Article

The Diffusion of Participatory Planning Ideas and Practices: The Case of Socialist Yugoslavia, 1961-1982

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Abstract

Although both praised and contested for its advanced conceptual elaboration and ineffective practical implementation, respectively, participatory planning has largely been considered a Yugoslav national legacy and a point of diversification compared with other similar contexts. However, there has been little research on the roots and features of public participation as observed through the lens of international influences on Yugoslav spatial and urban planning. By identifying the main channels (professional networks and events) and nodes (planning organizations and documents) in the diffusion of participatory planning ideas at both the international and national levels, we trace the evolution of citizen participation discourse in Yugoslavia. Based on archival research of the relevant documents (selected articles in professional journals, decrees, and plans), the paper examines the authenticity of the concept of citizen participation in Yugoslavia to, finally, elucidate the specificities of its implementation in the context of socialist self-management.

Keywords

urban planning, citizen participation, knowledge diffusion, critical discourse, self-management, Yugoslavia

Introduction

Arnstein's seminal article on "ladders of citizen participation"[1] is often used as a starting point in analyzing participatory planning practices due to its systematic clarity. More importantly, Arnstein focuses on an essential pre-condition and purpose of participation: the power re-distribution to enable citizens to exercise control over their lives. The ladder metaphor was employed to illustrate typical levels of citizen participation, ranging from non-participation to real civic power in decision-making. Although the article has recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary,[2] it

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is still considered one of the most influential works for both planning theory and practice across different geographical scales.

The notion of citizen participation in urban planning has rarely been associated with authoritarian political regimes favoring a centralized, top-down planning approach. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia in the aftermath of World War II (WWII) makes an interesting case. Citizen participation, decentralization of the state, and self-management, that is, "industrial democracy," were the critical instruments of Yugoslav socialism, which made the country different from its other communist neighbors.[3] Yugoslavia's non-aligned position and its openness to Western cultural influences strengthened the Yugoslav society, which was considered a relaxed version of communism compared with other countries behind the Iron Curtain.[4] However, the practice of citizen participation in conditions where bureaucratic communist dogma enjoyed a political monopoly, and civic culture was immature was still far from Arnstein's notion of citizen control.[5] Although its highly decentralized (yet single-party) socialism allowed Yugoslavia to invent the framework of a participatory system in all aspects of social life, the dominant political ideology prevented the system's effectiveness and, hence, a genuine public engagement.[6] Still, observed through the lens of debates among professional and intellectual elites, considerations such as self-management, considerable cultural autonomy, and a relatively good working environment enjoyed by elites made Yugoslavia fertile ground for developing critical discourses in all fields, urban planning included. In particular, Belgrade was the embodiment of the modern, cosmopolitan Yugoslav urbanity and played an essential role in professional activity, exchange, and networking.[7]

This paper traces the evolution of participatory planning ideas in Yugoslavia between 1961 and 1982, as the most productive planning period due to advanced comprehensiveness, interdisciplinarity, and inclusiveness.[8] The starting concept is knowledge diffusion, based on the imposition and borrowing of ideas that ultimately transform the planning interventions in a particular area.[9] However, uncritically importing concepts, instruments, and methods without considering the context of their origin and their future implementation could be misleading.[10] Therefore, to explore the evolution of participatory discourse in Yugoslavia, this paper focuses on the interplay between international transmission and local response. To operationalize such interplay, the research relies upon the classification stemming from the innovation diffusion domain, recognizing two elements: channels and nodes.[11] Channels, such as professional planning associations and their exchange events—congresses, meetings, and exhibitions, serve to spread the ideas of participatory planning, nodes, such as professional and academic elite, planning institutions, and planning regulations, convey shared knowledge into local settings. Ultimately, through observing the flow of participatory planning ideas across scales, the paper seeks to identify (1) to what extent the concept of citizen participation was an original and authentic legacy of Yugoslav spatial and urban planning, on the one hand, and/or it was shaped through international discourse on the other; and (2) how the socio-political framework it was embedded in affected its practical implementation.

The article is structured as follows. After a succinct positioning of the concept of citizen participation within different planning models and social settings, the Yugoslav socio-economic context and its official ideology are described as a general framework for nesting the narrative on citizen participation. As in the pre-Internet era, knowledge and ideas were communicated via printed material and mobility of people, and due to an inability to reach the latter, the central part of the article presents the results of archival research, including historical analysis of articles published in two well-regarded Yugoslav professional journals—*Arhitektura-Urbanizam* (*Architecture-Urbanism*) and *Urbanizam Beograda* (*Urbanism of Belgrade*), as well as a documentary analysis of Yugoslav federal laws, Serbian laws on spatial planning, and a master plan of Belgrade. The research findings highlight the outcomes of international and national diffusion of the discourse on citizen engagement and its implementation in the Yugoslav spatial and urban planning under socialist self-management.

The Evolution of the Idea of Citizen Participation

Before shedding more light on the specific case of Yugoslav spatial and urban planning observed through the lens of citizen participation, the paper situates the idea of citizen participation within different planning traditions and models, also attending to the specificities of both Western and socialist urban planning theory. As planning is dependent on socio-economic policy, insights into different socio-economic ideologies are briefly provided as well.

Citizen Participation in the Western Urban Planning

Modern Western society's cultural and technological sophistication was accompanied by a demand for "refinement" and "expertization" in decision-making. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, a parallel need emerged: decision-making should be infused with a more democratic expression.[12] Notably, Arnstein's metaphor of public engagement has been used for decades as a powerful tool for fostering debate on the role of citizens in making informed planning decisions.

In the aftermath of WWII, the production of blueprints or fixed master plans was widely pursued to cope with the need for massive urban reconstruction.[13] Such an approach was already reflected in the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) principles, notably the Athens Charter, adopted in 1933. The charter served as a manifesto of the early post-war urbanism across the Western world and beyond. Under such conditions, planning was a tool for economic and spatial growth led by planners as technocrats within hierarchically dominated institutional environments.[14] As a result, giving citizens a voice in determining the products and a means of planning was contrary to the fundamental conceptions of blueprint planning.[15]

In the mid-1950s, planning thought experienced a shift from a blueprint-led to rational planning,[16] encompassing some other models (e.g., systems view of planning and synoptic planning) as experienced later in the 1960s and 1970s.[17] The rational planning model provided precise steps for planning action, hence with no room for improvisation and flexibility. The systems viewpoint meant relating planning means and outputs using mathematical modeling, while synoptic planning brought important elements of participatory planning, such as the involvement of actors from outside the formal policymaking arena and institutionalization of public consultation.[18] However, two central concepts of the rational comprehensive paradigm remained embedded: planning as distinct from politics and the unitary public interest model.[19] Consequently, the idea of instrumental rationality still dominated planning conduct.[20] As a result, the role of public participation was reduced to legitimization and validation of planning goals.[21]

From the mid-1960s, the rational comprehensive paradigm gave way to a theoretically pluralist tradition of planning thought. Different approaches subsequently emerged with a unifying view of planning as an element of policymaking rather than a separate technical field.[22] According to the advocacy planning model, planners should step out of the central planning boards, councils, and committees in order to represent the disadvantaged social groups and their interests objectively. The advocacy model rejected the notion of a unitary and predefined public interest, arguing that it must be unveiled by assessing the needs of weaker parties.[23] It opposed the view on planning as value-neutral, making participation the fundamental objective.[24] Similarly, equity planning highlighted the need for planners to be aware of double customers—politicians as employers and enablers of the planner's services, and citizens ("the disadvantaged") affected by the implementation of the official planning proposals.[25] As a response, neo-Marxist critiques of planning regarded it as a "servant" of the capitalist state. The planners' technical approaches as seemingly "anti-political ideologies"[26] allowed planners to sidestep the fundamental issues of distributing public values.[27] However, although focused on criticizing the system and advocating grassroots actions, neo-Marxist approaches did not deliver practical recommendations for citizen participation through state institutions, including spatial planning.[28]

Referring to the practical dimension, transactive planning proposed face-to-face contact between the planning community and the public, relying upon interpersonal dialogue in which ideas are validated through action, with mutual learning being a key objective.[29] The radical model went one step further: planners became freelancers, acting outside the system and identifying themselves with the underprivileged social groups, usually living and working in the deprived areas.[30] On the contrary, the liberal planning model emphasized the role of the market as the primary regulator of spatially relevant activities; therefore, market-oriented instruments could be seen as a means of informal planning conducted by private-sector actors.[31] Such dominance of private self-interests through the developer-led planning system diminished the role of planning as state intervention in the market; consequently, the room for public voices to be heard was limited.

Finally, the most significant effect of Arnstein's contribution to planning was embodied in the numerous approaches supported by the so-called "argumentative turn in planning"[32] of the 1990s, focused on communication, discussion, discourse, consensus-building, collaboration, deliberation, reflection, and practical judgment.[33] Fostering debate among different stakeholders, recognizing their various interests, needs, positions, and aspiration toward conflict resolution and consensus-building highlighted the principle of equity among the participants in the planning process. Consequently, as the main power became the power of the better argument, all the parties had the same chance to fulfill their self-interests and, more importantly, achieve the common interest. Both the theoretical underpinning and the practicalities of such a collaborative planning approach have been criticized.[34] Briefly, the objections addressed the following: exchange of knowledge among stakeholders is relatively low; various parties differ significantly in their opinions of how to solve problems; some stakeholders are incapable of protecting their interests; the transparency required for unhampered communication is poor; and debate reveals the stakeholders with real power.[35] Nevertheless, the effect of collaborative planning theory on the evolution of planning thought strongly considering citizens' input cannot be neglected. The overview of participatory ideas within different planning traditions is given in Table 1.

Citizen Participation in Eastern/Socialist Urban Planning

In contrast to the citizens' need to engage in the pluralist decision-making processes of Western democracies, public participation in Eastern Europe resulted from a communist political ideology rather than from challenges posed by a socio-spatial reality. Briefly put, socialist urban theory was an expression of an idealistic politically oriented socialist planning: based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, planning strived to neglect ill-inherited capitalist arrangements of urban development and reflect the classless nature of society.[36] Under such "ideal" conditions of uniformity and absence of any divide, citizens were seen as equal to city managers and urbanists in the process of direct and harmonious interaction.[37]

However, the operationalization of an "ideal" inclusive approach was challenging. As a tool of the leading communist ideology, planning served to fulfill the requirements posed by the centrally planned economy. In the societies destroyed largely by WWII, the main goal was to secure economic growth and accelerate industrialization and urbanization.[38] Urban planning, rooted in architecture as a technical discipline, was focused only on its physical aspects, with no debate on public participation in the planning process.[39] The inferior position of planners is seen in the rejection of planning proposals inconsistent with the official ideology and political propaganda, making planners the local "technical executors" of national goals.[40]

During the 1960s and 1970s, debates among Western planners did not significantly impact their colleagues in Eastern Europe.[41] It was irrelevant to discuss whether the planners should act as representatives of various social groups when only unitary public interest was politically approved. Planners could not act as mediators in a conflict-free, socialist society exempted from

Table 1. The Overview of Participatory Planning Ideas in Different Planning Models.

Year	Planning model	Participatory ideas
1950s	Blueprint planning	None
1960s	Rational planning	Actors from outside the formal policymaking arena involved public consultation institutionalized, but serving to legitimate and validate the planning goals
1960s-1970s	Advocacy planning	The needs of weaker parties assessed by planners
1960s-1970s	Neo-Marxist planning	Critique to the traditional planning, with no practical recommendations for citizen participation
1970s	Equity planning	Planners engaged with "the disadvantaged," but still part of a system
1970s	Transactive planning	Social learning between experts and citizens
1970s-1980s	Radical planning	Planners as part of the underprivileged social groups
1980s	Liberal planning	Limited public voices
1990s	Collaborative planning	Intrinsic consideration of citizens' input based on the power of the better argument

Source: Authors.

the plurality of interests. Finally, socialist city planning relied immensely on operational principles such as standardization, proper town size, city center, and neighborhood unit concept.[42] Notably, in Yugoslavia, the latter was used as an instrument for involving the public in the planning process (as shown in the paper's central section). However, social uniformity, accompanied by the lack of a market economy and political pluralism, provided little room for participatory planning ideas to be implemented in the rest of Eastern Europe.

The scope of social, economic, and political changes during the 1990s also demanded a "new concept of planning" in Eastern European countries. The legitimization of private property, decentralization of the government, weakening of public institutions, and involvement of diverse stakeholders in the planning process all created tremendous change to the nature of planning.[43] However, the planning approach of "social engineering" as practiced in previous decades could not vanish overnight: even though public opinions became accepted as a legitimate source of information, planning was still considered in a paternalistic, but not elitist, manner.[44] The public was accepted as a valid opponent; however, it was still left to planners to decide if, how, and when to engage with citizens in the planning process, apart from the formal legal obligations on civil engagement.[45]

Public Participation in the Yugoslav "Self-Management" Society

Post-WWII Yugoslavia is an outstanding example of a "third way" social experiment, opposed to both ideologies that emerged during the Cold War and embodied in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. Based on a 5-year initiative of its life-long president Tito, Yugoslavia, together with India, Ghana, Indonesia, and Egypt, established the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. Such a "third" political, economic, cultural, and security approach brought more openness to the global ideas, overcoming the impacts of both the Soviet Bloc, dominant in most of Yugoslavia's neighboring countries, and Western cultural influences, widespread in the rest of Europe.[46] Briefly, being anchored into an international movement made Yugoslavia an independent socialist society based on the ideals of democracy, emancipation, pluralism, and progress on a massive scale.

The internal forces that marked Yugoslav distinctiveness relied upon the concept of self-management. Based on societal ownership of the means of production and management of public

enterprises by their employees,[47] self-management was conceived as a socio-economically liberalized, decentralized, and intrinsically human-centered socialism, compared with its Soviet-style version. Postulated as the pillar of social governance by the Yugoslav Constitution of 1953, the original intention of self-management was to replace the state bureaucracy with empowered workers at the helm of Yugoslav firms, thus establishing workplace democracy focusing on leadership development and continuous learning among all employees.[48] Under such "industrial democracy" and distorted by gradually growing internal tensions between the federal republics, the Yugoslav territorial administrative framework was also decentralized.[49] Hence, Yugoslav socio-economic planning included two dimensions: societal planning and self-management planning. More precisely, socio-economic planning was a social relationship between socio-political communities (*društveno-političke zajednice*), at various administrative levels (from municipality to federation), in charge of societal development, and basic organizations of associated labor (BOALs) (*osnovne organizacije udruženog rada*), in different sectors and governmental tiers, responsible for overall production and consumption.[50] The main instrument of socio-political communities were societal agreements, while BOALs operated through self-management arrangements, mutually coordinated by the principle of "cross-acceptance." The huge emancipatory project was further facilitated by the economic liberalization measures of the mid-1960s, creating a hybrid system of "market socialism"[51] that finally prompted massive urban housing provision and facilitation of educational, scientific, and cultural activities.[52]

The Constitution of 1963 formalized another specificity of the decentralized Yugoslav structure. The "local commune" (*mesna zajednica*) was introduced as an integral part of the municipality, also referred to as "commune" (*opština*), a larger territorial administrative unit and a primary socio-political community. Although originating from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the concept of the local commune was re-introduced and advanced by the leading ideologue of socialist self-management and Tito's war comrade, Edvard Kardelj, who saw a local commune

> not primarily as an institution, organisational mechanism, or territorial unit. It [the local commune] is a community of people, and this should always be a starting point. Therefore, it does not endure any scheme regarding the territorial organisation, functioning methods, organisational forms, or planning. If this is so, then every shared human activity in a neighbourhood that makes people close and develops solidarity, self-help, and awareness of togetherness is significant for creating a local commune.[53]

However, local communes were more than communities of people: they were composed mainly by the members of the Communist Party (e.g., the number of Communist Party members in a local commune committee varied from 50 to 60 percent, while the membership rate in the general population was not above 10 percent).[54] In short, the local commune was both the central unit of town planning and an instrument of self-management.[55]

The Constitution of 1974 further specified the rights and responsibilities of different actors in decision-making processes to strengthen conditions for pursuing direct democracy at the local level.[56] More precisely, the 1974 Constitution further encouraged local communes to collaborate with BOALs, "self-managed interest-driven communes" (*samoupravne interesne zajednice*) and other self-managed organizations and communities within and beyond the area of local commune. Moreover, local communes cooperated with socio-political communities at higher governmental tiers to become the conveyors of broader developmental goals.[57] Hence, the Yugoslav experiment in self-management attempted to reduce the power of the bureaucracy and secure desirable directions for the development of citizens' activities, as well as their working and living environment.[58]

However, the system was burdened by its intrinsic contradictions. Conceived and conveyed in a top-down manner, under a monopoly of communist political ideology and a rudimentary and

superficially adopted civic culture, the actual practice of self-management was full of inconsistencies and tensions.[59] This became particularly obvious in terms of participation in the planning process. The 1976 Act on the Foundations of the System of Societal Planning and the Societal Plan of Yugoslavia[60] enabled the integration of spatial and urban planning into societal planning, resulting in a change that led planning to include not only experts, but also representatives of local politics and, more importantly, citizens, but also in the merging of many urban planning institutes into societal planning institutes.[61] The same act introduced the instrument of 'agreement on plan's foundations' that was subordinate to the societal agreements as a tool of societal planning.[62] Such a relationship practically meant that freedom in the bottom-up participatory approach (involving various individuals, groups, and the public) was not absolute. The basic norms of the social model were mainly perceived through the ideology of the ruling political party and its values.[63]

The beginning of the 1980s brought both major internal and external tensions. The death of Yugoslav President Tito in 1980 triggered the dissolution that followed in various sectors of public life. A decentralized administrative system and a semi-market-based economy did not endure in the long run. Affected by the global economic crisis, by the late 1970s, Yugoslavia was struggling economically, as evidenced by hyperinflation, debt, trade imbalance, and a significant decline in the gross domestic product (GDP). Consequently, and under Western pressure, in the early 1980s, the country faced two significant issues: political re-centralization and economic restructuring through the first Economic Stabilisation Programme of 1982, which required the abolition of self-management by 1990.[64] This affected the approaches and priorities used in the preparation of planning documents. By 1982, all federal republics finalized their spatial plans informed by their unwritten principles but still created in an integrated manner (i.e., integrating disciplines and stakeholders). Driven by economic concerns, the focus of planning after 1982 shifted from considering the rights and obligations of space owners and users toward regulations and permit-granting.[65] The narrative on shared values and community interests eroded in the face of the economic downturn. In sum, after several decades of social experimentation with self-management and political independence from major global forces East and West, in the early 1980s, Yugoslavia experienced all the inefficacy of its system. Accompanied by other internal and external tensions, this brought about the collapse of the federal state ten years later.

Research Material and Methodology

This empirical part of the research provides a historical analysis of the evolution of participatory planning in Yugoslavia between 1961 and 1982. In this period, Yugoslavia was considered an internationally oriented yet sovereign state, with a stable socio-economic system and a spatial planning policy created to further self-management socialism. Following the focus on the heritage of the Athens Charter seen in the 1950s, when the blueprint planning approach was glorified, the first international meeting that revealed a growing tendency toward participatory planning was held under the auspices of the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP) in 1961. In Yugoslavia, benefiting from the framework laid in the 1953 Constitution, the 1960s and 1970s saw the creation of some of the most important federal and republic laws that explicitly dealt with the notion of citizen engagement in decision-making.[66] The 1961 Act on Urban and Regional Spatial Planning of the People's Republic of Serbia[67] considered citizen participation as "societal support and plan verification." The Constitution of 1963 formalized the local commune and, thus, mandated transparent and participatory planning at the local level. The Constitution of 1974 prescribed better-developed mechanisms for public participation, which, according to the 1974 Act on Planning and Spatial Arrangement of the Socialist Republic of Serbia,[68] were exercised through public viewing (*javni uvid*), public consultation (*javna rasprava*), and the possibility of submitting objections, opinions, and comments on draft versions

of plans. The 1976 Act on the Foundations of the System of Societal Planning and the Societal Plan of Yugoslavia[69] further regulated collaboration among professionals, local political representatives, and the public. By 1981, all the federal republics prepared and adopted their spatial plans, except Serbia, which in 1982 produced one that was never adopted due to a lack of consensus with the provinces over its procedural and substantive matters (a modified version of the plan was approved only in 1996).[70] The economic distortions of the early 1980s reflected on the nature of spatial and urban planning, too: as spatial and urban planning institutions were exposed to market principles, there remained no room for public influence at the goal-setting stage in societal planning, while integrated planning alternatives were obstructed due to the lack of efficient mechanisms and information for stakeholders to interact; finally, political support for planning as a mechanism to offer and achieve beneficial outcomes for the entire society was lacking.[71] In sum, planning turned from a participatory activity to a regulatory mechanism.

Although genuine public engagement was questioned, debates, deliberations, and discourse on citizen participation flourished in the 1960s and 1970. As the intellectual elite—including architects, urbanists, and spatial planners—enjoyed significant cultural autonomy, generous funding, and international mobility,[72] the Yugoslav socialist system proved fertile ground for exploring external influences and domestic triggers of the development of the critical discourse on citizen participation. Over time, participatory knowledge significantly outpaced the practical aspect of spatial and urban planning and design.[73] To examine the evolution of citizen participation discourse in Yugoslavia, this paper uses the diffusion of participatory planning ideas as its primary analytical tool. Using Rogers' classification,[74] the paper traces both the channels of knowledge exchange (international networks, congresses, and reports) and the nodes that transmit the shared knowledge into official settings (domestic organizations and legislation and regulations—decrees and plans). In doing so, this paper bridges the gap between the participatory discourse and a particular implementation context. Table 2 presents the timeline of events essential for addressing the issue of citizen participation in Yugoslavia.

In methodological terms, the paper observes the aforementioned channels and nodes of diffusion at two levels: international and national. The data were collected through archival research of the two most influential Yugoslav professional journals—*Urbanizam Beograda* (*Urbanism of Belgrade)*, published since 1969 by the Belgrade Urban Planning Institute, and *Arhitektura–Urbanizam* (*Architecture-Urbanism*), a publication of the Serbian Urban Planners Association (which appeared between 1960 and 1987). The two journals were selected as they included commentaries and reviews by reputable Yugoslav planning scholars and professionals on the topics addressed at the leading international and national planning symposia and their respective declarations. In addition to this, the authors selected relevant federal and republic planning laws and a local urban plan (the Belgrade Master Plan of 1972). The content analysis of the analytical units (articles, enactments, and a plan) provided insight into the key concepts and practices of citizen involvement in planning. More specifically, the paper particularly elucidates the following variables: approaches, mechanisms, and methods of citizen participation. In a discussion section, the paper presents a critical overview of the implementation of participatory planning ideas, particularly exemplified on the case of the Belgrade Master Plan of 1972. In sum, the discussion tackles the roles, responsibilities, knowledge, and skills of the actors involved in participatory planning (e.g., scientifically based, controlled or spontaneous participation), operational instruments of decentralized government (e.g., people's management boards, local authorities' committees), as well as at practical procedures of public engagement.

Diffusion of Participatory Planning Ideas Across Scales

The section describes the flow of international ideas on citizen participation and their receptivity among professional elites in Yugoslavia. The first subsection attends to the approaches,

Table 2. Timeline of Key Channels and Nodes of Participatory Planning Knowledge Diffusion: International and National Conferences, Declarations, and Legal and Regulatory Documents.

International channels and nodes	Year	National channels and nodes
Yugoslavia joins UIA (International Union of Architects)	1950	
Yugoslavia re-joins CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture)	1953	Yugoslav Constitution
X CIAM Congress, Dubrovnik	1956	
UIA Congress, Moscow	1958	
Yugoslavia joins IFHTP (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning)	1960	
IFHTP Congress, Paris	1961	Act on Urban and Regional Spatial Planning of the People's Republic of Serbia
	1962	10th Conference of the Association of Urban Planners of Yugoslavia
	1963	Yugoslav Constitution
IFHTP Congress, Belgrade	1971	
	1972	Belgrade Master Plan
IFHTP Congress, Copenhagen	1973	
International Planning Seminar ('U 73'), Ljubljana	1974	Yugoslav Constitution
		Act on Planning and Spatial Arrangement of the Socialist Republic of Serbia
Vancouver Declaration (UN)	1976	Act on the Foundations of the System of Societal Planning and the Societal Plan of Yugoslavia
	1980	3rd Meeting of Planners and Urbanists of Yugoslavia
UIA Congress, Warsaw Warsaw Declaration of Architects	1981	
	1982	Conference of the University of Belgrade and the Centre for Marxism of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

Source: Authors.

mechanisms, and methods discussed at the major international planning congresses and their declarations assessed through the lens of the leading Yugoslav planners. The following subsection elucidates the nature of participatory planning as discussed at the key national events and bodies and implemented in the main federal legal and state planning documents of Yugoslavia and Serbia, respectively.

International Professional Exchange on Citizen Participation from the Yugoslav Perspective

Interdisciplinary exchange through connecting research and practice at the international scale became a common practice of central Yugoslav urban planning and design institutions in the early 1960s.[75] It was achieved through international networking, where the Association of Urban Planners of Yugoslavia took the lead, primarily after becoming a member of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in 1950 and the IFHTP in the early 1960s.[76] However, the 1950s were

not fruitful in acknowledging any form of citizen participation: architects were considered omniscient figures who best knew what was good for humans.[77]

One of the first extensive reports indirectly addressing the notion of public involvement was published to mark the 26th IFHTP Congress in Paris (1961). Although the narrative focused mainly on planning as an activity that entailed producing plans based on expert knowledge and skills, the neighborhood unit concept was a key topic. As local communes had been formalized as early as in the Yugoslav Constitution of 1953, the Yugoslav attendees contributed to the debate about comprehensive research on the conceptual foundations for planning neighborhood communities and options for establishing scientific criteria for evaluating their functional content, key norms, and compositional methods.[78]

The IFHTP Congress in Belgrade (1971), held under the motto "Old and new in the same town," reflected on the aspect of urban governance, understood as cooperation among spatially relevant actors, and on urban socio-psychological and functional-structural aspects of steering urban development. As a key pre-condition for regulating old and new activities and the built environment, the decentralized government was given pride of place.[79]

Governance processes gained attention within the international planning community at the IFHTP Congress in Copenhagen (1973), which revolved around "The structure of local authority and local planning environment." Apart from the conventional program, the participants had an opportunity to learn about the theoretical and practical results of Danish planners and local administration. As Denmark was among the best examples of involving multiple actors in the planning decision-making processes, it was suggested that these experiences could be used as a role model for Yugoslav practice.[80]

The International Planning Seminar in Ljubljana (1974), hosted by the Institute of Urban Planning of Slovenia and dealing with the topic of "Modern town planning and urban design methods," recognized citizen participation as an alternative urban design approach. Such an approach mainly acknowledged the work of Appleyard and his attempt to involve a large number of people and rely on both their rational and irrational inputs while analyzing an urban tissue.[81] In addition, surveys were endorsed as a method of citizen involvement in making important conclusions—to discover what people liked, disliked, and wished for, breaking with the illusion of objectivity based on instrumental rationality in which many professionals live and work.

The 14th UIA Congress in Warsaw (1981) and the Warsaw Declaration of Architects prompted critical revisiting of the Athens Charter and the evolution of the thought and practice of planning since 1933. In a critical review of the Declaration, Yugoslav professionals defined several vital messages. Referring to Webber and Stringer, Srdanović addressed the central problem of professional blind-mindedness—embodied in personal responsibility and exercising power over the fates of cities and humans.[82] Accordingly, instead of merely mediating between interests or advocating for the poor, he argued that planners had to become equal participants in the collective endeavor for creating a new society. Another critique also referred to participation and advocacy planning as a reflection of broad discontent with urbanism, mainly serving the interests of limited social groups—mostly capitalists. As a solution, a new planning system was proposed: simple, straightforward, understandable to ordinary people, and enabling genuine democratization of urban development.[83]

Citizen Participation within Yugoslav Professional Networking

Two crucial mediators between the international and the Yugoslav professional community emerged in the 1950s. The Association of Urban Planners of Yugoslavia was oriented toward the revision of theoretical foundations and planning practice in light of the general social development of Yugoslavia[84]and initiated a series of conferences and assemblies at the federal level, bringing together urban planning bodies from all republics and major cities. The Belgrade Urban

Planning Institute represented a specific node in the web of both national and international professional flows and ideological preferences.[85] Some of these exchanges were also implemented in official planning documents.

The 1961 Act on Urban and Regional Spatial Planning of the People's Republic of Serbia[86] enacted the basic elements of formal public participation: public presentation and discussion after the draft plan, including submission of objections and suggestions. This was in line with the general idea of integrated planning pursued in this period: planning that spans over different disciplines and stakeholders.[87]

The report of the 10th Conference of the Association of Urban Planners of Yugoslavia (1962) shed light on the lack of understanding of urbanism as a societal agency, for example, through the misuse of power by individuals and hindrances to the engagement of the broader public in addressing problems in their local communes. Furthermore, Bjelikov complained about citizens' insufficient access to information about urban problems,[88] while Perišić saw the possibility to advance public awareness through public consultations.[89]

The Constitution of 1963 legitimized the concept of the local commune as a unit of urban planning, as well as a socio-political unit putting into practice the logic of self-management. Placing these functions into a mutual relationship paved the way for decentralization in decision-making, that is, a stronger engagement of the local residents on the issues of their immediate spatial concern.[90]

Citizen involvement in planning gradually gained attention following the enactment of the Constitution of 1974. Ensuring the re-distribution of power in making decisions regarding the human environment more democratically was seen as a fundamental goal of the constitutional changes. It meant avoiding the concentration of power in technocratic and bureaucratic structures and strengthening the influence of working people in the processes of spatial development.[91] More concretely, the socialist working class was not only inspired by the excellent accessibility of information but was required to participate in relevant planning discussions to secure the plurality of interests.[92] Moreover, the federal level was excluded from spatial planning activities (except for major infrastructural projects and environmental policies). Municipalities became the crucial planning and implementation bodies that facilitated negotiation and consensus-building among non-experts.

To foster exchange between local residents and planning professionals, the 1974 Act on Planning and Spatial Arrangement of the Socialist Republic of Serbia[93] introduced public consultation on draft plans as a regular practice. Finally, the 1976 Act on the Foundations of the System of Societal Planning and the Societal Plan of Yugoslavia[94] introduced the instrument of "agreement on plan's foundations," which served to improve cooperation between different actors: citizens, experts, and local politicians. However, as the higher political tiers strongly conditioned the latter's activities, this instrument also promoted vertical cooperation.

Toward the end of the 1970s, the general discourse of citizen participation in planning became more critical. Intense discussion about the political aspect of the planning process took place at the 3rd Meeting of Planners and Urbanists of Yugoslavia (1980), questioning whether self-management was a staged and manipulative process, one that had several disadvantages when it came to the implementation of collective decision-making principles. According to Milenković,[95] networking activities were highly ineffective—for example, the conclusions from scientific conferences were often omitted in the materials of the future meetings, let alone in legal documents. He also pointed to the "technicist matrix" of the profession, where rare citizens' inputs to the political issues were considered the peripheral enrichments to the discussions, rather than a central issue as they should be.

Others addressed systemic factors—liberalism, seen in the autonomous economic structures using a semi-market system to maximize particular interests, and bureaucratic dogmatism, that is, the oligarchy of authorities intended to misuse space for the sake of "higher interests." Fizir

stood up for municipalities whose spatial resources could not be exploited, he claimed, without appropriate compensation and efforts to maintain the environmental balance.[96] Criticism also focused on the nature of citizen engagement, which was described as weak, inert, and inconsistent. Krešić claimed that poor community cohesion had made the planning subjects, and particularly the residents of local communes, incapable of shouldering serious decision-making functions, given scarce free time and low political awareness.[97] In conclusion, the potential users should get involved during the beginning of the plan-making for an area.

In 1982, a scientific conference entitled "Cities and the decision-making process" was organized by the University of Belgrade and the Centre for Marxism of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In an article written as a critical overview of the event, the collection of the reports was assessed as extensive and unfocused. A lament from the mayor of Belgrade was often cited by the speakers at the conference, referring to a sense of powerlessness of those who were believed to hold great power. Krešić pointed out that the "diversity of approaches on the subject [of the decision-making process] proves that particular elements of the overall system unevenly follow its development; hence, it is necessary to analyze each of them particularly in the context of the whole system."[98] Moreover, Stojkov highlighted the complexity of the urban system and the size of urban units as the primary obstacles to effective citizen involvement.[99] Regarding the latter, some participants argued on the importance of defining the optimal size, form, and structure of municipalities and local communes so as to achieve a compact urban unit and effective urban governance; others dismissed territorial foundations and the ability for urban needs to be met by units smaller than a city, which is complex in its meanings, information, interactions, and relations.[100] In general, there was a call for continuous planning instead of plan-making, research studies rather than legal documents, and ideas about the city rather than blueprint solutions.

The conference made several specific recommendations: (1) decisions should not be made only on formal, special occasions, but a great deal more often and more concretely, as an inherent part of a continuous planning process; (2) information on public display should be adjusted to the competence and interests of lay people; (3) the issues of the so-called unitary interest should be detailed to address the self-interests of a heterogeneous public; (4) planning practice should go beyond a linear technical process based on value judgments and guided by the idea of scientific objectivity; and (5) the process of design competition should be strengthened to allow it to deliver alternative proposals which would be evaluated democratically.[101] Hence, the conference highlighted the vague relationship between the needs of an urban society and planning practice, on the one hand, and urban theory and ideology, on the other.

Reality Check: The Participatory Planning Ideas in Practice

Before addressing the previous comment on a loose correspondence between the reality of the Yugoslav socio-spatial setting and the approaches, mechanisms, and methods promoted through both international and Yugoslav channels and nodes, we first illustrate the participatory discourse in making the Belgrade Master Plan of 1972. Briefly, the case elucidates different types of knowledge (expert and experiential) covered in the process, political instruments, and planning procedures for public engagement.

Participatory Discourse in Making the Belgrade Master Plan

The idea of citizen participation gained significant attention during preparation of the second post-WWII master plan of Belgrade, namely the Belgrade Master Plan (*Generalni urbanistički plan Beograda*), which envisioned the development of Belgrade to 2000. In the preparatory period (1966-1972), the Belgrade Urban Planning Institute sought to defend its reputation in the face of ubiquitous criticism leveled at modernist planning practice.[102] This meant turning away

from Europe toward the United States, so the institute partnered with Wayne State University to develop and implement the latest planning tools. In sum, the Belgrade Master Plan reflected a strong dedication to keeping up with state of the art, of profession, seen in the growing importance of public consultation as one of the three global trends in planning, besides decentralization in town planning, and application of cybernetics, the systems view, and the rational-process view of planning.[103]

The essential features of the planning approach were interdisciplinarity, collaboration, and an effort to make the planning process transparent for all users of space and agents in development processes.[104] The interdisciplinary plan-making process resulted in around 150 studies, for the first time including a sociological survey. The planning process was cyclical: based on long-term goals, the alternatives were explored and evaluated through qualitative and quantitative methods. Representatives of relevant expert, scientific, and public institutions, including invited international participants, gathered regularly in constructive meetings. There were both formal (legally binding) and informal collaborative activities.[105] Besides the legally binding public consultation on the final proposal, the draft plan versions (both preliminary draft and final draft) were subjected to public discussions to make participation more creative and efficient.[106] Public consultations were extensive, taking place in all municipalities and local communes. In addition, the general public was familiarized with the plan in various ways, through exhibitions, visual presentations, specialized publications, brief illustrated supplements in daily newspapers—every household in Belgrade received the printed materials.[107]

Still, the embeddedness of the planning process into a specific self-management society was seen in the role of the Urban Planning Council, a consultative body composed of politically engaged experts. Formally defined as an executive-political body of the City Parliament, the council supported the city politicians in creating urban politics and decision-making. For example, the council evaluated the draft plans, coordinated the formal meetings' composition, attended to public engagement, determined and prioritized the planning goals and criteria, chose the planning alternatives, and advised the City Parliament in the final phase of adopting the plan.[108] The overview of the crucial phases and the main actors in creating the Master Plan of Belgrade 1972 is given in Figure 1.

However, the effectiveness of these participatory mechanisms was below expectations. The analysis of the public consultations showed attendance was lower than expected, with participants aged forty and above. More questions than objections to the plan led to the conclusion that people were poorly informed.[109] Also, the planners were the most disappointed to learn that residents were less interested in Belgrade's general concept and model for the year 2000 than curious about the restrictive aspects of the plan and the opportunities it offered for solving their day-to-day problems. As for experts' meetings, there were significant conflicts between the perspectives of the various city departments, each of which attempted to maximize the particular interests of its own monofunctional system, regardless of the interdependencies.[110] In short, particular interests overpowered the common interest.[111]

Apart from being praised for raising public awareness and facilitating effective citizen involvement,[112] the planners faced the challenge regarding their role in the early phase of the planning process.[113] Namely, the preliminary draft plan as the first output was hardly critically discussed later in the process, alluding that planners took their expertise and knowledge as the source of power and influence instead of considering social forums. As a result, planners were accused of being exclusively responsible for any decisions, despite the general regulations pointing out a (spatial) plan as a self-management convention. In the case of the Belgrade Master Plan, such an approach was evident: citizens were involved when procedurally demanded (in two formal meetings on the preliminary and draft plan), and even when it was recommended (through surveys and media); nevertheless, the results of such public consultations were poorly considered in preparing the final master plan, thus hindering the genuine public involvement.[114] The
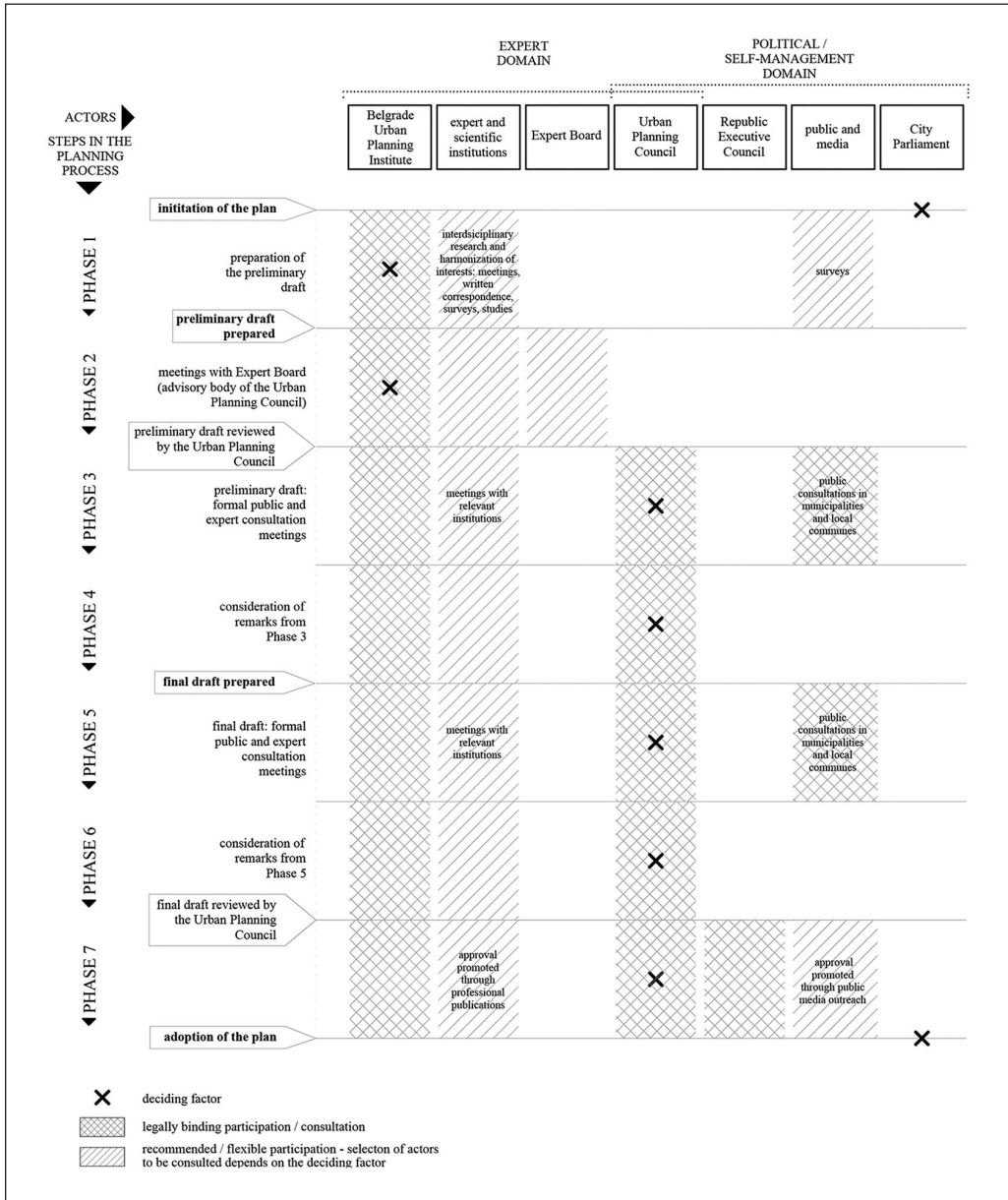
Figure 1. The overview of the main phases and participants in the process of creating the Belgrade Master Plan of 1972.
Source: Authors.

professionals from both the Belgrade Urban Planning Institute and Urban Planning Council, as the main expert and advisory body in guiding the plan-making process, respectively, kept the key role in the plan preparation.

However, instead of questioning planners' intentions, the discussion should have been directed toward a solid planning methodology to facilitate decision-making and eliminate arbitrariness and selectivity.[115] Reflecting on the experience of the Belgrade Master Plan, the composition of

citizens' groups in meetings and discussions was considered inadequate for representing the public interest in the long term. To address this, it was proposed that each plan should have incorporated a special public consultation and participation procedure. Another common problem was the incomplete implementation of plans that justified the lack of public trust and motivation to participate.[116] As a lesson, planning organizations should have reoriented their approach to comprehensive research work and close collaboration with a broad public.

Participatory Planning under Self-Management

The following lines compare international and domestic ideas on participatory planning and reflect on impediments to adopting participatory principles in Yugoslav planning practice, particularly attending to the criticism of the participatory planning idea under the fragile self-management system. Some of the major approaches, mechanisms, and methods of citizen participation introduced in international declarations, domestic reports, and Yugoslav legislation are summarized in Table 3.

The basic understanding of citizen participation overlaps in both international and domestic discourse. However, it is remarkable to notice that Serbia introduced citizen participation in its planning instruments as early as in 1961, when citizen participation was only entering the narrative of major international planning declarations. The reasons why the general public was spotlighted at disparate times were embedded in Yugoslav self-management, on the one hand, and Western pluralist democracies, on the other. Accordingly, the focus of international and domestic discourses also differed. While Yugoslavia was primarily concerned with instrumental steps to be covered in participatory procedures (e.g., public consultations and discussions), the international debate focused more on the practical methods for securing citizen engagement. The latter affected the late qualitative shift of Yugoslav participatory planning: surveys were introduced in Serbian planning legislation in 1989.[117] Therefore, it has been argued that citizen participation, and the planning system in general, in Yugoslavia during the socialist era evolved through synthetic innovation and selective borrowing, primarily from the West, as a dominant pole in tracing international debate.[118]

However, the main criticisms of citizen participation in Yugoslavia address the obstacles in implementing borrowed and original concepts. For example, the principles of the pioneering Serbian planning law of 1961 were poorly translated to practice. The prescribed "viewing" of the final draft plan did not provide much space for actual interventions on a proposal, as these activities were divorced from cooperation with official institutions. Instead, participation in planning was promoted by activities of the local communes on issues of local interest.[119] The 1970s witnessed the proliferation of a bottom-up participatory approach involving various individuals and groups that sometimes even overloaded the preparation, approval, and implementation of planning decisions. However, such deliberative activities were strongly influenced by the political ideology and its values: public participation was a tool for legitimizing the planning decisions, which could be but were not necessarily directed toward the public interest.[120] The idea of public interest was understood as a given and not produced by all the stakeholders (local residents) at play. Efficient mechanisms and information that would allow stakeholders to interact and deliver argumentation for defining planning alternatives were rudimentary, making the entire process resemble pseudo-participation: citizens became partners to experts in the planning process, though the space for bargaining and negotiation was lacking as both parties strove for the fulfillment of the same, imposed, unitary public interest.[121]

Notably, a criticism on implementing citizen participation in the self-management framework came from the professional and intellectual elite that acted as the conveyor of participatory concepts among international and national networks. Unitary interest was seriously challenged, as planning practice based on the previously set goals and not allowing intrinsic feedback disabled

Table 3. The Overview of Topics, Approaches, Mechanisms, and Methods of Citizen Participation in Leading International and National Channels and Nodes of Participatory Knowledge Diffusion.

Year	International channels and nodes	Topics, approaches, mechanisms, and methods of citizen participation	National channels and nodes	Year
1950	Yugoslavia joins UIA (International Union of Architects)			1950
1953	Yugoslavia re-joins CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture)	• Topic: self-management	Yugoslav Constitution	1953
1956	X CIAM Congress, Dubrovnik	• Topic: functional city		1956
1958	UIA Congress, Moscow	• Topic: technocratic blueprint planning		1958
1960	Yugoslavia joins IFHTP (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning)			1960
1961	IFHTP Congress, Paris	• Topic: neighborhood unit • Approach: scientific-based conceptual foundations • Topic: formal public participation • Approach: participation as part of integrated planning • Method: public presentation	Act on Urban and Regional Spatial Planning of the People's Republic of Serbia	1961
1962		• Topic: urbanism as a societal agency • Approach: citizens as informed agents in public debates • Method: public debate	10th Conference of the Union of Urban Associations of Yugoslavia	1962
1963		• Topic: local commune • Approach: decentralization in decision-making	Yugoslav Constitution	1963
1971	IFHTP Congress, Belgrade	• Approach: multistakeholder cooperation • Mechanism: decentralized government		1971
1972		• Topic: public consultation • Approach: interdisciplinarity, formal and informal collaboration, transparency • Method: sociological survey; public discussion of a draft plan; extensive public informing (exhibition, visual presentations, specialized publications, information in daily newspapers)	Belgrade Master Plan	1972
1973	IFHTP Congress, Copenhagen	• Approach: involvement of multiple actors • Mechanism: symbiosis between planners and local administration		1973

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Year	International channels and nodes	Topics, approaches, mechanisms, and methods of citizen participation		National channels and nodes	Year
1974	International Planning Seminar ('U 73'), Ljubljana	• Approach: citizen participation as an alternative to urban design; integration of rational and irrational inputs • Method: survey	• Approach: re-distribution of power • Mechanism: obligatory participation in public discussions; exclusion of federal level from spatial planning activities • Method: public discussion of a draft plan	Yugoslav Constitution Act on Planning and Spatial Arrangement of the Socialist Republic of Serbia	1974
1976	Vancouver Declaration (UN)	• Topic: dynamic incorporation of people in the social life • Approach: a cooperative effort of people and their governments • Mechanism: providing information in clear and meaningful language; two-way flow of information	• Topic: integration of spatial and urban planning into socio-economic planning • Approach: horizontal and vertical cooperation • Mechanism: 'agreement on plan's foundation'	Act on the Foundations of the System of Societal Planning and the Societal Plan of Yugoslavia	1976
			• Topic: poor implementation • Approach: protection of municipalities; community cohesion • Mechanism: genuine citizens' inputs; rising political awareness	3rd Meeting of Planners and Urbanists of Yugoslavia	1980
1981	UIA Congress, Warsaw Warsaw Declaration of Architects	• Topic: overcoming professional blind-mindedness • Approach: planners as equal participants in collective endeavors • Mechanism: genuine democratization of urban development			1981
			• Topic: planning as a process • Approach: inclusive decision-making (self-interests of heterogeneous public beyond technical rationality) • Mechanism: absence of technical jargon; design competitions (alternative proposals)	Conference of the University of Belgrade and the Center for Marxism of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia	1982

Source: Authors.

an iterative planning process. In such a situation, where planning was expected to merely translate social relationships and structures into spatial terms, the desired self-managed spatial planning was far from reality. Consequently, self-management was deemed a "cunningly designed process."[122] An appropriate relationship between the needs of urban society and urban theory, ideology, or practice was not achieved: citizens became uninterested in political processes when they saw that their involvement did not produce results, while planners rejected a re-thinking of their role and methodologies that would truly (and not just formally) upgrade social relations.

Conclusion

Citizen participation was the original concept of Yugoslav spatial and urban planning. Its incorporation into planning practice was a logical outcome of a decentralized society glorifying the community of ordinary citizens and workers and enabling their voices to be heard in various decision-making processes. The formalization of the local commune in the Yugoslav Constitution of 1963 notably strengthened localized decision-making on issues important for local urban development. Nevertheless, as Yugoslav planning experts tended to be internationally recognized, supranational bodies and documents influenced participatory Yugoslav planning, too. The fine-tuning of citizen participation in Yugoslav planning practice as influenced by international ideas mainly revolved around three aspects: pointing to the importance of decentralized government despite a monopolistic political regime; introducing advanced methods of citizen participation; and reassessing the planners' position in terms of understanding planners as the partners of citizens in a participatory urban planning process.

Still, Yugoslav planners were critical of foreign concepts, methods, and tools, given their fundamental contextual differences from the Yugoslav socio-spatial system. As a result, the principle of citizen participation was dictated mainly by self-management ideology. In cases where official ideology was not a direct trigger, the need for including citizens in planning processes derived from a "common sense" that the fundamental purpose of a planning intervention was to respond to human and social needs.[123] For instance, the city was seen as an organism constantly re-created by its residents and serving the purpose of their personal and communal flourishing. However, although contested, the notion of common or unitary interest was never rejected.[124]

The networking between federal planning associations sharpened tools and instruments for effective citizen engagement (two-way flow of information, non-technical language, public viewings, public consultations). It also improved the financial and organizational capacities of local communes as the building blocks of the participatory decision-making framework. Most importantly, Yugoslav internal debate reflected critically on the political aspect of citizen participation: the self-management system was accused of being an artificial participatory framework within which all the decisions were made in advance and without allowing people in participatory processes to pursue genuine political issues they faced in socio-spatial reality.[125] Hence, raising political awareness, acknowledging the manifold self-interests, and respecting the public as heterogeneous were defined as the main tasks of future planners.

Nevertheless, as indicated in the example of the Belgrade Master Plan, there was a huge gap between adopting the principles of interdisciplinarity and transparency in articulating the plan among the broader public, and implementing the plan. Again, the main body of criticism was leveled at planners: not only was their methodological approach to plan-making questioned, but opponents also criticized their willingness, skills, and knowledge for recognizing the values and beliefs of individuals in forming joint visions, rather than relying only upon instrumental rationality. In other words, despite the scientific objectivity as a strong presumption of value neutrality, planners were advised to refrain from making final decisions on plan evaluation criteria or spatial solutions and, instead, to offer individuals and entities in the self-management system a comprehensive set of information and the richest possible collection of alternatives, including clearly demonstrated consequences of each alternative.[126]

In sum, although the observed historical period (1961-1982) was labeled as the "golden era of Yugoslav participatory planning,"[127] the gap between the participatory narrative and the implementation of inclusive principles was noticeable. Interpreted against the broader framework, the evolution of citizen participation in Yugoslavia can be grasped as a gradual transition from blueprint-based and synoptic planning to a more pluralist view. Pluralist influence, however, remained only at the levels of criticism and theory, while the comprehensive rational paradigm still dominated the practical field. A crucial conceptual stumbling block was never overcome: being built into the very contradictions of self-management socialism, tensions between the unitary and particular interests prevented the planning profession from fully using the tool of unhampered public participation as a genuine move toward democratic pluralism. In other words, the abundance of participatory ideas in Yugoslav spatial and urban planning was due to both international encounters and the self-management nature of the Yugoslav socialist socio-political system. However, prevailing political goals over the need to address the real local problems finally impeded the intrinsic success of otherwise advanced participatory planning approaches, mechanisms, and methods.

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