATRIUM signature (such as special objects and replicas that are connected to the specific heritage site, like the mining lanterns).

The direct experience, of the site and the exchange between visitors and local inhabitants are the soul and heart of the product, since it does not address a building or a site as a material artefact only, but provides a wider socio-cultural exchange among stakeholders, making the experience, and consequently the tourist product, more of a pure and immediately human character.

The Slovenian buildings and sites presented in this paper can be deemed 'liveable' heritage, ingrained in the minds of inhabitants as well because they were never abandoned or vacated, i.e. were continually used in some way, and through the use they found a presence in the everyday experience of the inhabitants.

#### THE CULTURAL ROUTE AS A TOURIST PRODUCT

While the individual sites and buildings, and their associated artefacts, can be seen more tangibly as tourist products, the Cultural Route and its sub-routes are also an important part of the cultural tourism concept, because they add the meaning, contextual dimension and reinforcement of the synergies both on the national and international levels that make the project alive.

The attraction<sup>/6/</sup> lies in its meaningful linking of the individual sites into the network and creation of its sub-routes (e.g. the proposed ATRIUM route). The guidelines correspondingly point in the direction of the identification and description of individual sites along the route, establishing the criteria for selecting the sub-routes, providing visitors with a simple system, yet giving everyone the choice of alternatives, decisions and visits, organized by the principle: 'Choose your own start and end stages of the heritage route, the manner and purpose of your journey (enabled by the system of preparing the information on the heritage route for an individual user).' The sub-route concept could work particularly well in the selected Slovenian cases, as they possess a very strong thematic and architectural unity. Beside the three sites highlighted in the paper, there are many examples that could be part of a Slovenian post-war contemporary route and could branch out into even more special typological sub-paths (according to the building types, functions and purposes they possess, transitions they have gone through, etc.). Being located in

Urban model of the city  
centre from the late 1950s

Urbanistický model  
mestského centra,  
koniec päťdesiatych  
rokov 20. storočia

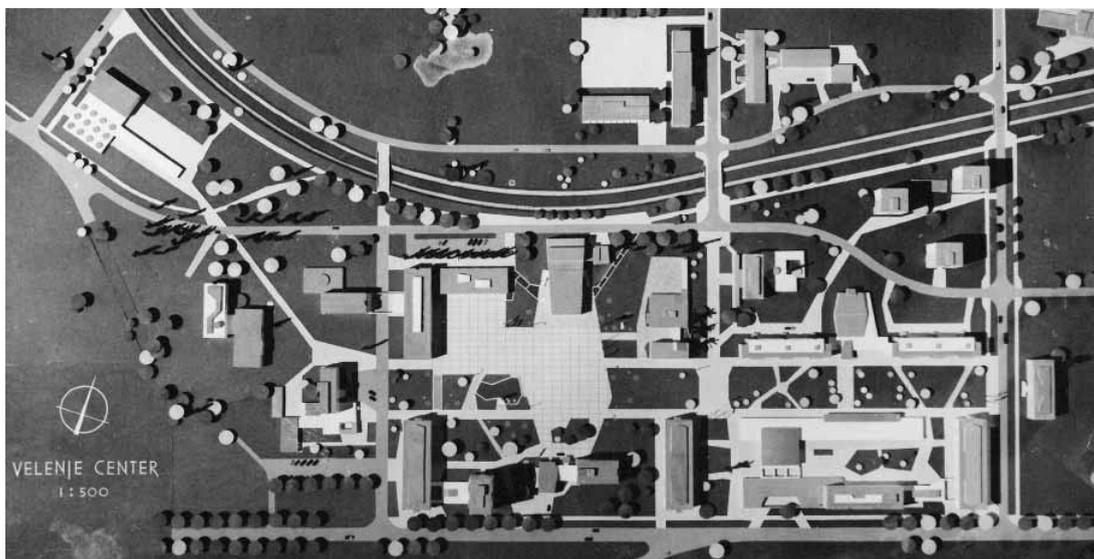


Photo Foto: Municipality Museum Velenje

one country, scattered over a relatively small area, they could be also physically connected in a sub-route and visited by public transportation or by car, which is not the case for the whole ATRIUM route. The attraction dwells in the route's credibility and further expansion potentials with the openness and readiness to include new locations, and the multiplication of synergies in international settings.

The infrastructure at the route level is less physical in nature than at the site level but complex nevertheless. The network of sites and sub-routes is one aspect of the infrastructure, followed by the organizational aspects: the marketing concept, strategic marketing planning, human resource management, financial management, operations management, website, signposting of the route, maintenance of partnerships, administration etc.

The experience of such a route is in part closely interwoven with the experience of the sites and buildings, although it represents more than their sum total. The other part of the experience is virtual in nature and happens at home. This aspect consists of planning and organizing the route and site visit, where the potential visitors and users are helped by the information system, which assists in

organising the route tailored to certain specific attributes, such as the political characteristics of the given regime, building typologies, geo-location, functions of buildings, range of accompanying events, etc. In our case, it is also the exploration of the ATRIUM database consisting of sites, buildings, tangible and intangible artefacts, media, etc. that adds an additional dimension to the experience of the route, be it from a distant location (home, school, etc.) or at a given site.

## CASE STUDIES

### DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

All three sites proposed as the potential framework of the ATRIUM Cultural Route in Slovenia are key representatives of post-war architectural heritage: Velenje as a newly designed town; Trg revolucije (Revolution Square) in Ljubljana as the largest public space and home to major structures of both political and economic life in Slovenia; and Dom družbenopolitičnih organizacij (House of Socio-Political Organisations) in Maribor as a case of a strictly political function that the architect designed in line with the functionalist thinking of the time, though adapted to the scale of its setting. The cases of Velenje and the Revolution



Photo Foto: Municipality Museum Velenje

View of a part of the Velenje centre  
 Pohľad na časť centra mesta Velenje

Square also shows the distinctive approach to the Slovenian architectural production of the time, representing the feel for the human scale, care for the relationship with the environment, and clarity of detail, even in a project of such scale as the Revolution Square complex, designed by Edo Ravnikar.

The Modernist socialist city of Velenje would not have evolved to the scale that it has today were it not for the abundance in lignite in the area, which was an important energy source for the new socialist state. The work on the first post-war regulation plan started in 1947<sup>[71]</sup>, and was based on Le Corbusier's concept of the Ville Radieuse, a model that contained all the key elements of a functionalist city. Nevertheless, the first plan of Velenje contained a relatively modest design of housing for the miners and only after the idea gained considerable political support, a more ambitious design groundwork was set out in terms of both spatial design and architecture. These efforts came to fruition in a new spatial design of 1955, by the group of Janez Treznj, Franc Šmid and Ciril Pogačnik. The plan draws on the basic characteristics of the previous plan, but it offers a more ambitious design of the new city centre, expos-

ing the representative role of the central square, which is lined on its lengthwise axis with the most important buildings: the mine administration building, the house of culture, the municipality building, and then passing into areas of apartment blocks in greenery, in line with the then-relevant functionalist ideas of modern urban design. Instead of using modest residential campuses for workers, the design included apartment blocks and high-rise buildings in a green setting.

The plan was the basis of a new modernist identity of the socialist town, transforming it into a model political achievement which the authorities put on the itinerary of many foreign delegations. To this day, the town has been inseparably associated with the new identity, testifying to its development, along with the high quality of design of its modernist buildings. Today, it is of particular importance that the town further expands on its identity and heritage, by recognising the identity as a positive aspect, which is undoubtedly the reason for its representing a candidate site for the proposed Cultural Route.

The Revolution Square district in Ljubljana was designed from the 1960s to the 1980s and was materialized in two major phases. The main pro-

tagonist of the project was Edvard Ravnikar, supported by many collaborators. Revolution Square is the largest public urban space in Ljubljana. Located in the former Ursuline Monastery garden in the city centre, it establishes a sophisticated dialogue with the historic urban structure.

The square is defined by two towers with their remarkable triangular plans, forming a new city gate on the remains of the Roman city walls, emphasising a narrow natural corridor between the two characteristic hills (Rožnik and the Castle Hill), penetrating into the city's built form. Once enthusiastically supported, construction was stopped in 1965 because of economic circumstances and the final realisation was slightly less ambitious in terms of the number of floors than initially planned. The square was enclosed by a functionalist market building and marked by the Monument to the Revolution and some other mon-

umental elements. The latest addition is the Ivan Cankar Culture and Congress Centre with concert and congress halls. The square itself is on top of an underground garage and a shopping passage, connecting all the buildings.

The scale of the building complex is defined with the purpose of forming a new city centre; it corresponds to the scale of the monumental urban pattern, and to the scale of the city as a whole. The new city centre replaced the former monastery garden; a new park was designed to 'host' two monuments (the Monument to the Revolution and Monument to communist politician Edvard Kardelj). Several parts of the neighbouring Baroque monastery were sophisticatedly renovated during the period of the construction of the new urban centre. Also, a number of interesting physical and visual connections with the nearby squares were established.

Trg republike (Republic Square), in one sense connected to the busy city centre and in another adapted to the scale of its edge

Trg republike (Námestie republiky). Námestie na jednej strane reaguje na rušné centrum mesta, na strane druhej sa prispôsobuje mierke mestského okraja



Photo Foto: Janez Kališnik, Museum of Architecture and Design, architectural collection

The House of Socio-Political Organisations was the Communist Party centre in Maribor, the second-biggest Slovenian city. It can be compared to the skyscraper which was supposed to house the Communist Party headquarters in the Revolution Square in Ljubljana. However, the Maribor building was embedded in the spatial context of urban block construction of the 19th century, in the immediate proximity of the city park. It was designed by the architect Ivan Kocmut, one of the most prominent students of Edvard Ravnikar.

The building is one of Slovenia's best preserved modernist buildings from the 1960s. Its exceptionally well preserved original interior furnishings and carpentry are of particular significance, and its relative obscurity provides it with a considerable advantage over other buildings.

The typological innovation, in combination with the quality of the architectural expression, forms the greatest advantages of the building. In this flagship building of the Titoist regime, one witnesses the establishment of a humane note in the overall architectural design and the detailed interior on one hand, and its dialogue with the pre-existing built-up areas on the other. It represents a potential that could be used for the formation of cultural heritage trails for anyone interested in the architecture of Slovenian modernism. It is an overlooked part of our history, which, although marked with an undemocratic political regime, saw numerous architectural realisations of genuine quality. In addition, it is worth noting the sensitivity of the architects, who should receive recognition in this context, as they, in fact, managed to merge new global trends of the time in an innovative manner to create projects which surpassed the utilitarian tone of the regime, characteristic of contemporary architecture within other single-party states of the time.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF THE SOCIALIST PERIOD IN SLOVENIA AS AN ARCHITECTURAL VALUE AND PART OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

Regardless of the political context in which the buildings concerned were created, the fact that they represent an important part of the 20th century European architectural production should not

be overlooked; this, indeed, is the main focus of the ATRIUM<sup>18/</sup> project.

Preservation of 20th century heritage opens many questions regarding interpretation, evaluative aspects, technical preservation methods, approaches and solutions. According to the Burra Charter<sup>19/</sup>, the conservation policy should identify

Trg revolucije (Revolution Square), today

Trg revolucije (Námestie revolúcie), v súčasnosti



Photo Foto: Sonja Ifko

appropriate ways of making the significance of the place understood that are likewise consistent with the retention of that significance. This process may include a combination of the treatment of the fabric, the use of the place and the use of introduced interpretive material. Accordingly, the project is also an opportunity to commemorate all the victims of all non-democratic regimes, as derived from the provisions of the European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism<sup>10/</sup> of 2009, expressing respect for all victims of all European totalitarian and undemocratic regimes. The resolution pays homage to all victims of European totalitarian and undemocratic regimes who fought against oppression and tyranny. It is founded on the importance of maintaining the memory of the past alive, emphasising the fact that the absence of memory signifies the absence of reconciliation. Furthermore, it is conceptualized on the efforts to form a unified interpretation of European history, able to attest to the existence of Nazism, Fascism and Communism as common heritage and to pursue fair and in-depth research on all totalitarian regimes of the previous century.

Since the topic is the architecture of totalitarian regimes, representing the most negative period of European 20th century history, the Resolution's principles should be closely followed in the presentation and interpretation of this heritage. The

use of such heritage presentation and interpretation methods, which enable the establishment of contemporary democratic social and political values, is essential, as it forms a simultaneous parallel with the aim to commemorate in a dignified manner the memory of the victims of these regimes. In tandem, a suitable integration of architectural heritage in contemporary European cultural tourism practice is achieved, since the latter is quickly emerging as one of the key bearers of European economic development.

As the ATRIUM project suggests, the negative attitude to the architectural heritage from totalitarianism could be overcome by simply shifting the focus to new functions of totalitarian architectural heritage, e.g. buildings once conceptualized as centres of political oppression could become home to human rights organizations; buildings formerly dedicated to education and training in the totalitarian spirit could be used to house organizations working with refugees and their integration into European societies. In this way, the dedication to democratic principles could be emphasized in different ways. For each location, it is important to provide a proper presentation of the aforementioned context of the historical memory, which is described in a way that the European Parliament resolution dictates, i.e. completely without any political connotation.

When assessing the selected sites in Slovenia from the viewpoint of an objective presentation of the significance of their architectural heritage outside the political context, we see that all three sites have been successfully restructured. The Revolution Square (the Republic Square of today) was a formal and symbolic carrier of political change and is, as such, not defined only by the communist political context as the basis of identity, but stands as the central public space of the capital city, the site of many public meetings, including the recent anti-government protests, i.e. an area of public manifestations. In 1990, the House of Socio-Political Organisations building became home to the Institute of Information Science (IZUM), the central information service of Slovenian science, culture and education. In 2011, UNESCO awarded IZUM the status of a regional centre for library information systems and research information systems, which testifies to the new activity in the

House of Socio-Political  
Organizations in Maribor  
Budova Spoločensko-  
političkih organizací  
v Maribore



Photo Foto: Maribor Regional Archives

building, which has completely surpassed its primary political function. Of the three sites, Velenje, as a newly designed socialist city, is perhaps the most directly connected to the socialist development context, the identity of which it manages to preserve and protect successfully.

Indeed, the sites proposed to become the bearers of cultural and touristic representation of the post-war modernist heritage in Slovenia present three key development elements: a newly designed socialist city, a central national public space and a local building conceived as the Communist Party headquarters. All three were important political projects whose contents were successfully restructured in the democratisation process after 1991. This, indeed, is the baseline that could suggest the development characteristics of architecture and its qualities, i.e. independently from political contexts, which is a goal aspired by the proposed ATRIUM Cultural Route.

#### PROMOTING SLOVENIAN POST-WAR MODERNIST ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE LOCATIONS AS TOURIST PRODUCTS THROUGH THE ATRIUM CULTURAL ROUTE

If we take a closer look at the preservation of post-war modernist architecture, it can be easily seen that much has been done in terms of research<sup>/11/</sup>. An important aspect of ensuring the long-term preservation of architectural heritage is its general recognition by the scholarly and professional public and, as a result, its proper promotion in the public sphere; the latter has been somewhat neglected, but a number of important steps have been taken to promote this heritage among the expert community, by publication of several studies on architectural websites<sup>/12/</sup>.

Hence, the ATRIUM project and the design of the Cultural Route, which would connect European sites of architectural heritage of different totalitarian regimes, has been an opportunity to raise wider public awareness regarding the post-war modernist architectural heritage and also of economic opportunity in the areas where the heritage has been overlooked so far precisely because of the political context.

The sites presented in the paper are only three among many that could be included into

the Cultural Route project. However, all three are extremely important in terms of development, as they provide good conditions for efficient connections to tourist infrastructure. This aim requires an efficient information platform – such as the one developed under the ATRIUM project<sup>/13/</sup> and which could be used to good effect in promotion and management of the Slovenian part of the route, i.e. the national sub-route. The sub-route concept could work particularly well in Slovenia. Beside the three sites highlighted in the paper, there are numerous examples that could be part of the Slovenian post-war modernist route and branch out into even more special typological sub-paths (according to the building types, functionalities and contents they possess, transitions they have gone through, etc.). The guidelines correspondingly point in the direction of the identification and description of individual sites along the route, establishing the criteria for selecting the sub-routes, providing visitors with a simple digital system, yet giving everyone the choice of alternatives, decisions and visits, organized by the principle: 'Choose your own start and end stages of the heritage route, the manner and purpose of your journey (enabled by the system of preparing the information on the heritage route for an individual user).' Lying within one country, scattered over a relatively small area, the distances between sites are small and thus create the physical feel of the sub-route and could be easily visited by public transportation or by car in a couple of days – which is not the case for the whole ATRIUM route – while also exploring other, thematically different, natural and cultural heritage sites of which Slovenia has plenty.

A confirmation of suitability of the proposed sites as the key points of the Slovenian part of the route of socialist modernism has been obtained through an analysis based on the basic parameters of evaluation of the sites of cultural tourism (attractiveness, infrastructure, and experience). As to the attraction of the town, there has been a growing interest for this particular period, particularly among the younger generations who are less concerned with the political past. Social concepts, a good living environment, collectiveness, and social solidarity are the values that are becoming even more important now, in the time of economic

crisis, regardless of their distorted formulations within the Tito regime. It is, therefore, important that well-conceived and suitable interpretative approaches are prepared for all sites, which would objectively represent the era, its characteristics and, as a consequence, the architecture of the time to a wider audience, not consisting of professionals only. The first steps in Slovenia have been made under different, occasional activities within the organisation DOCOMOMO Slovenia<sup>14/</sup> (DOcumentation and COnservation of the MOdern Movement) and the Open House Slovenia<sup>15/</sup> project, while continuous and active collaboration is necessary. However, in the context of a better understanding and, as a result, easier attainment of proper protection activities, keeping in mind the economic and tourism potential, the way to approach the problem should be more carefully

planned. As presented in the continuation, the analysis of tourism potentials of the investigated case studies has provided encouraging results and possibilities to approach the subject in stages.

THE MODERNIST SOCIALIST CITY OF VELENJE – AN ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE CULTURAL TOURISM CRITERIA: ATTRACTIVENESS, INFRASTRUCTURE, EXPERIENCE

Looking at the attractiveness of the city centre of Velenje as a cultural and tourist destination, we can see that its origin is the key – it was designed as an ideal socialist city, so much so that it was referred to as a ‘socialist miracle’ during the socialist era. Politicians, particularly Tito, frequently showcased the city to foreign statesmen, as a testament to the success of the socialist state. Due to its success, Velenje was renamed Titovo Velenje (‘Tito’s Velenje’) after Tito’s death. As can be seen, the story behind its identity is an attractive one and can be promoted well. Even after the political shift, the city, now in a newly independent state, never tried to deny its past, but rather it used its tradition to build on its recognisability. The Tito Monument has remained in the city centre, where it was initially placed, and, more importantly, the functionalist design of the city has been preserved in its almost original form to this day; this speaks of its testimonial significance and attractiveness.

The tourist infrastructure of the city has been established and is presently mostly based on attractions linked to older heritage and natural and recreational amenities of the area; however, organisationally, it would be relatively easy to broaden the existing tourist range. These planned activities of the Municipality of Velenje have, within the Atrium project, culminated in the publication of a guide book entitled ‘Velenje, a walk through a modernist city’; secondly, the most important modernist architecture sites of the town have been equipped with a unified signposting system. As a result, the effort has achieved a planned series of different forms of urban experience, which allow space for future cultural and tourist experiences.

To sum up, within the ATRIUM project, the activities related to Velenje provide an important basis for cultural tourism in relation to the socialist architectural heritage. For this very reason, in



First page of the guidebook Velenje – sprehod skozi mesto moderne (Velenje – a walk through a modernist city) published by Mestna občina Velenje, 2013

Prvá strana turistického sprievodcu po meste Velenje: Velenje – sprehod skozi mesto moderne (Velenje – prechádzka modernistickým mestom), ktorý vydala mestská samospráva roku 2013

Source Zdroj: Municipality of Velenje

Slovenia Velenje has been recognised as the potential key carrier of the ATRIUM Cultural Route, both in terms of the activities set and the significance of its heritage.

#### REPUBLIC SQUARE IN LJUBLJANA – AN ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE CULTURAL TOURISM CRITERIA: ATTRACTIVENESS, INFRASTRUCTURE, EXPERIENCE

With its position in the centre of Ljubljana, the location of Trg republike is attractive and, as such, part of the tourist attractions of the capital city, becoming a growingly interesting tourist destination in the global context. However, when addressing its attractiveness in the context of representing post-war modernist architecture, much more could be done. It could be seen as the vantage point of the local route exploring the architecture of recent history, as the architecture of the era has been gaining a growing interest among foreign and domestic visitors. It should be properly promoted and a basic information structure system should be set up. For this, no huge investments are required, making the implementation feasible, i.e. with the proper support of the city authorities. Another kind of information support is, in fact, to be found in the ATRIUM Cultural Route, i.e. an important starting point that should be taken advantage of, if given the opportunity to participate in the project in the future.

The location has a good infrastructural support and potential for the innovative conceptualising of the approaches to interpretation, and offers an even more profound experience of the capital city centre. The eventual design of a local route might shift tourists' attention to completely 'non-tourist' city areas, which could, indeed, become themselves places of interest for tourists of the present and the immediate future.

#### THE HOUSE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS IN MARIBOR – AN ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE CULTURAL TOURISM CRITERIA: ATTRACTIVENESS, INFRASTRUCTURE, EXPERIENCE

Similarly, because of its position in the very core of the city, the Maribor case study site is well integrated with the tourist infrastructure; on the

other hand, it is less attractive by itself. In terms of architectural development, this building is an important piece of architecture by an architect who designed many buildings in Maribor; his architectural work remains to be fully assessed.

The architecturally developmental role of the building was studied within the ATRIUM project and now it needs to be presented to a broader, professional and non-professional, public. As a first step, this should be achieved through a retrospective exhibition, a monograph or a website presentation, with the latter possibly realised within the website of the ATRIUM Cultural Route.

The case of Maribor shows the most probable scenario in terms of promotion of the post-war modernist architectural heritage sites as a tourist product. To this end, we need to define the procedures of their inclusion in the tourist range.



Signposting system of Velenje's Cultural Route, Velenje – a walk through a modernist city, design Rok Poles

Systém značenia kultúrnej cesty v meste Velenje. Velenje – prechádzka modernistickým mestom

Photo Foto: Helena Knez

## RESULTS OF CASE STUDY ANALYSES

When generalising the procedure of integration of post-war modernist heritage sites into the cultural and tourism offerings, three key levels can be identified:

- a) Identification, assessment and presentation of the developmental significance of the given architectural heritage with occasional presentations and site visits;
- b) Inclusion of assessed, developmentally important sites into the existing tourist range as attractions, i.e. special features. This method forms a way to present the heritage sites as tourist products and test the level of interest for a more intensive inclusion into the tourism range;
- c) Establishment of local sub-routes and organisation of additional activities associated with the historical context – theme exhibitions, cuisine, sports events, which were typical of the era and could contribute to a more objective understanding of the time.

This particular should be taken into account with special emphasis in the context of dealing with the architecture of recent history, which was burdened by the weight of the political regime. Furthermore, the interpretation and presentation processes must be in line with the European resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism <sup>16/</sup>. When addressing the aforementioned problems within the context of the ATRIUM Cultural Route, we must bring forward the specifications of the project stating that at least the first level of realization should be achieved for a site to be connected to the European route, i.e. a proper expert evaluation. Further stages can then be developed within

the relevant project or in the context of the rest of the tourist range, i.e. depending on the abilities of local tourism professionals. Indeed, the ATRIUM Cultural Route creates the conditions of a common European context, which in turn means a higher level of touristic attractiveness; through its information support it represents the basis for the global implementation of heritage sites, and the conditions for further upgrading of the local tourist economy.

## CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, in Slovenia the foundations for more efficient inclusion of the heritage of socialist modernism into the current cultural tourism offerings have already been created, as the heritage has been studied and assessed relatively well. The problems of its protection are, of course, evident; however, these could be challenged by awareness-raising campaigns about its significance. Indeed, these campaigns are among the important initial steps to be taken to create the conditions for a wider acceptance of the heritage, which is key to its recognition and successful inclusion as a tourism product.

Looking at the starting points of the design of the Cultural Route, the proposed Slovenian sites provide a suitable basis, as they all have architectural development significance. In parallel, they are linked to relevant local infrastructure systems, which are fundamental for tourist development. It is important to establish connections with proper information structure, which is, as it is, ensured by the evolving ATRIUM Cultural Route and other similar endeavours.

## NOTES POZNÁMKY

<sup>1</sup> TThe ATRIUM partner consortium: Municipality of Forlì, Italy; Province of Forlì-Cesena, Italy; University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Architecture, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Municipality of Velenje, Slovenia; The National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage, Sofia, Bulgaria; Municipality of Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria; Szechenyi Istvan University, Győr, Hungary; Local Government of Győr with

County Rank, Hungary; Institute of Construction and Architecture of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia; Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Bukovina – Archdiocese of Iasi, Romania; Institute for Innovation & Sustainable Development, AEI PLOUS, Patras, Greece; Cultural & Educational Technology Institute, ATHENA – Research & Innovation Centre information, Communication and Knowledge Technologies, Xhanti, Greece; Town of Labin, Croatia; Fund of microregional tourism cluster Subotica-Palic, Serbia; Municipality of Tirana, Albania; Rotor – organization for development of tourism of the

region Dobo, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Ministry of Culture, Sofia, Bulgaria; Municipality of Rasa, Croatia.

<sup>2</sup> VODOPIVEC, Aleš – ŽNIDARŠIČ, Rok (eds.): *Edvard Ravnikar, Architect and Teacher*. Wien/New York, Springer Verlag 2010, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> BERNIK, Stane: *Slovenska arhitektura dvajsetega stoletja / Slovene Architecture of the Twentieth century*. Ljubljana, Mestna galerija 2004, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> OGRAJENŠEK, Irena: *Economic potential*. In: ZUPANČIČ-STROJAN, Tadeja – IFKO, Sonja – FIKFAK, Alenka – JUVANČIČ, Matevž – VEROVŠEK, Špela (eds.): *Manual of Wise Management, Preservation, Reuse and Economic Valorisation of Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th century*. Forli, Municipality, Ljubljana, Faculty of Architecture 2013, pp. 198 – 207.

<sup>5</sup> See *Manual of Wise Management, Preservation, Reuse and Economic Valorisation of Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century* in the references for details

<sup>6</sup> *Observing the route and sub-routes again in terms of three components of cultural tourism*

<sup>7</sup> The work on the regulation plan was first started by Marjan Šorli and later assumed by Viljem Strmecki, as established in the recent studies on Velenje development by Alenka di Battista in Alenka di Battista, 2011: *Nova odkritja pri raziskovanju Ravnikarjeve Nove Gorice in Trenzevega Velenja*, Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino, No. 47.

<sup>8</sup> These are 71 case studies from 26 cities and 10 South Eastern European states, with the help of which the guidelines for the identification, protection and management of this specific heritage within the framework of the

system of this newly conceptualised Culture Route will be formed.

<sup>9</sup> The Burra Charter, The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999 with associated Guidelines and Code on the Ethics of Co-existence, Australia ICOMOS Incorporated, 2000, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> The resolution mentioned was ratified on April 2nd 2009.

<sup>11</sup> The monographs dealing with the subject reveal that more or less intensive research has been underway since the early 1990s, when DOCOMOMO was established. Some key websites/references: [Do.co.mo.mo\\_slovenija](http://www.do.co.mo.mo_slovenija); *Dnevi Evropske kulturne dediščine / Slovenia's Cultural Heritage*, [www.evidenca.org](http://www.evidenca.org); B. Mihelič (1984), F. Košir (2000), A. Fikfak et al. (2001), S. Bernik (2004), N. Koselj (2010), A. Vodopivec et al. (eds. 2010).

<sup>12</sup> [www.trajekt.org/www.evidenca.org](http://www.trajekt.org/www.evidenca.org)

<sup>13</sup> EMMANOULIDIS, Christos – KOUTSIAMANIS, Remous-Aris – TASIDOU, Aimilia: *Digital Support System Development*. In: ZUPANČIČ-STROJAN, Tadeja – IFKO, Sonja – FIKFAK, Alenka – JUVANČIČ, Matevž – VEROVŠEK, Špela (ed.): *Manual of Wise Management, Preservation, Reuse and Economic Valorisation of Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century*. Forli, Municipality, Ljubljana, Faculty of Architecture 2013, pp. 176 – 182.

<sup>14</sup> [Do.co.mo.mo\\_slovenija](http://www.docomomo.si), Slovenian Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement. Available at <http://www.docomomo.si>. Accessed 15 October 2013.

<sup>15</sup> *Odpрте hiše Slovenije – OHS*. Available at <http://www.odprtehiseslovenije.org>. Accessed 15 October 2013.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*