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HOUSING ONE PRAXIS: BETWEEN THE SPIRIT OF SPACE AND THE SPIRIT OF TIME. MILETA BOJOVIĆ – A MONTENEGRIN SOCIALIST EXPERIENCE

KEYWORDS

ANTI-SEGREGATION
CIRCULAR CONNECTION
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ABSTRACT

Mileta Bojović, a Montenegrin architect, is regionally and internationally recognized as the author of housing complex Blok 5 in Podgorica. Yet, his multi-decade oeuvre extends far beyond the scope of this single, albeit seminal, work. The aim of this paper is to present and critically contextualize Bojović's substantial contribution to the development of multi-family housing in Montenegro, particularly within the context of self-managing socialism and primacy of use over market value. Methodologically, the research is primarily grounded in previously unpublished primary sources, including original project

documentation, architectural drawings, and competition materials by the author. Additionally, the paper seeks to illuminate both the thematic diversity and the conceptual consistency of Bojović's work, as well as his sustained advocacy of *praxis*. This dialectical unity of theory and practice is particularly evident in his long-term engagement with the development of Žabljak, where his multilayered involvement extended from urban planning to architecture, thereby significantly influencing the spatial and morphological identity of this northern city's nucleus.

INTRODUCTION

The 1970s and 1980s were a pivotal period for the development of multi-family and mass-housing architecture in Yugoslavia. Outstanding results were particularly achieved in terms of use value, i.e. the functional value and organization of dwelling. This was primarily affirmed through the institution of architectural competitions, in which the winning teams were most often composed of young, emerging architects (Bajlon, 1975: 37). This kind of “housing revolution” was preceded by numerous conferences and congresses, from 1950¹ until the beginning of the 1980s (Bajlon, 1975: 30), at which the topic of adequate housing and dwelling was consistently discussed. This period is characterized by plans and projects of new, socialist cities, which were accompanied by socialist self-management and a new urban everyday life.

It was precisely during this period that the design practice of the Montenegrin architect and urban planner Mileta Bojović² began, regionally, and in recent years also internationally known as the author of the residential settlement Blok 5 (1977-1983) in Podgorica. The almost fiftieth anniversary since the inception of Blok 5 represents an appropriate opportunity for a more detailed presentation of the lesser-known, albeit very diverse, scope of the author’s work. Therefore, this paper examines a segment of Bojović’s design practice, i.e. analyses and contextualizes his highly significant contribution in the

domain of multi-family housing in Montenegro. This will be carried out through the analytical interpretation of four characteristic projects from the 1980s (1973-1977), three of which represent realized projects, and one an award-winning competition design. Additionally, through the presentation of the early phase of Bojović’s oeuvre, the paper provides insight into a segment of Montenegrin architectural practice related to multi-family housing in the stated period, since it has been the least represented in the literature, in comparison to contemporaneous developments in the rest of the region³.

Through the analysis of selected works, this study investigates the themes that have marked Bojović’s architectural practice from its earliest phase, and that he has continued to develop over several decades. These include praxis, as the unity of theory and practice, the abolition of segregation of people, functions, and space, mixed-use at both planning and architectural levels, the humanization of residential environments, volumetric articulation, the covering of pedestrian circulation, and the concept of “circular connection” within the apartment. The articulation of this thematic continuity evokes a different mode of spatial thinking, one that privileges use over market value.

Additionally, the article demonstrates that consistency in conceptual framework and in the configuration of residential units does not necessarily result in volumetric uniformity. On the contrary, through a recognizable design logic and the use of a similar spatial organization of residential units, it is possible to achieve markedly different architectural expressions and building forms – adapted to the local climate, immediate context, construction technologies, materials, as well as different regulatory frameworks and standards.

Methodologically, the study is grounded in a combined qualitative research approach. The

¹ I Consultation of Architecture Students, Zagreb, 1950.; I Consultation of Architects and Urban Planners of Yugoslavia, Dubrovnik, November 23-25, 1950 (Bajlon, 1975: 30).

² Throughout his multi-decade career, Bojović has been actively engaged in spatial and urban planning and architecture. He is the recipient of the first Lifetime Achievement Award of the Chamber of Engineering of Montenegro – for achievements in the field of spatial planning and building construction, 2011, as well as the first award of the Montenegrin Days of Architecture for “Special Contribution to the Development of Architecture and Urbanism”, 2024 (Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 2018).

³ This mainly concerns the availability of published materials on the Belgrade School of Housing, along with documentation on the Split III residential complex and comparable design achievements from the period. Lea Horvat, a Croatian theorist and art historian, in an

analysis and interpretation of primary sources, including previously unpublished archival material, are aimed at reconstructing, understanding, and critically examining the author's work at the intersection of theory and practice. This body of material is complemented by oral testimonies of the author, used both as an independent source and to further support interpretation of documentary evidence. In addition, the study incorporates an analysis of relevant literature, with the aim of contextualizing the author's work within a broader framework, as well as within the socio-spatial milieu of socialist self-management and the corresponding Montenegrin everyday life.

The selection of projects that structure and guide the research process has been carried out based on their typology, temporal framework, and their significance for the formation of Bojović's design approach, as well as for examining the implementation of his theoretical positions in practice.

BIOGRAPHY OR FRENCH DEPARTURES AND ITS RETURNS: MONTENEGRO PRAXIS⁴

Mileta Bojović, a full member of the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts⁵, was born in 1941, in the northern, mountainous part of Montenegro, in the village of Zminica, in the municipality of Žabljak. His childhood was formative and eventful. At the age of ten, he left his family home to attend primary and secondary school in Nikšić, an experience that early on shaped him into a highly mature and independent individual, with a wide range of diverse interests during those formative years in post-war Nikšić⁶. At the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, where he enrolled in 1959, he studied under some of the leading figures of the architectural scene of the time. His design studio was led by Milan Zloković, Bogdan Bogdanović

interview conducted in connection with her analysis of the projects of Split III and Blok 5, points out the discrepancy in the exposure of these two residential settlements (Kucinac, 2024).

⁴ The subtitle of this chapter derives from the title of an article by Serbian architect, professor, architectural historian and theorist Ljiljana Blagojević (2017) – „French Architectural Departures and Its Returns: Belgrade Chic, Balkan Mission, Montenegro Praxis“, addressing the connections between graduates of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Belgrade and France.

⁵ Bojović is the first – and to date the only – architect in Montenegro elected as an associate member of the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts in 2018, and in 2025 as a full member.

⁶ He was a member of the literary and photographic clubs, as well as of the Nikšić aero club.

thought the studio for Urbanism, Aleksandar Deroko taught the History of Architecture, Đurđe Bošković the History of Art, and Nikola Dobrović – Contemporary Architecture.

Following the suggestion of Professor Zloković to his students, Bojović went to France in 1964, to Nancy, in his final year of studies, and began his professional career in the office of architect Jean Marconnet (1925-2014). He returned to Belgrade briefly in 1966 to graduate, then returned to France (Blagojević, 2017). In the same office, Bojović worked on the design of residential (HLM) Quartier Saint-Sébastien in Nancy, in collaboration with the Paris office of Jean Faugeron (1915-1983), a prominent French architect, professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and recipient of the Grand Prix de Rome. Having seen Bojović's work on the study of prefabricated façades and central service core for this residential quarter, Faugeron proposed that he move to Paris, thereby marking the beginning of the author's Paris years and the inception of a theme he would later consistently pursue in his design practice.

At Faugeron's office on Place des Invalides, Rue Faber 26, the detailed design of the French Pavilion for the 1967 World Exposition in Montreal was underway. Bojović worked across a variety of typologies, including the extension of a secondary school in the city of Charleville, as well as the Les Halles project and the Bercy district, both in Paris. At the same time, he attended a two-year postgraduate program at the Institute of Urbanism in Paris (1967-1969), where one of his professors was Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), an undisputed authority in philosophy and urban sociology, with whom the architect agreed on the topic of his doctoral dissertation. During those years, Lefebvre was also present in the intellectual circles of the former Yugoslavia, notably through his participation in the Korčula Summer School (Kangrga, 1997). It is with Henri Lefebvre that the author's interest in urban sociology and in the contemporary problem of segregation – and its abolition at all levels – began to take shape. In May 1967, Lefebvre's assistants and followers launched the journal *Utopie*, which focused on the critique of urbanism, architecture, and everyday life.

Later, at the Faculty of Literature and Social Sciences, University of Paris X in Nanterre, Bojović continued his work under Henri Lefebvre at his Chair of Sociology, developing his doctoral dissertation entitled “*Urbanism and Architecture in Yugoslavia between Self-Management and the Withering Away of the State*” (1969-1978) supported by a three-year scholarship awarded by the French Govern-

ment in 1975. At that time, Lefebvre's assistant was Jean Baudrillard (Kellner, 2020). The author's collaboration with the French philosopher significantly influenced the overall trajectory of his design practice, as well as the thematic orientation of his writings, published up to the present day. This formed the foundation of his enduring commitment to praxis, conceived as the inseparable unity of theory and practice, a concept also promoted by the Korčula Summer School, yet largely absent from the practice of urbanists and architects.

At the same time, in Yugoslavia, the implementation of the renowned regional project "Južni Jadran"⁷ began in 1967. After five years in France, Bojović decided to return to Montenegro, and on 1 October 1969 he began working on the project in Budva, through the Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design⁸. He collaborated with a Swiss team on the plans for Cape Marko and Morinj in the Bay of Kotor, while independently developing the plans for Pržno Beach in the municipality of Tivat and the General Urban Plan of Herceg Novi, as part of the unified general plan for the Bay of Kotor (Bojović, 2025).

After the completion of the "Južni Jadran" project, Bojović, given the choice between working on the plans for Herceg Novi or Žabljak, chose his native Žabljak. With this decision, in September 1971, a new, highly significant and defining phase of his professional activity in urbanism and architecture began. His long-term work on the urban planning of Žabljak, alongside the simultaneous design of several important administrative, tourism, and multi-family housing buildings, began to shape the morphology of the mountain tourist center, while also marking the emergence of a distinct physiognomy and spirit of the author's architectural oeuvre. Additionally, Bojović consistently continued to advocate for mixed-use spaces and the integration of functions rather than zoning and their strict separation⁹, a principle he implemented throughout his practice. This approach promoted a mixed-use program, namely the creation of a residential-tourist settlement without rigid zoning or division between these two primary functions, while also supporting concentrated development and a natural, phased growth from the center toward the periphery. Furthermore, it enables the two main urban roads to be transformed into pedestrian zones during the ski season, while supply and servicing are handled via service routes (General Urban Plan of Žabljak, 1988). The foregoing indicates an affirmative and protective attitude towards space¹⁰.

MIXED USE BUILDING IN ŽABLJAK – THE "DEPARTMENT STORE" (1973-1983)

The combined program building¹¹ was among the author's earliest projects designed for Žabljak, although not the first to be realized. As this programmatically complex project marks the beginning of the author's independent investigation of multi-family housing and the application of his theoretical concepts in practice, it will therefore be examined in greater detail.

The building, located on the western side of the main town square, stands out for its, at the time, advanced program of design and construction, through which it established new standards of living in this mountain town, enhancing the existing habits and needs of the local population. Namely, through the plans that preceded the building¹², the architect had already established multifunctionality as an urban planning objective, which consequently shaped the future program of the mixed-use building. Bojović believed that a combined program building conceived as a kind of city within a city¹³ corresponded both to the needs of future users and to those of Žabljak as a whole (Bojović, 2015). The project brief therefore envisaged a department store, a supermarket, a bank, the Social Accounting Service, electricity distribution facilities, underground garages, a laundry, a kindergarten and a wide range of apartment typologies intended for existing and future personnel needed for further development of this northern tourist center¹⁴.

This self-sufficiency of the building, particularly relevant today in the light of a post-pandemic future, largely stems from the architect's interest in nineteenth-century utopian socialists and their phalansteries, as well as in Le Corbusier, and most notably in Russian Constructivists and revolutionaries who

⁷ „Južni Jadran“ (The “Southern Adriatic”) in Montenegro was carried out through a consortium comprising the Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design (RZUP) as the local bureau, in collaboration with the French and Italian firms OTAM and URBAM, and Tourconsult. (Plan fizičkog razvoja regije Južni Jadran: Generalni plan Boke Kotorske, 1970).

⁸ From 1969 to 1994, Bojović worked at the Institute for Urban Planning and Design – RZUP, after which he established his private practice.

⁹ Bojović's opposition to zoning and advocacy of mixed-use as an integrated urban system aligns with Jane Jacobs' (1992) concept of “mixed primary uses” as generators of diversity, Henri Lefebvre's (1974) critique of abstract space as a mechanism of functional segregation, and Christopher Alexander's (1977) view of the city as a continuum structured through overlapping functions within “activity nodes.”

¹⁰ Bojović was engaged in urban planning of Žabljak over four decades (1971-2010).

sought, to change ways of living and vice versa through transformations of the city and architecture. The architect notes (Bojović, 2015) that future residents, a “small phalanx” of relatives, friends, and colleagues, followed the process of design and construction, which enabled their identification with the building, its appropriation, and the development of a relationship to the house as their own. All of this was possible within a period that represented a totality of ideas, realities, and ideals (Blagojević, 2017), and the abolition of boundaries between urban planners, architects, and users was seen as an opportunity (Bojović, 1981).

The building’s multifunctionality and self-sufficiency are more than adequate in the context of the harsh climatic conditions of this municipality with the highest altitude in Montenegro. The transition between the public space of the square and the interior of the building is resolved through the provision of a covered sidewalk six metres wide, along the entire length of the building. The functional integration of all programs is also ensured by an internal pedestrian street at first-floor level, enabling users to maintain close interaction and access all facilities within the building. In this project, the inseparability of urbanism and architecture is evident, as the boundary between them dissolves.

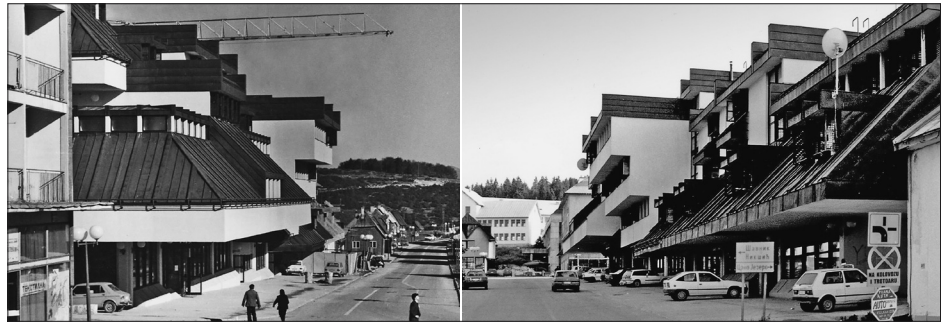
From a compositional standpoint, the playful masses and dynamic volumes, skilfully composed within the canon of mountain architecture aesthetics, render the building aligned with local identity, contextual, rhythmic, and at times even dramatic (Fig. 1). Given the building’s imposing scale within its context – both in terms of its overall length and number of storeys – the architect strategically fragmented the massing and articulated the volumes in order to achieve compatibility with the scale of the surrounding buildings, while also avoiding the obstruction of the

11 In the project documentation, the building is officially designated as the *Residential-Commercial Building in Zabljak*, whereas Blagojević (2017) describes it as a *combined-program urban block – housing and commercial*. In public discourse, however, it is commonly referred to as the “Department Store”, after the department store that once occupied four levels of commercial wing – now the supermarket.

12 At the beginning of his engagement with the Municipality of Zabljak, Bojović first developed the General Urban Plan (1971), followed by the Detailed Urban Plan (1973), both of which advocated the integration of functions, from which the design programme for this multifunctional building subsequently emerged.

13 In line with Koolhaas’s concept of “culture of congestion” (1978), a mixed-use (vertical) city within a city.

14 At that time, Zabljak had a policy of allocating apartments for use to personnel who came to the town to work (Bojović, 2025).



most significant views towards Durmitor mountain and the town square, by cutting the roof planes at a 45-degree angle.

In her text on the academic and professional connections between architects from the region and France, Blagojević (2017) highlights this work by Bojović, along with Blok 5. She recognizes that, through the focus on the triadic foundational code of architecture-city-society, both works interpret Henri Lefebvre’s unitary theory as praxis, further demonstrating that the theory of self-management was critically deployed and implemented in the production of space (Blagojević, 2017).

The building, with a maximum height of five storeys, comprises four residential entrances, each with a staircase, and one elevator providing a direct connection between the apartments and the garage. The typical floor combined a gallery-access layout with a central double-loaded corridor and duplex units. Several apartment types of varying layouts were designed, in a generous structural grid

FIG. 1 THE “DEPARTMENT STORE” MIXED-USE BUILDING: CORNER VIEW OF THE FIRST PHASE FROM THE MAIN CITY SQUARE, FOLLOWED BY THE NORTHERN VIEW SHOWING BOTH PHASES OF THE BUILDING, COMPLETED, 1990

FIG. 2 SECOND-FLOOR PLAN OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE “DEPARTMENT STORE” MIXED-USE BUILDING, PRESENTED TOGETHER WITH A THREE-BEDROOM APARTMENT FROM THE THIRD FLOOR. SECOND FLOOR INCLUDES A KINDERGARTEN – DAYCARE, A LARGE CORNER TERRACE, AND ELEVEN RESIDENTIAL UNITS, 1973



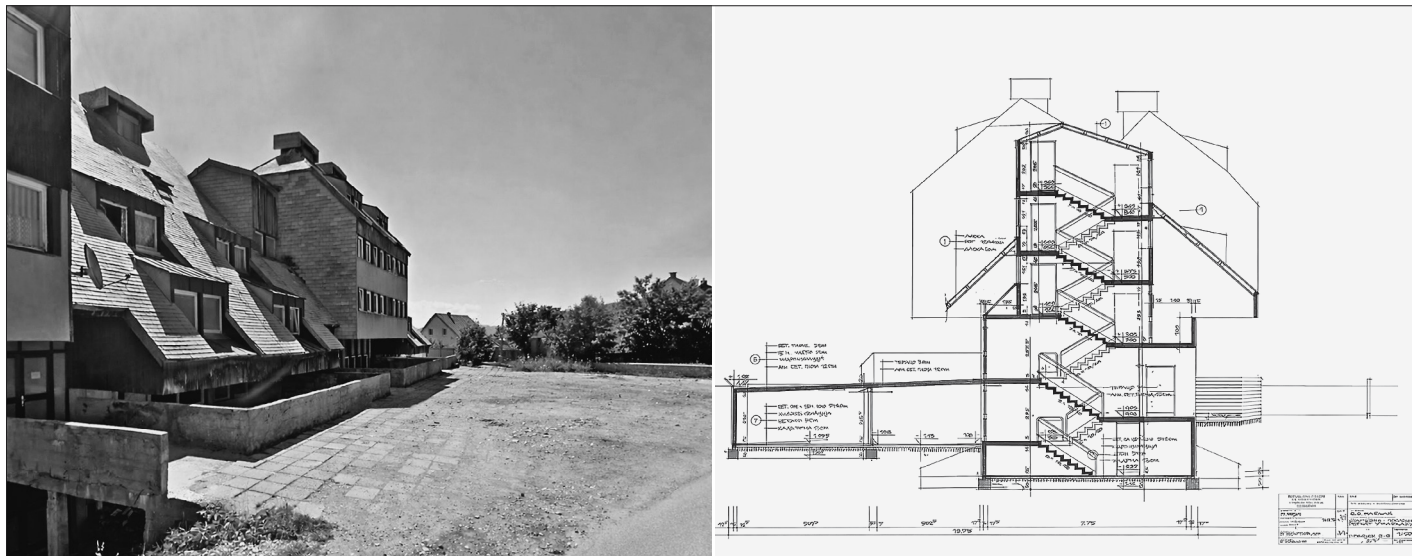


FIG. 3 SEGMENT OF THE BUILDING'S VOLUMETRIC COMPOSITION (2021), ACCOMPANIED BY A CROSS-SECTION, 1974

up to 7,5 meters – ranging from studio apartments to three-bedroom units. Given the focus of this study, particular importance is placed on those apartments that feature a central core and a “circular connection”, as found in a number of two-bedroom and three-bedroom units (Fig. 2). Through this organization of residential space, the architect transcends the conventional division between day and night zones, achieving instead a fluid spatial arrangement and multiple interconnections between spaces. This, consequently, enables numerous possibilities of use, enhances spatial quality, ambience, and usability, while also reducing unnecessary circulation and allowing for a more efficient use of the overall available area, fostering social integration of family members (Knezević, 1989; Lojanica, 2019). In this way, residential space becomes the smallest unit for testing the author's theoretical assumptions in practice. The “Department Store” building demonstrated a synthesis of all Bojović's key theoretical concepts, including a pronounced absence of segregation of space, functions, and people and would be fully realized in two phases over the next ten years.

RESIDENTIAL-COMMERCIAL BUILDING AT THE ENTRANCE TO ŽABLJAK (1974)

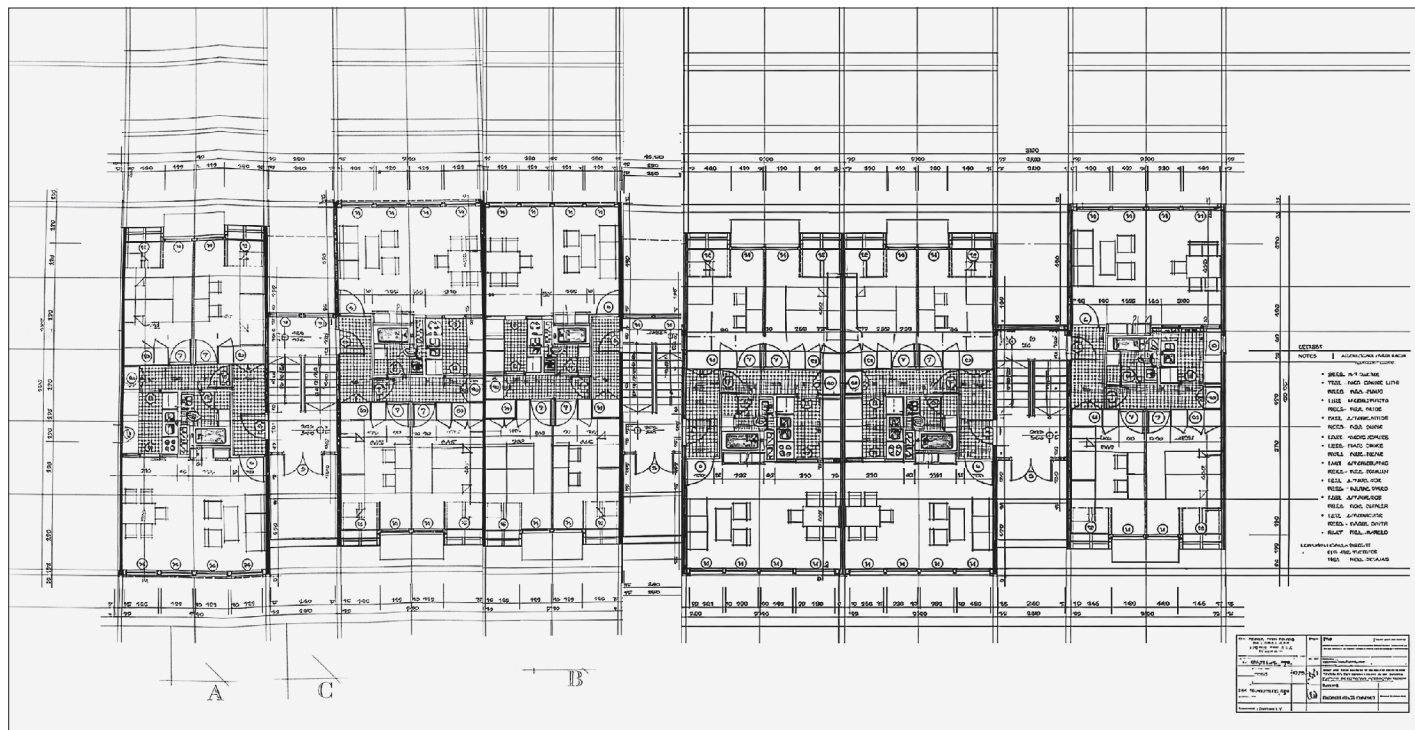
Another residential-commercial building, of a smaller scale, located at the southeastern entrance to the town, with a total floor area of 1,500 m², is situated within a residential zone designated by the Detailed Urban Plan Žabljak II, on a triangular plot between what was at the time one existing and two newly planned traffic routes (Bojović, 1974). The architect notes that the building adjoins the

zone of individual housing along its southwestern side, effectively enclosing it, which constituted one of the key conditions for the formation of the spatial concept. To establish a spatial relationship between the inherited and the newly designed fabric, the architect fragmented the massing of the new building on the floors above the ground level, so that the building becomes volumetrically closer to the existing structures, almost forming a sequence of individual units. The building entrances are approached via a covered zone measuring 2.7 meters in width, which represents one of the recurring themes in the author's architecture.

In terms of volumetric composition and overall aesthetics, Bojović, once again, skilfully employed the canonized aesthetic patterns of the vernacular architecture of the region in which he is designing. The roofs have a pitch of 45 degrees, characteristic of the climatic conditions of Žabljak and of traditional construction in this northern area. The building entrances are approached via a covered zone measuring 2.7 meters in width, which represents one of the recurring themes in the author's oeuvre.

The residential space is organized around three separate entrances, and the functions across the floors are arranged in split levels. The basement accommodates storage, while the second split level contains the service vehicular access and garages for residents. At the level of pedestrian circulation, along the newly designed street, commercial spaces are provided, whereas the residential units are located on the upper floors.

The articulation of volumes is further achieved through the variation of apartment typologies



across the floors. Two-bedroom apartments are designed on the first floor, thereby covering access to the recessed ground floor; one-bedroom apartments are located on the second, while studio apartments occupy the attic. This results in a distinctive cross-section, characteristic of the author's architecture – cantilevered overhangs, covered pedestrian routes and entrances, and a pronounced dynamism of massing (Fig. 3). The building is designed on sloping terrain, allowing access to the first floor from the upper street via bridges – another recurring theme in the author's work.

The project brief emphasized rational apartment areas and economic efficiency. Consequently, the service installations are grouped within the units, with ventilation and chimney ducts integrated alongside the vertical shafts, while the design overall aimed to minimize construction interventions within the apartments (Bojović, 1974).

In terms of the organization of residential units, the architect continued to develop the principle he had advocated in the previous project, adapting it to a new concept, smaller floor areas, and significantly reduced spans. Within a structural grid of 5.4 metres, all three apartment types are designed, of which the one-bedroom and two-bedroom units feature circular connection (Fig. 4).

Unfortunately, the present condition of the building is far from its original design intent. Following years of damage, the original

wooden façade and roof covering were initially replaced with asbestos cement panels and, in recent years, the entire building has been clad in corrugated metal, leading to substantial visual degradation.

COMPETITION ENTRY FOR SOLIDARITY APARTMENTS, ZABJELO, PODGORICA, 1973

These years marked an especially intensive creative period for the architect. In 1973, while engaged in the design of the mixed-use building in Žabljak, a national architectural-urban design competition was announced for the residential block "Solidarity Apartments" in Zabjelo, in what was then Titograd. The title of the competition was derived from the broader constitutional framework of socialist self-management, which established housing as a domain of social redistribution based on the principles of solidarity, reciprocity, and workers' self-management (Ustav SFRJ, 1974). In the mid-1980s, during the second phase of self-management, housing became decentralized, introducing a complementary system of "solidarity apartments" alongside socially owned housing. This program functioned as a corrective mechanism for addressing the housing needs of the segments of the population unable to obtain housing through their workplaces (Nikolić, 2023).

The first prize was awarded to the entry by Arsenije Martinović (Markus, 2008: 106), who was also working at the Republic Institute for

FIG. 4 FIRST-FLOOR PLAN FEATURING TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENTS ORGANIZED WITH A CIRCULAR CIRCULATION SCHEME, 1974

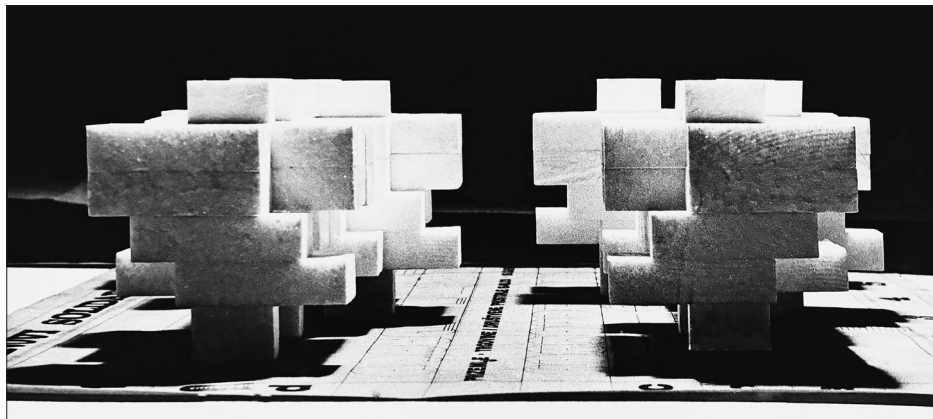


FIG. 5 COMPETITION ENTRY MODEL ILLUSTRATING THE CHARACTERISTIC VOLUMETRIC COMPOSITION OF THE APARTMENT BLOCK, DISTINCTIVE OF THE ARCHITECT'S VOLUMETRIC LANGUAGE, 1973

Urbanism and Design. Bojović's design received the second or third prize¹⁵. In contrast to the competition-winning scheme – subsequently realized between 1974 and 1976 – which structured the buildings along the block perimeter, Bojović proposed a fundamentally different urban concept. The buildings were grouped in the centre, with the ambition of establishing a residential street (Kovacic, 2016) and square, as well as a significant green buffer zone between the housing and the surrounding traffic arteries. The competition entry was submitted under the code PRAXIS and was the author's first competition entry on the topic of multi-family housing and has remained unknown to the professional public to date. At the same time, it anticipates his later competition proposal for Blok 5.

The proposed buildings, four storeys high, are volumetrically distinctive. The massing is adapted to the climatic context for which the project was designed, while access routes and pedestrian circulation around the block is covered over a width of four and a half metres. The architect effectively achieved volumetric dynamism through a characteristic shifting of residential units across the floors, resulting in articulated cross-sections, and leading to cantilevered overhangs and covered pedestrian access (Fig. 5).

The two buildings, positioned opposite each other, consist of three wings each, and are each organized around eleven staircases. The apartments are accessed from a main landing, reflecting the author's characteristic organization of the typical floor with integrated vertical circulation (Knežević, 1989: 29-30). In this project too, the author explores the possibilities of a modular organization of the typical floor and residential units, establishing a modular grid with an axial span of 5.4 metres, allowing for the achievement of a highly dynamic spatial expression, while meeting the required number and structure

of apartments as defined by the competition brief.

Three variants of two-bedroom apartments are provided. Common to all is the circular connection around a centrally designed bathroom and through the kitchen. Three-bedroom apartments follow a similar organizational logic, emerging from the basic two-bedroom module through the addition of a third bedroom and a bathroom (Fig. 6).

HOUSING ESTATE BLOK 5, PODGORICA (1977-1984)

All the above served as a prelude to the to the Blok 5¹⁶, a residential neighbourhood¹⁷ in Podgorica and the author's most well-known work. Unlike the previously discussed projects, in which Bojović also acted as the urban planner, Blok 5 represents the realization of a first-prize competition entry, based on an already adopted detailed urban plan (Fig. 7)¹⁸. Namely, in the context of self-managed socialism, an invited competition for a new residential neighbourhood in Titograd was announced in Montenegro in early 1977, organized by the Investor – Self-Managed Interest Community (SIZ). The Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design participated with three entries, of which Bojović's was consistently submitted under the code PRAXIS.

The competition program required a precise number and structure of apartments and strict adherence to the prescribed floor areas, in accordance with the standards for socially oriented housing. By employing a 6×6-meter module, Bojović's proposal succeeded in meeting all the stipulated programme requirements – 1,800 residential units, ranging in structure from studio (36 m²) to four-bedroom apartments (108 m²) (Bojović and Bajić Šestović, 2020; Jovičević, 2017).

Prior to the competition for Blok 5, the architect spent two years in Paris, working on his

¹⁵ Official data on this competition are scarce, and Bojović, in direct conversation, cannot recall with precision whether his entry received the second or third prize.

¹⁶ Blok 5 is widely regarded as the most renowned housing estate of the socialist period in Montenegro, and it was also recently ranked the most desirable residential area for living in Podgorica, in a survey conducted by a private media outlet (***, 2026). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in scholarly interest.

¹⁷ Blok 5 (originally „Stambena zajednica broj 5 – Krusevac u Titogradu“ – Housing Community number 5 – Krusevac, in Titograd, in English) was planned and designed at the level of a local community with six thousand inhabitants.

¹⁸ The author of the detailed urban plan was architect Vukota Tupa Vukotić, Bojović's colleague from RZUP, where the plan was designed and adopted in 1976.

doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1976). Through the project of this residential neighbourhood, the author continued, in practice, his own research into the relationships between the individual, society, and the city – relationships that Lefebvre had theorized in his seminal works “The Production of Space” (1974) and “The Right to the City” (1968). The focus was placed on the individual, on the role of the user as the central figure around whom both plans, and the city itself are formed (Dragovic, 2018). In this sociologically and politically specific moment for Montenegro, during the period of Yugoslav self-managed socialism – when state policy itself implied the participation of individuals in decision-making – Bojovic considered the involvement of users in the creation of their own living environment to be essential, and introduced the concept of flexibility in residential space, a quality that most clearly distinguished the first-prize proposal (Bojovic and Bajic Šestovic, 2020).

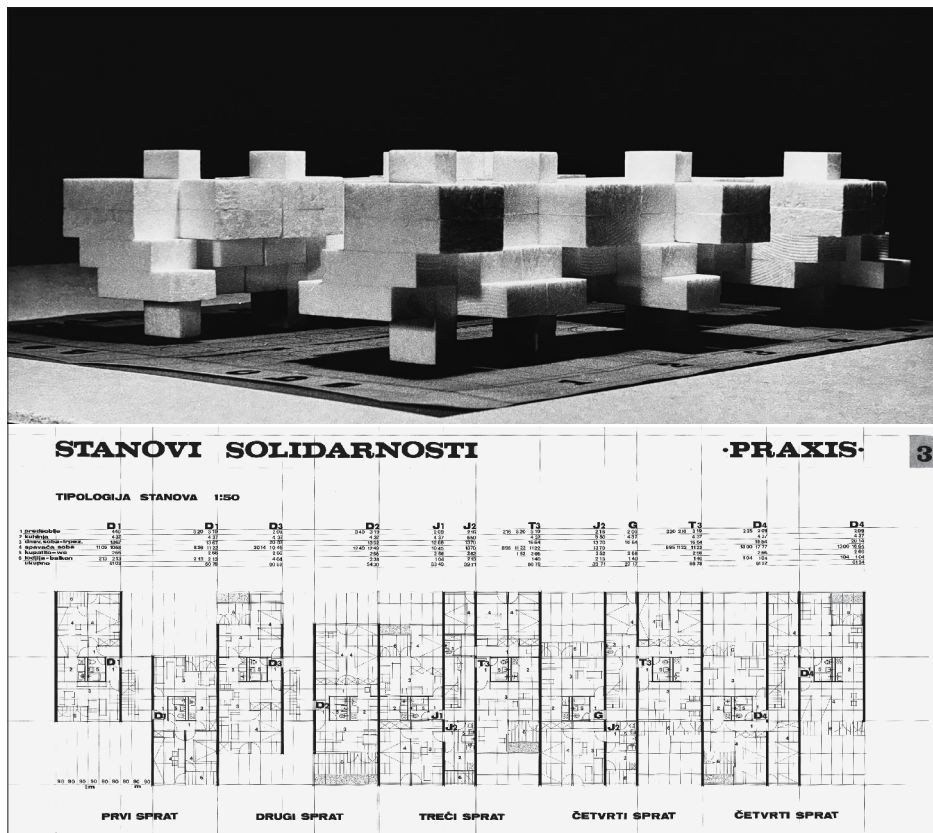
The first level of flexibility lies in the volumetric differentiation of buildings through varying compositions of the same elements, while the second concerns the internal structure of apartments, allowing adaptation to specific needs within a fixed building volume and resulting in a dynamic massing. Overall, the dramatic volumetry of the buildings in this neighbourhood – particularly the five high-rise towers in the central area (Fig. 8), with cantilevered overhangs of up to five meters¹⁹ – constitutes a key spatial quality by which the complex is recognized (Štraus, 1991). The third level of flexibility concerned the possibility of organizing the interior according to the needs of the users.

At the time, Blok 5 represented a major design and construction undertaking for Montenegro. The buildings – thirteen in total, with an overall floor area of 190,000 square metres – were constructed sequentially, with construction

¹⁹ The five-meter cantilevers constituted a structurally demanding solution for the engineers collaborating on the Blok 5 project. Consequently, the Institute of Earthquake Engineering in Skopje, Macedonia, given their experience with the devastating earthquake of 1963, was engaged as a consultant for the structural design throughout the entire process, providing technical verification and full support for the proposed structural system (Bojovic, 2025).

²⁰ The thesis remained unfinished, due to the intensity of the subject matter and retirement of the Mentor. However, its returns were to be evidenced in the author's praxis (Blagojevic, 2017: 143)

²¹ After the longitudinal building A3 had been painted in accordance with the projected chromatic scheme, intended to accentuate its volumetric composition, the process was discontinued by Bojovic's colleagues, and a Commission for Façade Painting was constituted, with the building ultimately repainted (Fig. 10) (Bojovic, 2025).



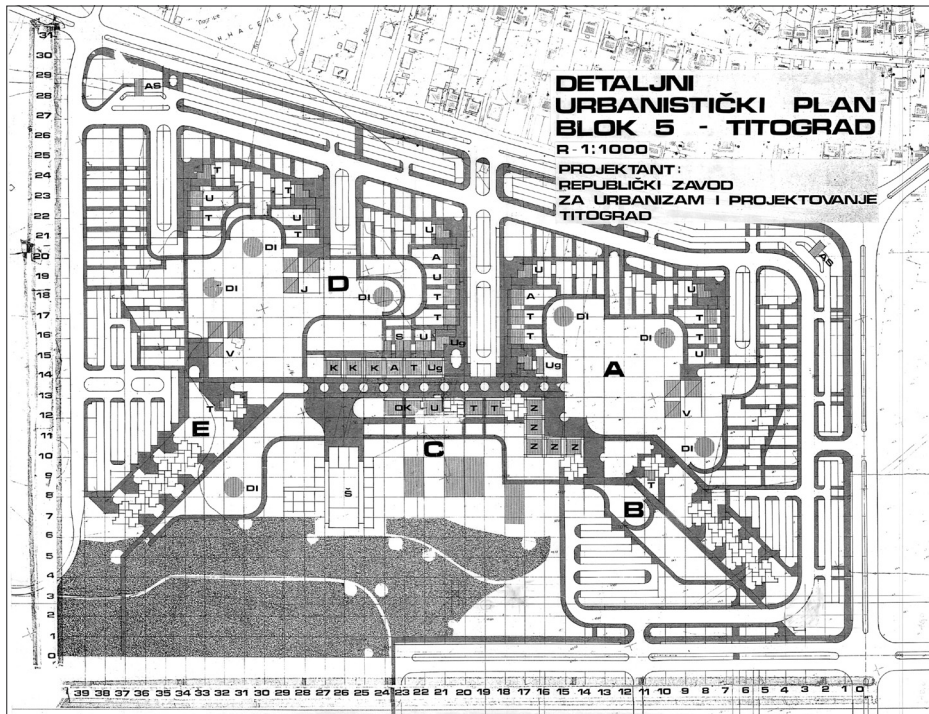


FIG. 7 DETAILED URBAN PLAN OF BLOK 5, AUTHOR ARCHITECT VUKOTA TUPA VUKOTIĆ, 1976

tion process²². (Stamatović and Bojović, 2023; Bojović and Bajić Šestović, 2020).

The basic apartment type, which served as the foundation for an impressive number of variations on the theme, is a two-and-a-half-room apartment organized within an axial grid of 6×14.4 metres, with a centrally positioned fixed wet core, around which the toilet, bathroom, and kitchen are arranged, further enabling circular connection in the majority of apartments (Fig. 10).

Horvat (2020, 2024) argues that this residential neighbourhood can be regarded as one of the most theoretically and practically consistent and enduring examples of (socialist) self-management in Yugoslav mass housing. It undoubtedly represents a realization of praxis – a synthesis of the author's theoretical ambitions and their practical testing, as well as a social advancement aimed at enabling users to identify with their own living environment.

FIG. 8 TWO CENTRAL TOWERS IN BLOK 5, VIEW FROM THE INNER COURTYARD AND FROM THE CENTRAL PARKING SPACE, 1989



CONCLUSION

This paper analyses a segment of the design oeuvre of the Montenegrin architect Mileta Bojović, through the example of four architectural works from the very beginning of the author's professional career. Particular emphasis is placed on the continuity of ideas that the author consistently tested through his practice. Bojović persistently embedded his own research into his buildings, exploring the underlying principles of production of space, that is, the individual-society-city-architecture nexus. Furthermore, the analyses clearly demonstrate that each project represents a form of contextual architecture, while simultaneously remaining avant-garde²³ in terms of its programme, volumetric expression and massing dynamics, as well as its functional organization. Norberg-Schulz (1982) argues that to connect with a place means to care for that place. For him, true architecture is an architecture of care – an architecture of participation that helps individuals realize their role as inhabitants. Bojović's architecture emerges from a deep and multi-layered understanding of the socio-spatial context, particularly that of his hometown, Žabljak, with a clear ambition to enhance people's habits, values, and needs through urban planning and architecture.

In terms of form, the dynamism of massing is a result of a reflective approach to (architectural) space and to living within that space – cantilevered overhangs, covered pedestrian circulation, and the articulation and fragmentation of volumes in response to the inherited context collectively produce an architectural expression of markedly dynamic, and at times even dramatic, volumetry. The theme is even more complex given that it concerns housing, the most sensitive task for any architect. The author approaches it with the ambition of fostering a sense of community,

²² Within the broader European context, Bojović's work aligns with a wider shift toward participatory, socially engaged housing, distinguished by its grounding in Yugoslav self-management. In the United Kingdom, Ralph Erskine designed the Byker Wall (1969), where future residents took part in shaping their homes through a pilot project, emphasizing the social dimension of housing (Erskine, 2009). In Belgium, Lucien Kroll collaborated with residents on La Mémé, linking participation to the protests of May 1968 (Turkkul, 2022). In Italy, Villaggio Matteotti (1969-1975), designed by Giancarlo De Carlo with Domenico De Masi, followed similar participatory principles (Felci, 2015). In theory, John Habraken (1972) proposed separating collective "support" from individual infill, opposing mass housing uniformity – an approach resonant with Yona Friedman's utopian projects (Cline and di Carlo, 2002), both aiming to restore social agency in housing design.

²³ Bojović (2024) argues that architecture is, by its very nature, predisposed to the avant-garde, since it is designed only in part for its own time and predominantly for the future – for generations yet to come.



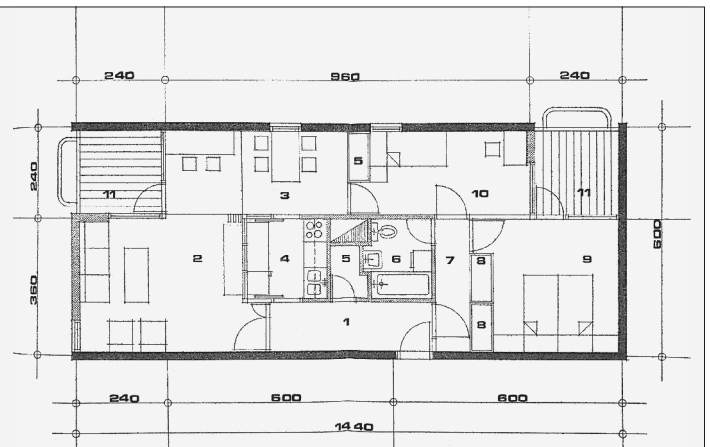
the individuation of spatial units and enabling users to identify with the space, so that its appropriation may be as complete as possible. At the level of the apartment itself, the elimination of segregation generates a fluid, more humane space, multiply interconnected and open to interpretation – a space of pronounced qualitative, that is, use value.

Bojović’s fundamental orientation is grounded in praxis, incorporating user participation in decision-making regarding their own living environment, as well as a conceptual openness of architectural space to accommodate future needs. Within the context of socialist

self-management, such an approach aligned with the prevailing ideological framework, with the conviction that every society produces its own space (Lefebvre, 1974), albeit marked by an inevitable tension with established traditional Montenegrin spatial practices. In conclusion, the architectural oeuvre of architect Mileta Bojović is grounded in consistent theoretical convictions and clearly shaped by artistic tendencies, positioned between the spirit of space and the spirit of the time (Bojović, 2006). Thus, as Norberg-Schulz (1982) argues, architecture becomes a work of art precisely when it reveals the spatiality of the lived universe. The foregoing analysis reinforces its contemporary relevance.

FIG. 9 TYPOLOGY OF THE APARTMENTS IN ELONGATED BUILDING D2, RANGING FROM STUDIO TO THREE BEDROOM APARTMENTS. APARTMENTS FEATURE FLEXIBLE LAYOUT DUE TO FIXED CENTRAL CORE AND REMOVABLE PARTITIONS. MOST UNITS ARE CONCEIVED WITH CIRCULAR CONNECTION

FIG. 10 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ELONGATED BUILDING A3, WITH SEGMENTS PAINTED IN THE ORIGINAL COLOUR SCHEME (1978), FOLLOWED BY THE BASIC TWO-AND-A-HALF BEDROOM APARTMENT, FEATURING CIRCULAR CONNECTION



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ORAL STATEMENTS

1. MILETA BOJOVIĆ (2025) – conversations with the first author.

ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

- FIG. 1, 7, 8, 10 Private archive of Mileta Bojović
- FIG. 2 Drawing by the author
- FIG. 3 Google street view image – left; *Stambeno-poslovni objekat u Žabljaku, glavni projekat Arhitekture, 1974* – right, private archive of Mileta Bojović
- FIG. 4 *Stambeno-poslovni objekat u Žabljaku, glavni projekat Arhitekture, 1974*, private archive of Mileta Bojović
- FIG. 5, 6 Competition entry material, private archive of Mileta Bojović
- FIGURE 9 Republički zavod za urbanizam i projektovanje

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Conceptualization, M.B.; methodology, M.B. and I.R.; validation, M.B. and I.R.; formal analysis, M.B. and I.R.; investigation, M.B.; resources, M.B.; data curation, M.B. and I.R.; writing – original draft preparation, M.B.; writing – review and editing, M.B. and I.R.; visualization, M.B.; supervision, M.B. and I.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.”

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