

CONTENT

Editors' Words	1
Novi Zagreb – new city next to the city.....	2
Zagreb Trade Fair as Impetus to the Development of the Centre of Novi Zagreb	7
The Fairground as a Geopolitical Playground: the Zagreb International Trade Fair and Cold War Circumstances	14
Transformation model of the Zagreb Fair and its inclusion in the area of Novi Zagreb	21
Activities of the Croatian Academy of Engineering (HATZ) in 2019	27

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Novi Zagreb – new city next to the city

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Abstract

Throughout history, every new society has tried to present itself with great construction ventures, and this was the case in the post-war new Yugoslavia. Novi Zagreb is an example in these areas. It is evident that certain factors overlapped, and only this kind of social and historical as well as economic conditions could give birth to an entirely new city south of Sava.

Keywords: Novi Zagreb, South Zagreb, Zagreb, Zagreb trade fair, new city

1. Introduction

The genesis of Novi Zagreb (New Zagreb) was characterised by turbulent political events in the world and Yugoslavia as well as social and economic changes. The cultural atmosphere, of which Zagreb of the ex-Yugoslavia was the leader on an international level, was extremely important. Compared to other cities within the region, the City of Zagreb ranked high on the list of cultural events in the late '50s and early '60s of the 20th century. Groups like – Exat 51, Gorgona, Nove tendencije – five international exhibitions, which, in the midst of the Cold War gathered artists, gallerists and theoreticians from East and West Europe; Music Biennale visited by the leading figures of classical and experimental music by Stravinski, J. Cage; Geff Avant-garde Film Festival, etc.). The expansion of the city to a large free area and poor villages was a reflection of the present social and several political circumstances that resulted in the decision made by the city heads and its mayor Većeslav Holjevac (1952-1963). They made a radical decision on the construction of a Novi Zagreb Fair in the area “on the other side of Sava” to preserve the tradition of fairs and the dominant role of this Fair in Yugoslavia and the region. This political decision resulted in the construction of a new bridge (Most Slobode – Liberty Bridge), traffic, and infrastructural network, which became the framework for urban development on the other side of Sava – South Zagreb. During the times this decision was made, this area had already included the complex of the Shipping Institute (Brodarski Institute, 1952) and the Fair (1956) [1].

2. Conquering the new site-concept of a city next to the city

Since there was no time or money to reconstruct the illegally built areas of Trešnjevka, Trnje and Peščenica, it was decided to venture into intensive construction works on the other side of Sava. During the post-WWII period, the name Novi Zagreb was used for the newly planned and transformed area between the railway and Sava (today's Trnje) as opposed to the old Zagreb (Donji grad). The freshly conquered area on the “other side of Sava” or the area south of Sava is called South Zagreb in all plans and records of this period. However, there is another, less formal reason – the planners of that period wanted Zagreb to be different from Belgrade in this aspect. However, the name Novi Zagreb prevailed later on [1].

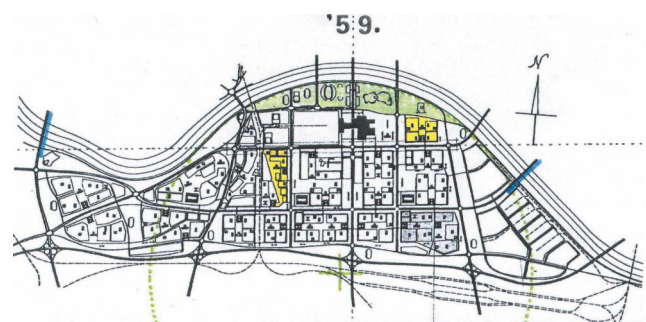


Fig. 1. The plan of South Zagreb for 250,000 people; spatial organisation was realised strictly in line with the principle of residential communities

The need for fast construction of a significant number of flats, due to mass movement of people to the City, resulted in different expansion models of the City. In the case of Zagreb, the model “city next to the city” was chosen to avoid the restoration of vast illegally constructed areas on the outskirts of the City (Trešnjevka, Trnje, Pešćenica, etc.). This model was legitimate and already known in the theory of urban planning. Many European cities solved their expansion in the same way in different periods, i.e., New Amsterdam in the Netherlands or Toulouse-le-Mirail in France as the “new Toulouse” for 50,000 people – a new part of the City right next to the old one. The project of South Zagreb was much more significant – the new part of the City was planned to accommodate 250,000 people. The area on the “other side of Sava” became both in architectural and urban planning sense, a polygon for verifying new contemporary ideas of urban planning. The international congress of modern architecture – Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) and the Athens Charter from 1933 played a vital role in the sense of planning a new city concept [2]. The Charter proclaimed the principles of a functional city and the principle for realising dignified hygiene living conditions (sun, light, air, green surfaces) [3].

All of the above mentioned supports the fact that the City and the society must be ready for such a grand venture as South Zagreb had been, and that it would take not only an idea, funds or organised residential policy, but also a major with progressive views and visionaries as Većeslav Holjevac was. Also, a cultural background was

present in Zagreb at those times and the degree of social development that could realise a project like the Plan of South Zagreb for 250,000 people.

3. Urban planning of South Zagreb

The City of Zagreb Regulatory Plan (1953) is a plan drafted by an architect – Vladimir Antolić preceded the Zagreb South Urban plan. The councilmen of the City Assembly denied adopting the plan in its entirety since they felt that the City’s railway system required more work; also, the concept of the City across the River Sava had not been elaborated enough [4].

This fact motivated the mayor who wanted to direct the City’s development on the other side of Sava as quickly as possible. He met with the director of the Institute for Physical Planning of the City of Zagreb, architect Zdenko Kolacio, and put him in charge of forming a team of experts. These ideas marked the beginning of the South Zagreb project. Mayor Holjevac left a significant mark in Zagreb’s development and growth in the period of its transformation and the most significant progress. He was a visionary politician and writer, and open-minded enough to introduce innovations and make brave decisions.

He successfully fought off the attempts to direct the Zagreb Fair to Belgrade. With his independent and energetic politics, Holjevac confronted the Yugoslavian political leaders. After the Declaration over the name and status

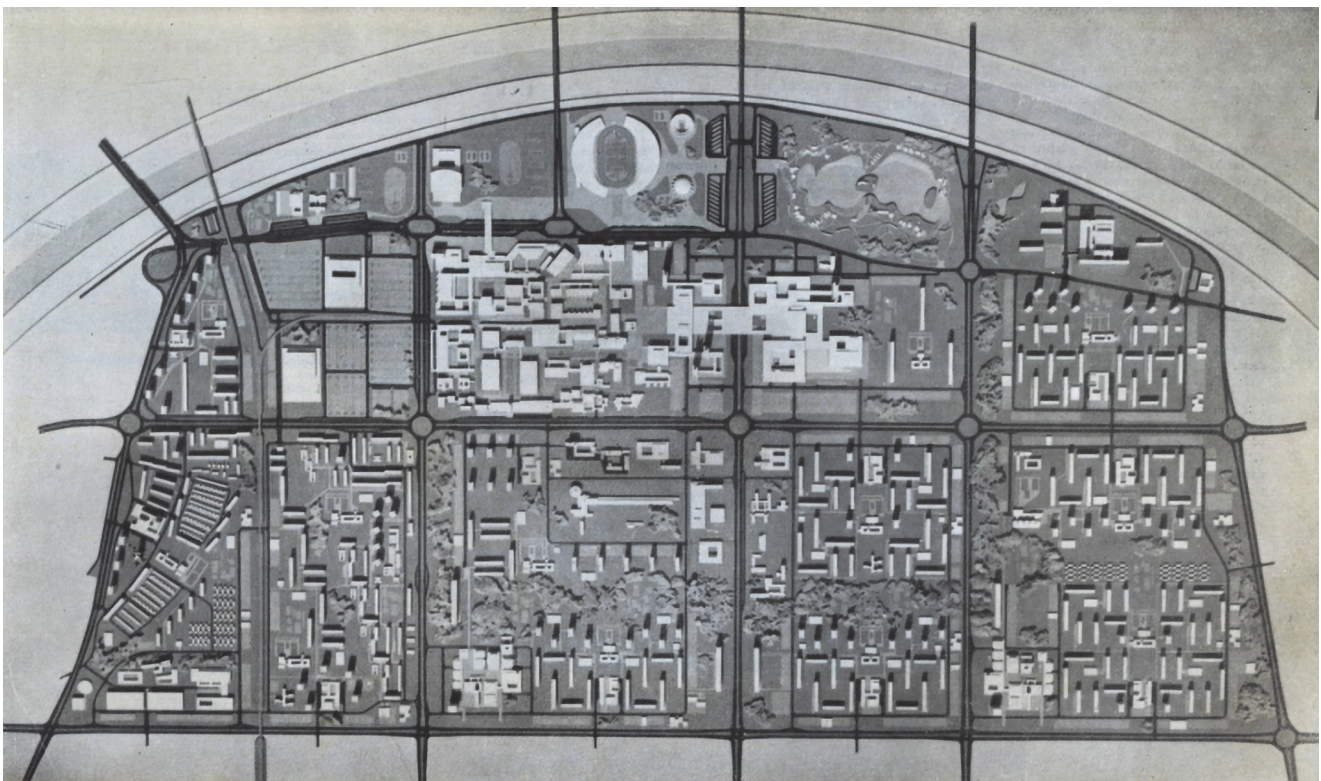


Fig. 2. Photo of the model of South Zagreb for roughly 100,000 people, from the publications of Južni Zagreb, the Zagreb Urban Planning Institute (1962)

of Croatian literary language was published, Holjevac was expelled from the Croatian Communist Central Committee [5]. The legacies of his mandate (1952-1963) were the Zagreb Fair, Novi Zagreb, Pleso Airport, Technical Museum, Student Centre in Savska Street, Zagreb Television, Sljeme cable car.

At the beginning of his mandate in 1952 around 350,000 people lived in Zagreb. This number climbed up to 430,000 after his mandate (1961). The rise in the number of people acted as an incentive to develop a new city next to the city (South Zagreb). Two facts were in favour of this idea.

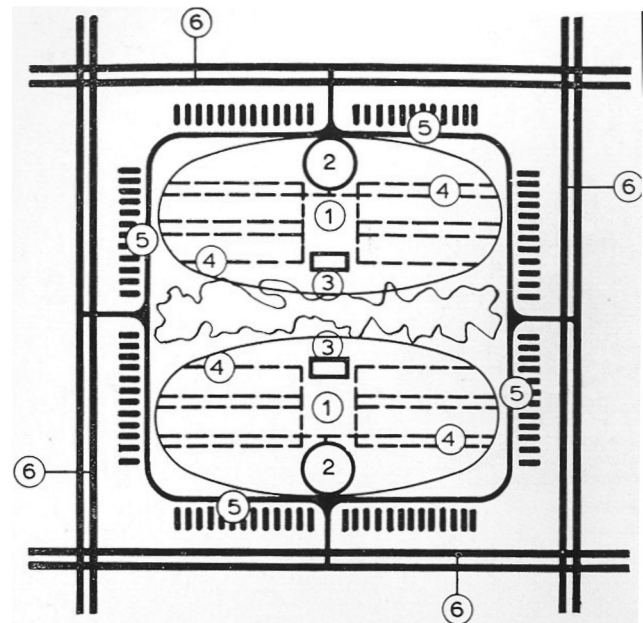
Right after WWII, the state was in charge of housing construction. The state's monopoly weakened between 1955 and 1959, and building funds were formed with contributions made by workers and work organisations. New possibilities for financing housing construction (in public or private ownership) opened up, and first housing cooperatives were founded.

In 1958 the nationalisation of tenement buildings and construction sites was implemented. The elimination of the ownership category in urban space allowed a freer approach to urban planning.

Concerning the post-war urbanism, it would be inappropriate not to mention and highlight the significant contribution to urban planning made by Vlado Antolić, great urban planner and visionary. His partially adopted City of Zagreb Regulatory Plan (1953) became the main planning development document in the '50s and the '60s of the 20th century [6]. Architect Antolić embedded in this Directive (1949/1953) new planning paradigms of a functional city, and the plan stimulated the city's expansion to the south towards the Sava and promoted modern settings of organising districts with buildings surrounded by green vegetation [7].

4. The importance of Family and Household didactic exhibition

In 1956 national committees steered the direction towards rationalisation and funds for housing loans. Some cities even established loan policy and managed to increase their funds. This is specially referred to as engaging additional funds of work organisations for their workers. The structure of housing construction completely changed. National committees, urban planners, architects, builders and the industry had to find their place in the implementation of this plan, continually managing the rationalisation of housing construction. This rationalisation meant switching from building flats to producing them. The industrial production and pre-fabrication resulted in housing construction rationalisation.



LEGENDA

1. Stambena zajednica.
2. Centar stambene zajednice,
3. Osnovna škola,
4. Glavne pješačke komunikacije za djecu i odrasle,
5. Kolne servisne saobraćajnice, parkirališta i garaže,
6. Gradske magistrale za brzi promet

Fig. 3. Residential community organisation – the relation between pedestrian and road surfaces, Urban Plan Programme of Zagreb, the Zagreb Urban Planning Institute (1965)

The change in ownership played an important role, and a new law was adopted, which allowed the nationalisation of construction sites [8]. Without taking into account technical, architectural, urbanistic, economic, social and political criteria, housing issues could not have been resolved in its entirety. The Zagreb Fair played a direct and crucial role in the process of planning Novi Zagreb.

The exhibitions held by organisations Family and Household played an essential role in informing the public and searching for new housing models. They consolidated all aspects of the life of a “new human” in a new society. Educational Exhibition of Social Standard dealt indirectly with this issue as well as possible city housing models. Educational exhibitions organised by Family and Household [9] were held at the Zagreb Fair from 1957 until 1960. There was an obvious link between the promoted models of housing communities of the educational exhibitions organised by Family and Household and the executed Urban plan for South Zagreb since 1962 [10].

A “model of flat for the near future” was promoted at the Zagreb Fair through exhibitions and architectural tenders [11]. To create mutual principles and opinions to define a prototype of the flat, which would suit the conditions of the time and the needs of working people, an exhibition of the same name was held. All of this contributed to forming a model of community living after WWII [12].

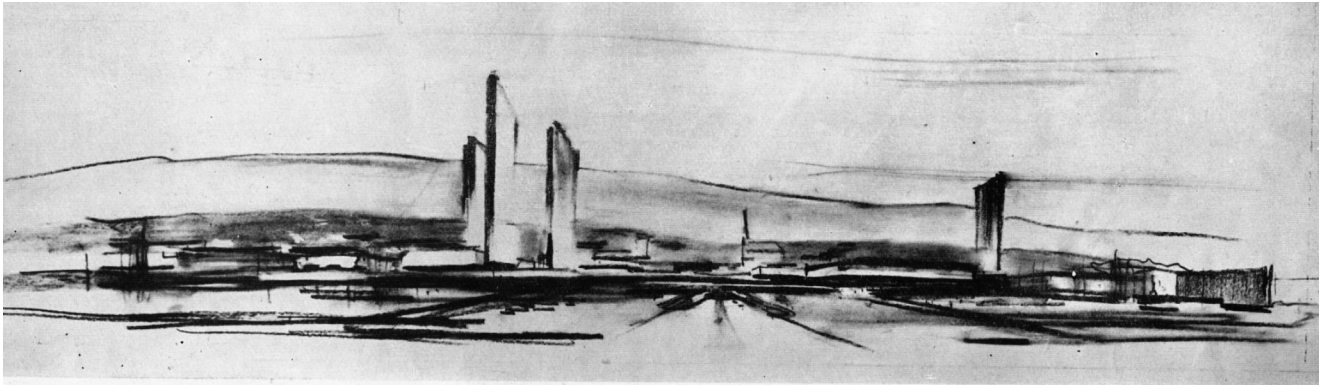


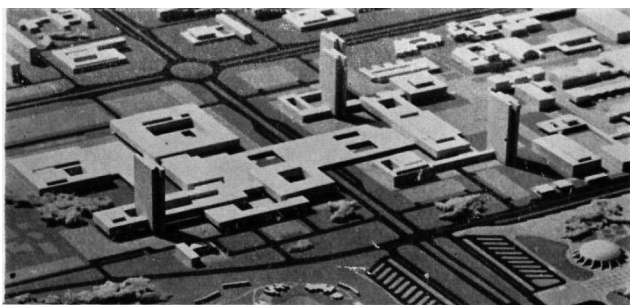
Fig. 4. View to South Zagreb facing Sljeme, Južni Zagreb publication

5. Housing community concept

In the late '50s and early '60s, the first plans of South Zagreb appeared. The concept of urban design of South Zagreb since 1962 included a new city for 250,000 people organised in housing communities [13] with 8,000-12,000 residents and an average density of 264 residents per hectare. Based on the principles of modular urbanism, a new city was planned right next to the existing one with four residential districts and 24 residential communities with 76 neighbourhoods, three districts, and one city centre as well as seven sporting and recreational centres and 24 playgrounds [10].

Each block of Novi Zagreb, defined by intense side traffic, carried urban and architectural features of the period. The novelties concerning planning included separate housing districts or "residential communities" whose size was determined by the capacities of schools, i.e. the number of children in the district who could attend their elementary school without having to cross wide city roads [14]. A new city centre of South Zagreb was also planned in addition to the central city axis.

Jakob Bakema, famous Dutch architect, was one of the authors who questioned the organisation system of the centre of South Zagreb and offered a solution [15]. Just as the new city centre, the centres of residential districts



Pogled na dio makete ukazuje na koncepciju centra. Promet prelazi ispod bujnog života na trgu. Poslovni dio povezuje se sa Velesajmom i na taj se način uključuje veliki međunarodni objekt u događaje i manifestacije centra, sa druge strane trgovačke i ugostiteljske velike radnje, društveni donovi, kazališta i kina u neposrednom su kontaktu sa bogatim zelenilom.

Fig. 5. Central area of South Zagreb, linking with the Zagreb Fair – part of the model, published in Južni Zagreb, the Zagreb Urban Planning Institute (1962)

were also planned for various cultural, recreational, trade-hospitality, and business amenities.

Special attention was focused on employment. In strictly industrial zones like Leskovac and Jakuševac, it was presumed that up to 50,000 people would work in larger service, industrial and other work zones of South Zagreb on the surface of 700 ha. After his international success and the first award from Sao Paolo in 1954 as well as realised bathing resorts along the Adriatic coast, in 1958, architect Zvonimir Požgaj developed a project of a Novi Zagreb bathing resort called Jezero (eng. Lake or today's Bundek) [16]. It was equipped with 2162 changing cabins and 860 lockers for 12,750 swimmers (15,000 max.).

Construction companies included in the South Zagreb project played a big role. They focused on prefabricating parts of buildings. They were the so-called flat factories Jugomont and Jugobeton, and they used the industrial YU-61 prefabrication system (author: Bogdan Budimirov, co-authors Željko Solar, Dragutin Stilinović) [17]. All of these changes resulted in the residential reform between 1960 and 1965 with housing funds as the primary source of financing. During that period (early 60's), the construction of the first generation of residential districts (Savski gaj, Trnsko under its work name Novi Zagreb 1, Zapruđe...) did not only start, but it was completed. Research showed that their maintenance and modernisation was not invested in enough, or it was not invested in at all, with serious indications pointing to their restoration and reconstruction [18]. In that time, Zagreb had a population of 560,000. The main documents for future development were the Urban Programme of Zagreb (1961/1965) and the General Urban Plan of Zagreb (1971) in which Novi Zagreb gained its form, detailed elaboration, and strict realisation rules.

6. Socially oriented residential construction

The best parts of Novi Zagreb were built in the '70s and the '80s of the 20th century based on the model socially oriented residential construction (DUSI). This model [19] was an integral part of the plans for future spatial development over the next five to 15 years. In 1979

Technical conditions for planning and constructing residential facilities on 20 locations were drafted for the purpose of socially oriented residential construction in Zagreb 1979-1980. In 1983 the DUSI study Standard of districts, buildings, and flats in Zagreb was drafted. The standards referred not only to the planning of buildings but also to district planning. Dugave (1977) was an example of a residential district of the period [20] with high housing standards from the aspect of the district and the aspect of buildings and flats. The '70s were marked by questioning the existing settings of urbanism and architecture. The main idea of the '80s was the city completion, with a focus on city areas that have been ignored ever since.

7. Conclusion

The area of Novi Zagreb was revalorised and affirmed once again by society and experts. This area was built in compliance with all the rules of urban planning of the time, achieving high quality in terms of its architectural expression. The contemporary transformation processes of the City, the affirmation and revitalisation of *Zagreb Fair* site, as well as the compression of this once main economic activity should turn this site into the centre of Novi Zagreb and transform it into a city inside a city with all of the missing amenities included. The final result should be a so-called living room for the residents of Novi Zagreb. The dissolution and transformation of the Zagreb Fair, its opening-up and merging with the future Sava Park (the area of the hippodrome and Bunde) will give Zagreb an attractive and recognisable park of the 21st century. This would in return improve the quality of life not only in Novi Zagreb but also in the entire City.

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Note: Novi Zagreb – the concept of a new city is an excerpt from the text prepared for Prostor, a scientific journal for architecture and urbanism in which the genesis of Novi Zagreb will be prepared and presented in full.