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UTOPIA OF THE NEW TOWN – IMPLEMENTED OR DEGRADED? NOVI BEOGRAD, NOWA HUTA AND TIRANA E RE IN A SOCIALIST AND POST-SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE

Summary

The paper follows in the assumption that the transformations of central-European and Balkan cities taking place in the second half of the 20th century can be considered a symptom of complex economic, social and political processes related to the development and decline of the culture of socialism. Changes after the Second World War were closely interconnected with the urbanization project, which was implemented in two ways – either by rebuilding, reorganizing and resemantizing old cities, or by creating cities and urban communities – in a modernist spirit – from scratch. We consider these issues by comparing three examples of cities with different historical experience, which shaped their identities within culturally and politically different frames of reference.

The subject of thus oriented considerations is the question of what happened to the socialist utopia which at the end of the 20th century was put to the test. What was its fate depending on various politically – but also culturally-motivated scenarios of political transformation? In what way and by whom is its heritage appropriated in the 1990's? While analyzing the fate of the utopia of the new city from a post-communist perspective, it should be noted that although individual projects did not meet the ideals and hopes of their designers, they proved to be an impulse that released social activity qualitatively different from existing traditional patterns and initiated a thorough redefinition of urban identities.

Keywords: urban utopia, socialist city, entropy, transformation, dwelling policies.

Research on cities and urbanism, ever more advancing in modern humanities, is viewed today as one of the basic reference systems for diagnosing the condition of modernity, as well as for the observation of its key cultural phenomena and processes. *Polis* becomes

not only the stage, but also the subject of historical events. This paper follows in the assumption that the transformations that central European and Balkan cities underwent in the second half of the 20th century can be considered a symptom of complex economic, social and political processes related to the development and decline of the culture of socialism. From its early beginnings, it was closely intertwined with the urbanization project that was implemented in two ways – either by rebuilding, reorganizing and rese-mantising old cities, or by creating – in a modernist spirit – cities and urban communities from scratch.

Cities – treated in the 20th century as islands of modern civilization and progressive development – stimulate the apparition of utopian projects, but also – through, among other things, the expansion of technological achievements and transformations of anthro-pological concepts – they facilitate changes in the perception of utopia and utopism, and complicate their understanding. The meaningful weight of these concepts begins to be determined by the principle of change that is the domain of human power and agency in an open, processual, non-finite world. We find such an interpretation, for example, in Ernst Bloch's reflections on the ontology of utopian thinking, where he states that *utopicum* is established for man as a being desiring change, a being whose world is given as potential-ity, as great δυνάμειον existing according to the measure of possibilities[1]. Thus utopia would be a dynamic category meaning "optimum projection"[2], i.e. such movement of thought and imagination that aims at overcoming the existing reality, defeating its limita-tions, is anchored in the future, and its goal becomes the anticipation and construction of meaning[3]. It would be not so much an unreal idea but rather a challenge to the impossible. The widening of the definition of utopia, traditionally focused around its classical under-standing as a literary genre that describes an unachievable vision of a fictitious ideal place, inhabited by a perfect society organized by perfectly functioning institutions, leads to its various displacements – also into the sphere of the analysis of areas of *praxis*. Reinhart Koselleck notices these trends, pointing to the application of the concept of utopia in political behavior strategies[4]; according to the researcher, the structure of the concept morphs when impacted by this transfer, bringing about a "temporalization of utopia", which means that the stress is shifted from its spatial to temporal qualities[5]. Therefore if it is assumed that utopian thinking means designing a social future according to an optimal vision of the desired line of development[6], by the same principle one will be able to analyze utopia as the space of a social-urban experiment carried out at a certain historical moment.

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[1] E. Bloch, Rzeczywistość antycypowana, czyli jak przebiega i co osiąga myślenie utopijne, transl. A. Czaj-ka, *Studia Filozoficzne* 1982: 7–8: pp. 49–57.

[2] A. Flaker, *Poetika osporavanja. Avangarda i književna ljevica*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 1982, p. 68.

[3] B. Czapik-Lityńska, *„Jeszcze-nie". Utopicum jugosłowiańskiej awangardy*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 1996, pp. 12–14.

[4] M. Matysek-Imielińska, Splatając otwarty świat / Doświadczając miejskich utopii. Teoretyczne zało-żenia eksperymentów miejskich w duchu Tima Ingolda, *Kultura Współczesna. Miasta-utopie* 2019: 3 (106), p. 15.

[5] R. Koselleck, Die Verzeitlichung der Utopie, in: W. Vosskamp (Hg.), *Utopieforschung,* Stuttgart 1982, pp. 1–14.

[6] B. Czapik-Lityńska, op. cit., p. 15.

From Anthropology to Entropology

The effort of erecting new cities during the socialist era can be analyzed at the archetypical level of activities and meanings using the well-recognized category of cultural cosmogony in anthropology, which in the classic works of Mircea Eliade was described as a kind of space consecration – the process of arranging it and filling it with meanings and values. In the analyzed case, it consists in *establishing* an urban structure on the basis of symbolic matrices rooted in the communist / socialist ideology bearing the hallmarks of mythical thinking. As Mircea Eliade said, […] *even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious valorization of the world* [7].

If, however, we would like to seek support for the reflection on the condition of socialist so-called new cities at the threshold of systemic change, we can use the interpretation framework of entropology, the outline of which is found in *Tristes Tropiques* (*A World on the Wane*) by Claude Lévi-Strauss[8]. It is the French anthropologist's response to the phenomenon of classical ethnography / anthropology exhausting its possibilities in the face of progressive disintegration of its subject of research. Entropology, adapted to the research on the transformation of socialist cities in the early 1990s, provides a tool to methodically analyze the fall of the communist system and the breakdown of its supporting structures in its material, institutional and social contexts, and in terms of the habitus and symbolic images and practices for which the city has, in the modern era, become both the carrier and the embodiment. The subject of thus oriented considerations is the question of what happened to the socialist utopia which was put to the test at the end of the 20th century. Was its fate depending on various politically – but also culturally – motivated scenarios of political transformation? In what way and by whom was its heritage appropriated in the 1990's? And finally, does the fall of communism signify the end to utopian thinking in urbanism?

We want to examine these issues by juxtaposing three examples of cities with different historical experience, shaping their identity in culturally different reference systems – Balkan or central European, cities which, however, at the same historical moment, under certain political circumstances, made the idealistic thinking deposited in socialist ideology the thresholds of their respective new orders.

Socialist Cosmogonies

The utopianism of the socialist idea of a new city – in analogy to the rule governing the classical utopian places – is contained in the mythologised vision of a new beginning. It embodies the concept of a world of universal happiness created by the force of revolution, understood as a radical cut-off, and also brings on a deep purification enabling history to face the new time. *There was no revolution*, says Jerzy Szacki, *without New World rhetoric*[9]. In the discussed case, the basis for creating a different reality, *better and more perfect than*

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[7] M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*, A Harvest Book, Orlando 1987, p. 23.

[8] C. Lévi-Strauss, *A World on the Wane*, transl. J. Russell, Centurion Books, New York 1961, p. 394; T. Szerszeń, *Podróżnicy bez mapy i paszportu*, słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2015, pp. 140–147.

[9] J. Szacki, *Spotkanie z utopią*, Wydawnictwo Iskry, Warszawa 1980, p. 38.

ours, is the communist anthropology founded on the principle of uniform measure in the treatment of the citizen, which then quickly transforms into an fetish of equality subordinated to the top-down political projection. The concept of Prometheism activating crypto-religious matrices constitutes the second pillar. Communist utopia assigns demiurgical power to the proletariat – workers and peasants comprising the masses. They are to be the creators and at the same time the disposers of the new order, which – as emphasized by Bronisław Baczko – is to ensure stability and thus the self-reproduction of the system[10].

Proponents of socialist utopia are fond of eyewitnessing – they are far more eager to employ "talking images" than abstract interpretations of their advocated ideas[11]. In the times of image dissemination in social communication as a means of mass communication, the awareness of its persuasive potential increases. Iconography seems to fulfil – to a greater extent than words – the criteria of a universal language – widely accessible and capable of affecting emotions, which is particularly useful for propaganda messages. The elevated moment of creation is shown by characteristic visual imagery depicted in socialist-realist aesthetic convention, such as the iconic work of the Serbian artist Božo Ilić *Exploratory drilling in New Belgrade* (Serb. *Sondiranje terena na Novom Beogradu)*. Evoking Eliade's traditional schema of consecrating a place by designating its Centre, the painting depicts the titanic, modernizing effort of the people helped by machines and technology to tame the chaos of nature[12]. New Belgrade – like Tirana e Re in Albania – grows into being as part of an existing city, on land acquired through the drainage of wetlands. The construction of the district on the opposite bank of the old "bourgeois" Belgrade was initiated in 1948 to host the administrative and representative center of Yugoslavia. However, in the 1960s, the expansion goals were changed when in the face of demographic changes, housing functions became a priority – Slobodan Selinić reports that by the end of 1968, 25,000 flats were completed in New Belgrade[13]. Ljiljana Blagojević emphasises that in the post-war years New Belgrade was conceptualized as a modernist center of power for the new administrative structure of the federal state. In the clash with the reality demanding a response to a housing crisis, aesthetic and representative purpose becomes of secondary importance[14]. Hence, next to the Palace of the Federation and the headquarters of the Central Committee of the communist party, housing estates comprised of multi-flat blocks and high-rises began to grow. In the initial phase, the propaganda messages emphasized the role of youth brigades participating in the construction of the new part of the capital in a "voluntary community action" (*Serb*. radne akcije), such practice intended as part of socialist education[15].

Similarly, pictorial images of the 1950s painted by Witold Chomicz, presenting the emergence of Nowa Huta near the city of Cracow, also reveal the world's Manichean structure, characteristic of communist cosmogony. The central painting in the series titled

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[10] B. Baczko, Utopia, [in:] *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice o nadziei i pamięci zbiorowej*, transl. M. Kowalska, Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa 1994, pp. 116–117.

[11] J. Szacki, op. cit., p. 14.

[12] See also: Љ. Благојевић, *Нови Београд – оспорени модернизам*, Завод за уџбенике, Београд 2007, pp. 122–123.

[13] S. Selinić, Urbanizacija socijalističkog Beograda. Istorijski pogled na neke aspekte urbanizacije Beograda 1945–1970, *Tokovi istorije* 2005/3–4, p. 183.

[14] Љ. Благојевић, op. cit., p. 126.

[15] V. Backović, *Socioprostorni razvoj Novog Beograda*. Beograd: Institut za sociološka istraživanja Filozofskog fakulteta – Čigoja štampa, Beograd 2010, p. 47, 125.

Tryptyk Nowohucki focuses on the contrast by setting the rural landscape of Cracow suburbs against the monumental solid of the metallurgical plant named in honor of Lenin: the factory which becomes *umbilicus urbis* – the axis of a prototype workers' city, built on the Soviet pattern around the "life-giving" workplace. Piotr Eckhardt reminds that new socialist cities sprang to life essentially as housing facilities for heavy industry factories being built in fulfilment of the first post-war five- or six-year plans. Aside from Nowa Huta, examples include the Bulgarian Dimitrovgrad, the German Stalinstadt or the Hungarian Sztálinváros[16]. Chomicz shows both registers – the rural and the working-class-urban ones – as mutually impenetrable, the first irretrievably giving way to the latter. The industrial outline tightly filling the background landscape with its powerful blocks of the steelworks unequivocally defines the horizon of the new world, bringing to view the ideal of a new urbanism based on the ethos of collective work and social justice[17]. Nowa Huta has emerged as an autonomous city – a workforce pool – on the outskirts of Cracow and in opposition to its historicity and conservative bourgeoisie. The urbanization and industrialization of this area was founded on the Soviet pattern externalized in the USSR through Komsomolsk-on-Amur River, Magnitogorsk and Karaganda[18]. The Soviet concept of new cities was a counterweight to counter-urbanisation processes appearing at the time in Scandinavia and Great Britain as a consequence of the depletion of the metropolitan city model, perceived as oppressive in the second half of the 20th century[19].

The *genesis* of Tirana e Re distinguishes itself in some aspects from the previous examples. In this case the idea of a new city has been somehow intercepted by the communist authorities and reprogrammed in the spirit of the then-current ideology. In the interwar period, the new administrative center of Tirana, designed according to the plans of an Italian architect Armando Brasini, was built to counterbalance the chaotic and provincial Ottoman architecture dominating the Albanian capital[20]. A wide boulevard on the north-south axis serves as a boundary physically and symbolically separating the new world from the old one[21]. In the post-war period, the authorities of communist Albania appropriated this Italian district embodying the imagination of modernity. European architecture identified with progressivism and political power was to become the leaven of the communist state, a sign of the permanence of its institutional foundations. Paradoxically, therefore, while remaining fascist in form (Ardian Vehbiu talks of mummification of the fascist building style[22]), Tirana e Re became communist-Albanian in its content. The residential

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[16] P. Eckhardt, Przestrzeń i architektura jako obraz doktryny politycznej. Przykład państw socjalistycznych, *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica* XV: 2016 (2), p. 16.

[17] M. Golonka-Czajkowska, *Nowe miasta nowych ludzi. Mitologie nowohuckie*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2013, pp. 74–75.

[18] R. Čepaitienė, In the Shadow of Moscow: the Stalinist Reconstruction of the Capitals of the Soviet Republics, *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 2015: 39 (1), p. 5.

[19] A. G. Champion, Counterurbanization in Europe, *The Geographical Journal*, 1989: 155 (1), pp. 52–80.

[20] The idea of developing the southwestern part of Tirana, which was to become "New Tirana" in the future, was included in the Regulatory Plan written by Austrian architect Wolfgang Köhler in 1928. According to Köhler's plan, this part of the city was to include green areas, gardens and private villas – see: P. Tashi, K. Dhrami, A. Tola, The Transformation of the Urban Block in the City of Tirana from 1920 to 1960, *International Journal of Science and Research*, vol. 14, issue 12, Dec. 2015, p. 1636.

[21] R. Kodra, Architectural Monumentalism in Transitional Albania, *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 29 (2017), pp. 197–200.

[22] A. Vehbiu, *Kulla e Sahatit*, Shtepia Botuese K & B., Tirana 2003, p. 26.

part of the district was appropriated by representatives of the new political elite and assumed an affluent character, so in this case the project of ideal reality became the reality of a closed group, which – after Milovan Đilas – can be called *the new class*. The sign of this closure was the moniker of the New Tirana quarter: the **Bllok**. Access to this zone of *good life* was restricted. It was unattainable for ordinary dwellers, so it grew to become a peculiar counterpart of Beijing's Forbidden City[23].

The Aesthetic, the Political, the Signifying

The material form of the new city, in the intention of the communist authorities, should be a legible and affirmative vehicle for their ideological and educational program. The teaching of the system is present in architectural shapes, urban structures, and the aesthetics of public spaces, but is also expressed in *dwelling policies*.

In Nowa Huta, whose core came into being in the 1950s, ideological meanings are arranged by socialist realist style which turns an ideological abstract into a material concrete merging the socialist element with recognizable visual signs of national identity. The socialist realism penetrates the city layout (wide streets, a huge square, and a main alley leading to it, intended for parades); the Combine facilities with a pompous administration building (colloquially referred to as the Doge Palace (*Pol*. Pałac Dożów) due to its monumentality, luxurious architectural decorations, and its purpose), the statue of Lenin situated as the central point, and the bodies of residential buildings located in this part of the city. The city as an ideological structure should form its settler – typically a first generation factory worker – into a new citizen[24]. It should shape their world view, attitudes, and their lifestyle as dictated by the political doctrine, with a sense of necessity of constant political and civilizational mobilization.

Socialist realist aesthetics are only incidentally present in New Belgrade, almost exclusively in the Tošin bunar estate built in the late 1940s. The symptomatic words of the song sung by the brigades working on the construction indicate the sources of the urban concept implemented there: "Gradili smo pruge, al to nije dosta. Gradićemo Beograd, da bude ko Moskva" (We've been building railroads, but that is not enough now, we will erect Belgrade so that it resembles Moscow). Fundamentally however, the architectural landscape of New Belgrade, whose development was accelerated in the 1960s (more than a decade after the falling out between Yugoslavia and USSR), is governed by the rule of modernist architectonics. Its local icons are the government buildings of Palace of the Federation (*Serb*. Palata Federacije) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (*Serb*. Centralni Komitet SKJ), as well as the housing estates built in the following years in brutalist aesthetics. While the monumentality of representative objects serves the Yugoslavian spectacle of power, the gigantism of housing estates is a manifestation of pragmatic and rational solutions based on the use of modular design and concrete in buildings intended

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[23] E. Mëhilli, Defying De-Stalinization, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Fall 2011), p. 16. See also: F. Lubonja, 2006. Blloku (pa nostalgjj), *Përpjekja*, vol. 24 (2007), pp. 12–13.

[24] M. Galent, P. Kubicki, New Urban Middle Class and National Identity in Poland, *Polish Sociological Review*, 2012, No. 179 (2012), p. 390.

for the masses. The functionality of the estates aims to prove the potential of modern state and its concern with its citizens. The example of New Belgrade shows how ideological didacticism as a carrier of political utopia gradually gives way to a residential utopia constituting the driving force of a new type of urbanization, necessary in the face of rapid demographic growth in the second half of the 20th century. Multiplying housing estates were not only an accessible materialization of social equality, but most of all a response to the rapid development of the capital and its needs.

In the aesthetic and architectural layer, the constructors of Tirana e Re refer directly to the solutions of Italian rationalism. Both the promenade dividing the modern and historic part of the Capital, and the ministerial buildings situated along it are a trace of visionary urban projects corroborated by the fascist regime in control of the Kingdom of Albania in the interwar period. After the Second World War, through the interception and resemantisation of the public space, modernist aesthetics became a part of propaganda messages legitimizing a project of radical socio-political change. The construction of Joseph Stalin Textile Combine at the turn of 1940s and 1950s, thanks to which Tirana e Re would merge residential and industrial functions, became a symbol of the final victory of communism and a portent of the redefinition of the city's cultural identity[25].

Marek Szczepański recognizes the architectural shape of new cities as a kind of official newspeak, a monologue of power addressing an incapacitated recipient. It is the "stopping of the thought movement" which pays no attention to the amorphism of the social structure[26]. Pragmatism of the communist reality and the economic conditions did not allow to fully implement, let alone complete the experiments comprising societal reconstruction, which was to take shape within the new cities that were to serve as its laboratories. Generational changes enhanced the anachronism of the urbanistic formulas created in the realities of the 1950s, while poor economic standing painfully verified the promises of modernity and exposed the illusion of the belief in the possibility of social programming from scratch in Times of dynamic historical change and in the context of hastily shaped urban awareness. The domination of ideology over cultural experience, common sense and local restrictions of urban space civilizational development resulted in their petrification.

Entropies of the Utopia

The 1990s became a real test for the *utopicum* of communist "new worlds". The fall of the communist system ultimately led to destabilization of the existing order of ideas and put the social projects that were based on it to the test. The dynamics, the courses, the consequences, and the meanings of these processes can be captured if one analyses them from the starting point of the perspective of entropology, concerned with the phenomena of "cultural and spatial disintegration and disappearance"[27]. We presume that, depending

[25] E. Fagu, Heritage of Planned Socialist Towns in Albania. „Kombinati i Tekstileve Stalin" – Tirana, *Proceedings of the 2nd ICAUD International Conference in Architecture and Urban Design Epoka University, Tirana (2014)*, Albania, 305, p. 4.

[26] M. S. Szczepański, *"Miasto socjalistyczne" i świat społeczny jego mieszkańców*, Europejski Instytut Rozwoju Regionalnego i Lokalnego, Warszawa 1991, p. 10.

[27] T. Szerszeń, op. cit., p. 147.

on cultural factors and political and economic circumstances, the disintegration of a political system leads either to the degradation of social values that took shape in the utopian imaginarium, or to their displacement.

In the case of Nowa Huta, the symptom of political transformation was the restructuring and privatization of the Combine which was renamed in 1990 as the Tadeusz Sendzimir Steelworks[28]. The fate of the workplace which was a focal point of the city for decades, providing for its residents, now utterly exposed the inefficiency of the old system – the steelworks were on the brink of bankruptcy. The rules of market economy practically overnight invalidated the communist anthropology, which idealistically viewed the worker as a producer of not only goods, but most importantly – of values, while the process of thorough modernization imposed on the Combine contributed to the destabilization and pauperization of many families[29]. Unemployment, increase in crime and pathological behaviors completed the picture of the city's degradation and the social alienation of the group which had until then been the reason for the creation and existence of the "new city"[30]. As an alternative to the state of affairs during the first stage of the political transformation, quasi-civic grassroots forms of social organization were created, inspired by the tradition of steelworks workers' anti-regime protests and the activities of local anti-communist opposition structures[31] – most of all the Solidarity movement, radical youth groups (e.g. Federation of Fighting Youth (*Pol.* Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej)), the journal "Voice of Nowa Huta" (*Pol.* "Głos Nowej Huty"), DAMI private television, and Radio Wanda[32]. The key factor that corroborated and steered the process of reintegration and redefinition of the local identity of the residents of Nowa Huta, was the socially oriented activity of the Catholic Church. The monumental modernist Lord's Ark temple, built at the turn of 1960s and 1970s, became a counterpoint for the declining Combine, both physically and symbolically. Thus, the community of Nowa Huta regained the sense of empowerment and self-agency through cultivating a parish and neighborly ethos. It began to form a new axiology of a good life, this time outside the socialist utopia, or even opposed to it.

Belgrade was in the relatively best starting position for the political transformation in comparison to other post-socialist cities, owing to the basic rules of market economy having been introduced earlier in Yugoslavia and a stable international status of the country, which during the reign of Josip Broz Tito implemented the policies of the Third Way. However, the disintegration of the Federation and Serbia's engagement in war in the last decade of 20th century led to a profound collapse, which had taken a toll on the condition of New Belgrade, which had been regarded up to that time as one of the territories with the biggest growth potential. In the first stage of the political transformation, this part of

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[28] Tadeusz Sendzimir (1894–1989) was a Polish engineer and inventor specializing in metallurgy. Following the Second World War he remained in the US, where he kept implementing his research.

[29] M. Golonka-Czajkowska, op. cit., p. 302.

[30] J. Sadecki, Nowy czas Nowej Huty, *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 VII 1994, p. 3.

[31] In the 1980s Nowa Huta became one of the most important activity centers for the Solidarity Movement, and after the introduction of martial law in December 1981 it saw regular demonstrations organized against the communist authorities; the resistance culminated in 1988–1989 in the form of strikes in the Nowa Huta Combine – see also: L. Konarski, Nowa Huta – wyjście z raju, Biblioteka Przeglądu; Fundacja Oratio Recta, Warszawa 2020, pp. 159–169.

[32] M. Wąchała-Skindzier, Nowohucianin, [in:] *Przemieszczanie*, Muzeum Krakowa, Kraków 2019, pp. 43–56.

the Serbian capital, which was supposed to embody the ideals of modernity, rapidly lost its significance as an administrative center of SFRY and heavily suffered from the negative effects of privatization, which recreated and even exacerbated social divisions created still in the socialist period[33]. The political and economic crisis deepened urban pathologies, such as so-called investment urbanism and arbitrary construction works consisting in the uncontrolled abuse of the right to city space and the expansion of turbo-architecture, which is an incarnation of symbolic violence. The inversion of the axiological system and the devastation of economic structures[34] coincided with the increase in crime, thus forming a specific layer of anti-elites affecting the authorities and the functioning of the state. In turn, the populist rhetoric of the Serbian authorities mobilized anti-city attitudes.

The processes of entropy advance most intensely within the space of New Belgrade's housing estates – model enclaves of modernity in the socialist past have become more and more regarded as ghettos by their residents. Rapidly degrading brutalist architecture – an example of radical modernist aesthetics and a propagandist visualization of the efficiency of the state's social policy – now became a figuration of the oppressiveness of Slobodan Milošević's regime and the moral downfall of the society trapped in a nationalist myth. Unlike in Nowa Huta, in New Belgrade there was a lack of positive institutional structures which would fill the ideological vacuum in the time of crisis. On one hand, the city space was being colonized by mafia groups, on the other, alternative forms of "indigenous" identity were developing in neglected backyards and stairways of skyscrapers resembling inaccessible fortresses. It is, in fact, an anti-identity, because it is based on the experience of atrophy and apathy. It is an expression of total negation, a side effect of squandering social capital, of which the new city – according to modern urbanism – was supposed to be the cumulation. It was primarily expressed by the hip hop subculture, which diagnosed the situation of New Belgrade in the 1990s with a language of disappointment, negativity and nihilism. These environments, which distance themselves from both the policy of Serbian authorities and the forces of democratic resistance, respond to the dysfunction of the state and metropolitan structures by creating "counter-public spaces" marked with wild graffiti, fueled by their local experiences of the city's degradation, they exhibit a form of adaptation, or even an attempt to gain control over the hostile reality, an endeavor to save their own subjectivity – the subjectivity of the inhabitants of Chaos[35].

During the final decade of the last century, Tirana became a scene of chaotic transformations of the public space which, being an expression of a grassroots initiative and extemporaneous pragmatism based on improvised solutions, elude the systematized categories of city planning. Just like in Belgrade, control over the Albanian capital, which has experienced "half a century of the dictatorship of scarcity", deprived of "an order-creating authority"[36], has been taken over by criminal structures. This phenomenon is a result of the weakening of the social network and the infraction of identification with the city as a living environment. Internal migrations (influx of rural population) and an external exodus abroad

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[33] V. Backović, op. cit., p. 79.

[34] M. Stojanović, M. Matić, *Plastične devedesete*, Etnografski muzej u Beogradu, Beograd 2010, p. 23, 26.

[35] For the sake of order, it should be noted that the intensive social and economic development of New Belgrade has been delayed compared to other post-communist European capitals and has significantly changed the contemporary face of this place.

[36] P. Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time*, transl. M. Wenning, Columbia University Press, New York 2010, p. 194.

became the significant factors increasing the disintegration of the existing order and generating a qualitative change in the social energy of the city[37]. On the other hand, one can observe the petrification of old divisions, expressed by the gentrification of Tirana e Re as a bridgehead of the communist establishment which (taking advantage of the expropriation of state property) replaced the illusion of the communist ideology with – as Sloterdijk calls it – the eroticization of the capital[38]. In the fight for the city space, investment capitalism comes triumphant, which is evident from the gradual expansion of Tirana e Re and the transformation of the villa district into a local quasi-Manhattan whose aesthetic and functional eclecticism in the 1990's breaks into the socialist aesthetics of austerity. The prestigious nature of the district has not changed, although its status – that of a residential district for the people of power – has been visibly deconstructed. Following the rise of high buildings, so different from the villas dominating the area in the communist days, the space of Tirana e Re became filled with entertainment venues, modern commercial spaces and recreational areas. Closed and fenced off from the world of communist mediocrity, the privileged community of the district has lost the features of a neighborly community, experiencing the processes of individualization typical of post-communist Tirana, loosening of social ties and the influx of "culturally foreign" immigrants from villages north of the capital.

We propose the juxtaposition of these selected examples to showcase significant diversity implementation paths of the idea of the socialist city, designed as an incarnation of the new, ideal, social and political order, as a progressive, future-anticipating thet embodiment of an optimal projection of civilization. Each of the cultures – Polish, Yugoslavian/Serbian and Albanian – produces different scenarios for its materialization, despite the starting point being universalistic claims of modernity. When analyzing the fate of the utopia of the new city from a post-communist perspective, it should be noted that utopian concepts introduced into the current of a specific historical and cultural experience, into the scope of social practice, through top-down programming and control mechanisms, are usually implemented at the expense of citizens' freedom on the one hand, and on the other hand, confronted with the changeability of urban reality (yielding to regulation to a very limited extent) they lose their idealistic potential. The new city designs discussed in this text have not met the ideals and hopes of their designers, however in a longer temporal perspective they proved to be an impulse that released social activity qualitatively different from existing traditional patterns and initiated a thorough redefinition of urban identities.

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