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BALANCING IDENTITIES  
WORKS BY ARCHITECT BRANKO PETROVIC  
IN ADDIS ABABA (1962-1969)

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BALANSIRANJE IDENTITETA  
RAĐOVI ARHITEKTA BRANKA PETROVICA  
U ADDIS ABABI (1962.-1969.)

IZVORNI ZNANSTVENI ČLANAK  
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FIG. 1 B. PETROVIĆ, WABE SHEBELLE HOTEL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 1968: PHOTO COLLAGE OF THE BUILDING'S DIVERSE ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN SEQUENCES  
SL. 1. B. PETROVIĆ: HOTEL WABE SHEBELLE, ADDIS ABABA, ETIOPIJA, 1968. FOTOKOLAŽ RAZLIČITIH ARHITEKTONSKO-URBANISTIČKIH SEKVENCI ZGRADE



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## BALANCING IDENTITIES

WORKS BY ARCHITECT BRANKO PETROVIĆ IN ADDIS ABABA (1962-1969)

## BALANSIRANJE IDENTITETA

RADOVI ARHITEKTA BRANKA PETROVIĆA U ADDIS ABEBI (1962.-1969.)

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA  
MODERN ARCHITECTURE  
NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT  
PETROVIĆ, BRANKO  
TECHNICAL COOPERATION

ADDIS ABEBA, ETIOPIJA  
MODERNA ARHITEKTURA  
POKRET NESVRSTANIH  
PETROVIĆ, BRANKO  
TEHNIČKA SURADNJA

The paper deals with the facets of work by the Croatian architect and urban planner Branko Petrović in Addis Ababa, where he served as the chief architect in the Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works and Communications from 1962 to 1969. Translation of the expertise stemming from the domicile practice and adaptation to a specific construction momentum in the city are thereby being considered. The modalities of technical cooperation are simultaneously examined as a form of international knowledge exchange in the field of architecture.

Rad se bavi facetama djelovanja hrvatskog arhitekta i urbanista Branka Petrovića u Addis Abebi, gdje je od 1962. do 1969. godine bio glavni arhitekt Ministarstva javnih radova i komunikacija Etiopije. Pritom se razmatraju aspekti prijenosa znanja proizlazeceg iz iskustva domicilnih praksi i prilagodbe situaciji građevinskog zamaha bez presedana u razvoju grada. Istovremeno se ispituju modaliteti tehničke suradnje kao forme međunarodne razmjene u domeni arhitektonske profesije.

## INTRODUCTION

### UVOD

Croatian architects' activity in the geopolitical context of the Third World occurred in different modalities<sup>1</sup>, where the processes of technical cooperation performed one of the key tasks. Technical cooperation as a form of international communication emerged globally after World War II, when the new social order prioritised material and social recovery and efforts to improve the quality of life stepped up. Aimed at supporting economic and social development of a particular area, in its elementary form, technical cooperation included knowledge sharing through the procedures of providing expert assistance or personnel training. Technical cooperation covered a wide range of professions related to specific requirements set in line with various development criteria, and architecture and urban planning, which this paper is focusing on, played a prominent role among different disciplines covered by its programmes. Seen as "soft diplomacy", socialist Yugoslavia's technical cooperation with developing countries largely fostered political ties forged within the Non-Aligned Movement, and was carried out mostly through two parallel processes – by educating citizens of the said countries in Yugoslavia and by sending its experts to provide "technical assistance" to the developing world.<sup>2</sup>

In the fields of architecture and urban planning, technical cooperation procedures allowed acquiring higher education on the one

hand, and on the other a status of experts with international qualifications, often repeatedly hired for different types of work abroad. This can be corroborated by one of the first significant professional transfers from Yugoslavia carried out through the technical cooperation programme of the United Nations in 1953, that of architect and urban planner Vladimir Antolić. As a UN expert, Antolić stayed in Southeast Asia – Myanmar (then Burma), Malaysia and Indonesia – providing assistance on various facets of the planning practice, until 1965.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, architect Miro Marasović realised a significant part of his work in Ghana, as Yugoslavia's technical assistance expert from 1961 to 1964. Later on, as an expert within the UN technical cooperation programs, he ran the physical development projects for South and Upper Adriatic Region in Yugoslavia (1967-1973), and a medical tourism development project in Hungary (1973-1977).<sup>4</sup> In line with that, architect Berislav Kalogjera's professional path was also closely linked to technical cooperation frameworks. As Yugoslavia's technical assistance expert he stayed in Ghana with Marasović from 1963 to 1965, after which he took part in the above mentioned UN granted project for the South Adriatic, ran the Regional Activities Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme in Split and worked as a UN housing advisor on Cyprus.<sup>5</sup> Among the companies whose experts were contracted to work in developing countries frequently and according to various procedures, the Croatian Urban Planning Institute was one of the most prominent. The most significant international assignment of the Institute was the Urban Development Plan of

1 A comprehensive overview of the international activity of Croatian architects discussed here was made in the dissertation *Croatian Architects' Modalities of Work in the Countries of Africa and Southwest Asia 1950-1991* authored by Mojca Smode Cvitanović, under the mentorship by Professor Andrej Uchytil, PhD, based on research as part of doctoral studies at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Architecture.

2 Forms and dynamics of technical cooperation of Yugoslavia with developing countries were described in more detail in the aforementioned doctoral dissertation (ref. 1).

3 DOMLIJAN, 1983; GALIĆ [ed.], 1991: 86-91; SMOKVINA, SMODE CVITANOVIĆ, 2018

4 CELMIĆ, 2004

5 KEČKEMET, 2005; MATOŠIĆ, 1999

6 GALIĆ [ed.], 1991: 92-97. The importance of Ernest Weismann's work in the context of pre-war modernism was synthesized by Tamara Bjazić Klarin [BJAZIĆ KLARIN, 2015]. The research carried out by Muhammad Ijlal Muzaffar partly addresses Weismann's work in the mentioned UN framework [MUZAFFAR, 2007].

7 SR-AJ-208 – Branko Petrović's personal file. The facts referring to received and provided technical assistance linked to Petrović's biography, given the institutional basis of technical cooperation, are evidently mutually linked.

8 On the work of the AR-59 bureau: PAVLOVIĆ, VASI-LJEVIĆ [ed.], 1971

Conakry, made in 1963 under the guidance of economist Franjo Gašparović and architect Radovan Mišćević, as a result of the technical cooperation ties forged between Guinea and Yugoslavia. Within the broader discourse of technical cooperation on a global scale, a prominent role was played by the architect Ernest Weissmann as head of the UN Housing and Town Planning Section and Assistant Director of the Bureau of Social Affairs in charge of the UN Housing Building and Planning Programme from 1951 to 1966, under whose charge numerous missions by that organisation involving well-known international experts were carried out.<sup>6</sup> Architect and urban planner Branko Petrović, whose work is in focus of this paper, on the one hand, owing to the UN technical assistance received in 1952, won a scholarship for specialisation in urban planning in England, Sweden and Denmark. On the other hand, a decade later, owing to the technical assistance provided by Yugoslavia, he was sent to Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup> His work as chief architect of the Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works and Communications from 1962 to 1969 is certainly among the most significant transfers carried out in the framework of technical cooperation in the field of architecture in Croatia.

Branko Petrović (1922, Požega – 1975, Zagreb) was an expert whose career involved exploring various aspects of the profession. After graduating in 1948 from the then Department of Architecture of the Zagreb Technical Faculty, he gained experience working in the Urban Planning Institute i.e. the Croatian Ministry of Public Utilities. Having received a UN scholarship, as was previously

mentioned, in 1952 he moved abroad to specialise in urban planning. From 1954 to 1958 he was director of Croatia's Urban Planning Institute, while from 1958 until his departure to Ethiopia in 1962, he ran, together with Branko Vasiljević, their joint bureau for urban planning and architecture AR-59.<sup>8</sup> The apparent intensity of professional activity and a wide range of interests resulted in a rich and diverse body of work, including in the methodologically innovative domain of regional planning, as well as numerous urban and architectural designs of different purposes and scales. Furthermore, Petrović was well acquainted with the architectural production in the country and abroad, active in publishing professional articles<sup>9</sup>, participating in conferences and working in professional organisations where he took on high-ranking functions.<sup>10</sup> After his return from Ethiopia, he worked as an advisor for urban planning and the protection of human environment in the Croatian Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction, Housing and Public Utilities.<sup>11</sup> His merit in the field of theory and critique in Croatia is unquestionable, especially in the domain of planning where Petrović is considered one of the “founders of contemporary urban planning theory and practice”.<sup>12</sup>

As a technical assistance expert in Ethiopia, Petrović engaged in an analogous array of activities. His work as chief architect in Ethiopia's Ministry of Public Works and Communications coincided with the period of building conjuncture which largely defined the shapes of Addis Ababa's urbanism that we see today. At the same time, the issue of *African* in the architectural cultures of the liberated continent gained significance<sup>13</sup>, particularly in the city which was supposed to become its political centre. Despite the fact that his predominant focus was on urban and, more broadly, regional planning, in Ethiopia he got an opportunity to design projects of the prime socio-political importance which surpassed works in his own country. Three Petrović's works in Addis Ababa, the unrealized projects of the New Imperial Palace and the Organisation of African Unity headquarters building, and the realisation of Wabe Shebelle hotel, demonstrate the use of a clearly diverse formal vocabulary shaping architecture of national, international and local significance. His approach, which relied heavily upon the preceding experience as practicing architect in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was adjusted when encountered with traditional building idiom found in Ethiopian architecture. On top of his contribution to rethinking the urbanism of Addis Ababa in the framework of urbanity-related aspects of his projects, Petrović showed a sensibility towards identity-related phenomena in the architecture of Africa which have remained



FIG. 2 PRESENTATION OF THE DESIGN FOR THE NEW IMPERIAL PALACE IN ADDIS ABABA AT AN EXHIBITION IN THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS IN 1963, IN THE MIDDLE: EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE AND ARCHITECT BRANKO PETROVIĆ  
SL. 2. PREZENTACIJA PROJEKTA NOVE CARSKE PALACE U ADDIS ABEBI NA IZLOZBI U MINISTARSTVU JAVNIH RADOVA ETIOPIJE 1963.; U SREDINI: CAR HAILE SELASIJU I ARHITEKT BRANKO PETROVIC

<sup>9</sup> The publication of his articles in *Town and Country Planning* journal may be highlighted here [PETROVIC, 1955a; PETROVIC, 1955b]. We thank Nikola Bojic for this insight.

<sup>10</sup> Vice-president of the Croatian Architects' Association, president of the Croatian Association of Urban Planners, president of the Federation of Urban Planning Associations of Yugoslavia, president of the Croatian Regional Planning Committee, member of the Standing Conference on Cities and Housing, desk member of the “Man and Space (Čovjek i prostor)” journal, president of the Federal Commission for Housing Communities of the Federal Committee “Family and Household” etc. [SR-AJ-208 – Branko Petrović's personal file].

<sup>11</sup> Valuable insights into Petrović's comprehensive work in the domain of human environment have been recently provided by Nikola Bojic. See: [modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/mud-muses/participating-artists-mud-muses/](http://modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/mud-muses/participating-artists-mud-muses/) (2020-04-25); [rijeka2020.eu/dogadjanja/terra-effluviens-nikola-bojic-hr/](http://rijeka2020.eu/dogadjanja/terra-effluviens-nikola-bojic-hr/) (2020-04-25).

<sup>12</sup> WENZLER, 1975: 18

<sup>13</sup> The heritage of international modernism has largely determined the understanding of architecture of the tropical belt through its “scientific” component which is primarily linked to climate-related aspects. Within its initial premises, such a worldview excludes the possibility of having a traditional basis that is crucially important for the modern architectural practice. The issue of identity therefore retained its relevance until recently. See: OKOYE, 2002

FIG. 3 „DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO ETHIOPIA, THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT RICHARD NEUTRA, ACCOMPANIED BY OUR ARCHITECT BRANKO PETROVIC, WAS RECEIVED BY THE ETHIOPIAN EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE” [\*\*\* 1968] – FROM THE NEWS SECTION OF THE ZAGREB BASED “MAN AND SPACE” JOURNAL

SL. 3. „U NEĐAVNOJ POSJETI ETIOPIJI, AMERIČKI ARHITEKT RICHARD NEUTRA, U PRATNJI NAŠEG ARHITEKTA BRANKA PETROVIĆA BIO JE PRIMLJEN KOD ETIOPSKOG CARA HAILE SELASIJU” [\*\*\* 1968.] – IZ RUBRIKE VIJESTI ČASOPISA „ČOVJEK I PROSTOR”





FIG. 4 THE PANORAMA OF ADDIS ABABA AROUND 1960 TAKEN FROM THE BUILDING OF THE NATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL BANK OF ETHIOPIA, THEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION – FROM THE ARCHIVE OF ARCHITECT DRAGICA CRNKOVIC OCKO

SL. 4. PANORAMA ADDIS ABEBE OKO 1960. SNIMLJENA SA ZGRADE NACIONALNE I KOMERCIJALNE BANKE ETIOPIJE ARHITEKTA HENRIJA CHOMETTEA, TADA U IZGRADNJI – IZ ARHIVE ARHITEKTE DRAGICE CRNKOVIC OCKO

topical until today, and it is precisely the dialogue between the urban and the representative that provides his works in Ethiopia a character of authenticity. At the same time, the apparent shift in approach testifies to the softening of the authorial agenda in line with the project's own publicity.

#### YUGOSLAVIA'S POSITION ON THE ETHIOPIAN MARKET

##### JUGOSLAVENSKA POZICIJA NA ETIOPSKOM TRŽIŠTU

Following a period of Italian occupation (1936-1941) – unlike other African countries where the colonial rule remained for more than a decade later – Ethiopia came out of the World War II as a sovereign state within the victorious alliance. Modernising tendencies of the country run by Haile Selassie created the dynamics of a heterogeneous market much earlier than in comparable situations in other parts of Africa, balancing between economic and political benefits coming both from the West and the East. Very early on, years before the formal establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia became one of the closest allies of Ethiopia.

Balancing between opposing ideas was in the very core of social development of Ethiopia which was striving towards modernisation and was, at the same time, marked by monarchism. Such circumstances were, among other things, reflected in the construction development of Addis Ababa<sup>14</sup>, a city characterized at the same time by its affirmation as a diplomatic centre of the continent – the seat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (1958) and of the Organisation of African Unity (1963). In the second half of the 1950s and in the 1960s,

the construction activity in Addis Ababa, the population of which at that moment amounted to slightly less than half a million<sup>15</sup>, reached a volume unprecedented in the city history.<sup>16</sup> The position of Addis Ababa as a social, political and economic centre of Ethiopia and as a continental political centre has incited a process of its dynamic transformation, which included construction of a large number of administrative, residential, educational, health, industrial and other buildings. The perspective of urban transformation was at the same time closely linked to the issue of representation of restructured and newly-established institutions.

Yugoslavia saw a strong interest to engage in the dynamic context of this developing country. As early as in the second half of the 1950s there was a considerable Yugoslav community in Addis Ababa consisting of experts in the service of the Ethiopian government and professionals from various export companies.<sup>17</sup> In parallel with the international competition, Yugoslav professionals on the Ethiopian market often competed among themselves. Petrović's appointment to the prominent position of chief architect of the Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works and Communications in 1962 occurred when the scene of a relative political stability and a well-es-

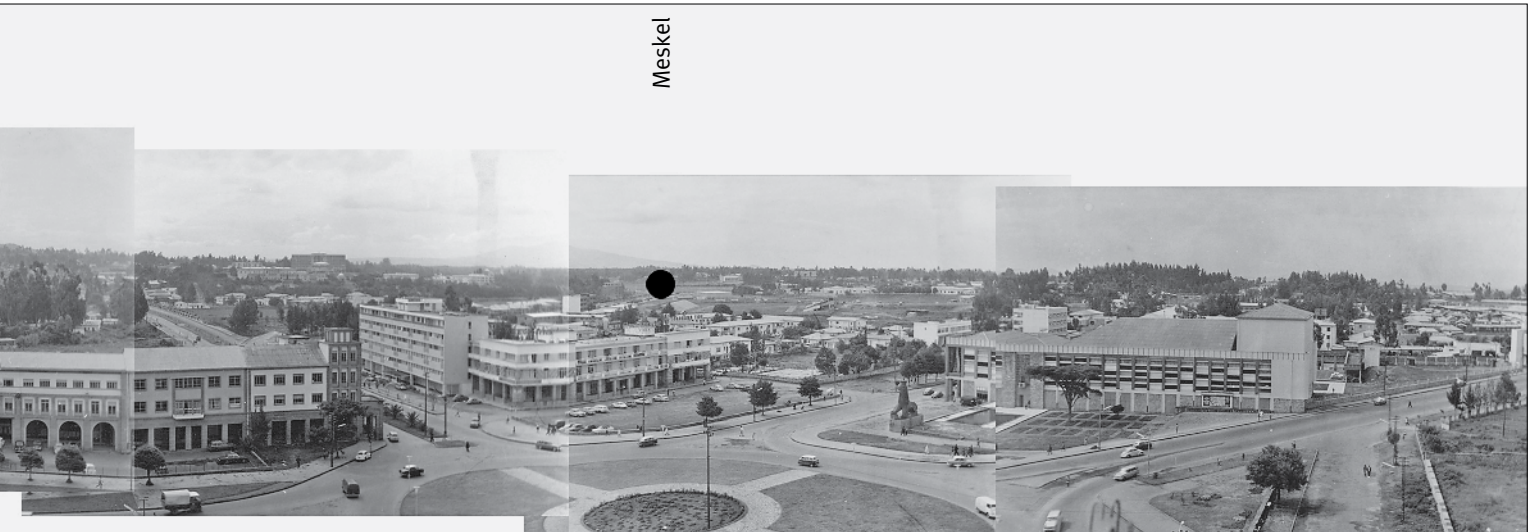
<sup>14</sup> Ayala Levin's work [LEVIN, 2016] provides notable conclusions on the specific post-war modernity of Addis Ababa.

<sup>15</sup> In 1961 the population of Addis Ababa amounted to 450 000. [\*\*\* 1966]

<sup>16</sup> HABTEMARIAM, 1987

<sup>17</sup> The location of the "Yugo-Club", the organisation where a significant segment of the socio-political life of the mentioned community took place, is still present in the city memory.

<sup>18</sup> Along with Ugrenović, Dragica Crnković Ocko's work in Ethiopia in the 1950s needs to be mentioned [SMODE



established Yugoslav export production had already been set. Only three years before, architect Ugrenović had stayed in Ethiopia, exploring options for marketing design services for the Belgrade-based company Invest-Import.<sup>18</sup> According to his report, professionals in that country were scarce, and modernisation efforts were only beginning to emerge. The total number of architects, mostly foreigners, in the whole of Ethiopia, was not more than 30, while the total number of engineers from all fields and all nationalities in Addis Ababa amounted to 59 in 1957.<sup>19</sup> However, at the moment of Petrović's arrival, the situation had already radically changed. Additionally, in the period between Ugrenović's and Petrović's stays in that country, Yugoslav design and contracting companies had already earned a stable position. In the 1960s, the number of Yugoslav experts in Ethiopia reached its peak.

The situation in the field of construction works was well described in the text written by Slobodan Sindelić in 1969 and published in Belgrade's journal "Architecture – Urbanism (Arhitektura – Urbanizam)" in which states: "The work of our experts in the field of architecture and civil engineering in Ethiopia is carried out in three basic forms used in parallel: through our contracting and design organisa-

tions, through the work of experts contracted as part of technical assistance and through bureaus that were awarded contracts in international competitions. We can safely state that work using these forms has reached a very high level of coordination and that a large part of success stories that we have witnessed can be attributed precisely to a close and tight cooperation among all our experts. The fact that in the last ten years the positions of the chief architect and the head of the Construction Department in the Ministry of Public Works were held by Yugoslavs clearly demonstrates that hiring Yugoslav experts via technical assistance produced good results and met expectations."<sup>20</sup> Although portrayed as a praise of international achievements of the Yugoslav civil engineering sector, the situation on the Ethiopian civil engineering market was not in the least easy, and technical assistance experts positioned in the state administration bodies were balancing between the interests of business diplomacy they were bound to follow, imperial aspirations and their own professional affinities.

The choice of Petrović as an adequate person for the demanding position was by the Yugoslav side undoubtedly justified by his versatile and successful professional biography. The transfer that required decision-making at the diplomatic levels of the two countries had to involve no less than a highly respected and qualified expert of a wide-ranging profile which, in Petrović's case, included an extensive multi-faceted work experience in planning and design as well as management positions and social engagement.<sup>21</sup> The position of chief architect of the Ministry of Public Works allowed Petrović not only to have an insight, to control and to guide the dynamics of international building activities, but also an opportunity to participate actively as a de-

CVITANOVIĆ, SMOKVINA, UCHYTIŁ, 2016] as well as the work by Lavoslav Horvat [PALADINO, 2011] and as predecessors, sculptors Antun Augustincić and Frano Krsinić with their collaborators [ASSEGUED, BREHANE, 2014; VUJČIĆ, 2017].

<sup>19</sup> UGRENOVIĆ, 1959: 10-12 [HAZU-HMA-OAF/DCO/66]

<sup>20</sup> SINDELIĆ, 1969: 43

<sup>21</sup> The criterion for the selection of Branko Petrović as chief architect of the Ministry of Public Works and Communications of Ethiopia can be compared to the criterion for the selection of Miro Marasović as head of the Architects Office of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi in Ghana [SMODE CVITANOVIĆ, 2020].

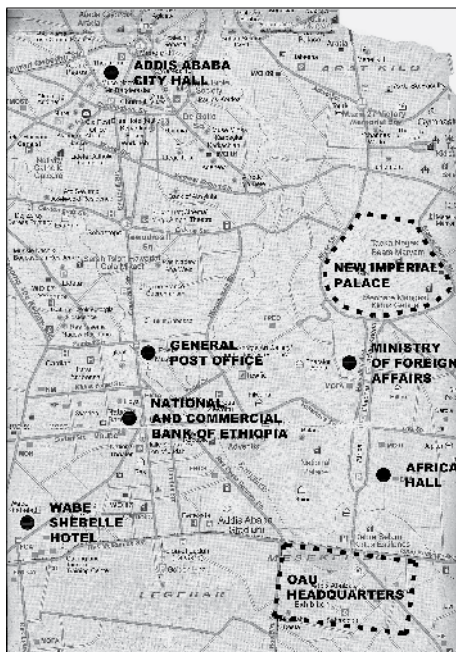


FIG. 5 THE SITUATIONS OF PROJECTS BY B. PETROVIĆ, ALONG WITH THE RESPECTED URBAN LANDMARKS OF ADDIS ABABA, ON THE CITY'S RECENT LAYOUT  
SL. 5. SITUACIJE PROJEKATA B. PETROVIĆA I PREPOZNTLJIVIH ARHITEKTONSKIH OSTVARENJA ADDIS ABEBE NA PRIKAZU RECENTNE SITUACIJE GRADA

signer. Crucial was his stay in Ethiopia and his undoubtedly close relationship with the emperor himself<sup>22</sup>, who took a clear interest in urban planning and architecture-related issues of his own capital.

## URBAN LANDMARKS OF ADDIS ABABA AS ENVISAGED BY BRANKO PETROVIĆ

### URBANI REPERI ADDIS ABEBE U OPUSU BRANKA PETROVIĆA

Addis Ababa is a relatively young city. Established in 1886 at an average altitude of c. 2500 meters above sea level, the city whose name means “a new flower”, in its inception consisted of groups of traditional neighbourhoods<sup>23</sup> scattered around the imperial residential formation situated at the location known as Ghebi.<sup>24</sup> The city's development in the aftermath of the World War II was to a large extent defined during the Italian occupation.<sup>25</sup> In the following years the Ethiopian government, for the purpose of developing an urban plan of Addis Ababa, hired the British architect and urban planner Patrick Abercrombie, author of the Greater London Plan where he applied the “green belt” concept as means to restrict undesired urban sprawl on the African soil. In the decades to come other British and French companies were invited for the same purpose.<sup>26</sup> However, the urban form of the city in the 1950s and the 1960s was to a large extent defined by its particular architectural landmarks.

The building momentum that started in Addis Ababa in the 1950s, reached its peak in the 1960s.<sup>27</sup> Several buildings were erected in that period which attempted to address the issue of representation of the newly constituted state and international institutions, emphasizing at the same time both the local history and tradition and a future based on the values of anti-colonialism, freedom and independence. At the urban scale, they formed a network of city's identity landmarks. The building of the National and Commercial Bank of Ethiopia by the French architect Henri Chomette, the building of the Addis Ababa City Hall and the seat of UN Economic Commission for Africa, the so-called Africa Hall, by the Italian architect Arturo Mezzedimi and the building of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Israeli-Ethiopian duo Zalman Enav and Michael Tedros, stand out as some of the most prominent buildings with these characteristics.<sup>28</sup> Another important building is the General Post Office, the Ministry of PTT and the Imperial Board of Telecommunications by architects Zdravko Kovačević and Ivan Straus, built after winning the first prize at the international competition in 1964, where Petrović was a jury member. This building, which devi-

ates from the aforementioned conceptions with its abstract vocabulary, has been recently valued as one of the key examples of modern architecture in Addis Ababa<sup>29</sup>, owing to the qualities on both the architectural and urban scale.

During his work in the Ministry Petrović created numerous designs and materialized buildings addressing different programmatic and spatial situations across the country. In Addis Ababa he designed the Ministry of Agriculture<sup>30</sup>, offered solutions for central squares, including the project that won the first prize in the competition for a monument on the Meskel square<sup>31</sup>, a place of large public gatherings. The extension of the Jubilee Palace, at the time the imperial and currently the presidential residence, is considered as one of his most significant realisations, as is the case with the building of the Wabe Shebelle hotel, standing even today as a landmark in Addis Ababa city centre. The vision of Addis Ababa as a national and pan-African centre is most evidently manifested in two non-implemented designs intended for important functions – the project of the New Imperial Palace and the headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity, situated according to all criteria, at the most important locations of that city. Moreover, he put together a solo exhibition of drawings of the Ethiopian traditional architecture, he taught at the Department of Architecture of the Technical Faculty of the Haile Selassie University and was a member of the Urban Planning Commission of the Ministry of the Interior. He received a Menelik medal by the emperor Haile Selassie in 1969 for all his achievements.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Petrović authored at least three designs of residential buildings for the Ethiopian emperor. Apart from the design for the New Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa, in close proximity of its planned location, he designed an extension of the Jubilee Palace, almost immediately after it had been declared the Emperor's official residence. In the rural environment of Bahir Dar he made a design for an imperial villa. (The notable Tana Palace at the slope above Bahir Dar, overlooking the Blue Nile and the Tana Lake, was designed by Arturo Mezzedimi in the mid-1960s. See: GALLI, 2016)

<sup>23</sup> A form of spatial organisation known as “safar”.

<sup>24</sup> GIORGHIS, GÉRARD, 2007

<sup>25</sup> DAWIT, GHIORGIS, 1987; PANKHURST, 1987

<sup>26</sup> On urban development of Addis Ababa: TUFA, 2008

<sup>27</sup> HABTEMARIAM, 1987

<sup>28</sup> On the role of architects Henri Chomette, Arturo Mezzedimi, Zalman Enav and Michael Tedros in shaping Addis Ababa's modernity: LEVIN, 2016

<sup>29</sup> “The General Post Office complex (...) is the most successful composition in the city to date. It is among the very few designs in Addis Ababa that combines offices and public facilities (...) thereby giving life to the immediate surrounding even after office hours, a quality which most public buildings lack. The overall arrangement of the different volumes and the external spaces they define, the general openness of the whole complex brought about by the use of very low fence – instead of the ‘customary’ 2



The analysis of three Petrović's projects – the unbuilt ones of the New Imperial Palace and the Organisation of African Unity headquarters, and the built one of the Wabe Shebelle hotel – will demonstrate his nuanced approach depending on the specificities of the building programme and the urban setting. In this way representation narratives, ranging from the initially neutral, fundamentally abstract vocabulary of international modernism and the language that clearly evokes the elements of the local traditions, will come to the fore.

- The very location of the **New Imperial Palace** (project, 1963)<sup>33</sup>, set upfront on Ghebi, a hill with a historical significance as a cradle of urban development of Addis Ababa, undoubtedly confirmed its role to showcase imperial power. Additionally, this spatial intervention implied a deep transformation of a historically valued ambience of a hill whose woody slopes accommodated existing built structures, including several significant churches. Occupying the highest position on Ghebi, the floor plan for the new palace incorporated the older throne hall, leaving its construction and outlines practically intact, while the solution for its immediate surroundings respected all the historical buildings in that location.

The monumental character of the complex is additionally emphasized by a wide profile of the Menelik II Avenue, which, situated on a slope and directed towards Ghebi provides an axial approach to the entire setting. The Menelik II Avenue is flanked by buildings with significant political functions – the Jubilee Palace, known today as the National Palace,

meters high ones – and the appropriate accesses from the streets, all contribute to the success of the work. It is one of the best examples that fits well into the urban context – an architectural work that helps stimulate urban life.” [HABTEMARIAM, 1987: 210-211]

The focus on the urban qualities can be linked to Petrović's contribution within the competition jury which gave the highest mark to precisely this solution, all the more since his own Ethiopian works insisted on the values of urban integration. This fact can also be linked to the translation of values established in the continuity of domestic practices that are characteristic of Petrović's worldview but also of that of Kovacevic and Štraus.

**30** Due to a lack of documentation, the characteristics of this project are today unknown.

**31** \*\*\* 1964

**32** A section on Branko Petrović's biography was composed based on: KRANJČEVIĆ, 2012; WENZLER, 1975; \*\*\* 1964; \*\*\* 1965; SR-AJ-208 – Branko Petrović's personal file

**33** The conceptual design for the New Imperial Palace was made by Branko Petrović in cooperation with two of his compatriots, Milutin Maksimović as an advisor and Dušan Machiedo as an assistant and Petrović's permanent collaborator on the Ethiopian projects, together with the Ethiopian draftsman Afework Yohannes, in the Ministry of Public Works. Project description based on: PA-SPK.DZ – Project documentation for the New Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa.

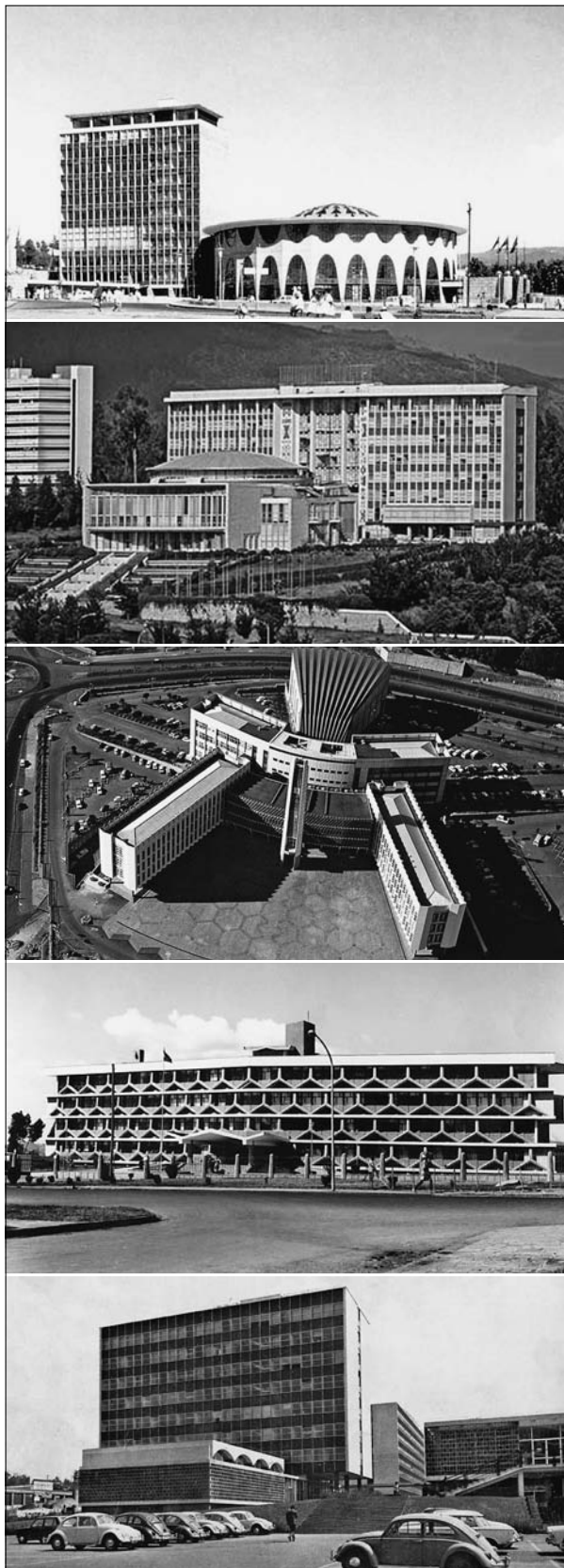
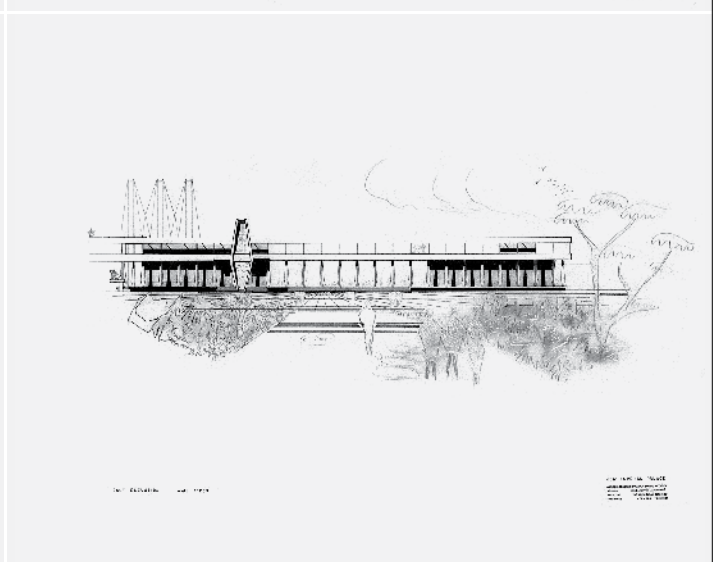
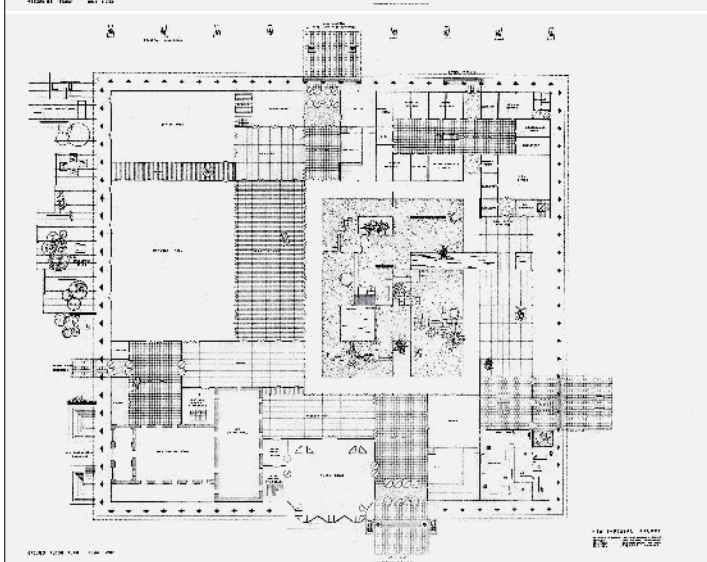
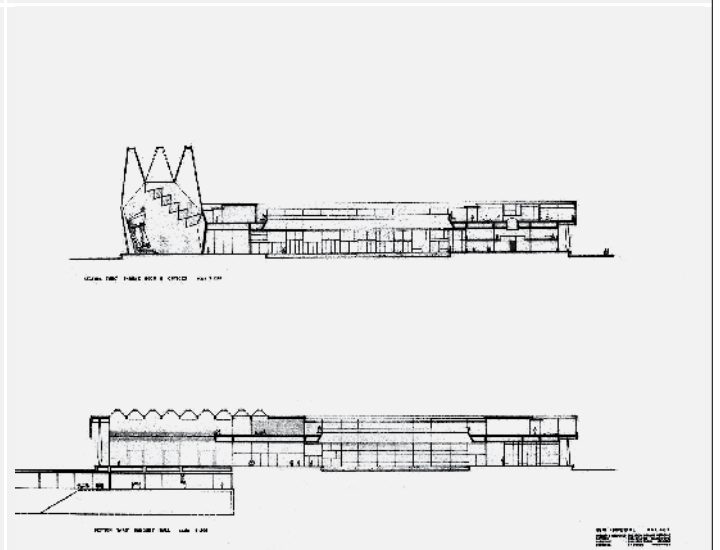
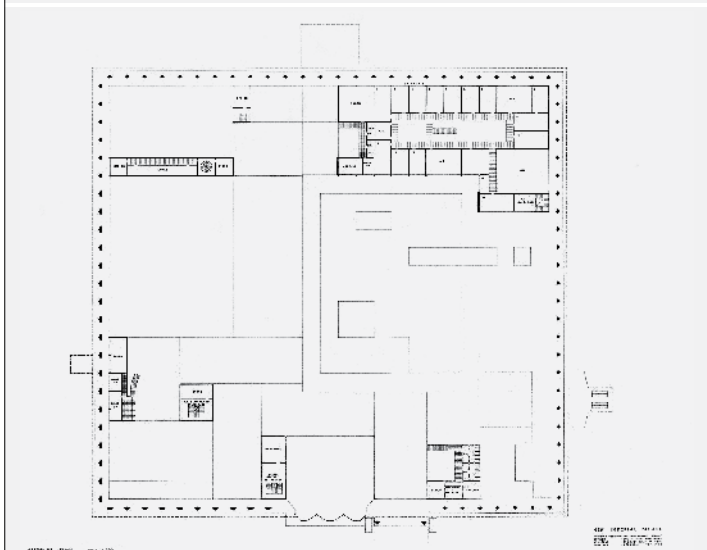
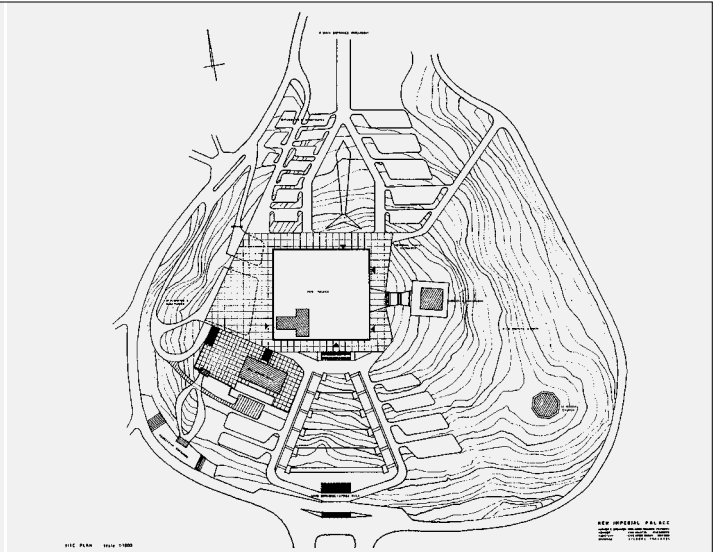
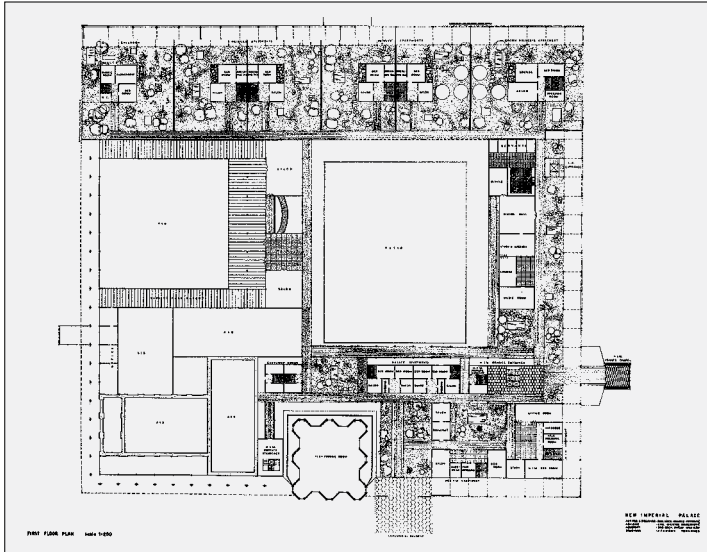
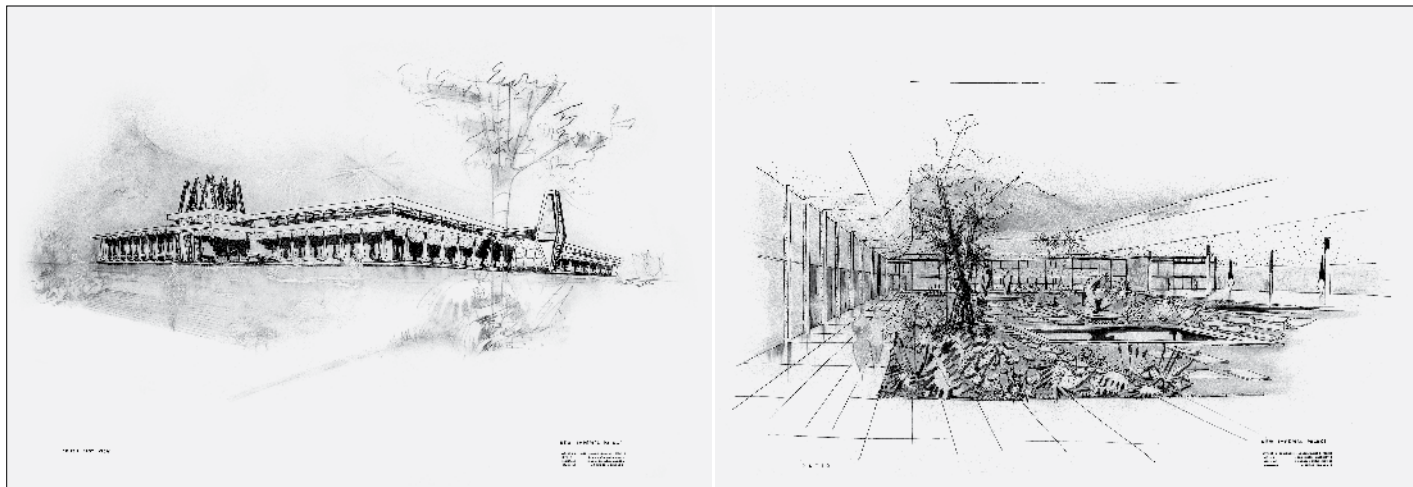


FIG. 6 MODERN ARCHITECTURE OF ADDIS ABABA.

TOP DOWN: HENRI CHOMETTE, NATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL BANK OF ETHIOPIA, ~1963; ARTURO MEZZEDIMI, AFRICA HALL, 1961; ARTURO MEZZEDIMI, ADDIS ABABA CITY HALL, 1964; ZALMAN ENAV, MICHAEL TEDROS, ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 1964; ZDRAVKO KOVAČEVIĆ, IVAN ŠTRAUS, GENERAL POST OFFICE, MINISTRY OF PTT AND THE IMPERIAL BOARD OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS, 1969

SL. 6. MODERNA ARHITEKTURA ADDIS ABEBE. ODOZGO PREMA DOLJE: HENRY CHOMETTE, NACIONALNA I KOMERCIJALNA BANKA ETIOPIJE ~1963.; ARTURO MEZZEDIMI, AFRICA HALL, 1961.; ARTURO MEZZEDIMI, GRADSKA VIJEĆNICA, 1964.; ZALMAN ENAV, MICHAEL TEDROS, MINISTARSTVO VANJSKIH POSLOVA, 1964.; ZDRAVKO KOVAČEVIĆ, IVAN ŠTRAUS, GLAVNA POSTA, MINISTARSTVO PTT I UPRAVA TELEKOMUNIKACIJA, 1969.





the Africa Hall and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Implemented in the 1960s, the concept of defining this axis as a political centre dates back to the period of the Italian occupation and stems from the urban plan made in the second half of the 1930s by Ignazio Guidi and Cesare Valle. The same plan included a central imperial complex on Ghebi as well, positioned axially in relation to the avenue. Haile Selassie persevered with his aspirations to build his own representative palace on Ghebi over a longer period. In 1948 an international competition was launched for this purpose<sup>34</sup>, and according to one of Petrović's reports, his palace followed after as many as 127 designs had been made in the course of 15 years for that same purpose.<sup>35</sup> The belief that Petrović's project, unlike other proposals, might be implemented was apparently justified which is corroborated by the fact that the Centroprojekt's office was entrusted with making its construction drawings. However, the project was abandoned after all and the existing architectural complex on Ghebi was kept in its natural surroundings.

Unlike, for instance, the Italian plan, which suggested situating the Imperial Palace vis-a-vis the suggestive Menelik Avenue, Petrović did not place his building absolutely symmetrically to its access street. An elegant

shallow volume of an almost square plan with a large patio, positioned along the top of a hill, slightly shifted in relation to the prominent urban axis, positions its entrances for diverse purposes on all four sides. With a total surface area of 25 000 square metres, the organisation of the palace implied several separate functional tracts within a relatively compact volume. Functional units included spaces for private accommodation of the members of the imperial family, guests and servants, spaces for protocol and ceremonial purposes with a special focus on the throne hall whose verticality opposes the predominant horizontality of the building, office space of the imperial court and facilities for service provision.

The effectiveness of the building in addressing climate-related requirements, which was generally lacking in the architecture of Addis Ababa in the 1960s<sup>36</sup>, was well taken into account in Petrović's concept and incorporated through a series of design-related decisions: by indentation of the facade canvas from the construction of the building perimeter, by applying various types of sheltered space as parts of its organisational disposition and through a horticultural treatment of a large part of its external surface area, primarily the ground-floor patio and the first floor terrace.

It could be claimed that his approach to monumentality applied in this concept was related to the theoretical discussions but also to a series of competition projects for buildings of socio-political significance in post-war Yugoslavia.<sup>37</sup> Although it was urbanistically pre-defined by a distinct axial situation, Petrović's composition manages to avoid absolute symmetry of, for instance, the Mezzedimi's Town Hall in an almost identical situation towards the Churchill Avenue, and even to Africa Hall, having a strong axial disposition. Initially abstract, the horizontal body hovering over

FIG. 8 B. PETROVIĆ, THE NEW IMPERIAL PALACE, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, PROJECT, 1963: PERSPECTIVE OF THE EXTERIOR AND THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING – LAYOUT PLAN OF THE MAIN ENTRANCE (LEFT) AND OF THE PRIVATE ENTRANCE (RIGHT) AND THE PATIO

SL. 8. B. PETROVIĆ: NOVA CARSKA PALAĆA, ADDIS ABABA, ETIOPIJA, PROJEKT, 1963. PERSPEKTIVNI PRIKAZI VANJSTINE I UNUTRAŠNOSTI GRAĐEVINE – SITUACIJA GLAVNOG (LIJEVO) I PRIVATNOG (DESNO) ULAZA I PATIO

<sup>34</sup> The author of one of the rewarded designs in this competition was the Croatian-Russian-German architect Đorđe Kiverov who, owing to this competition result, stayed in Ethiopia from 1949 to 1952 (PA-AR – Đorđe Kiverov's biographical, graphical and photo documentation).

<sup>35</sup> SR-AJ-208 – Branko Petrović's personal file

<sup>36</sup> HABTEMARIAM, 1987: 211. The approach that does not prioritize the aspects of "tropicality" is to a certain extent justified by the fact that the city is situated at an altitude of more than 2000 m above sea level.

<sup>37</sup> The same can be detected in the design for Guinea's Government Centre in Conakry, authored by architect Radovan Mišević in 1963, another complex with an important political function designed by Croatian architects in Africa.

FIG. 7 B. PETROVIĆ, THE NEW IMPERIAL PALACE, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, PROJECT, 1963: TOP DOWN, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT – FIRST FLOOR PLAN, MEZZANINE PLAN, GROUND FLOOR PLAN, LAYOUT PLAN, SECTIONS, SIDE VIEW  
SL. 7. B. PETROVIĆ: NOVA CARSKA PALAĆA, ADDIS ABABA, ETIOPIJA, PROJEKT, 1963. ODOZGO PREMA DOLJE (SLIJEVA NADESNO): TLOCRT PRVOG KATA, TLOCRT MEZANINA, TLOCRT PRIZEMLJA, SITUACIJSKI PRIKAZ, PRESJECI, PROČELJE

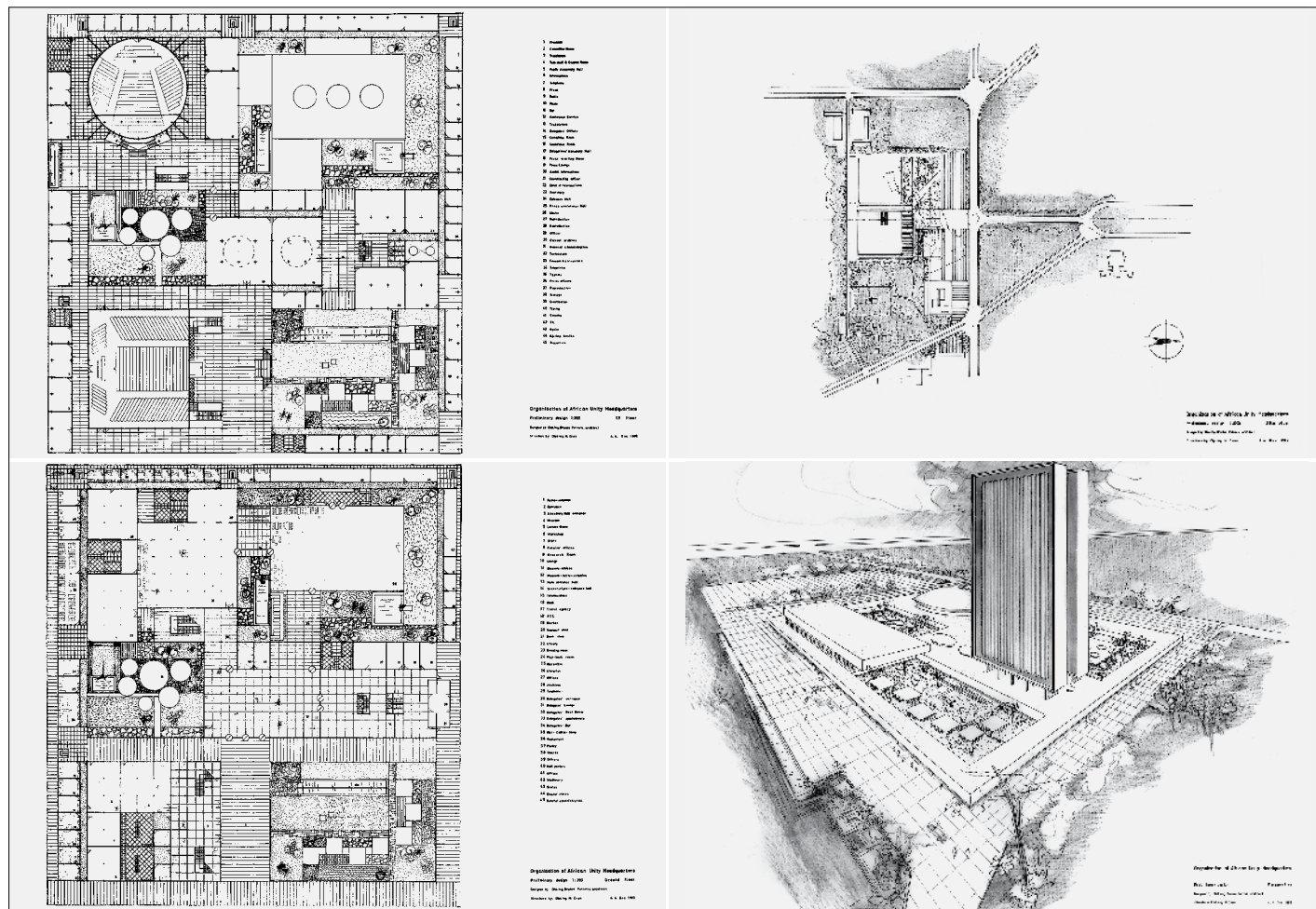


FIG. 9 B. PETROVIĆ, ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY HEADQUARTERS, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, PROJECT, 1965: TOP DOWN, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT – FIRST FLOOR PLAN, GROUND FLOOR PLAN, LAYOUT PLAN, PERSPECTIVE  
 SL. 9. B. PETROVIĆ: SJEDIŠTE ORGANIZACIJE AFRIČKOG JEDINSTVA, ADDIS ABABA, ETIOPIJA, PROJEKT, 1965. ODOZGO PREMA DOLE (SLIJEVA NADESNO): TLOCRT PRVOG KATA, TLOCRT PRIZEMLJA, SITUACIJSKI PRIKAZI

the city uses references to local traditions through the treatment of its vertical accents, primarily the throne hall, along with shaping visible and tall construction pillars at the front elevation. In the discourse of formal references, models for this building can undoubtedly be detected in the aforementioned layer of city's architecture emerging at that same time.

• **The Organisation of the African Unity headquarters building** (project, 1965)<sup>38</sup> moved to the top of the agenda after the establishment of that institution and after declaring Addis Ababa its administrative centre in 1963. Following the project of a New Imperial Palace on Ghebi, the seat of the Organisation of African Unity on the Meskel Square, as foreseen by Petrović, occupied again one of the most prominent city locations. Just as the previously described project was supposed to redefine its surrounding spacious park, given the disposition and a site plan for the administrative building, a new definition of the largest city square was also foreseen. All the more, compared to the location of the

New Imperial Palace on top of a hill, this building was planned to be at its foot, on the opposite side of the Menelik II Avenue, composing volumes of its architectural complex against the visual line of the same road. Albeit hypothetically, the duality of the imperial content on the hilltop and the public content below the hill can be seen as an analogy with the Acropolis and the Agora of an emerging society. The confrontation of the religious centre on Ghebi and the secular centre on Meskel already present in the city plan, was therefore supposed to be underlined by these two projects.

The project of the headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity, which, given its po-

<sup>38</sup> The conceptual design for the Organisation of African Unity headquarters was made by Branko Petrović in cooperation with the structural engineer Marijan Žvan, another Yugoslav technical assistance expert in the service of the Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works. Project description based on: PA-SPK.DZ – Project documentation of the Organisation of African Unity headquarters building in Addis Ababa.

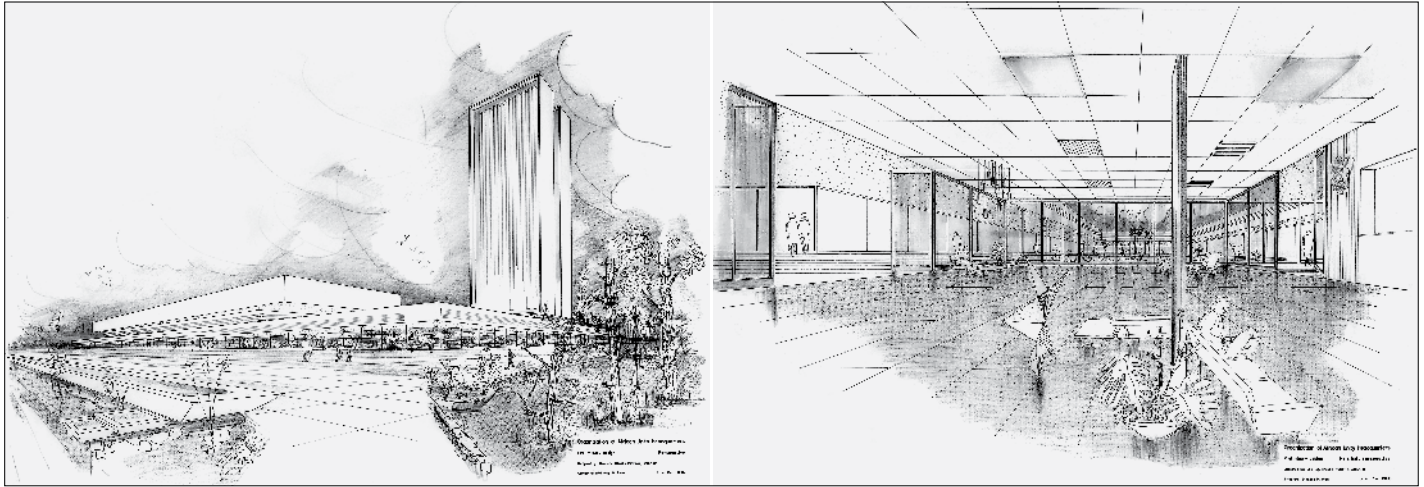


FIG. 10 B. PETROVIC, ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY HEADQUARTERS, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, PROJECT, 1965: PERSPECTIVE OF THE LAYOUT OF THE BUILDING WITH THE ACCESS SQUARE, PERSPECTIVE OF THE INTERIOR  
SL. 10. B. PETROVIĆ: SJEDIŠTE ORGANIZACIJE AFRIČKOG JEDINSTVA, ADDIS ABEBA, ETIOPIJA, PROJEKT 1965. PERSPEKTIVNI PRIKAZ SITUACIJE GRAĐEVINE S PRISTUPNIM TRGOM, PERSPEKTIVNI PRIKAZ INTERIJERA

litical significance and functional complexity can be compared to that of the New Imperial Palace, applies the typological pattern which is in certain elements comparable to the previous one. Horizontally placed, thin, pillars-supported body of a rectangular plan accommodates gardens in its interior. Its vertical accents appear as roof structures over the spaces of conference halls as well as the office tower. The ground floor of the building was envisaged as completely transparent and enriched by a series of public functions, thus complementing the content of a spacious square. While the elements of the climate performance, the approach to monumentality through a dynamic composition of interrelating volumes, and the effect of rich landscaping, can all be seen as equivalent to the previous project, his architectural design is to a much larger extent free from elements of traditional architecture.

In the end, both buildings can be discussed in the context of the capacity of the initially abstract modernism to represent the state and political power. Furthermore, their character can, globally speaking, be compared to the projects that address analogous architectural issues emerging at that same time across the world, starting from paradigmatic examples from the previous decade – Brasilia and Chandigarh – which in this case as well, undoubtedly served as models. When it comes to the Croatian practice, the same can be related to the issues of monumentality. When describing the characteristics of monumental

expression in architecture, in a paradigmatic text addressing the intellectual origins of architecture in the early socialist Yugoslavia<sup>39</sup>, the Croatian architect and theorist Neven Šegvić stresses the importance of the social purpose of the object and its functionality, physical location of the object in a given setting, type and radius of domination, choice of form and its reduction, addition or opposition of the object against the setting, specification of the design details, durability of the object and the quality of materials used. “It is a harmonious merging of these characteristics in a particular case, their dialectic unification, their artistic organisation and distribution that define architectural monumentality.”<sup>40</sup> It is precisely such a broad approach to monumentality in architecture, an approach which “is not taking an eclectic path in order to seek monumental expression, but rather the path of creating architectural organisms, tightly bound to the urban framework”<sup>41</sup> that can be observed here.

- **Wabe Shebelle Hotel** (realisation, 1968)<sup>42</sup>, in a given moment the tallest building in Addis Ababa, situated along a busy street near Mexico Square, soon after its construction became a popular meeting point<sup>43</sup> and a continuously well-known landmark of the city. It was implemented according to Petrović’s conceptual design while the construction drawings and supervision were carried out by Centroprojekt’s experts.<sup>44</sup>

In terms of space and content, the hotel is composed of several different elements. A two-storey glazed cube defines the situation of the corner of the main and the side street, providing the main entrance to the building and accommodating spacious bar and restaurant halls. It is complemented by a block, situated along the main road, whose indented, shaded ground floor is perforated by city shopwindows and overtopped by three floors

<sup>40</sup> ŠEGVIĆ, 1950: 34

<sup>41</sup> ŠEGVIĆ, 1950: 37

<sup>42</sup> Building description based on a study visit.

<sup>43</sup> WONTAMO, 1969

<sup>44</sup> Construction supervision was entrusted to Centroprojekt’s architect Hrvoje Justić. [SINDELIC, 1969; Conversations with Hrvoje Justić, 2012, 2013]



FIG. 11 B. PETROVIĆ, WABE SHEBELLE HOTEL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 1968: THE BUILDING ON A HISTORICAL PHOTO (UNKNOWN DATE)

SL. 11. B. PETROVIĆ: HOTEL WABE SHEBELLE, ADDIS ABABA, ETIOPIJA, 1968. ZGRADA NA POVIJESNOJ FOTOGRAFIJI, NEPOZNATA DATACIJA

of apartment accommodation, while away from the roads, in the rear, lies a vertical structure with ten characteristic floors of hotel rooms and a panoramic rooftop bar. When defining accommodation units, the requirements concerning solar exposure and to heavy precipitation have been addressed by a buffer belt of loggias in the zones of their fenestration. Roughly following the external lines of the corner plot, the elements of the building define its interior garden with a terrace. This “extraordinary example of a well-studied, rational design”<sup>45</sup> materializes its qualities mostly by implementing its own urban setup, and in that way Petrović confirmed his habitus in the urban domain. Unlike certain other hotel buildings in Addis Ababa, including some that were built at the same time, conceived as isolated and separated from its surrounding area, the layout of this hotel arose precisely from the affirmation of urban flows and from the coinciding efforts to enrich their content. In that way a primarily functionalist architecture characteristic of a large portion of the building production of the time was upgraded by Petrović in the context of urban integration, which was reportedly lacking in the city architecture.

Apart from their common consideration of urban and ambient values, when shaping the elevation of this hotel, a system very similar to that introduced by Kovačević and Štraus into Addis Ababa’s architecture was used. Free from a constructive function, elevations coated in an uninterrupted surface of a facade canvas, as exemplified by the General

Post Office building, create firm, abstract volumes. When it comes to the Wabe Shebelle hotel, the use of a system of suspended facade can be linked to an expected, representative public function of its angular volume.

Building new and reconstructing the existing hotels was a common practice in Addis Ababa in the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> An increase in the temporary accommodation facilities in the capital of a country that had only recently been relatively isolated coincided with shaping of its cosmopolitan character, and apart from the economic and diplomatic fields where a lively international dynamics was emerging, tourist activity intensified in parallel as well.<sup>47</sup> At the moment of its completion, and before hotels of leading global chains were built, Wabe Shebelle had been characterized as a building “dominating an entire part of Addis Ababa and representing the largest and the best equipped hotel in Ethiopia”.<sup>48</sup>

Out of the three described Petrović’s projects in Addis Ababa, two have a unique purpose and are tightly bound to references to the concrete moment and location. The New Imperial Palace and the Organisation of African Unity headquarters can primarily be linked to the discourse of Ethiopia’s building heritage at that time, and of the international architecture of global institutions. On the other hand, the Wabe Shebelle Hotel, given its purpose and functionalist concept, has a generic, universal character. Possibly due to its cosmopolitan content as well, the relevance of which was at the moment of construction even more pronounced, its generic contours can easily be imagined in the street layout of any city.

## CONCLUSION

### ZAKLJUČAK

Petrović’s activity in Addis Ababa coincided with exceptionally fertile circumstances of a building boom. In a dynamic situation the discussions on urban development and urbanity, type of construction, typological inventory, representation and local identity created a strong local discourse of heterogeneous participants, where Petrović’s work can also be positioned. The heterogeneity of approaches applied in the three described projects, apart from their different programme-related aspects, in a city characterized by a very hybrid modernity receives its broader meaning. While all three projects

<sup>45</sup> SINDELIC, 1969: 44

<sup>46</sup> WONTAMO, 1969

<sup>47</sup> WONTAMO, 1969

<sup>48</sup> SINDELIC, 1969: 44

<sup>49</sup> \*\*\* 1969

find their initial conceptual standpoints in the urban domain, their formal layer could be understood as a reflection of various identities present within the strata of the very same culture.

The expert with a broad professional experience fitted in easily into a demanding context of a developing country requesting him to provide solutions to an equally broad range of tasks. Given his professional path, Petrović's Ethiopian period can be seen as one in a series of different phases that have precisely their content-related divergence in common. Moreover, given that each of the three described Petrović's projects had unique terms of reference, seeking a direct link to his work in his own country would be irrelevant. It is only in elements of his approach, concerning instances of representation and monumentality, composition laws and urban qualities incorporated in his architectural solutions, where ideas characteristic of the Croatian architectural practices could be recognised. The divergence of a direct relation to the Croatian practice is additionally justified by Petrović's 7-years long stay in Ethiopia. Despite his presence in the local Yugoslav community and despite being in touch with the developments in Croatia at the time, the architect's professional focus was for quite some time under a direct influence of a practice found abroad, so positioning

Petrović's works closer to precisely the Ethiopian discourse can be additionally justified.

In 1969, just before leaving Ethiopia, in his interview for *The Ethiopian Herald* Petrović stressed the fact that at the time of his arrival some 80% of the buildings in Addis Ababa had not been built. During his stay and professional activity in Addis Ababa, it was given a new shape and acquired a character of an urbanised city, in a country which, even according to today's standards, has one of the largest percentage of rural population in the world. He elaborated on his own fascination with the Ethiopian traditional architecture by claiming that young Ethiopian architects, in order to have a reliable base for their projects, should extract original elements of their own valuable building heritage. Buildings erected on such foundations, using local raw materials for construction, would be simple, economical, functional, and above all "Ethiopian".<sup>49</sup> Contrary to omnipresent trends of a rapid urbanisation and construction according to the European standards which disregarded traditional building forms, this was a valuable attempt to find ways not only to recreate links with their own African tradition and restore certain aspects of identity, but also to respond to a need, which is topical still today, to disintegrate class divides of a stratified society.

[Translated by TANJA ŽAKULA]

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- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| FIG. 1         | Authors  |
| FIG. 2-3, 7-10 | PA-SPK.DZ  |
| FIG. 4         | HAZU-HMA-OAF/DCO/66  |
| FIG. 5         | Addis Ababa Tourist Map, Ethiopian Mapping Agency, 2012; Authors             |
| FIG. 6         | GALLI, 2016: 147, 152; LEVIN, 2016: 457, 458; ŠTRAUS, unknown year [1973]: 9 |
| FIG. 11        | facebook.com/groups/101239070216241/ [2017-12-01]                            |

## INTERVIEW

## RAZGOVOR

Mrvoje Justić 2012, 2013

## STUDY VISIT

## STUDIJSKI POSJET

Addis Ababa, 2013



## SUMMARY

## SAŽETAK

## BALANSIRANJE IDENTITETA

## RAĐOVI ARHITEKTA BRANKA PETROVIĆA U ADDIS ABEBI (1962.-1969.)

Branko Petrović (Požega, 1922. – Zagreb, 1975.) hrvatski je arhitekt i urbanist čiji je radni vijek uključivao raznolike aspekte bavljenja strukom. Nakon diplome stečene 1948. godine na tadašnjem Arhitektonskom odsjeku zagrebackog Tehničkog fakulteta radno iskustvo stječe u Urbanističkom institutu odnosno Ministarstvu komunalnih poslova Hrvatske. Kao stipendist Ujedinjenih naroda 1952. godine boravi u inozemstvu specijalizirajući se u području urbanizma. Od 1954. do 1958. direktor je Urbanističkog instituta Hrvatske, a od 1958. do odlaska u Etiopiju 1962. s Brankom Vasiljevićem vodi zajednički urbanističko-arhitektonski biro AR-59. Očigledan intenzitet stručnog bavljenja i široko područje interesa rezultirali su bogatim i raznolikim opusom, uključujući metodološki inovativan rad na brojnim prostornim i urbanističkim planovima, te brojnim projektima i izvedenim građevinama različitih namjena i mjerila. Nakon povratka iz Etiopije radio je kao savjetnik za urbanizam i zaštitu čovjekove sredine u Republičkom sekretarijatu za urbanizam, građevinarstvo, stambene i komunalne poslove. Vrijednost njegovih zasluga u poslijeratnoj teoriji i kritici u Hrvatskoj neupitna je, prije svega u njezinu urbanističkom području, gdje se Branko Petrović smatra jednim od osnivača suvremene urbanističke teorije i prakse. Raspon bavljenja analogne širine kao stručnjak tehničke pomoći ponovio je i u Etiopiji.

Odabir Branka Petrovića kao adekvatnog stručnjaka za zahtjevu poziciju glavnog arhitekta Ministarstva javnih radova i komunikacija Etiopije od jugoslavenske je strane nesumnjivo bio opravdan činjenicom njegove sveobuhvatne profesionalne biografije. Transferu koji je sezao razinu diplomatskih odnosa između dviju država primjeren je bio tek profil osobe prethodno potvrđenih stručnih kvalifikacija i odgovarajuće razine društvenog ugleda. Pozicija glavnog arhitekta Ministarstva javnih radova – pored mogućnosti uvida, kontrole i usmjeravanja dinamike međunarodne građevinske

aktivnosti – Petroviću je pružala priliku aktivne projektantske participacije, a za njegovo djelovanje u Etiopiji ključan je bio očito blizak odnos s carem Haile Selasijem, koji je bio posebno zainteresiran za urbanističko-arhitektonsku problematiku vlastite prijestolnice.

Djelovanje Branka Petrovića kao glavnog arhitekta etiopskog Ministarstva javnih radova, realizirano u razdoblju od 1962. do 1969., zasigurno zauzima istaknuto mjesto među najznačajnijim inozemnim angažmanima hrvatskih arhitekata u periodu intenzivnije tehničke suradnje sa zemljama Trećega svijeta. Ono je vremenski ekvivalentno razdoblju građevinske konjunkture koja ce uvelike odrediti i današnje elemente urbaniteta Addis Abebe. Istovremeno, pitanje 'afričkoga' u arhitektonskoj kulturi oslobođenoga kontinenta postaje goruce, što je napose prisutno u gradu koji je trebao postati njegovim političkim središtem. Iako inicijalno urbanističke, odnosno i šire, prostornoplanerske orijentacije svoje prakse, Petrović ce u Etiopiji dobiti priliku biti autor projekata kojih društvena važnost nadilazi domenu njegova projektantskog opusa u domovini. Tri Petrovićeva rada – projekt nove carske palače, projekt sjedišta Organizacije afričkog jedinstva i realizirani hotel Wabe Shebelle – pokazuju očito stupnjevanje oblikovnog vokabulara građevina primarno nacionalnog odnosno internacionalnog i lokalnoga društvenog značenja. Njegov ce se projektantski pristup pritom logično osloniti na kontinuum prosede hrvatskih praksi druge polovice 20. stoljeća te ce pokazati otklone u susretu s lokalnim tradicijama, kako povijesnih tako i recentnih ostvarenja. Pored doprinosa promišljanju urbaniteta Addis Abebe u sklopu gradotvornih aspekata svojih projekata, Petrović pokazuje izrazitu senzibilnost spram identitetskih fenomena u arhitekturi Afrike, koji ostaju aktualni do danas, pa ce upravo dijalog gradotvornog i reprezentativnog pružiti njegovim etiopskim radovima karakter autentičnosti.

Analiza triju Petrovićevih projekata pokazat ce diferencijaciju projektantskog pristupa u odnosu spram specifičnosti građevnog programa i urbanističkog smještaja. Pritom je prije svega moguće segregirati kategoriju reprezentativnosti, kojoj autor pristupa rasponom između inicijalno neutralnog, u osnovi apstraktnog vokabulara internacionalnog modernizma i jezika koji uključuje jasne narative lokalnih tradicija. Odvijajući se unutar dinamične građevinske situacije, polemizirane teme urbanističkog razvoja i urbaniteta, načina gradnje, tipološkog inventara, reprezentacije i lokalnog identiteta – formirale su snazan lokalni diskurs heterogenih participanata te je unutar istoga moguće pozicionirati i Petrovićevo djelo. Heterogenost pristupa koju pokazuju tri opisana projekta, pored njihovih različitih programskih aspekata, u gradu izrazito hibridnog moderniteta zadobiva i svoj širi smisao.

S obzirom na njegovu profesionalnu putanju, etiopsko razdoblje Branka Petrovića moguće je sagledati kao jednu u nizu različitih etapa kojima je zajednica upravo sadržajna divergentnost. Također, s obzirom na jedinstveni karakter projektnih zadataka u trima opisanim Petrovićevim radovima, izravna relacija s njegovim djelovanjem u domovini bila bi bespredmetna. Tek je u određenim elementima pristupa – primjerice aspektima reprezentacije društveno-politički značajnog sadržaja, odnosno aspektima monumentalnosti, kompozicijskim zakonitostima i autoritetu gradotvornosti arhitektonskih rješenja – moguće stratificirati elemente prisutne u hrvatskim praksama. Divergentnost neposredne relacije s hrvatskom praksom dodatno opravdava Petrovićev boravak u Etiopiji u trajanju od sedam godina. Iako unutar brojne jugoslavenske zajednice i u kontaktu s istovremenim zbivanjima u Hrvatskoj, profesionalna orijentacija djelovanja arhitekta tijekom prilično dugog razdoblja bila je pod neposrednim utjecajem prakse izvan njezinih granica i pozicioniranje radova Branka Petrovića bliže upravo etiopskom diskursu time dobiva svoje dodatno opravdanje.

## BIOGRAPHIES

## BIOGRAFIJE

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Dr.sc. **MOJCA SMODE CVITANOVIĆ**, poslijedoktorandica, suradnica projekta „Atlas hrvatske arhitekture 20. stoljeća“. U svom istraživačkom radu bavi se procesima transfera struke i međunarodne diseminacije znanja.

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Prof. dr.sc. **ANDREJ UCHYTIĆ**, redoviti profesor, voditelj projekta „Atlas hrvatske arhitekture 20. stoljeća“. Dobitnik je nagrada UHA-e „Neven Šegvić“ za teorijski rad 2008., Državne nagrade za znanost 2009. (sa Z. Barišić Marenic i E. Kahrović) te I. nagrade Zagrebackog salona 2009. (s R. Waldgoni).

