Architects as Memory Actors: Ruins, Reconstructions, and Memorials in Belgrade

Research Article

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This article examines the reshaping of Belgrade's memorial landscape after the Second World War and after the 1999 NATO bombings, with a focus on the role of architects. As such, the paper shifts the scale of memory debates in two ways: first, from the national to the urban; second, from 'classical' memory entrepreneurs of the political realm to city makers, usually perceived as 'technical' actors, but, as the paper argues, in fact relevant memory actors both through the way they influence sites of memory and through memory debates. The article places the engagement of architects with narratives of heroism and victimhood in Serbia in a historical perspective, examining the shift in memorialisation after the Second World War. It then discusses the hesitant approaches on engaging with ruins of the 1999 NATO bombing, highlighting frictions between various actors in the Generalštab debate. Finally, it analyses the distinctive memorial engagement with the ruins of the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) building by examining the bottom-up process of the competition for the RTS memorial. The article highlights that, even if not intentionally or by embracing memory-work, architecture and architects play a role in memory processes, while deeply enmeshed in constellations of political and economic power.

Keywords: architects, memory, memorials, ruins, reconstruction, Belgrade.

Introduction

The advertising campaign for Belgrade's largest urban project since the 1980s, the controversial Belgrade Waterfront,[1] proudly proclaims the Serbian capital to be the "City of the Future".[2] Yet the city's materiality also showcases the enduring presence

[1] See Grubbauer, Monika and Nebojša Čamprag. 2019. Urban Megaprojects, Nation-State Politics and Regulatory Capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe: The Belgrade Waterfront Project. *Urban Studies* 56(4), 649–71; Koelemaij, Jorn. 2021. Dubaification in Practice. An Inter-Scalar Analysis of Belgrade Waterfront. *Urban Geography* 42(4), 439–57.

[2] https://www.belgradewaterfront.com/en/about/belgrade-waterfront/

of the past. In front of the former railway station, now the gateway to the Belgrade Waterfront, a grandiose monument to medieval ruler Stefan.

Nemanja was unveiled in 2021,[3] following up on a series of new monuments and memorials which have recently emerged in the city. Centrally placed ruins such as the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army (Generalštab) and the Radio Television of Serbia building evoke the memory of the 1999 NATO bombing of Belgrade.[4] Discussions surrounding such memorialisations, as well as the fate of these ruins, have prominently featured architects. Since the Second World War, architects in socialist Yugoslavia and successor states have not only taken part in projects shaping visions of the future, but have also been involved in projects evoking the past, particularly in memorial architecture. This article examines the theme of the special issue, the social reconstruction of places of memory, by highlighting the involvement of architects in reshaping Belgrade's memorial landscape after the Second World War and after the 1999 NATO bombings. It traces how actors of spatial transformation, including architects and other city-makers, not only make sense of but also impact the memory of war. It argues that, even if not intentionally or by embracing memory-work, architecture and architects play a role in memory processes, while deeply enmeshed in constellations of political and economic power.

The premise is that architecture, through the role that it plays in human existence, as the background of most human activities, is important in a salient way in the politics of memory. Through its "enduringness of materials",[5] urban space acts as a mediator of the translation of a variety of events into memory.[6] As such, the article shifts the scale of memory debates from the national to the urban, and from 'classical' memory entrepreneurs of the political realm to city makers. While the latter are usually perceived as 'technical' actors, this article argues that they are also relevant memory actors both through the way they influence sites of memory as well as through memory debates. It draws from three sources: interviews with architects, urban planners, employees of state institutions, artists and urban activists in Belgrade from 2012 to 2015 and in 2019-2020; a focus group with young architects and students in Belgrade (2014); and an architectural studio with twelve participants as part of the October Salon (2014).Moreover, it builds on an analysis of the historiography of memorial architecture after the Second World War and research of the media coverage of reconstruction and memorial architecture after 1999. Finally, a hermeneutic analysis of the urban ensembles as well as participant observation and informal discussions with Belgrade residents on the memorial sites have informed this research.

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[3] Makuljević, Nenad. 2019. <u>Nacionalni spomenik u zabavnom parku: Stefan Nemanja u Beogradu na vodi.</u> *Peščanik*, 21 March 2019 (accessed: 3 November 2021); Aranđelović, Biljana. 2020. *Public Art in Belgrade*, in *Belgrade*, edited by Aranđelović, Biljana and Milena Vukmirović. Cham: Springer, 223–71.

[4] Bădescu, Gruia. 2019. Making Sense of Ruins: Architectural Reconstruction and Collective Memory in Belgrade. *Nationalities Papers* 47(2), 182–97.

[5] Ricoeur, Paul. 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 150.

[6] Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Bakshi, Anita. 2017. *Topographies of Memories: A New Poetics of Commemoration*. Cham: Springer.

The relationship with the past in Serbia has been generally discussed with regards to state practices and the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY),[7] as well as narratives of denial[8] and (self)-victimisation.[9] More recently, there has been increasing attention paid to the reshaping of cultural practices and national symbols in relationship to the recent wars,[10] as well as processes of memorialisation and commemoration.[11] While there is a wealth of studies regarding memorial architecture in socialist Yugoslavia, to which I will refer below, the urban memory of the wars of the 1990s has been less addressed. Lea David fruitfully discussed the monument to the fallen of the wars of the 1990s as a site of "mnemonic battles". However, her aim was to investigate the mediation of international and domestic demands rather than discuss architectural agencies and urban memory. In contrast, in this article I will examine memory narratives in Belgrade through a spatial lens and with a particular examination of architects as actors of memory-making.

In the discussion of urban environments after war, as I have argued elsewhere, reconstruction is a profoundly transformative act for urban memory.[12] Interventions in urban space can have an impact on urban memory through erasures, replacements and reconstructions. Through their involvement in such urban changes, architects and other city makers have an impact on the reshaping of urban memory even if their considerations do not relate to dealing with a difficult past. However, they also participate in projects related specifically to memory, where intentionality is clear, namely projects of memorial architecture.[13] What follows is an examination of how architects have taken part in the shaping of memory in Belgrade both after the Second World War and after the NATO bombings, focusing

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[7] Subotić, Jelena. 2009. *Hijacked Justice Dealing with the Past in the Balkans*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[8] Dimitrijević, Nenad. 2008. Serbia After the Criminal Past: What Went Wrong and What Should Be Done. *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2(1), 5–22; Obradović-Wochnik, Jelena. 2013. *Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans the Narratives of Denial in Post-Conflict Serbia.* London: I.B. Tauris; Gordy, Eric. 2013. *Guilt, Responsibility, and Denial: The Past at Stake in Post-Milosevic Serbia.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

[9] MacDonald, David Bruce. 2002. *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim Centered Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[10] Lazić, Sladjana. 2013. Memory Claims and Memory Constraints. (Re)negotiating Statehood and Identities in Serbia. *Nationalities Papers* 41(6), 936–95; Fridman, Orli. 2015. Alternative Calendars and Memory Work in Serbia: Anti-war Activism after Milošević. *Memory Studies* 8(2), 212–26; David, Lea. 2015. Between Human Rights and Nationalism: Silencing as a Mechanism of Memory in the Post-Yugoslav Wars' Serbia. *Journal of Regional Security* 10(1), 37–52.

[11] David, Lea. 2014. Mediating international and domestic demands: mnemonic battles surrounding the monument to the fallen of the wars of the 1990s in Belgrade. *Nationalities Papers* 42(4), 655–73; David, Lea. 2015. Dealing with the Contested Past in Serbia: Decontextualisation of the War Veterans Memories. *Nations and Nationalism* 21(1), 102–19.

[12] Bădescu, *Making Sense of Ruins*; Bădescu, Gruia. 2019. Traces of Empire: Architectural Heritage, Imperial Memory and Post-war Reconstruction in Sarajevo and Beirut. *History and Anthropology* 30(4), 1–16; Bădescu, Gruia. 2021. *Urban Memory After War: Ruins and Reconstructions in Post-Yugoslav Cities*, in *Contested Urban Spaces: Monuments, Traces, and Decentered Memories*, edited by Capdepón, Ulrike and Sarah Dornhof. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[13] Young, James E. 2002. *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

on specific memorial architecture projects, as well as debates about the memorial role of ruins.

I scrutinise the changing role of architects in the Yugoslav space with regards to memorial practices. After a discussion of the important role of architects in memorial projects during socialism, I turn to the major shifts in the profession during the crisis of the 1990s and the different articulations of architectural engagements with reconstruction practice and memorialisation after 1999. Throughout, I examine the interplay between intentionality and the consequence of projects involving the materiality of memory in urban space.

Architects and memorial design in socialist Yugoslavia

Architects' engagement with memory in the Yugoslav region has often been connected with the particular role of architects in designing memorials after the Second World War. As the country celebrated the partisan struggle against fascism, which became the main thread of official memory narratives, memorials sprung up across the Yugoslav territory.[14] The official memory focused on the Second World War as both a war of liberation against fascism and a people's revolution.[15] In the early years, many memorials were dedicated to the heroism of partisans, including fallen soldiers, while after 1965 there was an increase in the construction of monuments dedicated to people's uprisings, or, more broadly, to the people's revolution. Furthermore, memorials to specific massacres or to the victims of fascism featured from the early years onward.

Memorials related to the Second World War were built throughout the Federation as a result of direct commissions by various state authorities, and particularly in the 1960s and the 1970s, through numerous open competitions.[16] Many of the initiatives for such memorials came from local municipalities, organisations of partisan veterans, and at times from the families of victims.[17] Funding came from different levels of the state, as well as from local communities, including through *samodoprinos* (citizens' voluntary contributions).[18] Individual donations and community support for memorials were often connected to human losses in families and communities rather than responding to political pressure – something that was also reflected in memorials intended for the mourning of the dead rather than celebrating a future-oriented political project.[19]

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[14] Karge, Heike. 2010. *Steinerne Erinnerung: versteinerte Erinnerung? Kriegsgedenken im sozialistischen Jugoslawien*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.

[15] Đureinović, Jelena. 2020. *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia: Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution*. Abingdon: Routledge.

[16] Horvatinčić, Sanja. 2017. *Spomenici iz razdoblja socijalizma u Hrvatskoj–prijedlog tipologije*. PhD Thesis, University of Zadar; Horvatinčić, Sanja. 2018. *Between Creativity and Pragmatism: A Structural Analysis and Quantitative Survey of Federal Competitions for Yugoslav Monuments and Memorial Complexes* (1955–1980), in *Modern and Contemporary Artists' Networks. An Inquiry into Digital History of Art and Architecture*. Zagreb: Institute of Art History, 124–65.

[17] Horvatinčić, *Spomenici*.

[18] Horvatinčić, *Spomenici*.

[19] Karge, *Steinerne Erinnerung*, 56; Đureinović, *The Politics of Memory*, 40.

Federation-wide, republican and local commissions and competitions saw these initiatives materialise from the design of architects and sculptors. In many of these memorial initiatives, a sculptural object was the main focus, continuing the association of memorials and monuments with the work of sculpture. As Sanja Horvatinčić has shown, in the 1970s in particular the interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation of sculpture and architecture in Yugoslavia developed new typologies of hybrid design, which combined sculptural form with architectural spatial organisation.[20] This way, architects became protagonists of memorial landscapes, beyond their penchant for new forms in cities and the modernist approach to urbanism, which was a radical break from the past. With regards to the intentionality of the architects, many spoke about their conviction to honour the memory of the fallen heroes and victims.

As such, architects got involved in what until then had been a field generally dominated by sculptors.[21] Bogdan Bogdanović's Memorial of the Jewish Victims of Fascism (1952) in Belgrade and Edvard Ravnikar's 1953 Kampor Cemetery on the Adriatic Island of Rab legitimised architecture as a profession to deal with commemoration in socialist Yugoslavia.[22] By the 1960s, memorial architecture had gained a prominent role in Yugoslav architectural discourse, when the main professional journal even dedicated an entire issue to it.[23] At the core of this involvement lay the architects' modernist belief that their work was a synthesis of the arts.[24] In the 1960s and 1970s in particular, design teams frequently included architects working together with sculptors, or even solely architects.[25] In her study of 24 federal competitions for memorials in socialist Yugoslavia, Sanja Horvatinčić found that three quarters of participants were architects, planners and landscape architects.[26]

Belgrade's memorial landscape from the socialist period mirrors these developments at the scale of the Federation. The partisan struggle against fascism was celebrated

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[20] Horvatinčić, Sanja. 2018. *Memorial Sculpture and Architecture in Socialist Yugoslavia*, in *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948-1980*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

[21] Important figures in interwar Yugoslavia included Ivan Meštrović, Antun Augustinčić and Frano Kršinić.

[22] Kulić, Vladimir and Maroje Mrduljaš. 2012. *Modernism in-between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*. Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH.

[23] *Arhitektura Urbanizam* 10(2) (1961): 1–61 (accessed: 3 November 2021).

[24] Horvatinčić, *Memorial Sculpture*, 105.

[25] For an overview of memorial architecture during socialism in the Yugoslav republics and a discussion of the main architects who took part, see Horvatinčić, *Memorial Sculpture* ; Putnik, Vladana. 2015. Les parcs mémoriaux dans l'espace yougoslave et post-yougoslave. *Revue detudes comparatives Est-Ouest* 4, 93–122; Putnik Prica, Vladana and Nenad Lajben Šperger. 2018. On the Wings of Modernity: WWII Memorials in Yugoslavia. *Docomomo Journal* 59; Putnik, Vladana. 2016. Second World War monuments in Yugoslavia as witnesses of the past and the future. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 14(3), 206–21; Pintar Manojlović, Olga. 2014. *Arheologija sećanja: spomenici i identiteti u Srbiji 1918-1989*. Belgrade: Udruzenje za drustvenu istoriju.

[26] Horvatinčić, *Between Creativity and Pragmatism*. The comparatively higher number of architects who took part in competitions can also be explained by the fact that usually architects sent proposals as teams of several members, while sculptors sent individual entries.

in the country's capital from early on with monuments which continue to constitute landmarks in the urban space. Let us turn now to some of these emblematic monuments and memorials that also reflect the processes of memory-making in socialist Yugoslavia.

Monuments and memorial architecture in post-1945 Belgrade
Across the street from the historicist Serbo-Byzantine entrance to Novo Groblje, Belgrade's elite cemetery, stands an imposing socialist-realist monument dedicated to the liberators of Belgrade in October 1944. The solid angular columns of the monument respond to the slender patterned brick columns of the cemetery entrance, with the main axis of the cemetery continuing through the centre of the monument to a memorial park with plaques, statues of glorious soldiers and funeral stones. Proud, heroic, confident figures of men and women alike, engaged in revolutionary battle, adorn the monument. Inscriptions in Cyrillic praise the anti-fascist struggle of the liberators. The monument adorning the entrance to the memorial cemetery of fallen Yugoslav partisans and Soviet Red Army soldiers was opened in 1954, on a design by Croatian architect Branko Bon, featuring reliefs by sculptor Rade Stanković and a Red Army soldier sculpture by Antun Augustinčić. While opened after the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, when Yugoslav architecture had moved away from the Soviet-promoted socialist- realism, the ensemble echoes the style. As such, the complex pays honour to the Soviets both through their inclusion in the cemetery, and, indirectly, through the aesthetic. While the Yugoslav memory culture emphasised the unique role of the partisans in liberating the country from fascism, the Belgrade monument acknowledges that this did not happen without a Soviet presence.

More than half a century later, as post-socialist Serbia's political elites embraced a special relationship with Russia, since 2019 the monumental ensemble has featured a night light show including the colours of the Serbian flag colours – which coincide with those of Russia – as well as a red backdrop for special days, specifically recalling the Red Army.[27] Opened on the 75th anniversary of the liberation, the monument's lighting scheme, in the words of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Zoran Đorđević, marked the celebration of a "traditionally good relationship".[28] Monuments have not only been material embodiments of memory politics, but also stages for geopolitical manifestations.[29]

[27] N.N. 2019. Svečano puštena nova rasveta na Groblju oslobodiocima Beograda, Politika, 19 October 2019 (accessed: 29 March 2020).
[28] *Svečano puštena.*
[29] Bădescu, Gruia. Forthcoming. Urban Geopolitics in 'Ordinary' and 'Contested' Cities: Perspectives from the European South-East. *Geopolitics.*

Figure 1. The monument to the liberators of Belgrade, by Novo Groblje.

Source: Photo by the author.

The prominent monument to the liberators and the memorial cemetery are separated by a stone wall from the Belgrade Jewish cemetery. Hidden from view, only the arched tips of the structure can be glanced across the wall. The arches are part of the Memorial of Jewish Victims, one of the first works of later celebrated architect Bogdan Bogdanović, completed in 1952. The memorial is small, yet expressive. Its symbolist aesthetics marked a departure from the socialist-realist impositions of previous years, as well as from Bogdanović's earlier embracement of the style. The architect, who had fought in the war on the side of the partisans and had a good relationship with the new communist authorities, had previously extolled Soviet architecture.[30] As the official architecture moved away from this model, Bogdanović experimented towards finding his new voice, and came up with this winning solution for the competition called in 1951 by Josip Broz Tito himself.

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[30] Putnik Prica, Vladana. 2017. *From Socialist Realism to Socialist Aestheticism: Three Contrasting Examples of State Architects in Yugoslavia*, in *The State Artist in Romania and Eastern Europe: the Role of the Creative Unions*, edited by Caterina Preda. Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 347–73.

Figure 2. The arched tips of the Jewish memorial as seen from the memorial park dedicated to fallen soldiers.

Source: Photo by the author.

Despite the command from the top, the memorial gesture remained limited to an enclosed location. To access it, one must go through the gate of the Jewish cemetery, and only there is it revealed in its fullness. Located at the end of an alley amidst funeral stones, its marginal position in the city stands as testimony to the marginal role of memorialising victims, and especially ethnicised victims in the first decades of socialist Yugoslavia. Members of the jury of the 1951 competition commented that Bogdanović included a "rudimentary symbolism" in his design, but not one that includes lament or grieving that would disturb "silence and dignity".[31] This contrasted with the Federation-wide complaints that many of the locally erected memorials concentrated too much on suffering, pain, and melancholy, instead of being "invigorating" and celebrating the liberating struggle.[32]

In these times, official memory cultures all over Europe shied away from lamenting victimhood. The gradual European shift after the Second World War from a 'patriotic memory' centred on glory and heroes to the memory of genocide and to victims

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[31] Putnik Prica, *From socialist realism*, 356.
[32] Karge, Heike. 2009. Mediated Remembrance. Local Practices of Remembering the Second World War in Tito's Yugoslavia. *European Review of History - Revue européenne d'histoire* 16(1), 49–62.

arrived in full steam after the 1960s.[33] Jewish survivors of the Holocaust started to talk about their experience at this later date, not only as it may have been more bearable to talk about traumatic experiences after some time had passed, but also because the societies around them, from Israel to Europe and North America, had started to change their approach to victims. For a long time relegated to realms of inglorious suffering, overshadowed by heroic fighters, victims were redeemed by a more humanitarian understanding of history and of the contemporary world alike.[34]

In Yugoslavia, civilian victims from across the country were assimilated into the anti-fascist struggle. The high number of civilian casualties was seen as an indication of the heroism of the people, rather than victimhood. Similarly, children involved in the war were seen both as victims and as heroes.[35] In contrast, victims of the concentration camps, where the trope of resistance and struggle was less easy to articulate, were not at the forefront of remembrance in the first decades. The memorialisation of Jewish victims through the memorial in Belgrade appears thus a rather early initiative in post-war Europe, with the local representatives of the Jewish community advocating for its need from early on.[36] Yet it remained conscribed to the Jewish cemetery, and was therefore a site of memory usually accessed by the community. In contrast, in post-war Belgrade, the Old Fairground (Staro Sajmište) concentration camp, located across the Sava River in what later became New Belgrade, a hotspot of construction and urban vision for the new socialist Yugoslav Federation, remained unmarked and unmemorialised for decades despite the atrocities that took place there during the Second World War.[37]

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[33] François, Etienne. 2006. *Europäische lieux de mémoire*, in *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien,* edited by Budde, Conrad. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 290–303.

[34] Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. 2006. *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

[35] Petrović Todosijević, Sanja. Konstruktivno vaspitanje najmlađih pripadnika jugoslovenske zajednice. Sovjetski model na tragu poznavanja naše sopstvene problematike. *Oslobođenje Beograda 1944.* Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 382–92; Petrović Todosijević, Sanja. *Proizvođenje heroja. Školovanje jugoslovenskih dečaka u suvorovskim vojnim školama u SSSR-u 1945-1954*, in *Tradicija i transformacija. Političke i društvene promene u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji u 20. veku*. Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 103–29.

[36] Stipić, Davor. 2016. U borbi protiv zaborava. Jevrejska zajednica u Jugoslaviji i očuvanje sećanja na Holokaust 1945-1955. *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 23(2), 91–121. Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju.

[37] Ignjatović, Aleksandar and Olga Manojlović Pintar. 2008. Staro Sajmište i sećanja na Drugi svetski rat: Prostori selektovanih memorija. *Helsinška povelja* 13, 117–18; Pintar, *Arheologija Sećanja*; Radović, Srdjan. 2016. *Memory Culture and Urban Reconstruction: The Case of Staro Sajmište in Belgrade*, in *Transitional Justice: Images and Memories*, edited by Brants Langeraar, Chrisje / Hol, Antoine and Dina Siegel Rozenblit. Abingdon: Routledge, 87-107.

Figure 3. Old Belgrade Fairgrounds (Staro Sajmište). While the surrounding areas were remade into New Belgrade, the site of the Nazi concentration camp remained marginal in the post-war era.

Source: Photo by the author.

A small memorial was placed at the edge of the site in 1975, corresponding to shifts in the memorialisation of victimhood in Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

The turn to recognition of victimhood beyond the associations with heroism and resistance was also reflected in Bogdan Bogdanović's later work in memorial architecture. While the memorial for Jewish victims in Belgrade is tucked away in the Jewish cemetery, thus available only to those to seek it in a place associated with a specific community, his later work, especially outside of Belgrade, is set up in conspicuous places and majestic settings, from Bosnian mountains to the dark site of the Jasenovac concentration camp.

The shift towards an emphasis on commemorating victims can be illustrated in the Belgrade memorial landscape with regards to the evolution of memorial projects in Jajinci. Located in the city's periphery, Jajinci was the site of the killing of over 80,000 people between 1941 and 1943, mostly detained in the Banjica concentration camp, as well as in the Staro Sajmište camp. Victims included Jews as well as Serbs involved in protests against the collaborationist regime of Milan Nedić and the German occupation. After the war, the ad-hoccreated Jajinci Memorial Committee invited sculptor Stevan Bodnarov to make a monument. In 1951, his bronze relief

depicting victims of the shooting was placed on a pedestal designed by architect Leon Kabiljo, shaping a monument representative of the socialist realist style.[38] Nevertheless, critics pointed out that this relief, placed at the entrance to the camp, was not satisfactory for the importance of the crimes.[39] In the meantime, a competition for a memorial, one of the first in socialist Yugoslavia, took place in 1947-48, but no project won the first prize.[40] The second prize winner, Slovene sculptor Lojze Dolinar, eventually authored a second monument at Jajinci, including fifteen figures of men, women and children, unveiled in the mid-1950s.[41] After criticisms of this ensemble, it was eventually moved to Kraljevo. A new competition took place, but it did not result in a new monument.[42] During the popularisation of memorial parks across Yugoslavia in the 1960s[43], the area was reshaped into a memorial park by the city authorities after a competition which selected the project by architects Branko Bon and Brana Mirković.[44] Finally, in 1986, the city of Belgrade listed the memorial park as part of the city's cultural heritage, mirroring the recognition of victimhood as a pillar of memory culture. Moreover, the city organised a competition in 1988 for a monument dedicated to the victims of fascism, located at the site of the largest mass grave. The design brief asked the solution to reconcile a memorial function, "which in a dignified and convincing manner gives reverence to the fallen victims"[45] with the organisation of artistic and "festive" gatherings.[46] The jury, which included Bogdan Bogdanović, called Vojin Stojić as a winner. The competition was one of the last memorial projects in the entirety of socialist Yugoslavia.

[38] Janković, Nataša. 2017. Architectural Terri(s)tories: Jajinci Memorial Park in Belgrade. *AM Časopis za studije umetnosti i medija* 12, 81–97.

[39] Stevanovic, Nina. 2017. *Architectural Heritage of Yugoslav-Socialist Character. Ideology, Memory and Identity*. PhD Thesis. Barcelona: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.

[40] Horvatinčić, Sanja. 2015. Povijest nemogućeg spomenika. Podizanje spomenika žrtvama fašizma u Jajincima. *Anali Galerije Antuna Augustinčića* 32, 261-80.

[41] Horvatinčić, *Povijest*, 261.

[42] Horvatinčić, *Povijest*, 261.

[43] Putnik, *Les Parcs Mémoriaux*.

[44] Horvatinčić, *Povijest*.

[45] N.N. 1980. Iz programa za idejno rešenje Spomen-parka Jajinci. *Arhitektura i Urbanizam* 85, 78–81; Janković, *Architectural Terri(s) Tories*, 87.

[46] N.N., *Iz programa*.

Figure 4. Jajinci Memorial Park

Source: Photo by the author.

The reading of memory frames in these memorials has been often left open. For instance, Bogdanović's memorials are open-ended, involving historical references, but they are never explicit.[47] For Ljilijana Blagojević, Bogdanović's expression is that of a pioneer postmodernist.[48] Bogdanović´s memorials were daring and symbolic, with Vladana Putnik calling them "visually progressive" and "on the very edge of state art".[49] Yet as she also points out, the architect repeatedly highlighted that he was a devout communist in order to set the ideological frame of the monument as being consistent with that of the state. Moreover, the monuments' openness to interpretation and the concentration on the formal dimensions of the catharsis have come under scrutiny from critics of this form of engagement with the past. For instance, Miloš Perović argued that through excessive aestheticisation, Bogdanović's designs were elusive with regard to victimhood and became a celebratory device of communist authority and victory.[50]

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[47] Kulić and Mrduljaš, *Modernism In-Between*.

[48] Blagojević, Ljiljana. 2011. Postmodernism in Belgrade Architecture. Between Cultural Modernity and Societal Modernization. *Spatium* 25, 23–29.

[49] Putnik Prica, *Three State Architects*, 357.

[50] Perović, Miloš R. 2003. *Srpska arhitektura XX veka: od istoricizma do drugog modernizma*. Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu.

In 1993, as Yugoslavia fell apart, Bogdanović echoed another turn in the way European societies remembered the past after the Second World War. This was the shift to discussing acts of perpetration, initiated by Germany and continued to various degrees by others. As bombs fell on Croatian and Bosnian cities, Bogdanović called "Let us hope that the old, mature peoples of Europe know how to remember not only the days of glory, but also the shameful nights of their own history",[51] pondering on how Serbs will remember the days of inglorious attacks in the name of the Serbian nation.

The NATO bombings of Belgrade, main narratives, and voices of architects
The end of socialist Yugoslavia meant not only a reshaping of the memory culture of the Second World War in the successor states,[52] but also brought new layers of memory associated with the 1990s wars.[53] In Belgrade, protest and division would dominate the urban memory of the 1990s, with the wars in the neighbouring republics in the background.[54] The direct experience of war arrived in Belgrade with the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, which began on March 24th 1999 and lasted 78 days. It occurred in the aftermath of the failed negotiations over Kosovo between NATO and the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in Rambouillet. NATO justified the operation as a preventative intervention to avoid a humanitarian crisis in Kosovo to match the ethnic cleansing which had occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s.

The bombings were targeted at buildings which hosted mostly military and political institutions, including ministries such as the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army (Generalštab). Furthermore, targets also included industrial, transport and media infrastructure which NATO ascribed as contributing to Milošević's war machine, such as bridges in Novi Sad or the Radio Television of Serbia building in Belgrade. The scale of destruction was limited compared to cities bombed in the Second World War (including Belgrade itself), or other cities affected by war in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the general portrayal of the destruction was that of severe victimisation of the city and nation, assimilated into the much more severe destruction of the Second World War. In the official Serbian media, the bombings were presented as a nonsensical aggression, with NATO killing innocent children, proof of barbarian behaviour.[55] At times, voices of architects appeared echoing the main media discourse – celebrated architect Mihajlo Mitrović wrote a piece called 'We build, they ruin', opposing the

[51] Bogdan Bogdanović, in Biserko, Sonja and Džajić-Weber, Azra. (eds.). 2005. *Srebrenica: Remembrance for the Future: 1995 - 2005*. Sarajevo: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 119.

[52] Đureinović, *The Politics of Memory*

[53] Banjeglav, Tamara. 2012. Memory of War or War over Memory? The Official Politics of Remembering in 1990s Croatia. Paper at Re-thinking European Politics and History. Vienna: IWM (accessed: 3 November 2021); Trošt, Tamara P. and Lea David. 2021. Renationalizing Memory in the Post-Yugoslav Region. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1–10.

[54] Lavrence, Christine. 2005. "The Serbian Bastille" Memory, Agency, and Monumental Public Space in Belgrade. *Space and Culture* 8(1), 31–46.

[55] The barbarian trope featured almost daily in the coverage of the bombing in Politika, the Serbian newspaper of record.

cultured activity of architects in Serbia to the destruction provoked by the Western alliance.[56] In a series spanning a few weeks, architects described ruined buildings around the country, stressing the cultural loss that NATO had inflicted not only on Serbia, but also on the entire world by destroying what is in fact human heritage.[57] The overall narrative was that of a war to destroy modernity and urbanity alike, a war waged by barbarians against civilisation. In many accounts by Belgrade residents, after the first weeks of the bombings, the lack of electricity and essential urban amenities took the focus away from the initial fear provoked by the sound and sight of the aerial attacks.

For NATO, Belgrade was the capital city of Milošević's Yugoslavia and thus embodied the regime; the attack of urban landmarks allegedly connected to the war machine, and the disruption of infrastructure, was thus rational. However, when we shift the scale to the city and to urban imaginaries, another picture emerges. Throughout the 1990s, large cities in Serbia, including Belgrade and Novi Sad, embodied the image of resistant cities, with strong anti-Milošević sentiments amidst large segments of the population, and significant demonstrations against the regime.[58] As such, Belgrade was portrayed by pro-Milošević commentators as the unfaithful capital, 'Tito's whore'[59] or the 'Serbian Hong Kong', doubtful of the city´s real allegiance to the nation.[60] To them, Belgrade had lost its Serbianness, as it embraced a cosmopolitan nature as Yugoslavia's metropolis during socialism. For philosopher Aleksa Buha, a spiritual version of the Berlin Wall was dividing a Serbian Belgrade of the working people in the outskirts from a non-Serbian Belgrade of inner city denizens.[61] This echoed the discussions about the alleged duality of two perceived Serbias, a 'First' and an 'Other' Serbia, one democratic and pro-Western, embodied by Belgrade and urban Serbia, the other nationalistic and inward looking, represented by the hinterlands.[62]

In 2000, Slobodan Milošević commissioned a monument to celebrate what he described as Serbia's "victory over NATO". It was plagued by spelling errors, a Stalinist architectural expression and dimensional downgrading, with its electrically powered 'eternal light' just a third of the projected size. The eternal light

[56] N.N. 1999. Mi zgradimo, oni ruše. *Politika*, 5 January 1999.

[57] *Politika*, April 1999.

[58] Jansen, Stef. 2001. The Streets of Beograd. Urban Space and Protest Identities in Serbia. *Political Geography* 20(1), 35–55.

[59] "Belgrade is Tito's whore. It considers itself Yugoslav, cosmopolitan, democratic. The only thing it does not want to be is what it is: Serbian," in *Srpska Rec* 89 (1994), 15), quoted in Vujovic, Sreten. 2000. *An Uneasy View of the City*, in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, edited by Nebojša Popov. Budapest: Central European University Press, 137.

[60] "The lurching city of Belgrade, with its intellectual circles that only care about ingratiating themselves to the West, has ceased to be the capital of its own volition. It is no longer the capital in spirit", Rajko Djurdjevic (1994), quoted in Vujovic, *An Uneasy View*, 138.

[61] Buha, Aleksa (1994), quoted in Vujovic, *An uneasy view*, 138.

[62] Omaljev, Ana. 2013. *Constructing the Other: Discourses on Europe and Identity in 'First'and'Other' Serbia*. PhD Thesis, University of Reading.

was switched off after the uprising of 5 October 2000, allegedly revealing its lack of popularity with the public.[63]

After Milošević, the city of Belgrade inherited many ruined government buildings as a result of the NATO bombing. In the subsequent decades, processes of reconstruction and memorialisation followed. Government institutions took often contrasting decisions with regard to the reconstruction of ruined buildings – some were carefully restored, while others, particularly modernist buildings which originated during socialist Yugoslavia, either underwent a makeover or were left in ruins.[64] Moreover, political and bureaucratic actors were involved in the initiatives for various monuments and memorials, plagued by a vagueness that showcased the lack of a clear official memory narrative.[65] References to the broader Yugoslav wars were largely absent, also evoking a lack of knowledge among large segments of the population.[66] The obfuscation of the past through vague memorial gestures was followed by a more strict control of narratives: the 2018 law on war memorials restricted the production of memorials to those which would not be offensive to the Serbian state.[67] As for architects, powerful actors in the shaping of memorial landscapes during socialism, their role transformed in the new post-socialist context.

Rupture and Disempowerment: Architects after 1991
The transitional years of the 1990s and 2000s significantly changed the work of architects and city makers in Belgrade. For Miloš Perović, the political instability of the 1990s provided architects with a new creativity and a spirit of the avant-garde, comparing it to the times after the First World War in both Yugoslavia and the world.[68] Nevertheless, another view, more cogently articulated by Vedran Mimica or Ivan Kucina, is that architects and planners perceive this period as one of severe disempowerment for the two professions. In this turbulent transition, which saw the withdrawal of the state, the end of many of the socially owned companies which employed architects, and the pauperisation of the population, architects and planners regarded themselves as a powerless, marginalised group. Mimica describes the situation of post-1991 architects in ex-Yugoslavia as extras, as freelance actors without a script. As opposed to the situation before the dissolution, "The architect was no longer a gentleman with a bow-tie and cigar, waiting for a patron to develop

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[63] See Jovanović Weiss, Srdjan. 2013. National, un-national. *Nationalities Papers* 41(1), 90–108; Bădescu, Gruia. 2016. 'Achieved without Ambiguity?' Memorializing Victimhood in Belgrade after the 1999 NATO Bombing. *Südosteuropa* 64(4), 500–19.

[64] I examine the motivations of political actors elsewhere, see Bădescu, Gruia. 2021. *The Modernist Abject: Ruins of Socialism, Reconstruction, and Populist Politics in Belgrade and Sarajevo*, in *Memory and Populist Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Jody Jensen. Abingdon: Routledge, 27–46.

[65] David, *Mediating International and Domestic Demands*; Bădescu, '*Achieved without Ambiguity?*'; Božić-Marojević, Milica 2018. Izgubljeni u prevodu. Pamćenje devedesetih u javnom prostoru Beograda. *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 3, 83–100. Beograd: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju.

[66] Božić-Marojević, Milica. 2016. Rat sećanja – (zlo)upotrebe disonantnog nasleđa u političke svrhe. *Kultura* (152), 155–70.

[67] Marojević, Izgubljeni u prevodu.

[68] Perović, *Srpska Arhitektura*, 214.

canonical national institutions of historical importance".[69] Architects had as possible clients only private investors with money, and oftentimes these were perceived as victors of dubious privatisation deals or even illegal war gains. Furthermore, they joined the intellectual elites in castigating the new architecture that these *nouveaux riches* were producing, perceived as an ultimate kitsch, dubbed *turboarhitektura* with a reference to the low-brow musical style of *turbofolk*.[70] The architecture of the 1990s thus became a symbol of the socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions of the post-socialist transition, but for architects was also a marker of the erosion of their role as main city makers. Moreover, planners saw the near extinction of state projects and a state of general informality that made their work quasi-redundant. Consequently, powerlessness caused by the difficult transition and a perception of architects and planners as purely technical professions led many built environment professionals not to directly express concerns for societal responsibility and the past.

Beyond the perception of powerlessness, the pauperisation of the professional led, in the words of architect and activist Iva Čukić, to a disengagement with the larger questions, including the fate of destroyed buildings:

> *"Because people's lives are very difficult and we are fighting all the time for the basic needs. So they [architects and residents] don't really care what will happen to the Generalštab if they can't even buy food for that day."*[71]

The view that architecture had become a small cog in a larger political economy paralysesarchitects' possibility to envision a form of utopia and the building of a new world of meaning, like they did, for instance, after the Second World War.[72] The writings of local architects are subsumed at times in a defeatist tone:

> *"Immersion in processes of 'new economic reality' turns architecture into a pure economic factor which is left to fragmentary opportunities and the conceptless antimodernism of new investors and politicians. It is no wonder, then, that we are unable to address the question of the Generalštab building, the fundamental creation of our modern architecture ... The reason is that we, as a society, have lost the ability to create, to imagine and build an adequate and modern urban ambient, a significant building production, like the New Belgrade was in the past."*[73]

Lijlijana Miletić Abramović's statement was aimed at the local architects' community, part of the exhibition catalogue of Belgrade's 35th Architecture Salon.

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[69] Mimica, Vedran, Kenneth Frampton, Darko Glavan, Kenneth Frampton and Kenneth Frampton. 2000. *Randić & Turato. Arhitektura tranzicij*. Zagreb: Arhitekst, 13.

[70] Jovanović Weiss, *National, Un-National*.

[71] Interview Iva Čukić, September 2014.

[72] Le Normand, Brigitte. 2014. *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism in Belgrade*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Miletić-Abramović, Ljiljana / Slobodan Selinkić, Danko / Muzej Primenjene Umetnosti (Belgrade), and Salon arhitekture. 2013. *Još uvek imamo arhitekturu: 35. salon arhitekture, Muzej Primenjene Umetnosti, Beograd [exhibition catalogue, 35th Salon of Architecture, 27th March - 30th April 2013]*. Beograd: Muzej primenjene umetnosti. 9.

Beyond all these limitations, for many architects, dealing with the past, politics, and memory are seen as far removed from their sphere of activity. For several of my architect interlocutors, the profession is a largely apolitical, purely technical one. In our interview, architect and academic Ivan Kućina stated that this attitude has its roots in the modernist moulding of architects in socialist Yugoslavia, who were taught to regard architecture and the city as scientific. They regarded themselves as non-ideological, technical, producing architecture and urban plans according to the tenets of modernism and the Charter of Athens, the programme of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM). They did not see their work as being connected somehow to the ideology of the socialist regime, but as a holistically professional adherence to international modernism in the first decades of socialism and to modernism's critiques and deconstructions in the 1980s. This attitude, Kucina argues, followed them in the transition years, the period of transformation from a socialist state planning system to a market economy.

We turn to look both at the practice and at the debates about reconstruction of bombed buildings in Belgrade. The discussion of the reconstruction debates for the Generalštab and the Radio Television building will highlight the tensions between structural limitations — the political economy of transition and the limited set of tools that architects have — and agency, coloured by moral, emotional and creative responses to war and dealing with the past.

Reconstruction trajectories after 1999
In interviews with Belgrade architects, most reconstructions after 1999 are not associated with concerns for the past and memory, but with the common trope of functional, lucrative projects. For instance, the reconstruction of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (CK) into a major office centre and shopping mall transformed the site from an emblem of socialist Yugoslavia into a representation of the new capitalist, consumerist economy. The architect of the reconstruction discussed the approach as purely motivated by the needs of office architecture, without considering its political past.[74] Milica Topalović compares this reconstruction to the so-called 'Euroremont' (Russian for Euro-Repair), a common practice throughout the Eastern Block to convert older modern buildings to reflect a contemporary and therefore 'European' look.[75] The conversion of the site from a state building of authority reminiscent of socialist Yugoslavia's Western leanings into a shopping-office area rewrote the memory embedded in the site. Its architectural design echoes international office architecture, a sign of a turn to capitalism. It also serves as a place of amnesia, severing, through its reshaped

[74] Staničić, Aleksandar. 2014. A*rchitettura nata dalla violenza: il dilemma creativo delle ricostruzioni post-urbicide. Esperienze di Belgrado dopo la guerra del 1999/ Architecture born in violence: Creative dilemma in post-urbicidal reconstructions. Experiences of Belgrade in the aftermath of 1999 War*. PhD Thesis. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
[75] Topalović, Milica. 2012. *New Belgrade: The Modern City's Unstable Paradigms*, in *Belgrade: formal / informal. Eine Studie über Städtebau und urbane Transformation*, edited by Roger Diener. Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess.

materiality, links to both the memory of its previous uses during socialism as well as the NATO bombings.

In contrast, other reconstructions were ostensibly about nation-building and dealt more directly with the meaning of the past. The Avala TV tower, built between 1961 and 1965 on the Avala hill south of Belgrade, was the tallest structure in Yugoslavia until it was destroyed on 29 April 1999. Its reconstruction is mired in the process of dealing with the past. Avala was the subject of a reconstruction campaign which started in 2004, and which expressed the need to bring back what the organisers deemed "the symbol of the city", but also to counteract the acts of the NATO bombing. The campaign began just after the violent unrest in Kosovo against Serbs, and the destruction of Serbian architectural heritage in March 2004 and was not coincidental.[76] By launching a campaign to reverse the intervention that was connected to Kosovo, the organisers addressed the ongoing events in Kosovo itself, thus connecting the politics of the present with dealing with the past. The government provided financial support for the campaign, with RTS hosting TV shows asking for public donations through SMS in order to foster a "common cause".[77] Personalities such as tennis star Novak Djoković showed their public support for the campaign, raising its status and visibility. The new Avala tower was inaugurated in 2008.

Other buildings, however, have not had this public attention and stood in ruins for significantly longer. The bomb-damaged Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, one of Belgrade's rare socialist realist buildings,[78] remained covered by transparent canvas commercial advertisements for years. The massive building stood in between one of Belgrade's main boulevards and a highway interchange, with sizeable bomb holes visible through the canvas from the often traffic-clogged avenues. Despite being bought by an Israeli investor in 2007, the plans to redevelop the site as a hotel were stalled by a missing permit.[79] Only in 2016 was the site cleared. By the end of 2019, the Skyline tower was erected, consisting of luxury apartments and a shopping centre.

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[76] Atanasovski, Srđan. 2016. 'The Song Has Kept Us': Soundscape of Belgrade during the NATO Bombing. *Südosteuropa* 64(4), 482–99.
[77] Atanasovski, *The Song*.
[78] Originally intended for the New Belgrade administrative center of the Federation, the structure was eventually located in the older part of Belgrade, while keeping its socialist realist shapes as defined by architect Ludvik Tomori, involved in the war and the communist movement. See Ćirić, Ksenija. 2011. Beogradski opus slovenačkog arhitekte Ludviga Tomorinja. *Naslede* 12, 197–202.
[79] Interview, Institute of Urban Planning staff, 2014.

Figure 5. Ruins of Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs (2015)
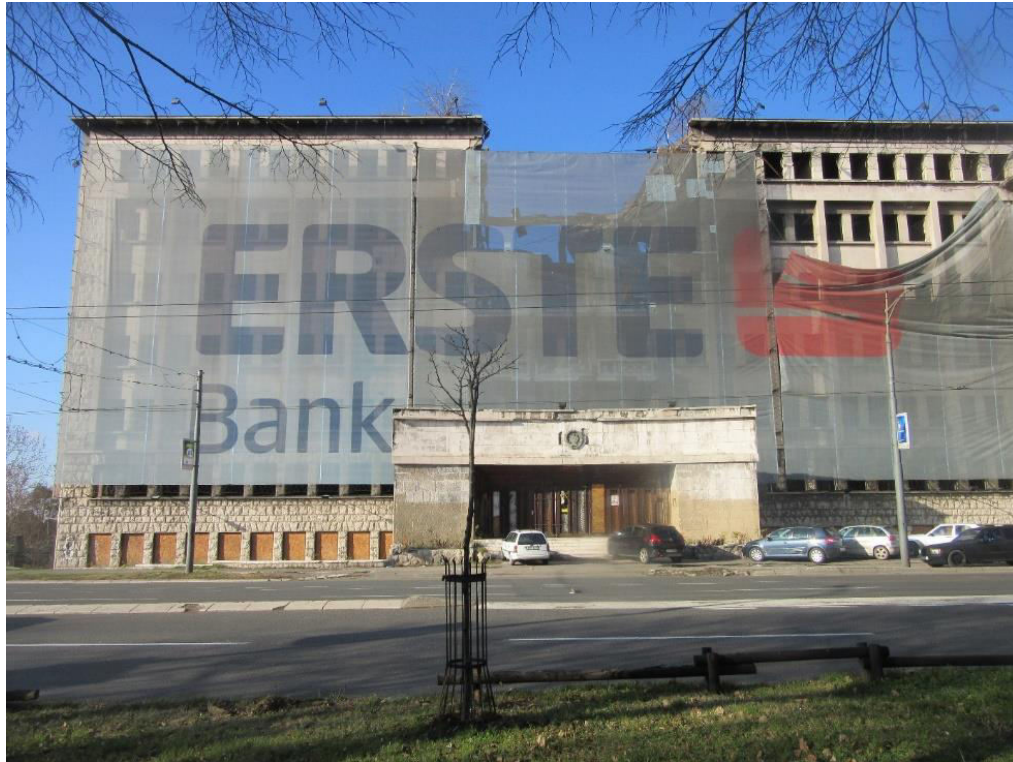
Source: Photo by the author.

Persistent Ruins: The Generalštab, architects, and the state

The ruins of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army (Generalštab), a twin structure on both sides of the central Nemanjina street, have become emblematic for the NATO bombing.[80] In 2005, the Ministry of Defence announced the sale of the site for redevelopment. The news was met with anger by many in the architectural community: the Generalštab was designed by celebrated modernist architect Nikola Dobrović, even being considered his "magnum opus".[81] Facing the risk of demolition, the Association of Belgrade Architects (*Društvo Arhitekata Beograda*, DAB) mobilised to block this potential scenario and initiated a motion to declare the Generalštab a cultural monument. Soon after, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, a state institution, declared it a monument (listed building).

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[80] For a discussion of the broader context of Generalstab's reconstruction and an account of all the actors involved, see Bădescu, *Making Sense of Ruins*; Davenport, Ben. 2015. *"A Heritage of Resistance". Changing Readings of Belgrade's Generalstab*, in *War and Cultural Heritage. Biographies of Place*, edited by Stig Sørensen, Marie Louise and Dacia Viejo-Rose. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[81] Milinković, Marija. 2013. *Headquarters of Public Memory*, in *The General Staff of Public Memory*. Belgrade: Cultural Center Rex.

Figure 6. Ruins of Ministry of Defence of Yugoslavia and the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army
(Generalštab). Building A (left), Building B (right) (2013)

Source: Photo by the author.

Reactions to the 2005 listing were varied. While several architects advocated for the
restorative reconstruction of Dobrović's work,[82] the print media questioned why the
building should be preserved instead of being sold for much-needed money for the
impoverished country's budget.[83] Furthermore, as the building belonged to the
military, a further proposal was made in the media to convert it into flats for war
veterans.[84] In 2006, the state Directorate for Property asked to have the protection
removed in order to sell it to investors. The listing was seen as an impediment to
such selling, as in Serbia, the status of a cultural monument allows the sale and the
repurposing of a building, but requires that the original appearance of the building
is preserved. The Directorate argued that no investor would agree to buy knowing
they could not realise their own project. Moreover, according to lawyer Taras Panić,
deputy director of the Directorate for Property, it was startling that the complex was
listed only when it was ruined; furthermore, other important buildings such as the
Ministry of Interior were not.[85]

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[82] One such proponent has been Bojan Kovačević, the author of several studies on the architrecture of the
Generalštab.

[83] N.N. 2012. Generalštab čeka kupca. *Novosti*, 24 March 2012.

[84] N.N., *Generalštab čeka*.

[85] Mučibabić, Daliborka and Vladimir Vukasović. 2013. Srbija razgovara: Generalštab – rušiti ili čuvati
kulturno blago. *Politika*, 18 February 2013 (accessed: 3 November 2021).

The Generalštab was thus caught between different platforms of various state institutions that had different goals, a situation that continued for decades. Several interviewees from public institutions underlined that the lack of reconstruction was due to this blockage. According to this explanation, the persistence of ruins was not an intentional act, but a result of competing institutional agendas. Nevertheless, an opinion that the ruins were left in the centre to intentionality act as reminders to passers-by of the NATO bombing has also endured. For a number of my interviewees, the ruins were left to stand there as a memorial act of Serbian victimhood. Even public figures such as Patriarch Irinej have claimed that the ruins remain untouched to serve as reminders.[86] Yet, be it an intentional act or not, the ruins were indeed read by many as a reminder: the mnemonic role of ruins, which I have discussed elsewhere,[87] kept the memory of the NATO bombings visible through the sheer materiality of the ruined complex in the centre of Belgrade.

Institutional decisions throughout this period have modified the shape of the ruin. Since 2005, the Ministry of Defence has repeatedly announced that the site would be redeveloped. At various occasions it has demolished parts of the complex, to signal to possible investors that the land is prepared for redevelopment. For instance, after Donald Trump expressed an interest in the site in early 2013, the entrance to the building B was removed. Announcements about redevelopment by UAE investors followed in 2015, in tune with the shift of attention of the entire urban scene to the Belgrade Waterfront project, featuring an UAE developer, a special relationship between Serbian leader Aleksandar Vučić and an Emirati sheikh, as well as important contestation.[88] Since 2014, the Ministry of Defence has covered the ruins with a large banner consisting of an advertisement for the Serbian Army: the mnemonic impact was mitigated by a call to join the forces.

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[86] Published 21 May 2014 on the online portal Fakti.org, retrieved March 20th 2020.
[87] Bădescu, *Making Sense of Ruins*.
[88] Grubbauer and Čamprag, *Urban Megaprojects*.

Figure 7. Generalštab, Building A, in 2016.

Source: Photo by the author.

The situation of the Generalštab highlights the role of state institutions as city-makers and a memory-makers – unwillingly or not, but it also illustrates the frictions between them. As such, for the period discussed, one cannot talk about a monolithic state actor, but of different agendas motivated by different understandings. Despite having state institutions as protagonists of the process, a rich debate about the fate of the building took place elsewhere: NGOs which organised public debates, architects taking stances.[89] The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments represented some of the profession's voices: but through the lens of heritage, which regarded the only option for the complex to be its faithful reconstruction in Dobrović´s design. A specific engagement with memory was called for by some architects, such as Marko Matejić,[90] and was expressed as a possible option by my interviewees. However, while leaving the complex partially or totally ruined would prolong its mnemonic impact, what remained open is the key of reading such a ruin: a memorial to bombing, to victimhood, or to responsibility, as the building was, after all, the building of the Yugoslav army, which was not only a unifying institution in socialist Yugoslavia but also key to the 1990s wars. Jameson's

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[89] For instance, architects and artists organised a debate associated with the project Kustоširanje, while the active civic group REX organised an event about the fate of the Generalštab in 2013.

[90] Bădescu, *Making Sense of Ruins*.

discussion of allegorisation remind us that such acts of memorial design are dependent on the narrative frames available to the reader.[91]

The debates about the reconstruction of the Generalštab highlight the tensions and ambiguities of architectural meaning, historical function, and political emotions that architectural objects and the nature of their past evoke. But how do these come to play a role in actual architectural design in a project that aims to deal with the past of the ruin but does not result in its reconstruction in a purely utilitarian manner? We shall now turn to a close analysis of an architectural competition that aimed to make sense of ruins directly in terms of the NATO bombings.

The architectural competition for the Radio Television of Serbia memorial
The Radio Television of Serbia building was bombed by NATO on 23 April 1999. There was an international and domestic outcry when it was found that 16 people were inside the building when it was bombed. The regime and the media blasted NATO's crime against civilians. This was ultimate proof, they said, that NATO was committing criminal aggression against the people of Serbia.[92] On the other hand, families of the victims have pointed out that there is evidence of memos in which staff of the Generalštab, the Supreme Defence Council, as well as other ruling party members ordered the director of RTS to keep people in by declaring it "compulsory work duty".[93] The guilt for the deaths of civilians, the families of victims argued, lay both with NATO and with the government, as the former launched the attack and the latter deliberately sent the workers into mortal danger in order to raise the number of civilian victims and thus discredit NATO.[94]

The association of relatives of victims placed a small memorial plaque outside of the ruined building, asking 'Why?' and listing the name of victims. The memorial park 'Lest We Forget', consisting of 16 trees, was opened in March 2014 in the Belgrade Košutnjak Park. Earlier, in 2013, a competition for the reconstruction of the ruin as a memorial was organised by the Investment and Housing Agency of the City of Belgrade. The initiative, however, did not come from the local authorities, nor from RTS, but from the families of those who had died in the building.[95]

The competition for the memorial was initiated by the families of victims, organised by urban institutions (the Investment and Housing Agency of the City of Belgrade) and the RTS, and intended mainly for architects. It brought forward concerns about

[91] Lahiji, Nadir. 2011. *The Political Unconscious of Architecture Re-Opening: Jameson's Narrative*. Farnham: Ashgate.

[92] Janić, Zoran. 2006. *Tišina u Aberdarevoj*. Beograd: Dan Graf.

[93] Janić, *Tišina u Aberdarevoj*; Ristić, Marija and Andrić, Gordana. 2012. Searching for Buried Truth at RTS. *Balkan Transitional Justice*, 4 May 2012 (accessed: 3 November 2021); N.N. 2009. Porodice stradalih u RTS-u traže pravdu. *Politika*, 23 April 2009 (accessed: 3 November 2021; D.B.M. 2015. Porodice poginulih radnika RTS: Ništa još nije rasvetljeno! *Novosti*, 24 March 2015 (accessed: 3 November 2021).

[94] *Porodice Stradalih*.

[95] Member of the competition jury, personal communication.

the role of architects in the production of memorial space, dealing with the past, and their relationship with the public. The jury was comprised of four architects nominated by state institutions, and three representatives of the families of the deceased.[96] The latter included Žanka Stojanović, who had acted as a spokesperson of the families before. The composition of the jury gave voice to the families of the deceased, empowering those directly affected by the events, and paying respect to the bottom-up nature of the initiative. It thus showed continuity with practices in socialist Yugoslavia, where such community representatives took part in some competition juries, but not necessarily in the most representative memorial works in the Federation.[97]

The competition outline, the design brief and the jury composition highlighted the privileged position of architects in dealing with ruins and memory. The role of architects was nonetheless criticised in the press, with *Politika* giving voice to disgruntled sculptors and other artists who criticised the focus on architects and architecture when dealing with such a sensitive topic. A number of award-winning artists claimed that they would have liked to participate, but the requirements and deliverables were clearly aimed at architects; they also contested that the jury comprised of architects, but not art historians or artists.[98] Architect Mihajlo Mitrović himself criticised what he saw as the favouring of architects.[99] According to Mitrović, on the territory of former Yugoslavia, only a sculptor conveyed most poignantly the meaning of war, referring to Jovan Soldatović's work, while he deemed the others just "hundreds of expensive and pretentious war memorials", alluding to those of architect Bogdan Bogdanović.[100] Mitrović was critical about the alleys, perspectives, plateaux and other elements that come from looking at the site architecturally. Similarly, sculptor Zdravko Joksimović criticised the approach on the ruined site as a spatial, architectural solution and not enough of an artistic one. He went back to Bogdanović's special role in bringing architecture to the forefront of the memorial and monument design. Bogdanović's logic, Joksimović argued, was to bring art into architecture, but the reverse process – to bring architecture into the realm of art – is not desirable. Yet the design brief saw the ruin memorial as one of the topics of the competition, together with a suggested reconstruction of the rest of the building. According to the initiators of the project, to deal with a ruined building of several floors was something that only architects were equipped to do.

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[96] Society of Belgrade Architects. 2013. <u>Competition Brief Documents. City of Belgrade</u> (accessed: 10 March 2015).

[97] In Sanja Horvatinčić´s study of 24 Federal competitions, no member of the Juries were non- professional and non-institutional community members. Horvatinčić, *Between Creativity and Pragmatism*.

[98] Dimitrijević, Milica. 2013. <u>Konkursi za spomenike prekratki, žiri jednostran, nagrade male</u>. *Politika*, 18 September 2013 (accessed: 3 November 2021).

[99] Mitrović, Mihailo. 2013. <u>Ni Zadkin ni Soldatović ne bi prošli.</u> 2013. *Politika*, 18 September 2013 (accesssed : 3 November 2021).

[100] He gives the example of Jovan Soldatovic's Black Ćuprija monument in Žabalj, Vojvodina, dedicated to the massacre in the village of over 500 people, mostly Serbs, by the Hungarian Axis forces. Mitrović, *Ni Zadkin*.

The RTS competition outlines did not separate the artistic from the architectural. The stated goal of the competition was to develop a memorial "that will testify to the tragic perishing of the employees of Radio Television of Serbia during the 1999 NATO bombing in the Aberdareva street no. 1 in Belgrade."[101] The design brief asked the participants to "use their artistic, architectural and technological solutions" to integrate the memory of the victims into the design of a memorial, to be kept separate from a part to be reconstructed for use by the RTS. The building, a historicist construction of the interwar times, did not elicit the architectural admiration of the Generalštab. It was designed in 1939 as a canteen for poor students for a humanitarian organisation under the patronage of the Queen of Yugoslavia, but was adapted after the war as a film studio. Its architect was Rajko Tatić, who had a preference for and experience with neo-byzantine designs. After 1963, the building became the Headquarters of RTS, which expanded in 1989 with a modern extension. While the building was intended originally to form a Serbo-Byzantine ensemble with nearby St Mark's Church, by the end of the 1980s it ended up being dwarfed by the modern extension, as well as by the modernist House of Pioneers designed by Ivan Antić. After 1999, the reconstruction of its previous form was not called for; instead, the design brief asked for a ruin-memorial and a new wing. The free spaces in the direct vicinity of the RTS building were also included in the memorial site. The competition brief asked for the ruin to be the central feature in the design, recognising the mnemonic role of ruins.

How did the architects who took part in the competition negotiate the conditions and the expectations of the brief with the situation of the ruins and of the events? The jury awarded the first prize to Neoarhitekti, an architecture practice consisting of architects Snežana Vesnić, Vladimir Milenković and Tatjana Stratimirović. Their proposal included sixteen kinetic sculptures, referring to the lost human lives, and the exposed bricks of the ruins, which the Jury commended for its attention to the conservation principles and the role of materials to convey memory. This was not Neoarhitekti's first foray into dealing with sites affected by the NATO bombing – they had participated in, and obtained an honourable mention for, the 2005 competition for the "New Gates of Belgrade", which aimed to reconfigure the site where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs lay in ruins. Yet their motivation was not one defined primarily by the pursuit of memory, but by taking up the challenge of design amidst complexity. They explained their interest in the project through the fact that the site was "difficult to define", and that the competition was an unusual task, also "carefully and thoughtfully prepared".[102] They compared it with the competition they had prepared in the 2000s for the Hagar Qim Mnajdra Park in Malta. While the latter was a cultural heritage project, they saw parallels in the challenges between dealing with the Maltese Neolithic structure and those provoked by the Belgrade ruins. Reflecting seven years after the competition, the architects stated that they are not really certain what the relationship between their design approach is to the memory of the bombings: "It

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[101] Rezultati konkursa. 2013. *Rezultati konkursa za spomen-obeležje stradalim radnicima RTS-a* (accessed: 20 March 2015).
[102] Interview, April 2020.

may be better to keep it wrapped up in a purely architectural relationship, because everything is already overloaded with the event to which the Memorial relates".[103] Consequently, their stated intention was not related to a memory agenda, but to a professional challenge. Nevertheless, despite intentionality, the impact would be consequential for the memory bombings in Belgrade as a central memorial to the event.

Figure 8. First Prize in the RTS competition Design by architects Snezana Vesnić, Vladimir Milenković, Tatjana Stratimirović (Studio Neoarhitekti).

Photo: Courtesy of Neoarhitekti

The architects explained their design through a desire to highlight a sense of movement, of kinetics, through the sixteen sculptures. They wanted the memorial to be part of the busy urban life of Belgrade's centre.[104] While several other proposals sent to the competition converted some of the ruined floors to an exhibition space, Neoarhitekti chose not to intervene in the ruin itself. They grounded their treatment of the ruin in the work of Gillo Dorfles on ruin aesthetics and the imaginary in architecture. For the Italian art critic, aesthetics should focus on culture as a whole, including symbols and metaphors, fantasy and myth. The architects focused on one of his quotes on the affective response to ruins: "... whenever you find yourself in front of the ruins of the architectural past, be it the Mayan pyramids in Uksmalu, or the ruins of pillars of Selinunte, we cannot fail to feel touched by some irrational

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[103] Interview, April 2020.
[104] Interview, April 2020.

wire ..."[105] They decided not to insert space for exhibits, but to "declare ruins to be a memory in itself".[106]

The memorial complex has yet to be built, but at the time of writing there is a sense that this will occur during 2021 as the authorities have expressed renewed interest in the project. The RTS competition mirrored a collaborative approach between state institutions, the association of relatives, and designers. The winning architects commended the professionalism of institution representatives ("unexpectedly high") and the involvement of the family members. Architects continued to reshape the material landscape of memory through a collaborative and participative process that engages with the past.

Conclusion
This article discussed the architectural shaping of places of memory in Belgrade related to the Second World War, as well as ruins of the 1990s NATO bombings. It examined how state actors and city makers took part in processes of memorialisation, with a focus on architects. Protagonists of memory-work in the socialist period through their involvement in memorials, architects, while disempowered by the post-socialist transition, continued to play a role in memorial reshaping through their design and their role in the debates. The article traced the change in the relationship between architects and the state institutional actors, as well as of the process of memorial production, mirroring a shift in wider memory cultures. In socialist Yugoslavia the approach on memorialisation was led by state authorities and local communities, with architects and artists responding to such calls, while they expressed autonomy in design. After the fall of Yugoslavia, some architects decried the loss of the state as a patron, but after 1999 they took part in a limited number of competitions. The article analysed the mobilisation of a different set of actors with regard to reconstruction debates, highlighting the competition related to the ruins of the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) building. The winning team of architects participated in an act of memory-shaping seen as a professional challenge, rather than as a political commitment to memory-work. What emerged, however, was the bottom up process of the competition for the RTS memorial and the role of victims' associations, which made the RTS project a participative approach on memorialisation, albeit limited to direct stakeholders.

The article argued that it is not the intentionality of memorial design that matters, but the sheer materiality of architectural presence. The hidden, peripheric victim memorials in socialist Belgrade kept victimhood marginal, while liberators and heroes were featured prominently. The ruins of the Generalštab invoked memories of the NATO bombing regardless of the intentions of bureaucratic institutions just through their presence in the centre of the city. For the RTS winning solution, in

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[105] Translated from the Serbian, from Estetika ruševina, Metamorfoza imaginarnog u arhitekturi / Pohvala disharmoniji – umetnost i život između logičkog i mitskog (Đilo Dorfles, 1986) [Aesthetics of ruins, the Metamorphosis of the imaginary in architecture / Praise to disharmony - art and life between logical and mythical] in Neoarhitekti, 2014.
[106] Interview, April 2020.

the projected realisation of the project, the sixteen lost lives would be signalled. The decision to keep the ruin in its raw state enhances the materiality of memory, to be read according to the viewer's allegorical frames. While architects mediate through design the state politics of memory and the urban memory embedded in materiality, is it is ultimately the viewer that is the main actor in how memorials or ruins affectively trigger memory.

Acknowledgments

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