

PROSTOR

34 [2026] 1 [71]

A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING
ZNASTVENI ČASOPIS ZA ARHITEKTURU I URBANIZAM

UNIVERSITY
OF ZAGREB
FACULTY OF
ARCHITECTURE
SVEUČILIŠTE
U ZAGREBU
ARHITEKTONSKI
FAKULTET

ISSN 1330-0652
[https://doi.org/
10.31522/p](https://doi.org/10.31522/p)
CODEN PORREV
UDC 71/72
34 [2026] 1 [71]
1-146
1-6 [2026]

29-41

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THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM
IN THE ARCHITECTURAL OEUVE OF RADOSAV ZEKOVIĆ

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER
[https://doi.org/10.31522/p.34.1\(71\).3](https://doi.org/10.31522/p.34.1(71).3)
UDC 72.01:72.02 R. Zeković (497.16)“19”



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ARTICLE RECEIVED / REVISED / ACCEPTED: 12. 12. 2025. / 24. 2. 2026. / 22. 4. 2026.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM IN THE ARCHITECTURAL OEUVRE OF RADOSAV ZEKOVIĆ

KEYWORDS

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
CRITICAL REGIONALISM
MODERNISM
RADOSAV ZEKOVIĆ
YUGOSLAV ARCHITECTURE

ABSTRACT

Radosav Zeković's (1930-2010) architectural oeuvre constitutes a highly significant corpus within Montenegro's modernist legacy. This paper examines the approach through which Zeković, operating amid radical socio-political transformations, transposed the symbolic values of context while striving to articulate spatial and historical continuity. His architectural production is notably diverse, revealing a distinct approach to contextual architectural reasoning that positions him among the most notable proponents of critical regionalism in the region. Through his realized works, Zeković introduced a distinctive, personalized form of modern architecture into Montenegrin cities,

emphasizing the creation of an authentic, locally grounded contemporary urban identity. In some of his works, principles of his mentor's architectural approaches can be observed, as shall be analyzed in the following sections. The aim is to present the architectural oeuvre of Radosav Zeković and emphasize the importance of preserving his buildings as part of the cultural and architectural heritage, especially at a time when Montenegrin cities are exposed to globalization processes that frequently result in the transformation and falsification of identity. In this regard, critical regionalism may hold a crucial role in shaping contemporary architectural practice.

INTRODUCTION

Architect Radosav Zeković (1930-2010), both through his professional biography and architectural oeuvre, occupies a leading position among Montenegrin architects, despite the lack of systematic research covering his complete built work. His most acclaimed projects remain among the most distinguished examples of architecture in Montenegrin cities. This paper identifies the lesser-known architectural corpus of Radosav Zeković. Special attention shall be paid to tourist facilities (hotels), with reference to the spatial framework of cities of that period, in which tourism was the leading development resource, and hotel architecture created the identity of cities. The goal is to demonstrate the architect's place within the modern architectural tradition through the mapped works, while simultaneously highlighting the pronounced characteristics of critical regionalism¹. The objective is to clarify the origins of critical regionalist thought within his oeuvre, which reflects the interaction between global modernist influences and local specificities. By examining the collected material, much of it previously unpublished and provided by the Zeković family, this research reveals the significant role he played in shaping the visual identity of Montenegrin cities and in maintaining the spatial continuity he consistently advocated. The research aims to advance knowledge of Montenegro's architectural heritage and to underscore the impor-

tance of Zeković's oeuvre, whose value exceeds regional boundaries.

As a rare representative of critical regionalism in Montenegro, his work requires adequate protection and valorization, particularly at a time when many of his buildings face removal or inappropriate transformations. The fact that his creative oeuvre has not yet been fully examined highlights the necessity and justification for addressing this topic. Several important contributions² have been published on his distinctive architectural expression, whereby architect Ivica Mladenović, in the book '11 Prominent Architects of Yugoslavia' (Mladenović, 1989), explicitly lists Zeković among the eleven leading Yugoslav architects, affirming his position as one of the most significant authors of that milieu. Similarly, *The Lexicon of Fine Arts of Montenegro* notes that his work captured the attention of distinguished theorists and critics, such as Udo Kultermann, who highlighted Zeković as an especially important architect within the Yugoslav context in his book *Zeitgenössische Architektur in Osteuropa* (Mitrović, 2021).

The methodological framework is based on a combination of approaches grounded in a comparative analysis of both theoretical and practical examples to identify the genetic code and contextual elements embedded in his modernist reasoning. Therefore, it is important to reconsider the concepts and methods advanced by theorists of critical regionalism. Rural, traditional (vernacular) architecture is approached as a source of underlying principles rather than formal models, whose reinterpretation allows for continuity instead of rupture. In this sense, the Mediterranean is understood as a space that mediates between universal modernism and local identity (Lejeune and Sabatino, 2009). Critical regionalism represents a form of resistance to the homogenization and uniformity of global architecture, safeguarding regional cultural identity while maintaining a strong connec-

¹ Critical regionalism: The roots of the philosophy of critical regionalism go back to the phenomenology of French theoretician Paul Ricour, and its theoretical basis was developed in the works of architect Christian Norberg-Schulz (1963), *Intentions in Architecture; Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980), as well as in theorists Frampton, K. (1983). *Towards Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance*. In *The Anti Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, and Archetypes in Architecture*, 1987 by Thomas Thiis-Evensen.

² Manević, 2000; Markus, 2008: 84-88; Stiller, 2013; Radonjić, 2021.

³ Born on June 28, 1930 in Slatina near Andrijevica (Montenegro). He was arrested as a high school student at the age of 18 and spent several years as a political prisoner on Goli Otok, from which he returned with a disability and consequently spent two years in a

tion to the local context (Canizaro, 2007). Canizaro refers to this as a *sense of place*, emphasizing the importance of spatial experience as well as the authenticity of materials and construction techniques, which is clearly evident in several of Zeković's works. Ranko Radović argues that every new space should evoke curiosity, invite exploration, and encourage interaction (Radović, 1990), thereby rendering space dynamic and open to the unexpected. Regionalist theorists have long emphasized the importance of a sense of belonging to place, which reinforces spatial identity (Umbach and Huppau, 2005). In this regard, an approach that mediates between vernacular values and global modernist tendencies emerges as key to articulating an architectural language. This ultimately suggests that modernism should not be understood as a fixed style, but rather as a heterogeneous and open-ended framework of responses (Umbach and Huppau, 2005).

REVIEWING THE ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY OF RADOSAV ZEKOVIĆ

To understand Zeković's architectural approach, it is necessary to consider his distinctive biographical trajectory³, which shaped his diverse architectural production. He enrolled at the Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo in 1956, where Professor Juraj Neidhardt (1901-1979), a student and later colleague of German architect Peter Behrens (Vienna, 1930-32), quickly recognized his exceptional talent. Under Neidhardt's mentorship, Zeković completed his diploma project on 28 June 1960, designing the "Ivangrad" Hotel (today Hotel Berane), constructed two years later on the banks of the Lim River, which serves as a central case study for this research.

At the age of thirty, he declined the opportunity to pursue an academic career and returned to his hometown to establish the Urban Planning Institute of Ivangrad. The late

hospital in Rovinj. After that, he enrolled in the program study Yugoslav literature at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, and published a couple of significant literary works, *Tales from Bare Island* (1998); *Devil's Time* (2000); *Silent Hell* (2008).

⁴ Božidar Milić, one of the authors of the book: "Architecture of the 20th Century", states: "In the 1960s and early 1970s, generations of Montenegrin architects graduated from Yugoslav universities (Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo) who took a leading role in the urbanism and architecture of Montenegro. Its most important representatives are: Bajo Mirković, Ksenija Radović, Nada Radović, Anđelija Pavićević, Đorđije Minjević, Milorad Vukotić, Vukota Vukotić, Jovan Milošević, Božidar Milić, Ilija Šćepanović, Slobodan Vukajlović, Svetlana-Kana Radević, Milan Popović, Pavle Popović, Mileta Bojović, Batrić Mijović, Milorad Petijević, Vasilije Knežević, Vladimir Plamenac, Radosav Zeković, Nikola Drakić, Predrag Dmitrović."



1950s and early 1960s marked a formative period of Montenegrin architecture, as many architects returned to Montenegro and later came to define its architectural identity⁴. During his tenure at the Urban Planning Institute (1960-1968), Zeković designed and built numerous projects, representing Montenegro in the international project "South Adriatic." In 1968, he relocated to Belgrade and founded an architectural office within the foreign trade company *Industrija Import Titograd*, which later evolved into the design bureau *Beoplan*. From 1990 until his retirement in 1997, he worked at *Kablar Engineering*, contributing to a series of projects in Russia and Ukraine (Radonjić, 2021).

This research focuses primarily on Zeković's architectural oeuvre realized in Montenegro, which encompasses some of the most valuable works of Montenegrin architectural heritage. His dispersed architectural production is dominated by tourist facilities particularly in northern Montenegro, which, through their form and siting, have become identity markers of their respective urban contexts. Among his most notable works are: the "Ivangrad" Hotel (diploma project, completed 1962); Motel Jelovica, near Berane (1963); Hotel Sandžak, Phase I in Bijelo Polje (1967) and Phase II, co-authored with Z. Petrović and A. Radojević (1972); Hotel Rožaje in Rožaje (1971); Hotel Bjelasica in Kolašin (1979); Motel Petnjica, co-authored with Ervin Zeković (1986); and Motel Lokve in Berane (1980-1986).

His impressive oeuvre also extends to commercial and public buildings. Notably, Business Complex with Bank in Ivangrad (Fig. 1.a.), co-authored with Zlatko Ugljen and J. Finci (designed in 1966, completed in 1979), demonstrating the dynamic and collaborative character of the Yugoslav architectural scene. In addition, he designed the Terminal Building of Berane Airport (1963) in Ivangrad (today Berane). Zeković's remarkable versatility across architectural typologies is evidenced by his authorship of numerous mixed-use residential and commercial buildings, as well

FIGURE 1 A. BANK IN IVANGRAD, 1966-1979; B. RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDING IN BIJELO POLJE

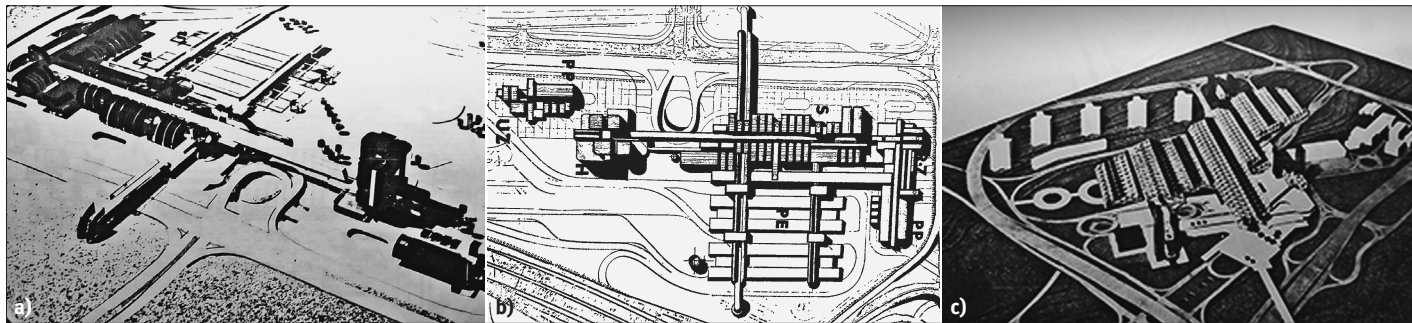


FIGURE 2 A. COMPETITION, 2ND PRIZE, "JUG" BUS STATION, BELGRADE, MODEL 1977; B.C. COMPETITION ENTRY FOR THE PROKOP RAILWAY STATION IN BELGRADE, 3RD PRIZE

as residential complexes throughout Yugoslavia. Notable examples include the residential complex opposite the bank in Ivangrad (1966) and a distinctive mixed-use residential building in Bijelo Polje (Fig. 1.b.), co-authored with Ervin Zeković (1982-1988).

Zeković's active engagement in northern Montenegro also led to the construction of the Veletrgovina commercial building in Kolašin (1983). Among his administrative projects, the headquarters of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro (CKSKCG)⁵, for which he obtained the Republic "Borba" Award for Architecture in 1979 (Kolacio, 1980b). Although this building is not the subject of this research, as it does not belong to critical regionalism, it is important to highlight its significance as the crown of Zeković's oeuvre. This project demonstrates that the architect had a profound understanding of the principles of modern architecture that dominated Yugoslav cities at the time, particularly in the representative building of Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (CK SKJ Novi Beograd, 1964), CK SKH Zagreb (1963-68), CK SK Skoplje (1968-1970). In this building, Zeković showcased his mastery of the language of functional and spatially expressive modernism, clearly connecting his work to the broader context of Yugoslav modernism between the two world wars, while also confirming his ability to apply contemporary architectural principles in an ambitious significant state building. The distinguished Croatian architect Zdenko Kolacio reviewed this building in the journal *Arhitektura*, offering a critical assessment of its architectural expression (Kolacio, 1980a). Architectural theorist Adolf Stiller further evaluated the building as an exceptional work of modern architecture, not only within the Yugoslav context but on the European scale⁶.

He also produced multiple competition entries that received international recognition, including the Belgrade Bus Station project, awarded Third Prize (co-authored with Aleksandar Đokić, 1977), as well as the design proposal for the Prokop Railway Station in

Belgrade (Fig. 2). These projects reveal a continuity in addressing formal and spatial challenges, exemplified by Zeković's strategies of volumetric hierarchy and spatial organization, particularly evident in the CKSKCG building in Titograd (Fig. 3).

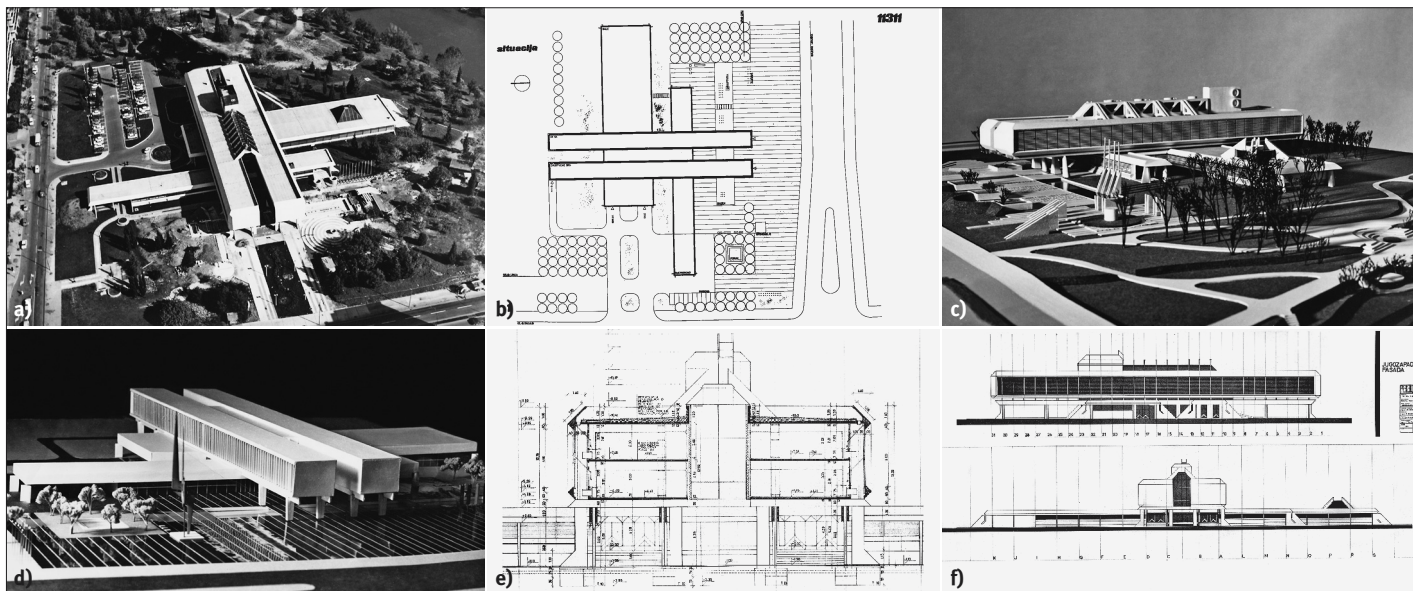
Zeković's oeuvre, in addition to receiving the Borba Award, earned him numerous professional and state recognitions⁷. A special acknowledgment of his architectural contribution lies in the exhibitions where his projects were presented to an international audience: Vienna (2013), MoMA New York (2018), and the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale. He passed away in Belgrade on 28 June 2010, after fifty years devoted to architectural practice.

The following section provides a tabular overview of all available architectural works of architect Zeković, including both realized and unrealized projects, as well as those in which he participated as a coauthor. However, in the subsequent discussion, only those works that feature elements of critical regionalism shall be analyzed, as they represent a significant and key contribution of Zeković to Montenegrin architecture, which is also the subject of this paper.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SARAJEVO SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND JURAJ NEIDHARDT ON THE MODERNIST OEUVRE OF RADOSAV ZEKOVIĆ

As previously noted, upon returning to Ivangrad from Sarajevo, Zeković was presented with the opportunity to construct the city's central hotel. A series of circumstances led to

⁵ As a very young architect, at the Yugoslav architectural competition, Zeković won the prestigious first prize, which was followed by the realization in 1975 – 1979. The jury, consisting of architects Pavle Popović, Novak Jovović, Špir Milević and editor Slavko Vukasinović, particularly emphasizes the project due to its clear functional approach, consistent design, rational use of materials, respect for the quality of the location and adaptation to contemporary needs, Borba (Kolacio, 1980a).



the realization of his diploma project, with certain modifications, in 1962. The building was among the first in that region of Montenegro to display marked modernist features, amid an urban fabric long defined by Ottoman and traditional Montenegrin vernacular influences. Zeković's inaugural architectural gesture thus embodied a radical modernist approach: a pure cubic volume positioned along the riverbank of the Lim (Fig. 4.a.b.). He aligned the building with the linearity of the riverbank, accentuating it through a deep ground-floor canopy, evocative of prominent architectural references of the period. This gesture visually separates the hotel room block above, establishing a strong and dominant base within the urban landscape.

In the context of openness to the functionalist tendencies of the time, the deep eaves of the restaurant terrace of the Hotel Berane, its rational function and strong façade grid, suggest possible analogies with the works of the modernists whose postulates were adopted by his teacher Neidhardt, as well as with certain examples of modern Dutch architecture, especially in the treatment of horizontality and pronounced structural articulation. This can be seen through the rational organization of the functional program, which will also

be represented in all subsequent projects, as typical for modernist functionalism. Zeković can be analyzed as part of the wider System of Yugoslav tourist architecture, whereby his solutions confirm or partially interpret given typological and spatial patterns, which can be seen in the theoretical analyzes of Bao Zhi Fang (Zhi Fang, 1983). All his hotels have a clear functional organization, plan of rooms, public spaces, while the facade, roofs and materials reflect vernacular elements and local values. Zeković's modernist approach in the diploma project likely rooted in the direct influence of his mentor Juraj Neidhardt, widely recognized as the ideological successor of Le Corbusier in the Balkans. Le Corbusier in the preface of the book 'Architecture of Bosnia and the way of modernity' criticized folklore and imitative approaches and emphasized the importance of the design method: 'The method of continuity of spirit, continuity of evolution, including the revolution that marks that path' (Gabrijan and Neidhardt, 1957: 7). In the framework of the overview of Bosnian architecture of the 20th century, Neidhardt is considered a key figure in connecting modernism with regional tradition (Manević et al., 1986). However, Neidhardt's critical interpretation of modernism did not accept the universal modernist language literally; but rather, he adapted it to the local context, climate, and cultural patterns, demonstrating sensitivity toward local tradition and material authenticity (Novaković, 2024). Neidhardt employed regional natural and cultural characteristics, such as topography, landscape, ambience, instead of applying a uniform modernist formula (Zatirć, 2024). Parallels in the treatment of form, particularly

FIGURE 3 A. BUILDING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO, TITOGRAD, REALIZATION; B. DRAWING, SITE PLAN; C. MODEL; D. MODEL OF THE COMPETITION ENTRY; E. SECTION; F. FACADE VIEWS

6 The building of the CKSKCG (2013) was exhibited at the exhibition titled Montenegro: Kontrast Landschaft, Architecture of Montenegro in Vienna, and Adolf Stiller was the curator of the exhibition.

7 Ivangrad "July 21" Award (1966); Rozaje SO "September 30" award (1972); Award of SO Kolašin "December 29" (1979); Large plaque of the Association of Fighters of Yugoslavia (SUBNOR) "for monuments and memorials"... He was also a prominent member of the Association of Serbian Architects (ASA).

TABLE I OVERVIEW OF ALL RADOSAV ZEKOVIĆ'S AVAILABLE PROJECTS

Architectural project	Location	Year of realization	Status
Hotel "Ivangrad" (diploma project)	Berane (formerly Ivangrad), Montenegro	1962	Modified In use
Motel Jelovica	Near Berane, Montenegro	1963	Not in use
Terminal Building of Berane Airport	Berane, Montenegro	1963	Devastated Not in use
Hotel Sandzak , Phase I co-authored with Z. Petrović and A. Radojević	Bijelo Polje, Montenegro	1967	Modified Not in use Commercial/restaurant use only
Residential buildings settlement Bele Vode (co-authorship with Dobrivoje Miljević, project organization Industrija import Inženjering)	Belgrade, Serbia	1970	In use
Hotel Rozaje	Rozaje, Montenegro	1971	Modified Not in use
Hotel Sandzak , Phase II, co-authored with Z. Petrović and A. Radojević	Bijelo Polje, Montenegro	1972	Modified Not in use Commercial/restaurant use only
The Otoka Hotel project , (co-authored with Vesna Vuica)	Durmitor, Žabljak, Montenegro	1972 Unrealized project	Unrealized project
Prokop Railway Station in Belgrade (Co-authors with unknown team, according to the information from Ervin Zeković)	Belgrade, Serbia	1975 Competition entries Awarded Third Prize Unrealized project	Competition entry – Third Prize Unrealized project
Bus Station "Jug" Belgrade (co-authored with Aleksandar Dokić and collaborators)	Belgrade, Serbia	1977 Competition entries Awarded Third Prize Unrealized	Competition entry – Third Prize Unrealized project
Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro (CKSKCG) Republic "Borba" Award for Architecture (Kolacio, 1980b)	Podgorica, Capital of Montenegro	1979	Functional transformation *Currently undergoing adaptation and conversion into a facility for the Special State Prosecutor Building (procurement/tendering process ongoing).
Hotel Bjelasica	Kolasin, Montenegro	1979	Modified In function
Business Complex with Bank co-authored with Zlatko Ugljen and J. Finci	Berane (former Ivangrad), Montenegro	1979	In function
Reconstruction of the prewar hotel Komovi	Andrijevica, Montenegro	1982	In function
Commercial building "Veletrgovina"	Kolasin, Montenegro	1983	In function
Mixed-use residential building , co-authored with Ervin Zeković	Bijelo Polje, Montenegro	1982-1988	In function
Motel Petnjica , co-authored with Ervin Zeković	Petnjica, Montenegro	1986	Not in function

the pronounced separation between the ground floor and the upper volumes, can be observed in Neidhardt's Faculty of Philosophy building in Sarajevo (Fig. 4.c.), while the specificity of this influence is further evidenced in his reinterpretation of the Bosnian house (Fig. 4.d.).

A similar architectural method can be identified in Neidhardt's Hotel Metalurg in Zenica (1967) (Fig. 4.e.), particularly in its pronounced linear podium from which accommodation units rise, articulated through repetitive windows and balconies, parallels that resonate with Zeković's approach in Hotel Berane. These correspondences indicate shared modernist design principles characteristic of the period. The significance of the Hotel Berane project lies primarily in its introduction of architectural modernism to northern Montenegro, a context in which such a

language had not previously existed. Although early in his career Zeković strongly displayed modernist influences shaped during his studies in Sarajevo, his subsequent architectural responses in northern Montenegro increasingly incorporated elements of critical regionalism, grounded in contextual sensitivity. Zeković neither applied modernist principles uncritically nor romanticized tradition; rather, he remained attentive to the overwhelming natural context of the northern region, which profoundly influenced his spatial perception and architectural expression. This approach is further exemplified in his award-winning design for the republican competition organized by the Association of Architects of Montenegro for the CKSKCG building in Titograd (Fig. 3). While the building appears to be a quintessential modernist and structuralist work, the conceptual sketch

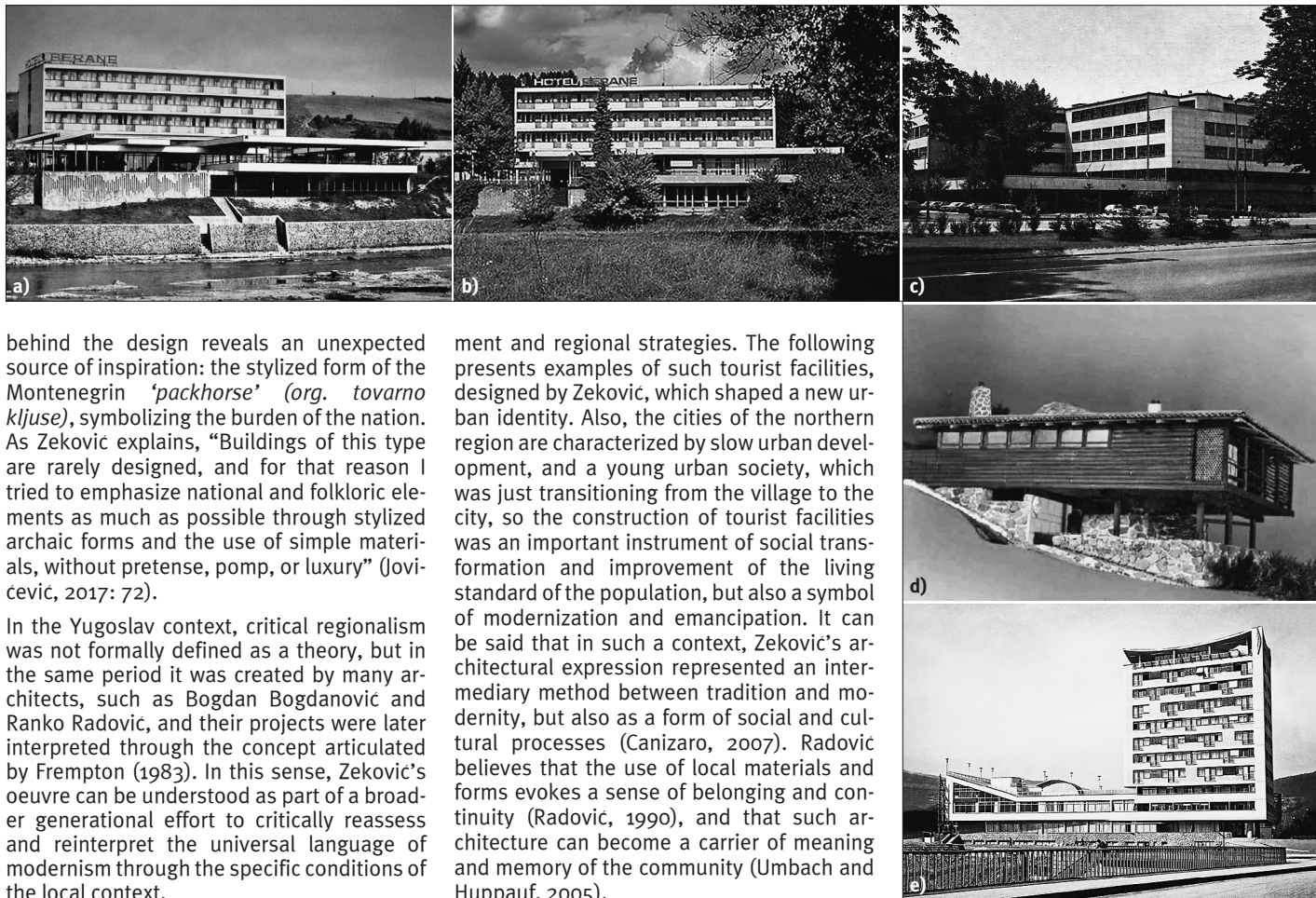


FIGURE 4 A.B. HOTEL IVANGRAD, REALIZED DIPLOMA PROJECT; C. FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, SARAJEVO (1959); D. SKI HOUSE ON TREBEVIĆ; E. HOTEL METALURG, ZENICA (1967).

behind the design reveals an unexpected source of inspiration: the stylized form of the Montenegrin *'packhorse'* (*org. tovarno kljuse*), symbolizing the burden of the nation. As Zeković explains, "Buildings of this type are rarely designed, and for that reason I tried to emphasize national and folkloric elements as much as possible through stylized archaic forms and the use of simple materials, without pretense, pomp, or luxury" (Jovičević, 2017: 72).

In the Yugoslav context, critical regionalism was not formally defined as a theory, but in the same period it was created by many architects, such as Bogdan Bogdanović and Ranko Radović, and their projects were later interpreted through the concept articulated by Frempton (1983). In this sense, Zeković's oeuvre can be understood as part of a broader generational effort to critically reassess and reinterpret the universal language of modernism through the specific conditions of the local context.

CRITICAL REGIONALISM AND THE USE OF METAPHOR AS A RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

To better understand Zeković's architecture, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the socio-spatial context in the cities where he built, but also to analyze the key methods of critical regionalism, which Zeković knew and applied.

Tourism development in the SFRJ was a fundamental factor shaping architecture and urbanism, where tourist facilities became not only functional accommodation capacities but also strong visual and symbolic markers of urban identity, particularly during periods of intensified tourism policies and planning after World War II (Antešević, 2022). Antešević emphasizes that the intensive construction of such facilities was linked to ambitions for socio-economic development through tourism. This is clearly reflected in the Northern Montenegrin context, whereby in the decades after the 1950s, dominant hotel facilities emerged as instrument of local develop-

ment and regional strategies. The following presents examples of such tourist facilities, designed by Zeković, which shaped a new urban identity. Also, the cities of the northern region are characterized by slow urban development, and a young urban society, which was just transitioning from the village to the city, so the construction of tourist facilities was an important instrument of social transformation and improvement of the living standard of the population, but also a symbol of modernization and emancipation. It can be said that in such a context, Zeković's architectural expression represented an intermediary method between tradition and modernity, but also as a form of social and cultural processes (Canizaro, 2007). Radović believes that the use of local materials and forms evokes a sense of belonging and continuity (Radović, 1990), and that such architecture can become a carrier of meaning and memory of the community (Umbach and Huppau, 2005).

Following the completion Hotel Berane, he demonstrated a more mature approach, less rigidly modernist and more deeply contextual. An analysis of his most notable projects, discussed in the following sections, reveals that he did not employ predefined design mechanisms or typological formulas, which explains the remarkable diversity of his architectural oeuvre, encompassing various forms and expressions. A key determinant of this diversity was the influence of nature, which played a decisive role in shaping his architectural language (Mitrović, 2021). His architecture does not seek reference in pre-existing models; rather, it emerges from a nuanced reading of local and natural contexts, whose programmatic requirements he masterfully composes into expressive architectural forms. Thus, his oeuvre, highly varied and never repetitive, represents a synthesis of place and the architect's ability to render it in spatially distinct manifestations. This explains why his hotel architecture in northern Montenegro is defined by strong and dynamic forms. Although he consciously introduced recognizable traditional motifs, he simultaneously

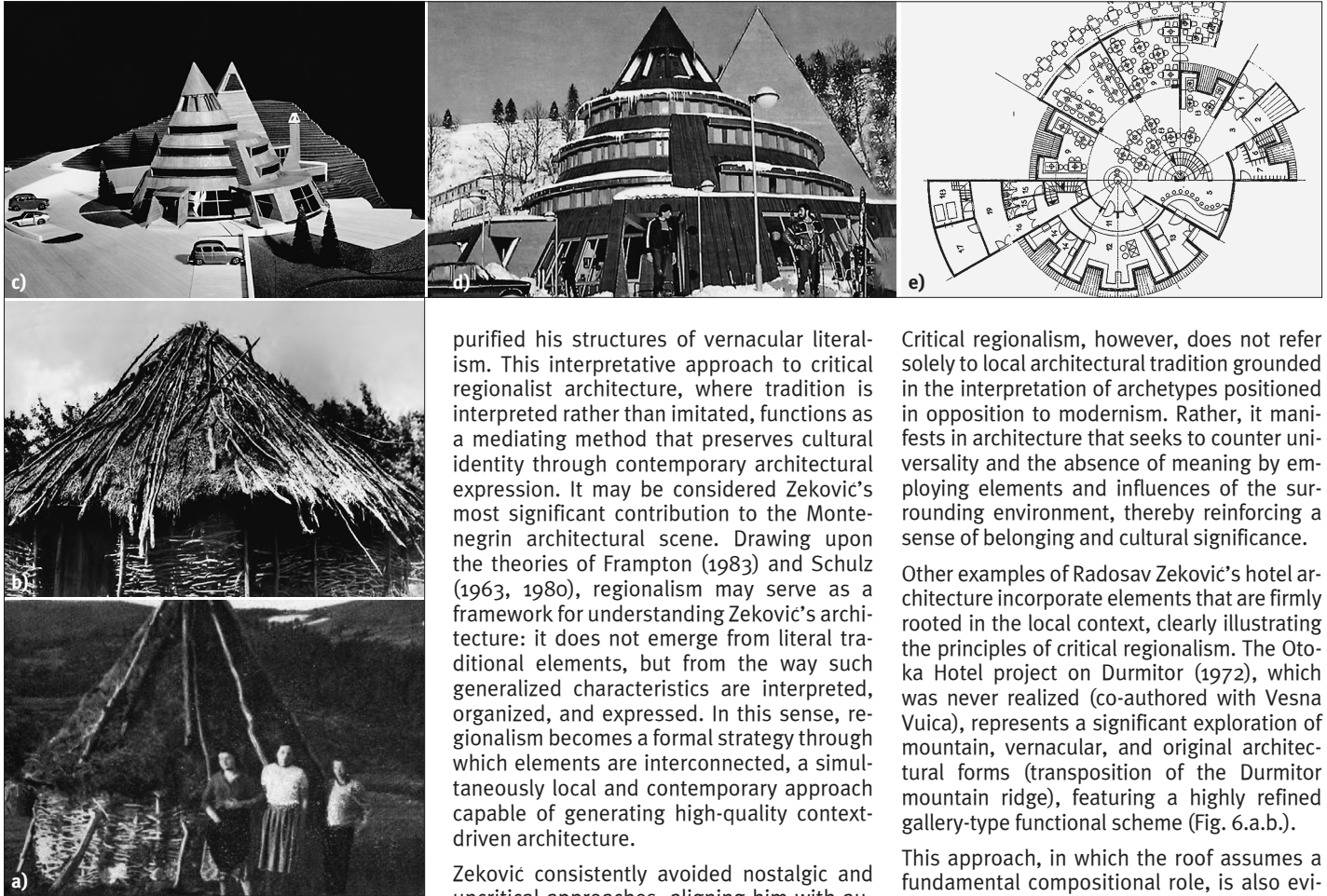


FIGURE 5
 A. THE PLOTTER'S HOUSE IN THE VILLAGE OF DRAGOSAVA NEAR BERANE;
 B. DUBIROG IN BIHOR;
 C. HOTEL, LOKVE: MODEL;
 D. HOTEL LOKVE: BUILT FORM;
 E. HOTEL LOKVE: TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

purified his structures of vernacular literalism. This interpretative approach to critical regionalist architecture, where tradition is interpreted rather than imitated, functions as a mediating method that preserves cultural identity through contemporary architectural expression. It may be considered Zeković's most significant contribution to the Montenegrin architectural scene. Drawing upon the theories of Frampton (1983) and Schulz (1963, 1980), regionalism may serve as a framework for understanding Zeković's architecture: it does not emerge from literal traditional elements, but from the way such generalized characteristics are interpreted, organized, and expressed. In this sense, regionalism becomes a formal strategy through which elements are interconnected, a simultaneously local and contemporary approach capable of generating high-quality context-driven architecture.

Zeković consistently avoided nostalgic and uncritical approaches, aligning him with authors of '*mediatory regionalism*' such as his colleague Zlatko Ugljen, also a student of Juraj Neidhardt. Ugljen's work embodies 'a profound engagement with the intersection of regional identity and universal architectural values', synthesizing traditional principles with modernist expression through a continuous interplay of spatial and cultural meanings (Bradić, 2025). He cultivated a restrained, resistant form of modernism, a quality also found in Zeković's work, where stylized archaic forms reinterpret the robust morphology of the Dinaric landscape.

The hotel typology provided Zeković with a flexible framework for experimentation with form and materialization, resulting in sculpturally expressive works that deeply shaped the visual identity of the cities in which they were constructed. This approach is particularly evident in the Motel Lokve (1980-1986), conceived as a reminiscence of the traditional *dubirog-savardak* (Fig. 5.a.b.), marking a phase in which the architect began transposing traditional spatial schemes and forms into a contemporary architectural language (Fig. 5.c-e.).

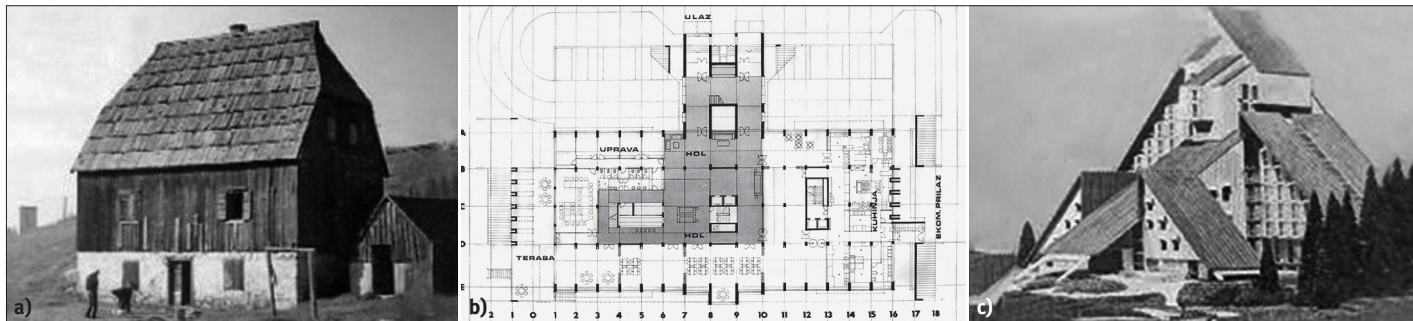
Critical regionalism, however, does not refer solely to local architectural tradition grounded in the interpretation of archetypes positioned in opposition to modernism. Rather, it manifests in architecture that seeks to counter universality and the absence of meaning by employing elements and influences of the surrounding environment, thereby reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural significance.

Other examples of Radosav Zeković's hotel architecture incorporate elements that are firmly rooted in the local context, clearly illustrating the principles of critical regionalism. The Otoka Hotel project on Durmitor (1972), which was never realized (co-authored with Vesna Vuica), represents a significant exploration of mountain, vernacular, and original architectural forms (transposition of the Durmitor mountain ridge), featuring a highly refined gallery-type functional scheme (Fig. 6.a.b.).

This approach, in which the roof assumes a fundamental compositional role, is also evident in the design of the Petnjica Motel (1986), a collaboration between Radosav Zeković and Ervin Zeković. In this project, the architects drew upon dominant elements of the Petnjica landscape and the traditional houses of the Bihor region. These influences are expressed through the adoption of a massive, hipped roof, effectively transposing the archetype of the local vernacular house into a larger-scale architectural articulation.

Conversely, the "Bjelasica" Hotel in Kolašin (1979) appears as a conceptual extension of the Otoka project, the outcome of the collaborative team of Radosav Zeković and Đorđe Mitrović. The dynamically modeled form of Hotel Bjelasica shaped in response to the Bjelasica mountain range (Fig. 7.b.) and the prominent peaks of the Kolašin landscape, exhibits a pyramidal reduction towards an imagined ridgeline (Fig. 7.b.). It is noteworthy that Zeković's design constituted a reconstruction of the former Bjelasica Hotel (Fig. 7.a.).

This contextual response is again guided by the mountain environment, while the architect surprises with specific details within the composition, such as the honeycomb geom-



etry of the window openings (Fig. 8.a-f.). His affinity for natural forms occasionally renders his architecture nearly organic. The triangular form embodies the principles of critical regionalism, invoking the local landscape, climate, and traditional vernacular construction of the region. The design presents a futuristic interpretation of the traditional wooden hut or ski lodge, enriched with visionary elements of modern architecture.

A similar approach is evident in Zekovic's design for the Rožaje Hotel, positioned to define the urban street front and mediate between the main pedestrian zone and the town square. In this composition, two strong pyramidal volumes are positioned in linear succession, with shifting roof planes that depict the dominant mountainous landscape surrounding Rožaje more convincingly and metaphorically (Fig. 9.a-d.). This procedure ensures harmony and spatial unity, and the physiognomy of small, picturesque agglomerations such as Rožaje can be preserved (Petrović, 1967). The design also demonstrates a deliberate reinterpretation of the "group form" principle, characteristic of the traditional city center (*carsija*), by reworking the typology of the traditional house into a new contemporary architectural expression.

Particular attention is warranted by the Hotel Sandžak in Bijelo Polje (Fig. 10.a-f.), where Zekovic, in collaboration with Zoran Petrović and Aleksandar Radojević, creates a dominant architectural and visual landmark of the town through specific geometry, volumetry, and height. Like the Hotel Berane, the Sandžak Hotel (today known as Hotel Bijela Rada), consists of two clearly articulated parts: a base housing commercial and service functions, and a tower accommodating guest rooms. The lower volume forming the pedestal of the vertical belongs to a distinctly modernist architectural language, featuring a large terrace with colonnades and a canopy, reminiscent of the solution at Hotel Berane. The verticality of Hotel Sandžak does not conceal its aspiration to become the town's leading height and visual reference point; on

the contrary, it asserts itself prominently with its rotated façade facing the town square, engaging directly with Slobode Street and the wider urban fabric. Such architectural decisions confirm Zekovic's awareness of the architect's evolving role in response to contemporary urban challenges, as he himself articulated in reflections on design and urbanism (Mladenović, 1982: 105). Alihodžić Jašarović (2021: 148) further emphasizes in her doctoral dissertation that Zekovic's buildings functioned as recognizable spatial landmarks, generating a clear visual identity, embodying modernity, and serving as symbols of development, thereby elevating the urban character of former small settlements into the status of cities.

Zekovic's architectural philosophy, often expressed through dramatic roof geometries contrasted with simplified base volumes, may be traced to the visual character of historical towns, whereby the dominant composition was shaped by the roofs of residential houses. Through the abstraction of such imagery and the creation of a new composition, again employing the principle of "group form", a result emerges that can be clearly observed in the upper levels and roof capes of Hotel Sandžak. A deeper compositional analysis reveals elements of traditional architecture, such as *doksat* (bay window), transposed into an idealized linearity that appears in nearly all his projects.

In the summary of conclusions, and in accordance with the previously mentioned meth-

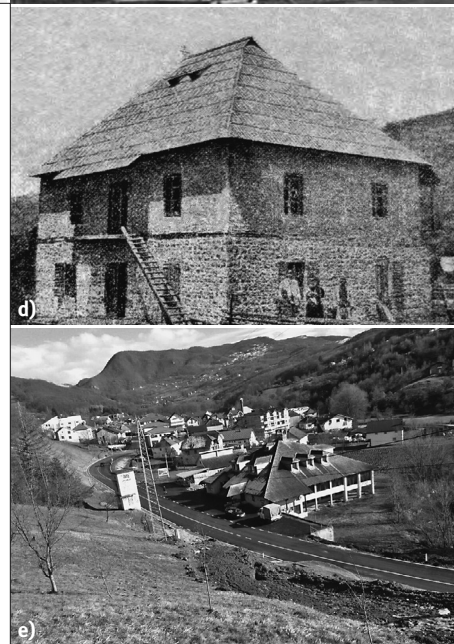


FIGURE 6 A. TRADITIONAL DURMITOR HOUSE; B. OTOKA HOTEL, 1972: PLAN AND ELEVATION; C. OTOKA HOTEL DRAWING; D. HOUSE TYPES IN RŽANICA: AN OLD LOG HOUSE COVERED WITH STRAW AND A NEWER STONE HOUSE WITH SHINGLE ROOF (SOURCE: LUTOVAC, 1957); E. PETNJIKA HOTEL, 1986

FIGURE 7 A. ORIGINAL BJELASICA HOTEL PRIOR TO ZEKOVIC'S INTERVENTION; B. TRADITIONAL HOUSE IN THE BJELASICA HIGHLAND SETTLEMENT



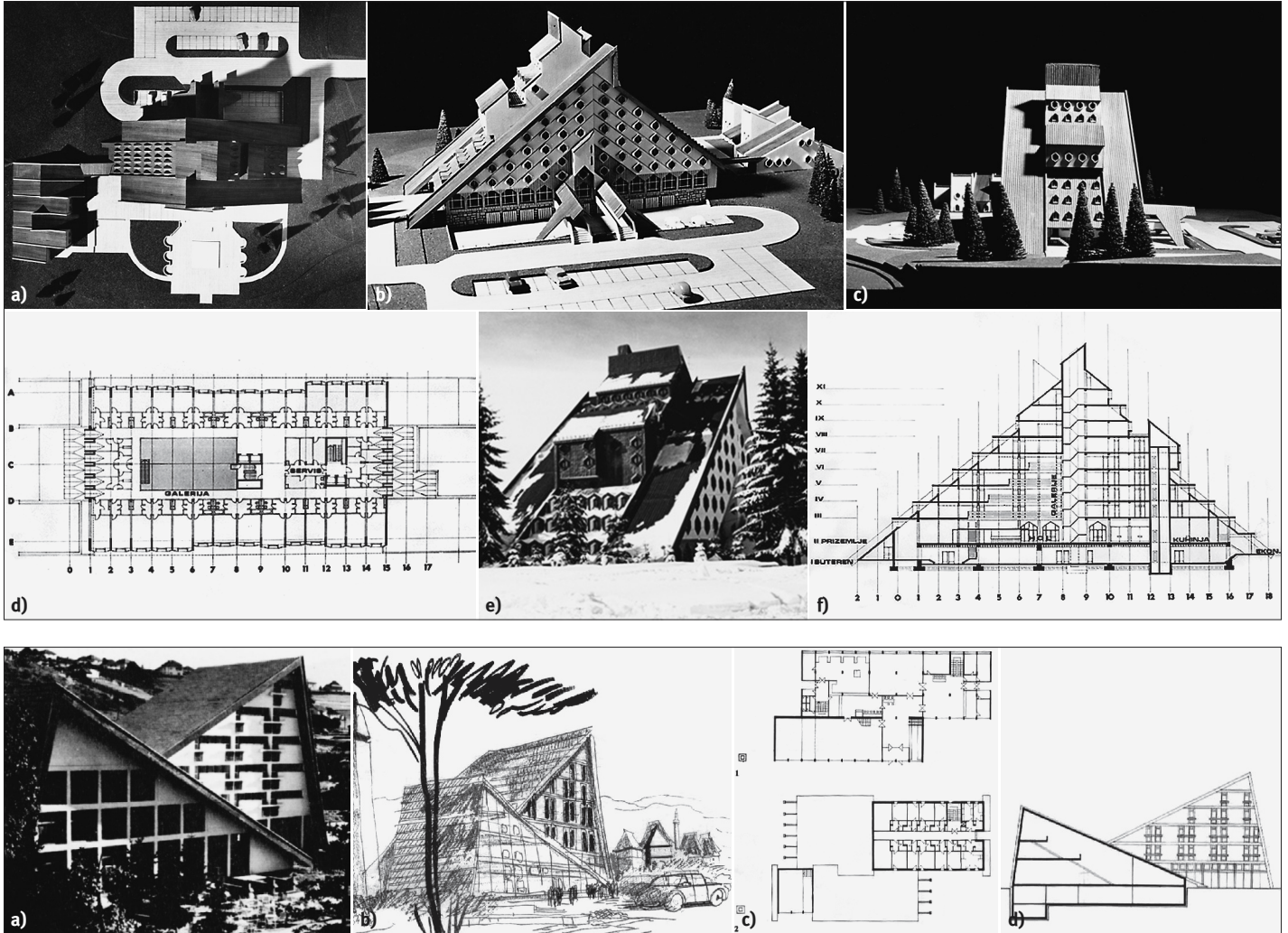


FIGURE 8 A. B. C. MODELS OF HOTEL BJELASICA;
D. TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN; E. BUILT FORM;
F. CHARACTERISTIC SECTION

FIGURE 9 A. HOTEL ROŽAJE (MLADENOVIC, 1989);
B. PERSPECTIVE; C.1. PLAN OF THE GROUND FLOOR;
C.2. PLAN OF THE 2ND FLOOR; D. SECTION
AND ELEVATION (PETROVIC, 1967)

ods of critical regionalism, we can conclude that Zeković applied and combined the following principles of critical regionalism:

a) Dialogue: mediation between universal modernism and local / tradition – we can name this principle regionally sensitive functionalism. This method is read in the form of clear, functional plans and rational constructions, whose form becomes sensitive to the local context and genius loci. It can also be read in the realization of social and cultural continuity. (*Hotel Berane, Bank Berane, Building of the Central Committee of the Union of Communists of the SR of Montenegro*);

b) Sense of place: interpretation of the vernacular tradition – listening to the topographical and climatic context, especially in the cities of the northern region. Adoption of local constructive methods and stylistic characteristics. Dynamic shaping of volumes and spatial organization in accordance with the local landscape (*Hotel Lokve, Hotel Bjelasica, Hotel Rožaje, Motel Petnjica, Hotel Durmitor, Residential and commercial building in Bijelo Polje*);

c) Materiality – emphasizing local architectural culture and techniques, as well as the use and interpretation of local materials (*Hotel Lokve*).

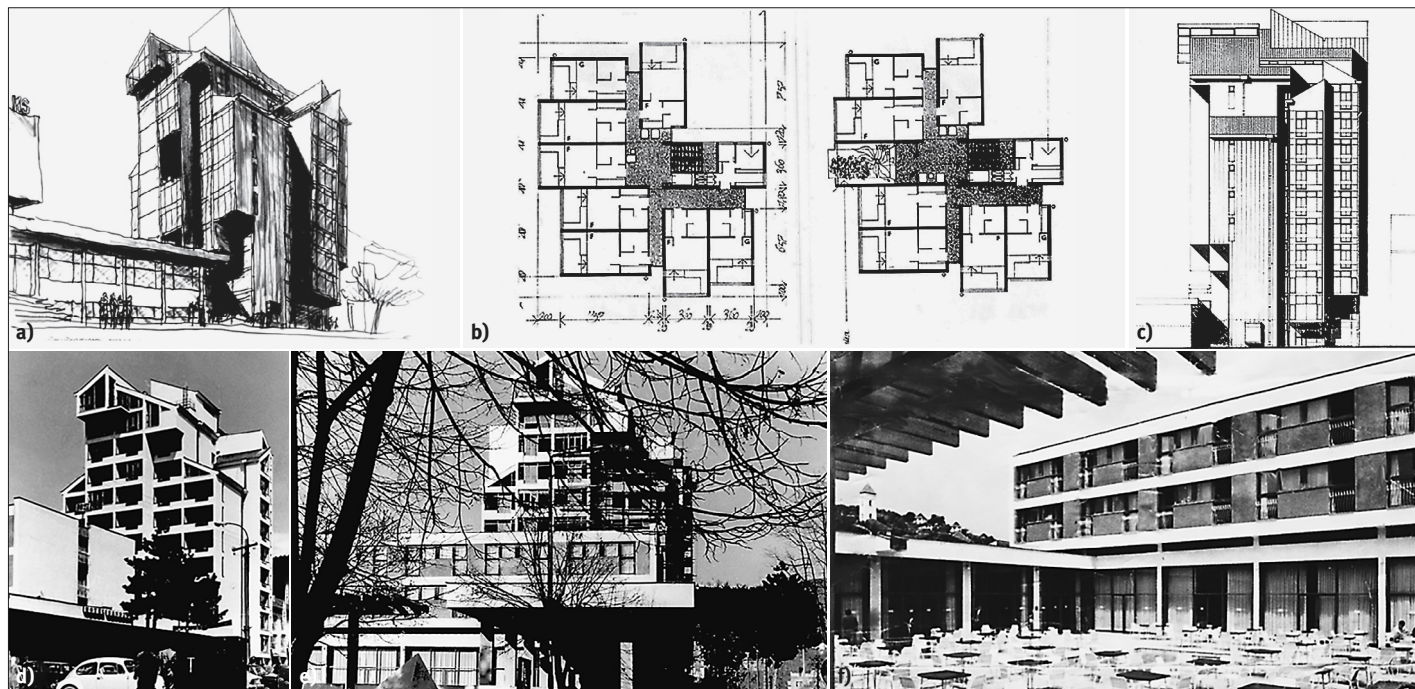


FIGURE 10 HOTEL SANDŽAK: A. DRAWING BY ALEKSANDAR RADOJEVIĆ; B. TYPICAL FLOOR PLANS; C. FACADE; D.E.F. BUILT FORM

Despite their unquestionable value, many of his buildings are nowadays faced with threats of demolition, inappropriate alterations, and neglect (Table I). Dealing with the analysis of the architecture of tourist facilities of the 20th century, as well as issues related to their renovation, valorization and integration into the contemporary social context, Antesević (2023: 132-145) states that this architecture should not be viewed as an artifact of the past, but as a resource that requires thoughtful protection, creative adaptation and sustainable use in the present. In this sense, Zeković's work is recognized as a significant part of the local identity and cultural heritage, i.e. as such, it deserves a strategic approach to protection that will enable its sustainable function.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the architectural oeuvre of Radostav Zeković represents a conceptual realization of the principles of critical regionalism, drawing upon theoretical and pedagogical influences as well as a profound connection to place. His work demonstrates that critical regionalism can serve as a means

of preserving continuity and identity, articulated through the specificities of local context. Many of his projects, now key urban landmarks, illustrate a thoughtful application of regionalist principles, establishing an architectural language that is both innovative and deeply rooted. This mode of regionalism provides an extraordinary contribution to mediating and shaping contemporary identity, grounded in an architecture that already possesses tradition and confidence in the reinterpretation of vernacular elements. Zeković's practice shows that the preservation of identity is not an obstacle to modernism, but rather an essential tool for maintaining cultural continuity. His work succeeds in skillfully transposing established architectural patterns, whereby the broader landscape becomes a leading element in new compositions. Globalization trends directly affect urban continuity and identity and considering that Zeković was among the last regionalist architects working in Montenegro, it is crucial to emphasize the need to preserve his architectural oeuvre as an important component of the anthology of Montenegrin architecture.

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Conceptualization: The author(s) are obligated to present the main contribution of each listed co-authors. For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following state-

ments should be used "Conceptualization, E.A.J. and S.P.Ž.; methodology, E.A.J. and S.P.Ž.; software, E.A.J., S.P.Ž., N.B. and S.S.; validation, E.A.J.; formal analysis, E.A.J., S.P.Ž., N.B. and S.S.; investigation, E.A.J., S.P.Ž., N.B. and S.S.; resources, E.A.J., S.P.Ž., N.B. and S.S.; data curation, E.A.J.; writing – original draft preparation, E.A.J.; writing – review and editing, E.A.J., S.P.Ž., N.B. and S.S.; visualization, S.S. and N.B.; supervision, E.A.J. and S.P.Ž.; project administration, E.A.J.; funding acquisition, E.A.J., S.P.Ž., N.B. and S.S.. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript." Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the purposes of this work, the author's team used data provided by the Zeković family, with permission to publish the material from the son of the author Radosav Zeković, Mr. Ervin Zeković, who is also an architect, and a collaborator on some of the projects, and with the consent of Radosav Zeković's daughter, Mrs. Radmila Zeković.

Note: a large part of the submitted material has not been published so far and was submitted for the purpose of creating this work. The architectural work of Radosav Zeković is processed at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Montenegro, as a process of digitization of archival materials, within the scope of the course Digital methods in architecture, under the mentorship of Ema Alihodžić Jašarović, Ph.D., and with the assistance of M.Sc. Nikola Bajović and M.Sc. Sanja Sekulović.

