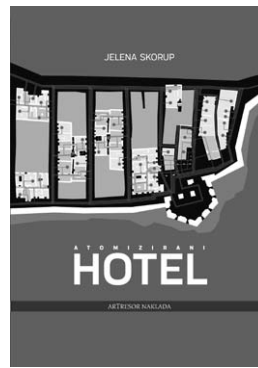


DUBRAVKO BAČIĆ

## THE ATOMISED HOTEL A NEW TYPE OF HOTEL ARCHITECTURE FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

ATOMIZIRANI HOTEL  
NOVI TIP HOTELSKE ARHITEKTURE  
U REVITALIZACIJI GRADA ILI KRAJOLIKA

JELENA SKORUP JURAJIĆ



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Hotels are in a period of significant evolution and opportunity. From online travel agents to the commoditization of hotels, changes in the travel and hospitality industry are challenging hotels to move beyond conventional operating patterns and extend their relationships with travellers. Traditionally, the hotel experience has been limited to whatever a guest encountered within the property's four walls. But as travellers' needs and expectations have shifted and new competitive trends have emerged, hospitality industry is evolving beyond the traditional models to deliver new types of experiences.

Jelena Skorup's book *The Atomised Hotel – A New Type of Hotel Architecture for the Revitalization of the Built Environments* explores such a new type. The book grew out of Skorup's extensive research and her PhD thesis presented in 2016 at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Architecture. It also reflects the author's long-lasting professional interest in tourist architecture, as demonstrated by her projects (jointly done with architect Drazen Jurajic), included in the book, particularly the 2007 Club Med Master Plan, the 2009-13 Pustijerna Dispersed Hotel Project in Dubrovnik and the highly acclaimed 2013-15 Pine Beach Eco Resort Restaurant and Kitchen in Pakostane.

The book consists of seven chapters and appendices. The introductory chapter outlines the subject matter and briefly summarizes specific characteristics of the new type. The first chapter gives a historical overview of hotel buildings, and includes an overview of historical development of tourist territory. The second chapter discusses the relevant cultural theories since the 1960s and related tourism theories that explain the postmodern society, and thus elaborates the main aspects of modern tourism and its epiphenomenon. The third chapter expands on the reversal in the mainstream tourism industry caused by the rise of globalization, the global neoliberal economy and the cultural theories of tourism that started at the turn of the 1990s and have continued ever since. This reversal has been described as the *millennial tourism* practice. Hotel architecture follows

the postmodern paradigm shift in tourism: new kinds of experiences, interests and sensations – excessively unnecessary and, simultaneously, very opposed to everyday life and the commonplace. In the fourth chapter, the author defines the new type and reinforces those features that make it especially suitable for the revitalization of urban or rural areas.

The fifth chapter synthesizes the arguments presented in the previous chapters. The new type of hotel emerged through the decomposition of the hotel (as defined in Nikolaus Pevsner's 1970s typological classification) into its functional and structural elements. Neither their interconnections, nor their morphology are predefined in an *atomised hotel*. According to Skorup, impermanence, transformability and sensitivity towards the cultural and natural landscape are essential to the new hotel type. Due to its discrete and fragmented nature, an *atomised hotel* can be a retrofitting program for the majority of empty or obsolete buildings. Listed buildings can also function as *atomised hotels*, at least up to the moment they gain a more socially and culturally appropriate use. However, the transient nature requires a sustainable economic model, as well as the use of minimally invasive reversible building technologies. Skorup convincingly demonstrates that impermanence, transformability and sensitivity towards the cultural and natural landscape are deeply rooted in the very essence of the new type. The concluding chapter summarizes the central propositions of the book, specifically presenting the requirements for developing *atomised hotels*, location criteria, and criteria for the application of the new type in rehabilitation and revitalization of historic centres and preserving cultural heritage.

The *atomised hotel* emerged as a structural decomposition of the dominant hotel building type to its constituent functional elements. The functional elements of the new type can be located in parts of single buildings or scattered in multiple buildings connected by public spaces: they can be of various sizes, and grouped in various ways. The number of buildings that form such a hotel is not determined a priori restricted. However, it still

consists of one indispensable part (accommodation) and one changeable (administrative and common areas, and services).

Jelena Skorup analyzes numerous examples of *atomised hotels* not only according to their spatial and morphological aspects, but also as settings which enable new social dynamics to take place. The creation of direct and indirect connections between an *atomised hotel's* parts can expand and/or activate social spaces. It is an elastic organizational system in which the morphology, number and the interconnection of functional units is not predetermined. Their composition and size is directly related to a specific context, whether historical, urban, economic, ecological or social. Furthermore, each context is capable of generating a new variation in the number and position of structural elements and their morphological manifestations. Elements can be added or subtracted, the number of accommodation units (rooms) can be increased by adding additional spaces or even entire buildings into the system. A restaurant, a bar or some other common area can change its position in the system or its locale. New facilities can easily be added. The changeable parts of the hotel can seemingly be left out, as long as their function is sufficiently substituted by local services or establishments, as well as new IT and communication technologies.

Metaphorically speaking, as Skorup argues, the *atomised hotel* has the ability to organically grow or shrink, and therefore effectively react to changes, whether economic, social or cultural, or to the *Zeitgeist* itself. The case studies presented indicate that *atomised hotels* can be a sensible way for the revival and reuse of abandoned built heritage, providing that the location itself has the potential for activation and intensification of the surrounding environment. As the author aptly asserts, the expansion of touristscape through active application of *atomised hotels* in brownfield regeneration could also potentially contribute to the reduction of problems related to the excessive use of undisturbed natural environments for new tourist developments. The book was awarded the 2020 "Neven Šegvić Award" by the Croatian Architects Association.