

Tamara Koneska, University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture, tkoneska@yahoo.com

SPATIAL ORGANISATION AND POST-SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE BUILDINGS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS OF YUGOSLAVIA

Abstract:

The buildings of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Skopje, Zagreb and Belgrade form a corpus of socialist modernist architecture in which spatial organisation structured political authority across diverse urban contexts. Developed within a shared modernist framework, they articulated governance through controlled access and hierarchical circulation. Their post-socialist transformations reveal divergent trajectories, from ideological rebranding and institutional continuity to commercial reconfiguration. The study assumes that ideological change is registered primarily through shifts in spatial organisation rather than symbolic substitution. Despite differing interventions, the original spatial diagrams remain operative, rendering political transition architecturally legible.

Keywords: socialist modernism, ideology, spatial organisation, post-socialist transformation, Yugoslavia

ПРОСТОРНА ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА И ПОСТСОЦИЈАЛИСТИЧКЕ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЈЕ У ОБЈЕКТИМА ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ КОМИТЕТА САВЕЗА КОМУНИСТА ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ

Сажетак:

Објекти Централног комитета Савеза комуниста Југославије у Скопљу, Загребу и Београду чине корпус социјалистичке модернистичке архитектуре у којем је просторна организација структурисала политичку власт у различитим урбаним контекстима. Унутар заједничког модернистичког оквира артикулисали су управљање кроз контролисани приступ и хијерархијску циркулацију. Њихове постсоцијалистичке трансформације показују различите путање, од идеолошког ребрендирања и институционалног континуитета до комерцијалне реорганизације. Рад полази од претпоставке да се идеолошка промјена првенствено региструје кроз трансформацију просторне организације, а не кроз симболичку замјену. Упркос различитим интервенцијама, изворни просторни дијаграми остају оперативни, чинећи политичку транзицију архитектонски читљивом.

Кључне ријечи: социјалистички модернизам, идеологија, просторна организација, постсоцијалистичка трансформација, Југославија

1. INTRODUCTION

In socialist Yugoslavia, the architecture of public and institutional buildings was never simply a technical response to administrative needs, nor just a neutral backdrop for political life. It was part of a broader cultural and ideological project through which modernisation was envisioned, realised, and made publicly visible. Within this framework, architecture played a role in shaping state rationality, collective order, and political legitimacy, not only through representation but also through the physical organisation of institutional spaces. Access, hierarchy, circulation, and visibility were therefore not secondary technical aspects but essential means by which authority was spatially structured and normalised. Architecture did not merely reflect ideology from the outside; it also influenced the conditions under which ideology became operative, understandable, and socially routine [1]. This is particularly evident in the buildings of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which held a distinctive position within socialist Yugoslavia's architectural culture. Unlike traditional monuments, these buildings were not created with explicit historical symbolism or inherited iconographies of political power. Instead, their authority was grounded in the language of socialist modernism: abstraction, geometric clarity, disciplined composition, technological skill, and a carefully managed relationship between the institution and the city. In this way, Central Committee buildings did not glorify power through ornament or allegory but through an administrative form expressed in spatial design. Their modernist vocabulary linked them with the broader Yugoslav project of modernisation while also differentiating them from socialist realist models of representation [1]. However, this modernism should not be seen as ideologically neutral or merely international in style. On the contrary, it functioned as a political and cultural conduit through which authority was reinterpreted as rational, efficient, and embedded in spatial order. As highlighted in studies of Yugoslav modernisation, this architectural culture was shaped by a productive tension between utopian visions, institutional pragmatism, and incomplete transformation, and it was precisely within this volatile space that architecture gained its political influence [2]. From this perspective, the former Central Committee buildings in Skopje, Zagreb, and Belgrade are more than just a group of officially connected administrative structures. Collectively, they form a corpus through which one can examine how political power in socialist Yugoslavia was spatially expressed across various urban environments, institutional levels, and local development narratives. Although they emerged within a shared ideological framework, they did not establish authority in identical ways. Each building conveyed the relationship between ideology, institution, and urban space differently, and each employed a specific spatial logic that extended beyond mere façades, images, or stylistic features.

In Skopje, the former Central Committee building, now the Government building of North Macedonia, was developed during the post-earthquake reconstruction, a period when architecture took on a distinctly political significance. In the rebuilt city, modernist architecture symbolised not only technical recovery but also projected a new image of order, restoration, and administrative capability. The building contributed to a wider urban vision in which socialist modernisation was regarded as both a material and an ideological response to disruption. In Zagreb, the former Central Committee building, commonly known as Kockica and currently housing the Republic of Croatia's ministries, conveyed authority through a more compact, internally regulated administrative structure. Here, power was demonstrated not through urban singularity or dramatic prominence but through repetition, integration, and disciplined organisation of institutional space, fostering an image of stability that was equally political despite its restraint. In Belgrade, the former Central Committee building, now Ušće Tower, operated at the scale of federal representation. Situated within the open, modernist landscape of New Belgrade, its vertical prominence made it a highly visible urban landmark. However, its importance lay not only in its height or skyline visibility but also in the internal management of access, vertical circulation, and spatial stratification through which federal power was physically organised.

What connects these buildings, then, is not merely their institutional function or their association with socialist modernism, but the fact that they made political authority spatially comprehensible. In all three cases, ideology was embedded less in explicit symbolism than in carefully calibrated relationships between entrance and restriction, openness and control, visibility and withdrawal, centrality and exclusion. Political meaning was therefore not confined to what the buildings symbolically depicted but operated through how they organised movement, distinguished users, and established hierarchies. To interpret these buildings solely through their exterior appearance, or only through the symbolic changes in their post-socialist afterlives, would therefore be inadequate. Their political significance also lies in the spatial arrangements through which institutional order was created, stabilised, and preserved. This spatial aspect becomes especially significant in the post-

socialist era. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the former Central Committee buildings did not merely replace one ideological system with another. Instead, they reveal different ways in which inherited spatial structures were preserved, overwritten, adapted, or reinterpreted under new political and economic conditions. In some cases, the socialist diagram remained largely intact beneath a new symbolic facade; in others, institutional continuity muted ideological rupture; elsewhere, market logic infiltrated spaces originally designed for party administration. These changes highlight an important methodological point: political transition in architecture cannot be understood solely through shifts in image, façade, or declared meaning.

This paper examines the former Central Committee buildings in Skopje, Zagreb, and Belgrade through a comparative analysis of their spatial organisation and post-socialist transformations. The analysis is structured around four parameters: urban location, spatial hierarchy, circulation patterns, and post-socialist interventions. Using these parameters, the paper investigates how political authority was originally arranged architecturally and how subsequent changes affected, preserved, or redefined those core spatial logics. The central argument is that ideological change is most clearly visible not just through symbolic substitution but through shifts in the organisation of access, hierarchy, movement, and institutional control. By tracing both the persistence and evolution of these spatial diagrams, the paper asserts that architecture functions as a resilient material framework within which political transition is both represented and spatially organised and enacted.

2. SPATIAL ORGANISATION AS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA AND THE SPATIALISATION OF AUTHORITY

In socialist Yugoslavia, ideology should not be understood solely as explicit political content imposed on architectural form or as a symbolic message accessible through representation. Instead, ideology operated through spatial practices, institutional routines, and aesthetic regimes that structured daily experience and rendered political authority intelligible as usual, rational, and legitimate [2]. Architecture primarily served as a spatial framework that stabilised and naturalised power relations, rather than as an expressive medium. To analyse this spatialisation of authority, the study focuses on how architectural form regulates access, hierarchy, circulation, and visibility. These spatial mechanisms provide the basis for comparative evaluation across the selected case studies. This logic is fundamental to the broader effort of socialist modernisation. Critical theory on Yugoslav architecture demonstrates that modernism acted as a mediating framework between ideology and administration, allowing the socialist state to convey political authority through rationality, abstraction, and technical skill rather than through historical monumentalism [1]. Formal restraint did not denote ideological neutrality; instead, it shifted political power into organisational clarity and spatial discipline.

At the same time, Yugoslav modernisation was a negotiated and internally contradictory process. Analyses that emphasise its unfinished character reveal how the institutional architecture mediated between political ambition, bureaucratic pragmatism, and specific urban conditions [2]. The Central Committee buildings of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia were designed within this context to project stability and administrative competence while deliberately avoiding representational excess that might undermine claims of political normalisation. Theoretically, this spatial logic aligns with Althusser's conception of ideology as a material practice embedded within institutional structures, rather than as a belief system imposed from above [3]. Ideology is reproduced through spatial arrangements, organisational routines, and everyday practices that shape individuals' relationships to authority. Architecture thus operates not as an ideological representation but as a spatial mechanism through which ideology is reproduced in everyday routines, via the spatial organisation of access, circulation, and hierarchy. In Yugoslav institutional architecture, this mechanism was especially pronounced. CK buildings were designed to embody rational governance and political control through spatial discipline rather than monumentality. Authority was articulated through controlled circulation systems, layered thresholds, and carefully calibrated degrees of openness and closure. Ideology was not simply represented; it was embedded within the spatial order itself.

To operationalise this theoretical position, the research adopts a two-phase analytical framework that examines each case through its socialist configuration and its post-socialist transformation. The analysis progresses through four interconnected parameters: urban positioning, spatial hierarchy, circulation regime, and post-socialist intervention. The first three parameters reconstruct the original spatial diagram that stabilised authority, while the fourth explores how this diagram was altered, preserved, or reinterpreted after 1990. This dual structure allows for a comparative reading of

continuity and transformation, demonstrating how ideological change becomes understandable through shifts within an enduring spatial framework rather than through symbolic replacement.

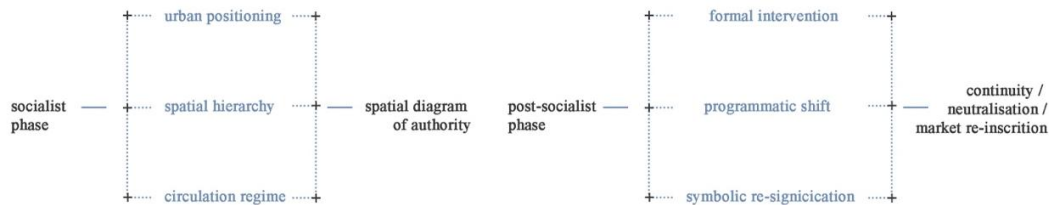


Figure 1. Methodological and analytical framework

2.2. SEMIOTICS OF SPACE: VISIBILITY, HIERARCHY AND INSTITUTIONAL POWER

The ideological power of spatial arrangements can be understood through a semiotic perspective on space. Barthes contends that ideology functions most effectively at the level of second-order meaning. At this level, historically constructed relations are naturalised and perceived as self-evident [4]. In architecture, this naturalisation rarely happens through iconography alone. It is often achieved more convincingly through the organisation and repetition of spatial relations. Functional arrangements then take on broader cultural and political significance.

Architectural elements such as entrances, corridors, vertical communication, thresholds, lobbies, and restricted zones have denotative functions related to use. Yet their configuration produces connotative effects: centrality, hierarchy, exclusivity, discipline, and control [4]. Architecture can thus be understood as a structured semiotic field where meaning emerges not from isolated forms, but from relations of position, sequence, differentiation, and repetition. A corridor is not meaningful in itself but in relation to what it connects, filters, delays, or excludes. An entrance is not merely a point of access but a device that frames approach and determines who may enter and under what conditions. A lobby is not only a transitional space but often a place where public presence is acknowledged while being simultaneously regulated. This perspective aligns with Lefebvre's conception of space as socially produced rather than a neutral container [5]. Spatial organisation materialises institutional relations by translating abstract political structures into concrete arrangements of movement, access, distance, and visibility. Architecture, therefore, does not simply house power after it has been formed elsewhere; it also participates in its creation by organising social relations spatially. The regulation of circulation and the differentiation of zones are primary mechanisms through which authority is structured and maintained within built environments [5].

In CK buildings, ideology was rarely expressed through explicit symbols. Instead, it became legible through spatial sequencing, calibrated distance, and controlled visibility. Layered thresholds regulated access, while zoning reinforced internal hierarchy, and urban positioning mediated the institution's relationship to the city. As a result, political authority emerged as a spatial condition rather than a rhetorical statement. These mechanisms align with Foucault's account of spatialised power: here, control operates through organisation, regulation, and the management of bodies in space rather than through overt coercion alone [6]. Visibility remains a crucial political category in this regard. As Rancière suggests, architecture participates in the distribution of the sensible by structuring what may be seen, who may approach, and under which conditions authority becomes perceptible [7]. Specifically, CK buildings rendered power visible within the urban field while simultaneously preserving distance, restricted access, and internal stratification. Thus, visibility and withdrawal, presence and regulation, operated together rather than in opposition. Importantly, their ideological force did not derive from explicit symbolism, but instead from a carefully managed balance between public recognisability and institutional inaccessibility.

The semiotics of space in these buildings is therefore not reducible to façades or stylistic codes. Instead, it resides in a more enduring system of relations: layered thresholds, differentiated interiors, controlled passages, centralised cores, and regimes of movement that distinguish the representative from the administrative, the accessible from the restricted, and the visible from the inaccessible. In this way, such configurations do not merely express institutional power after it has been established elsewhere. Rather, they actively participate in its production by transforming political hierarchy into spatial order. This is precisely why the internal organisation of these buildings is so significant for the present analysis. Questions of access, sequencing, circulation, and zoning are not supplementary to their ideological reading but essential to it. If ideology is materialised in the built environment, then it must be traced through the arrangements by which space structures, experiences, and

distributes authority. The floor plan, in this sense, is not only documentary evidence of organisation but also a primary site where ideology becomes architecturally legible.

3. CENTRAL COMMITTEE BUILDINGS OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS OF YUGOSLAVIA AS IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUSES

The Central Committee buildings of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia held a unique place in the architecture of socialist Yugoslavia. Unlike traditional monuments of political power, they were not merely neutral office spaces devoid of ideological purpose. Instead, these buildings were designed as frameworks, making political authority visible and organised in daily life. They translated ideological power into the physical layout, the routines of administration, and managed what was visible and accessible. Monumentality was shifted from grand appearances to organisational logic and the careful management of access, hierarchy, and movement within.

Thus, the Central Committee buildings did not monumentalise authority through symbolic excess, historical references, or rhetorical display. Instead, a distinctly Yugoslav modernist approach to institutional expression developed. In these structures, abstraction, geometric restraint, technological skill, and formal clarity served as channels of political legitimacy. Their forms reflected modernism's broader political role: authority appeared natural via rationality, administrative coherence, and spatial discipline—rather than through explicit ideological symbols. What might seem like composure, efficiency, and restrained form was, in fact, one of the most effective spatial expressions of ideology. This highlights why the ideological significance of these buildings cannot be limited to their façades, images, or symbolic ties alone. Their political power lay in how they arranged institutional relationships across space. Authority was conveyed through layered thresholds, controlled visibility, distinct zones of access, and circulation systems managing movement within. The divide between the public exterior and the institutional interior, between accessible and restricted areas, and between symbolic presence and administrative control was not merely functional; it was central to the spatial mechanism that made governance appear normal, clear, and lasting. In this way, Central Committee buildings can be regarded as ideological devices in Althusser's materialist sense: not as passive symbols of ideology, but as spatial frameworks through which ideology was enacted and reproduced [3].

These buildings do not simply repeat a single type of political design. While they share similar institutional functions and are part of a common ideological and architectural context, the Central Committee buildings in Skopje, Zagreb, and Belgrade conveyed authority in different manners. Each building was shaped by its unique urban environment, political scope, and narrative of socialist modernisation. The connection between the institution and the city was expressed through different spatial logics. In Skopje, authority was rooted in the reconstructed administrative structure of the post-earthquake city. Zagreb's building authority was organised through compact internal regulation and continuity. Belgrade's building projected authority through vertical concentration and federal urban visibility. Rather than viewing these differences as deviations from a shared model, they should be recognised as distinct variations within a common spatial and ideological framework. Because of this, comparing these three buildings allows us to see how Yugoslav institutional modernism operated across different contexts while maintaining a recognisable political and architectural logic. Their shared purpose does not erase their differences; instead, it provides a foundation for understanding how a common ideological programme was spatially adapted to various urban contexts and subsequently transformed under different post-socialist conditions. The following analysis approaches the three case studies not merely as former party headquarters but as spatial instruments of governance, whose afterlives reveal varying degrees of continuity, overwriting, adaptation, and rupture. In this way, their post-socialist trajectories are not secondary to their original importance, but essential for understanding how the spatial logic of authority persisted, shifted, or was rearticulated after the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

3.1. SKOPJE: POST-EARTHQUAKE AUTHORITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRAINT

The former Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Skopje, designed by Petar Mulichkovski and completed between 1968 and 1970, emerged directly from the post-1963 earthquake reconstruction [8]. In this context, architecture assumed a political function: it served not only to rebuild the city but also to stabilise institutional authority within a newly rationalised urban order. The building was located within the reconstructed administrative centre, embedding governance horizontally within the modernist matrix rather than asserting dominance through vertical monumentality. Its urban presence aligned political authority with technocratic

reconstruction and administrative continuity. This position within the rebuilt centre is significant because, in Skopje, political authority was not expressed through a singular urban exceptionality but through integration into a broader spatial and planning framework shaped by post-earthquake reconstruction [9]. The building participated in a larger vision where modern architecture served both as a material response to rupture and an ideological instrument of recovery. Its restrained formal language, measured relationship with the public realm, and administrative composure projected governance as rational, controlled, and stabilising rather than overtly monumental. In that sense, the building did not merely occupy the reconstructed city; it helped articulate the political logic of reconstruction itself.

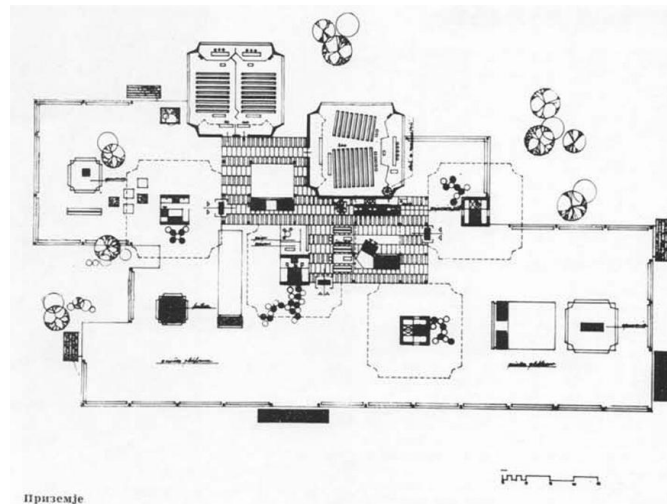


Figure 2. *Schematic floor plan of the former Central Committee building in Skopje, original drawing by the author Petar Mulichkovski.*

As shown in the original floor plan published in the post-competition article by Popovski [10], authority was organised through a clear spatial differentiation of zones, separating public access from restricted administrative areas. The building's modular organisation, clear volumetric logic, and controlled interface with surrounding public space aligned governance with technical competence and administrative composure. Circulation was regulated through controlled corridors and distinct vertical connections that separated visitor movement from internal bureaucratic flows. Access was not simply granted or denied, but carefully sequenced through thresholds, filters, and hierarchically ordered transitions. In this way, political authority was spatialised as organisational discipline rather than in purely symbolic display. The building's internal layout is especially significant for understanding how ideology functioned architecturally in this instance. Instead of relying on symbolic excess, the building conveyed authority through routine spatial features: controlled access, distinct circulation paths, and the division of administrative and ceremonial areas. Hierarchy was not glorified through grand design but was integrated into the plan itself. What seemed like a calm modernist order was therefore also a political structure, one that translated governance into an everyday spatial condition and naturalised institutional control by organising movement and visibility.

Mulichkovski's spatial logic demonstrated significant adaptability in the post-socialist period. The building's continued use as a governmental facility demonstrates administrative neutralisation, in which ideological framing shifts while the spatial structure endures [9]. The neoclassical envelope introduced during the Skopje 2014 project constituted a radical transformation at the façade level. However, although the exterior re-signified the building within a national-historical narrative, the internal spatial hierarchy and circulation regime remained largely unchanged. The intervention thus functioned as symbolic overwriting rather than structural reorganisation, highlighting the resilience of the original spatial diagram.



Figure 3. Former Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Skopje: photograph in 1990. (left) and axonometric drawing (right)

The Skopje case is particularly revealing because it demonstrates how post-socialist transformation can significantly alter a building's visual and ideological framing while leaving its core spatial logic largely unchanged. The most noticeable change was in the language of representation; what remained consistent was the architecture of governance. The contrast between earlier and later perspectives further indicates that the most apparent transformation occurred at the level of imagery and representational framing rather than through a fundamental reorganisation of the internal spatial layout [11]. For this reason, this Central Committee building clearly shows that political transition in architecture involves more than just façade, image, or symbolic replacement; it also entails recognising the resilience of spatial organisation itself.

3.2. ZAGREB: INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY AND DEPOLITICISED MODERNISM

The former Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Zagreb, widely known as *Kockica*, represents a distinct articulation of political authority within the institutional architecture of socialist Yugoslavia. Designed by Ivan Vitić and constructed between 1963 and 1968, the building emerged within the planned civic framework of New Zagreb, where authority was not asserted through skyline dominance or singular monumentality, but through disciplined integration into the administrative urban fabric [12]. In contrast to the reconstructed matrix of Skopje and the vertical federal projection of Belgrade, the Zagreb case articulated power through organisational coherence, measured visibility, and institutional continuity. Its urban position is significant precisely because it did not rely on dramatic formal singularity. Rather than functioning as an exceptional object within the city, *Kockica* established centrality through administrative embedding and compositional restraint. This mode of presence aligned authority with procedural order rather than spectacle, and with institutional stability rather than overt political display. The building's modernist language, characterised by geometric clarity, repetition, and formal control, projected governance as rational, integrated, and internally regulated. In this sense, political authority was not exteriorised as a monument but stabilised through the institution's disciplined spatial order [13].



Figure 4. Schematic floor plan of the Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Zagreb, original drawing by the author Ivan Vitić

As illustrated in the original floor plan published in Mrduljaš [12], the building's compact and repetitive organisation conveyed political authority through careful differentiation of offices, meeting rooms, service areas, and zones with controlled access. Photographic material, original drawings, and the model reproduced in Mrduljaš's article [12] further confirm the building's compositional restraint and administrative compactness. Authority was spatially embedded not through dramatic separation but via administrative sequencing, repeated modules, and internally regulated movement. Circulation was arranged through clearly defined corridors, filtered entry points, and controlled transitions between more public and more restricted sections of the building. Access was thus not simply open or closed but distributed through a measured gradation of approach, entry, and internal passage. This internal logic is especially significant for understanding the ideological function of the Zagreb case. Here, power did not depend on forceful formal rhetoric or urban dominance but on the spatial normalisation of order. The building established authority through repetition, integration, and routine. Hierarchy emerged not as a theatrical display but as an organisational condition embedded within the plan. The regularity of the layout, the disciplined distribution of functions, and the controlled internal flows all contributed to an architecture where governance appeared less as an exceptional concentration of power and more as a stable, rationalised administrative structure.

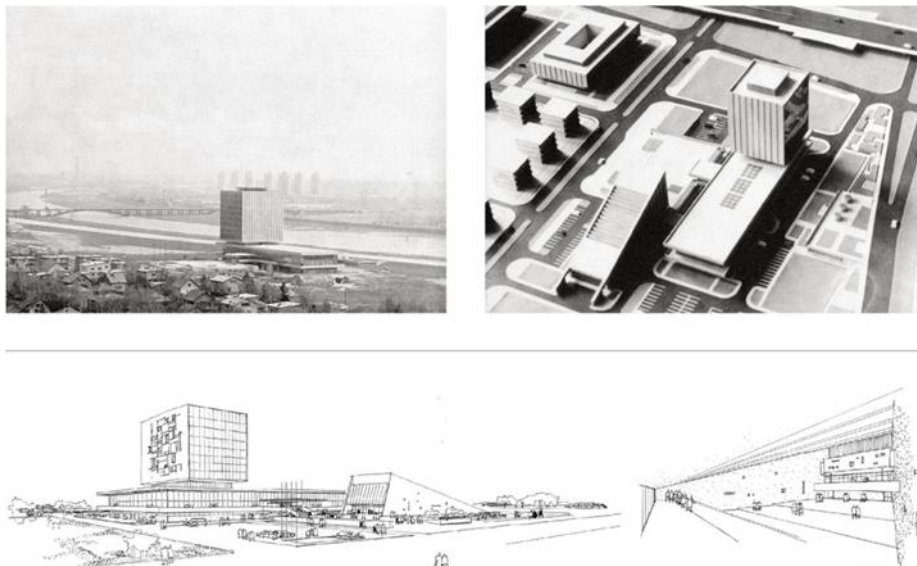


Figure 5. Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Zagreb: photographed in 1970. (left) and original drawings and model in 1961. (right)

Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Kockica experienced institutional reassignment rather than a radical spatial rupture. Its continued use by the ministries of the Republic of Croatia allowed the programme's depoliticisation without a substantial change to the underlying spatial order [12]. The building's architectural form remained consistent while its ideological framing shifted from party centrality to bureaucratic governance. In this case, post-socialist change did not require symbolic rewriting at the level of form nor a profound reorganisation at the level of plan. Instead, spatial continuity itself facilitated ideological translation. The Zagreb case is thus particularly illustrative because it shows how Yugoslav institutional modernism could integrate political change through functional consistency and semantic redistribution. What shifted was the institutional narrative used to interpret the building; what remained constant was the organisational clarity of its spatial logic. For this reason, Kockica demonstrates that post-socialist transformation can occur not through obvious rupture but through the subtle endurance of an architectural order capable of supporting new governance regimes without abandoning its original spatial discipline.

3.3. BELGRADE: VERTICAL SOVEREIGNTY AND MARKET RE-INSRIPTION

The former Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, now known as Ušće Tower, expressed political authority through a markedly different spatial approach than in Skopje and Zagreb. Designed by Mihajlo Janković and completed in 1964, the building condensed federal power into a prominent vertical form within the open modernist landscape of New Belgrade [14]. Unlike the horizontal administrative integration seen in Skopje and the compact institutional layout of Zagreb, the Belgrade example signified sovereignty through

height, distance, and metropolitan visibility. Authority was not dispersed within an administrative ensemble but was concentrated, abstracted, and projected at the city scale. Its urban position within New Belgrade is central to this logic. The tower did not simply occupy a prominent site, but transformed federal governance into a recognisable element of the metropolitan skyline. Political authority was thus made visible as an elevated, spatially distant condition, aligned not with everyday urban flow but with uniqueness, overview, and strategic presence. Its verticality expressed power in a distinctly federal way, while its modernist abstraction reinforced the image of rational, centralised, and technically organised governance [14]. In this case, the city was not merely the setting of authority, but part of the mechanism through which authority became perceptible.

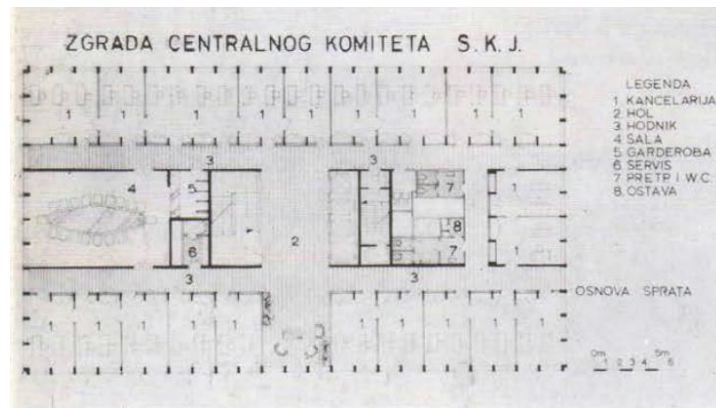


Figure 6. *Schematic floor plan of the Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, original drawing by the author Mihailo Janković.*

As shown in the original project presentation of the building [15], and reinforced by the tower's vertical organisation, authority was structured through stratification rather than horizontal distribution. Internal hierarchy was articulated through centralised circulation cores, controlled entry points, and differentiated levels of access that separated routine administrative movement from higher executive domains. Vertical communication functioned not merely as technical infrastructure but as an instrument of institutional ordering. Movement through the building did not simply connect programmes; it distributed degrees of proximity to power. The internal structure of the Belgrade building is particularly important because it reveals how verticality itself became a political tool. Height was not only an urban symbol but part of the building's internal logic of authority. Political power was made visible both externally, through skyline presence, and internally, through vertical zoning, restricted ascent, and the concentration of executive functions. In this case, hierarchy was neither dispersed nor quietly normalised but materially intensified through the tower's form itself. The architecture of governance was therefore organised as a condition of elevation, distance, and controlled ascent. Historical visual documentation of the building further supports this reading by showing how its vertical prominence was articulated within New Belgrade's skyline.



Figure 7. *Central Committee building of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Belgrade: photographed in 1965 (left) and 1980 (right)*

The post-socialist trajectory of Ušće Tower marks the most distinct programmatic break among the three cases, though it does not represent a complete departure from spatial logic. After the 1999 destruction and subsequent reconstruction, the tower was reconfigured into a commercial office

complex [16]. While its institutional function changed significantly, its prominent position in the skyline, its vertical hierarchy, and its centralised circulation system remained in place. The spatial logic that once represented federal authority was not entirely eliminated but was instead reinterpreted within a new economic and symbolic framework. What once embodied political centrality was transformed into corporate visibility, prestige, and market value [17]. For this reason, the Belgrade case is especially important in demonstrating how ideological persistence can endure despite apparent discontinuities. The building no longer serves as a seat of party or state authority, yet its spatial organisation continues to define hierarchy, distance, and controlled access in ways that retain the trace of its original political purpose. The ongoing public use of the name “CK” further implies that ideological memory remains linked to the building beyond its formal function. Belgrade, therefore, shows that post-socialist transformation can involve a complete change in use while the underlying architecture of authority remains structurally unchanged.

4. POST-YUGOSLAVIAN TRAJECTORIES: CONTINUITY, DISCONTINUITY, AND PROCESSES OF TRANSLATION

A comparative analysis of the former Central Committee buildings of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Skopje, Zagreb, and Belgrade reveals three distinct post-Yugoslav trajectories operating within a shared ideological and spatial framework. Grounded in modernist principles of abstraction, functional clarity, and organisational discipline, these diagrams enabled ideology to function indirectly through spatial order rather than explicit representation [19]. This demonstrates that post-socialist transformation cannot be adequately described through categories of rupture or preservation. When examined through the four analytical parameters established in this study: urban positioning, spatial hierarchy, circulation regime, and mode of intervention, a more precise pattern emerges: political transition operates through the re-articulation of existing spatial diagrams rather than their elimination. Although Yugoslavia's institutional and ideological frameworks dissolved, the spatial structures through which authority had been organised remained materially and operationally intact. What changed was not the existence of hierarchy, access control, or regulated visibility, but the narrative within which these mechanisms were interpreted.

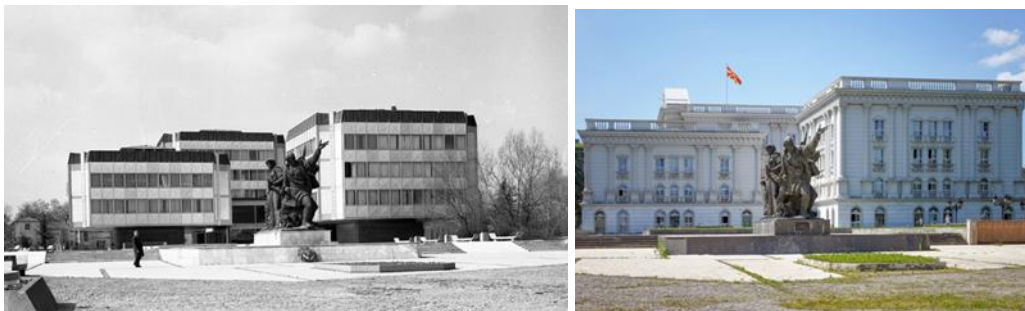


Figure 8. CK in Skopje, photographed in 1970 (left) and 2015 (right)

In Skopje, the intervention associated with the Skopje 2014 project constitutes a radical formal re-signification [11]. The neoclassical envelope introduced a new symbolic layer aligned with the reimagined fake national-historical discourse [9]. However, the internal zoning, circulation logic, and regulated thresholds remain structurally intact. The spatial hierarchy continues to organise institutional practice. The ideological shift, therefore, occurs primarily at the level of representational framing, while the underlying spatial diagram persists without structural reconfiguration.

Zagreb represents a distinct mode of translation, defined by institutional continuity and redistribution rather than neutralisation. The former CK building retains its administrative function, but political authority is now distributed across a pluralised governmental structure. The reassignment of Kockica to ministerial use required no spatial restructuring. Its administrative embedding within the urban framework, compact zoning, and internally regulated circulation remain unchanged. Authority is redistributed rather than spatially reorganised. Ideological translation operates through institutional continuity, demonstrating how organisational clarity enables political redefinition without architectural intervention.

Belgrade's trajectory is the most visibly discontinuous, yet it demonstrates the persistence of ideology through market re-inscription. The transformation of the Ušće Tower from a federal political centre to a commercial office complex illustrates how spatial dominance is converted into

economic value [17]. The ideological residue of sovereignty is not erased but is instead transformed into prestige, visibility, and symbolic capital, yet its vertical dominance, stratified internal hierarchy, and centralised circulation cores remain operative. The spatial diagram that once articulated federal sovereignty now supports corporate visibility and market centrality. The shift is programmatic and economic, but the spatial logic remains structurally continuous.

Despite their differing trajectories, the three cases reveal a structural commonality: ideological transformation unfolds within an enduring spatial framework. The comparative analysis shows that ideology in architecture is not primarily anchored to explicit political symbolism or institutional programme, but to spatial relations that regulate hierarchy, access, and visibility. What varies across Skopje, Zagreb, and Belgrade is not the presence of these mechanisms, but the interpretative regime within which they operate.



Figure 9. CK – Kula Ušće during the NATO bombing in 1999 (left) and with the "twin" Tower Ušće 2 in 2025 (right)

Lefebvre's conception of the production of space provides a critical theoretical grounding, positioning architecture not as a neutral container of political change but as a material structure that organises social relations [5]. In all three cases, space continues to function as a medium of governance even as justificatory narratives shift—from socialist authority to technocratic administration, bureaucratic redistribution, or market rationality. The durability of these buildings lies in the persistence of their spatial diagrams, which remain structurally operative despite ideological recontextualisation. This persistence can be further clarified through Foucault's understanding of spatial discipline, in which power is exercised through organisation, calibrated visibility, and regulated circulation rather than explicit declaration [6]. The differentiation of zones, the sequencing of thresholds, and the management of movement continue to structure authority irrespective of political regime. The transition from socialism to post-socialism, therefore, does not dismantle spatial hierarchy; it reframes its institutional meaning.

At the same time, the three cases show that modernist institutional architecture has a specific ability for ideological translation. Its focus on abstraction, rationality, and organisational clarity allows reinterpretation without structural collapse. The spatial logic that once shaped socialist governance can accommodate administrative continuity in Zagreb, symbolic-national re framing in Skopje, and market-oriented re-inscription in Belgrade. The comparative perspective also highlights visibility as a political category. Drawing on Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible [7], post-socialist transformations reorganise not only institutional function but also the conditions under which authority is perceptible. In Skopje, authority is visually re framed yet spatially continuous; in Zagreb, it is normalised through procedural routine; in Belgrade, it is recoded through commercial prominence. In each case, architecture shapes what is accessible, what is legible, and what is distant. Together, these trajectories complicate narratives of rupture or ideological disappearance. Instead of signalling the end of ideological architecture, the post-socialist condition shows its structural persistence. The former CK buildings remain active sites where political transition is physically expressed through spatial continuity and reinterpretation. Ideology persists not as doctrine but as a relational framework embedded in spatial organisation. To clarify the internal coherence of this comparative framework, the following matrix combines the four analytical parameters used

throughout the study and outlines the specific mode of post-socialist translation in each case. The comparison reveals that variation does not occur at the level of spatial structure itself but in the way its ideological interpretation changes under new political and economic conditions.

Table 1. Comparative matrix

<i>City</i>	<i>Urban positioning</i>	<i>Spatial hierarchy</i>	<i>Circulation</i>	<i>Post-socialist change</i>
Skopje	Horizontal integration	Layered thresholds	Controlled corridors	Symbolic overwriting and refacading
Zagreb	Administrative embedding	Compact zoning	Regulated internal flows	Functional continuity
Belgrade	Vertical dominance	Vertical stratification	Centralised cores	Market re-instription

5. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the former CK buildings in Skopje, Zagreb, and Belgrade as architectural spatial frameworks that organised, sustained, and subsequently reinterpreted ideology across socialist and post-socialist regimes. By applying a comparative framework based on urban positioning, spatial hierarchy, circulation regime, and mode of intervention, the research demonstrates that architecture not only reflects but also materially mediates political change. In each case, Yugoslav modernist architecture functioned as a mechanism for naturalising political authority. Rather than relying on overt symbolism, these buildings embedded ideology within spatial organisation, administrative procedures, and regulated visibility. Authority became intelligible through circulation routes, hierarchical zoning, and calibrated interfaces between public and institutional domains. Ideological operation was thus grounded in spatial relations rather than in representational rhetoric, supporting materialist perspectives that locate power in everyday practices and built form rather than in discourse alone [5].

The post-socialist trajectories explored in this research challenge narratives of ideological disappearance or architectural obsolescence. Rather than sudden ruptures, the cases show processes of spatial translation in which established spatial diagrams are reinterpreted under new political and economic regimes. In Skopje, ideological change appears as formal rewriting alongside structural continuity. In Zagreb, institutional redistribution takes place without spatial rupture. In Belgrade, programme discontinuity exists alongside the ongoing vertical hierarchy and regulated circulation. These differences demonstrate that variation occurs at the level of ideological framing rather than spatial structure. Lefebvre's idea of space as socially created is helpful here, as it places architecture as an active agent in shaping and maintaining power relations over time [5]. Foucault's analysis of spatial discipline further explains how hierarchy and control endure through organisation, visibility, and separation, regardless of political ideology [6]. The persistence of these mechanisms indicates that spatial organisation primarily mediates ideological continuity. The comparative analysis also highlights visibility as a political category. Building on Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible, post-socialist changes reorganise not just institutional function but also the conditions that make authority perceptible [7]. CK buildings remain sites where political transition is made visible through space, as their architectural forms continue to structure regimes of perception, access, and hierarchy.

This synthesis confirms that the durability of Yugoslav institutional modernism lies not in its aesthetic vocabulary but in the resilience of its spatial organisation. The post-socialist condition, therefore, appears not as a rupture but as a process of spatial translation. Former CK buildings should thus be understood not as passive remnants of a socialist past but as enduring spatial dispositifs through which power is reorganised and made operative across changing historical contexts.

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