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LIFE, LEGACY AND THE DESIGN OUTLOOK OF PETAR VULOVIĆ: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE AUTHOR'S ARCHIVE

Abstract:

This research is inspired by the acquiring of the personal and professional archive of the architect Petar Vulović (1931 – 2017) by University of Banja Luka Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy. Vulović was a distinguished architect of high-to-late modernism in Yugoslavia, whose body of work progressively came to be treated in a relatively fragmented way after the breakup of the country. The archive, which encompasses architectural designs and projects, informal studies of architectural geometry, drawings, paintings, photographs and personal documents, is being for the first time examined and classified, within the process of making it available to the professional and wider audiences. The paper proposes a structured framework for the study of this archive, based on the review of the existing literature, biographical reconstruction and an analytical approach to the archival material. Findings point in the direction of significant new possibilities for new readings of the author's creative and theoretical outlook.

Keywords: Yugoslav modernism, architectural design, architectural legacy

ЖИВОТ, ЛЕГАТ И ПРОЈЕКТАНТСКА ВИЗИЈА АРХИТЕКТЕ ПЕТРА ВУЛОВИЋА: ПРИЛОГ ПРОУЧАВАЊУ АУТОРСКЕ АРХИВЕ

Сажетак:

Повод за ово истраживање јесте преузимање личне и професионалне архиве архитекте Петра Вуловића (1931–2017) од стране Архитектонско-грађевинско-геодетског факултета Универзитета у Бањој Луци. Вуловић је био истакнути архитекта касног модернизма у Југославији, чије је дјело након распада земље постало третирано донекле фрагментарно. Архива, која обухвата архитектонске пројекте, неформалне студије архитектонске геометрије, цртеже, аквареле, фотографије и лична документа, по први пут се систематски прегледа и класификује, с циљем да се учини доступном стручној и широј јавности. Рад предлаже структурирани оквир за њено проучавање, заснован на прегледу постојеће литературе, биографској реконструкцији и аналитичком приступу архивској грађи. Налази указују да ово наслијеђе отвара значајне могућности за нова читања ауторовог креативног, пројектантског и теоријског мишљења.

Кључне ријечи: југословенски модернизам, архитектонско пројектовање, архитектонско наслијеђе

1. INTRODUCTION

Architectural histories, as any other, require periodical re-examinations. Within those histories, importance of certain authors or oeuvres can fade, while others can (re)emerge. Undoubtedly, such re-examinations seem to be appropriate when we are presented with fresh or completely new view on the primary sources. They seem to be even more appropriate, if we become aware that the author and oeuvre in question have received limited attention or fragmented treatment not entirely due to (lack of) merit, but due to a conjunction of personal, institutional and socio-political circumstances. The oeuvre of Petar Vulović provides such an example. Although he once stood as a well-established architect within the high-to-late modernism in Yugoslavia, his later historiographic reception remained perhaps inadequately systematized and without a complete interpretative framework, suitable for either his designs, pedagogical work or his theoretical/conceptual explorations. If we may be allowed to briefly speculate at the outset, it may be that this slow fading out of the historical narrative seems highly related to Vulović being both personally and professionally closely coupled with the life and the fate of the socialist Yugoslavia itself.

Our (renewed) interest, however, stems less from the need to right the perceived historiographical wrongs, and more from the newly acquired access to the primary source previously unknown to the public. After the death of Petar Vulović in 2017, the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UBL FACEG) was granted a significant (predominant) part of Vulović's professional archive. Throughout the second half of the year 2025, this set of documents has finally been transferred, and we, the authors of this paper - out of professional, scientific and pedagogic interest, as well as out of previous relative acquaintance with Vulović's work – have approached the task of examining and classifying this archive, with the final intent of making it physically and digitally presentable to a wider audience.

This paper will try to offer a multi-layered overview of the work of Petar Vulović, based on the integration of written sources, archival material and interpretative architectural analysis. The newly acquired archival sources provide us not only with the opportunity to reconstruct certain segments of the author's creative process, but also indicates ways to understand deeper continuities and transformations of throughout larger segments of Vulović's career. Thus, the author's oeuvre ceases to appear merely a succession of built architectural pieces, but serves us a proposition to construct versions of creative and thought *systems*, or perhaps more loose *constellations* of ideas and processes.

In a broader sense, one of the central aims of this paper is to formally (re)introduce Petar Vulović, to a new generation of researchers and to propose a certain structure for the study of his work – especially in cases where the late architect's archive would be used as an important source. The text will be partly shaped in the basic and foundational terms, in order to enable a wider use and interest in the architect's work, however, discoveries of this sort of material usually present us with possible new readings of the author in question and we will be engaging such opportunities, especially where the new documents point to critical positions of the author's thinking and design approach.



Figure 1. Petar Vulović in front of the SDK Building in Tošin bunar Street, New Belgrade (1986), recipient of the October Award of the City of Belgrade. The building is an adaptation and extension of the former Aviation Authority headquarters – a work distinctly different in character from the author's early and recognizable SDK opus.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research presented herein is based in qualitative, multilayered methodological approach aimed towards integrating relevant written sources, analysis of archival material and interpretative architectural analysis. This approach eventually provides a cross-referential framework capable of bridging several planes of research, which remain mutually checked and complemented, thus enabling more solid and more complex interpretations. Closely correlating to the structure of the text itself, the methodological processes are:

Review of the existing literature. Since the central intention is to re-introduce Petar Vulović as an author of interest, it is important to assess the critical and historiographical understanding of his work up to this point, while also comparing the existing historical record to the archival material. By relevant literature here we mean both the published works on Vulović individually, as well as general and thematic historical overviews of the period in question (architecture in Yugoslavia cca. 1960-1990).

Review of the archival material, which is comprised of drawings, sketches, photographs, notes and other documents. Overall, this methodological arm consists of:

- The process of **acquisition and general examination**, in order to determine types of documents contained within the archive (Figure 2.), state of their physical condition, volume and overall historical, cultural, pedagogical and research value.
- **Classification** and subsequent digitalization, which is immediately related to (eventual) curatorial work related to presentation in both digital and physical state. When possible, the classification will be based on the principle of “original order” [1], while keeping in mind that the original structure may have easily been disturbed through the acquisition process and previous partial losses.
- **Selection and structuring** of the archival content deemed significant for the research task at hand: a renewed and more thorough understanding of both the oeuvre of Petar Vulović and his design process (and general outlook on architecture).

Interpretative architectural analysis will be based on both the archive and the previously published material, and will be performed primarily with one main intent: to help understand, read and/or (re)construct Petar Vulović’s creative thought process, especially as it relates to architectural design. It will be achieved by observing several key vectors within the material:

- recorded interests of the author (for example in notes, (un)published interviews, etc.). Direct exposition of ideas in writing is a remarkably rare occurrence in the archive or in the (available) published sources - and most probably in the totality of Vulović’s professional life as well. The underlying ideas and themes thus need to be gleaned from designs and design traces.



Figure 2. Display of a segment of documents constituting the archival material that will be

selected, categorized and stored at the faculty

- recurring themes in his sketches, drawings and analytical drawings

- sequences of sketches and drawings documenting the design process related to particular buildings.
- Sequences of thematically closely linked building designs (most notably the SDK series).

The aforementioned thematical and methodological structure will be supplemented with a short **professional biography** of the author, reconstructed through both published sources and the archive. Within the structure of the text, the biography will precede other elements, in order to initially present the author

3. BIOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Petar Vulović was born in the mountainous village of Javorska Ravna Gora, near Kušići, in the broader Ivanjica region, within the Drina Banovina of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (present-day Serbia), on 11th July 1931. Already in his early childhood (in 1933 [2] or 1934 [3], accounts in the archive vary) his family, with Petar as an only child, moved to Belgrade in order for his father to pursue a career at the State Mortgage Bank of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia [2]. Despite leaving so early for the capital, where he got his education and spent, practically, his entire life, he remained keenly attached to Kušići, the Javor mountain and the town of Ivanjica [3]. He frequently spent time there, often engaging in drawing, painting, photography and in general reflection on the vernacular ways of living and building – about which his archive acutely informs us.

After graduating from the First Male Real Gymnasium in 1950, he enters the Faculty of Architecture at the Technical School in Belgrade (later re-integrated into the University of Belgrade) from which he graduated in 1957. During the course of studies, he was deeply influenced by the outlook on architecture of his studio mentor Milan Zloković – a key figure of the Serbian and Yugoslav interwar modernism. Vulović often – and late into his career – asserted the importance of this influence [2]. His autobiographical notes (as well as other material) in the archive maintain that, sometime around the graduation or immediately after entering the National bank office, he traveled to London, Oxford, (Paris) and Florence, studying architecture and that, while there, he might have shortly worked in some architectural offices.

Also, around this time, he spent some six months in the office of Stanko Mandić, participating in the then ongoing work on the designs of the Partisans square in Užice [2].

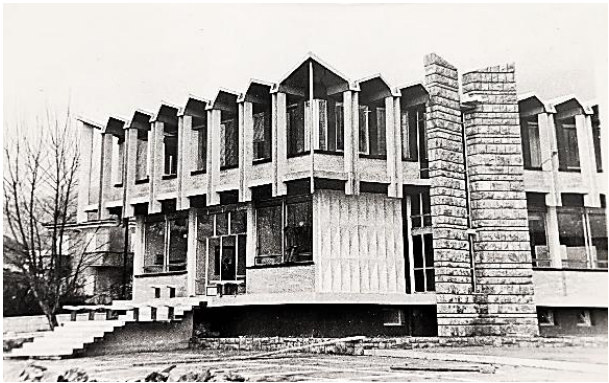
In 1959, after the completion of the mandatory military service, he commenced his career at the nascent architecture office of the National Bank of Yugoslavia, where he remained for the subsequent six years. Reforms of the early-to-mid 1960s, geared, amongst other goals, towards decentralization, saw spawning of new financial institutions. One of those institutions was the Service of Social Accountancy (Служба Друштвеног Књиговодства, abbrev. СДК, latinized SDK) and from 1965 it was the task of Petar Vulović to take (a significant) part in shaping its architectural presence in several locations throughout Serbia and Yugoslavia. He remained there until 1974. It was his career and professional role at these financial institutions that determined the most dominant part of Vulović's oeuvre, in some cases long after departing the bank and SDK and entering academia.

He initially became involved with formal teaching in 1973, as a visiting lecturer in postgraduate courses at the Belgrade University Faculty of Architecture, while from 1975 he initiated his academic career in earnest, progressing through the ranks of teaching assistant (1975), assistant professor (1979), associate professor (1980) and full professor (1988), all at the same school. The documentation submitted at many of these tenure applications is contained within prof. Vulović's archive, providing a valuable and (presumably) a very precise information regarding his career path. He officially retired in 1997, while remaining relatively active at teaching up until 2006, mostly in post-graduate and doctoral courses. In addition to his Belgrade teaching career, he taught at the Faculty of Architecture University of Prishtina and also briefly at the post-graduate courses at the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy. His (auto)biographical notes also state that he provided several lectures at the Moscow's MARHI (МАРХИ) school of architecture.

Petar Vulović died in December of 2017 and was buried in Kušići, alongside his parents.

Outside of teaching, public professional legacy left behind Petar Vulović consists almost exclusively of built architectural objects, of which for 23 remains a record or mention. Even by his own estimation, and judging by the way he presented his architecture, this body of work could be classified according to the level of achievement, and the most important and prominent group consists of eleven buildings (Table 1.)

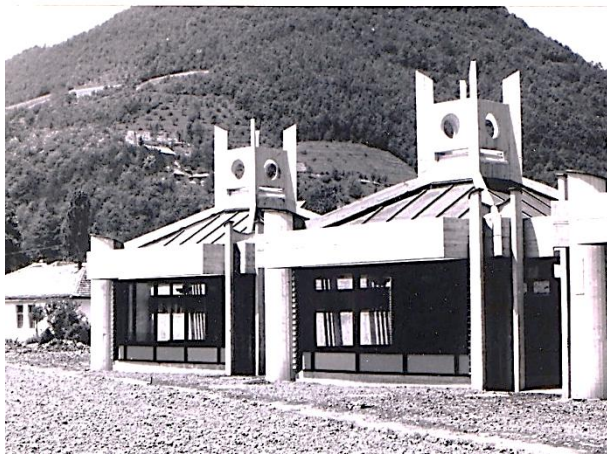
Table 1. Chronological presentation of key built projects by Petar Vulović. If not otherwise noted, photographs presented are part of the author's archive [4].

	The National Bank building in Makarska (The Socialist Republic (SR) of Croatia). Designed 1959–1960, built 1960–1962. The building has been partially altered in 2019 [5].
	The National Bank building in Cetinje (SR Montenegro, 1963). Designed 1959–1960, built 1960–1963. The building has been considerably altered in 2012 [6].
	The National Bank building in Koper (SR Slovenia). Designed 1964, built 1966–1967.
	The building for Central SDK Directorate of Yugoslavia in Belgrade (SR Serbia). Designed 1965 -1966, built 1966–1969. Recipient of the Borba Architecture Award in 1969 [7]; declared a cultural monument of the City of Belgrade in 2020 as a testament to the high achievements of Serbian and Yugoslav architecture and the economic development [8].



The SDK branch office building in Kraljevo (SR Serbia).

Designed 1969,
built 1970–1973.



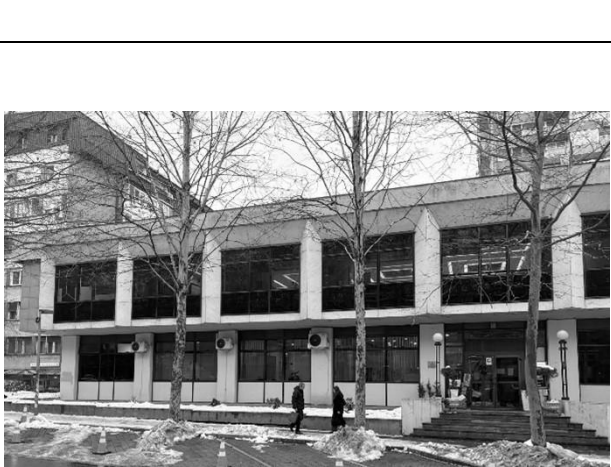
Nursery school building in Ivanjica (SR Serbia).

Designed 1971,
built 1976–1978.



Apartment building in Ivanjica (SR Serbia).

Designed 1973,
built 1974–1977.

	Primary school building in Užice (SR Serbia). Designed 1975-1976, built 1976-1979. Shortlisted for the October Award of the City of Belgrade in 1981 [9].
	Healthcare centre in Ivanjica (SR Serbia). Designed 1979, built 1987.
	The SDK building in New Belgrade. Designed 1985-1986, built 1986 The October Award of the City of Belgrade for the SDK building in New Belgrade in 1987
	Reconstruction of the office building of the ZOP (Завод за обрачун и плаћање, one of the successor institutions of the SDK) in Belgrade (photo: T. Aleksić). Designed and built 1999-2000.

Architects' records make note of the total of 50 projects he was engaged in (whether these were built or not), ranging from aforementioned administrative and housing programmes to individual houses and industrial buildings.

For his achievements Petar Vulović received some of the most prestigious awards of the Yugoslav and Serbian architecture:

- Architectural award of the Borba newspaper (serb. Борбина награда), section for SR Serbia, for the Belgrade SDK directorate building in 1969 [7].
- Lifetime achievement award by the Serbian Association of Architects (Савез архитекта Србије) in 1985.
- The October Award of the City of Belgrade (Октобарска награда) for the SDK building in New Belgrade in 1987.

4. PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED SOURCES ON PETAR VULOVIĆ

How has Vulović's work been interpreted within the contemporaneous sources, both in terms of volume and critical reception? How well was he recognized within the subsequently published literature on Yugoslav modernism, both as a primary object of research and within the broader studies of the stylistic period he, as an author, was so devoted to? There are two general sources we can currently draw on in order to answer these questions? The first one of course is the public domain of published sources, while the other lies within the architect's own archive, since he appears to have been quite meticulously keeping the record of his public image. We are also aware of the third realm – published texts and interviews archived elsewhere (offline), TV appearances etc. – and efforts are being made for some of that material to become accessible.

The published sources can be structured in the following way:

First, we have not encountered (nor are we aware of the existence of such publication) any sort of individual monograph - research or popular – dealing predominantly or exclusively with the work of Petar Vulović.

As for the extensive publications which catalogue prominent Serbian or Yugoslav architects, references to Vulović do appear in many of them. One of his early collective appearances was the exhibition *Srpska arhitektura 1900-1970*, at the Belgrade's Museum of Contemporary Art [10], where, in the catalogue of the exhibition, he is described as belonging to the "third generation" of Serbian architects, with his iconic structural scheme of the Cetinje SDK building among few selected images for the catalogue (presented here also in Figure 5.).

Vulović's archive references an entry on his architecture in the V. N. Belousov's book *Современная архитектура Югославии* [11], dedicated to contemporary architecture of Yugoslavia, though we were unable to obtain this text. Already in 1975, Vulović is referenced in M. Mitrović's book on recent architecture of Belgrade [12], and in 1978 again in an extensive study by U. Martinović and B. Stojanović on urban and architectural development of Belgrade from 1945 to 1975 [13]. His work is again represented in 1982 in *Arhitektura i njeni privrženici*, compiled by I. Mladenović [14], among 100 authors mainly from the Serbian/Belgrade architectural milieu.

At this point in the research, we are not aware whether Vulović was included in the 1986 anthology of the Yugoslav architecture of the 20th century (*Umjetnost na tlu Jugoslavije: Arhitektura XX vijeka*), within the section on Serbian architects also authored by Z. Manević. Ivica Mladenović, once again, maintains an entry on Vulović in his *55 istaknutih arhitekta Jugoslavije* [15], which treats the Yugoslav architectural scene from 1950s through 1980s, while Ivan Štraus presents two Belgrade SDK buildings in *Arhitektura Jugoslavije 1945-1990* [16]. *Leksikon neimara*, a collection of essays and other (often previously published) references, edited by Z. Manević [17], lists Vulović among a relatively large number of architects and civil engineers from Serbia (with Montenegrin authors added in the third edition) throughout 19th and 20th century.

Guide to Modern Architecture in Belgrade by D. Milašinić Marić [18] includes two of Vulović's buildings: SDK directorate and SDK in New Belgrade.

It is notable that Miloš R. Perović, in his encyclopedic (yet revisionist) 428 page dual-language tome completely omits any mention of Petar Vulović [19], while Perović's and Z. Lazović's exhibition named *Serbian 20th Century Architecture* does display the New Belgrade SDK [20].

Register of Modern Architecture and Urbanism in Serbia 1945-1990 notes: the SDK Directorate in Belgrade, the SDK branch office in Kraljevo, the school in Užice and the kindergarten in Ivanjica [21]. The architect's significance, both as a teacher and as an author was duly recognized in Belgrade's Faculty of Architecture publication on the notable names throughout the 170 years of this institution [22].

Vulović's work has been occasionally written about in professional periodical publications. Based mostly on the record of the archive, we can glean that his buildings in Makarska, Belgrade, Cetinje, Kraljevo, Ivanjica, Užice etc. were subjects of seven articles in Belgrade based *Arhitektura Urbanizam*, from 1963 to 1977, two in Zagreb's *Arhitekt* (1970) and *Arhitektura* (1981) and three in Belgrade's *Izgradnja* (1976, 1981). The archive also registers the article on his Ivanjica apartment block in Wasaw's *Arhitektura*, from 1976.



Figure 3. Two completed works featured on the covers of the Yugoslav journal *Arhitektura Urbanizam*: SDK Building in Kraljevo (1973)

Figure 4. Residential building in Ivanjica (1978)

Texts about Vulović's architecture (or about his views on architecture) in non-professional periodicals, magazines and newspapers, according to the archive, amount to three articles in *Politika* (1969-1976), three in *NIN* (1974-1976) and additional 5-6 in various other publications, dates ranging from 1972 to 1982. His SDK building in New Belgrade was reviewed on the national radio, and the archive contains the transcript.

The archive contains a few interviews and references to other interviews. Some were published, but remain unavailable (online) today, and some were never published.

We are aware that Vulović's architecture was the subject of one of eleven episodes in a documentary series on modernist architecture in Serbia, produced by the national broadcasting service RTS, and broadcasted in 2002-2003, however we have not yet been able to access and review that material.

It should be noted that Petar Vulović's architecture has also been written about in relation to significant alterations. It was first in Cetinje SDK [23], where the author himself declared a clear disagreement in an interview [6] [24], and later in Makarska, where the alterations commenced after Vulović's death [5]

5. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHIVE

The limited knowledge we have of prof. Vulović's life circumstances, especially those in his later years, amounts mostly to personal information relayed to us by some of his close friends and colleagues. According to those sources, it seems that the formal plan for the deposition of the archive did not exist during the author's life. Eventually, the material ended in Banja Luka (at the UBL FACEG) through a series of successive decisions. First, this institution was offered a part of the personal library, along with several other individual or institutional subjects. The key determining factor, on part of Vulović's friends and relatives, was the particular eagerness of the UBL FACEG to engage in receiving, preserving, honoring and using the archival material. Eventually, the largest part of the overall archive was entrusted to this institution.

It remains practically self-evident that the totality of the architect's lifetime production is not present within this archive. Many project drawings remain at the institutions of his former offices, local administration where the buildings were built etc. However, his personal archive did suffer some unfortunate losses. A personal information was relayed to us that some material was carelessly discarded by third parties upon Vulović's retirement and, also, that the plumbing malfunction damaged and destroyed another part of the archive as well.

Additionally, we are aware of some additional records of author's legacy (for example audio or audiovisual interviews) where acquisition of copies would be highly beneficial to the research and presentational potential of the whole.

In parallel to the aforementioned process of entrusting the (physical) archive, prof. Vulović's friends and colleagues initiated a process of digital preservation at the Audiovisual Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (AVA SASA), which was the first instance of an architectural legacy being digitally preserved at this institution. The final online digital version of the preserved archive is intended for presentation at the web page of AVA SASA, with further tasks of digital preservation shared with UBL FACEG – in accordance with previously established and standardized archival procedures and technical norms of SASA [25].

The material itself arrived at the UBL FACEG in 2025 and 2026 (with the personal library part arriving somewhat earlier). Although there are signs that the author made efforts to organize the archive systematically, the protracted process of acquisition, several parties involved, as well as the aforementioned losses, all certainly affected the archiving principle of "original order" [1] in classification of this material. As for the "principle of provenance" [1], it is quite applicable to keep only this private archive as the separate entity, with other possible later acquisitions being ascribed their own precise categorization, in accordance with origin.

In terms of its physical form and state, the archive consists of: rolls and folded sheets of drawing paper (differing sizes, weight, colour and texture), bound sets of designs, one set of project documentation in bound form, presentation slides, photographs, freehand drawings, sketches and watercolour paintings, as well as notebooks with written, drawn and sketched notes on various topics.

6. CONTENT OF THE ARCHIVE AND ITS PRELIMINARY STRUCTURE

Notwithstanding the eventual final form of strictly archival classification, which is a process only at its beginnings currently, herein we provide a (descriptive) categorization of the personal archive of Petar Vulović. It consists of:

- Architectural designs of author's built architectural objects. Depending on the building in question, this section might consist of: drawings, sketches, concept explanations, designs of prefabricated façade elements, structural concepts (Figure 5.) etc.

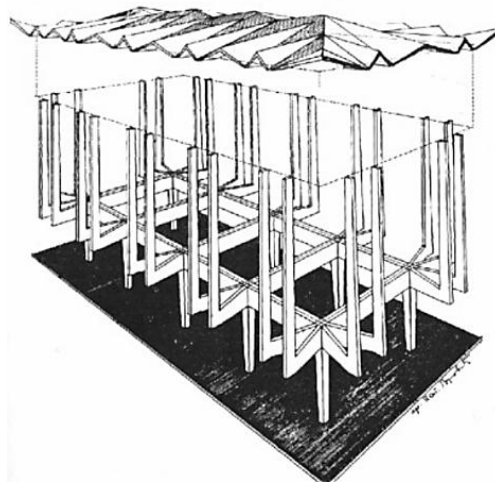


Figure 5. Conceptual design for the National Bank in Cetinje.

- Architectural designs of author's unbuilt architectural objects and proposals (for example, SDK building in Palilula, Belgrade; extension for the Užice school etc.).
- Project documentation (part?) of the SDK Directorate building in Belgrade.
- Notes on differences between projects and the final as-built state of buildings (a small amount).
- A large body of freehand drawings, colour pencil and watercolour paintings (Figure 6.), which might be broadly distributed in the following thematic categories:
 - Architecture and built environment. Within this category we find:
 - Ivanjica/Kušići/Javor – vernacular architecture
 - Ivanjica – town scenes
 - Vernacular architecture
 - (Ottoman era) bridges
 - Medieval sacral architecture of Serbia
 - Travels (Dubrovnik, Mount Athos, Ohrid, Veles, Priština, Prizren, Opatija, Igalo etc.)
 - Localities related to some of his built objects (Makarska, Cetinje). These are from varying dates, either related to the time of designing or building (Makarska 1960 for example) or of the later date (Makarska 1970). Either preceding or representing a later review, certain lines of visual investigation are more than likely present in this series: for example, roof lines and hill silhouettes of Cetinje.
 - Landscapes – predominantly landscapes of Vulović's birthplace region.





Figure 6. *A fragment of the collection of author's drawings and paintings*

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- Abstract forms – often related with forms he (previously or subsequently) applied in architecture.
- Portraits – a small number, including a self-portrait study with a semi-fantastic background which combines the author's birthplace landscape with his SDK-themed architecture.
- Still life and other themes.
- Photographs: a rich collection of at least nine of the author's built projects in various phases of completion. Additionally, the archive contains photographs of vernacular architecture of broader Javor region, also sacral architecture of Dečani, Gračanica, Mileševa monasteries, as well as a small number photographs from his travel abroad.
- Studies of architecture. There are two historical architectural objects which preoccupied Vulović the most: the Studenica monastery (predominantly the Church of the Mother of God, but also the layout of the monastery walls) and the Parthenon of Athens. These are detailed studies of geometry at the varying scales (from the whole of the building down to individual *gutae*). Studenica certainly appears more as a coherent endeavour (Figure 7.), with noticeably more material produced (or preserved). In addition, the archive contains studies of geometry of a few Ottoman-era bridges from Yugoslavia (most notably the Arslanagić Bridge in Trebinje and the Old Bridge in Mostar).

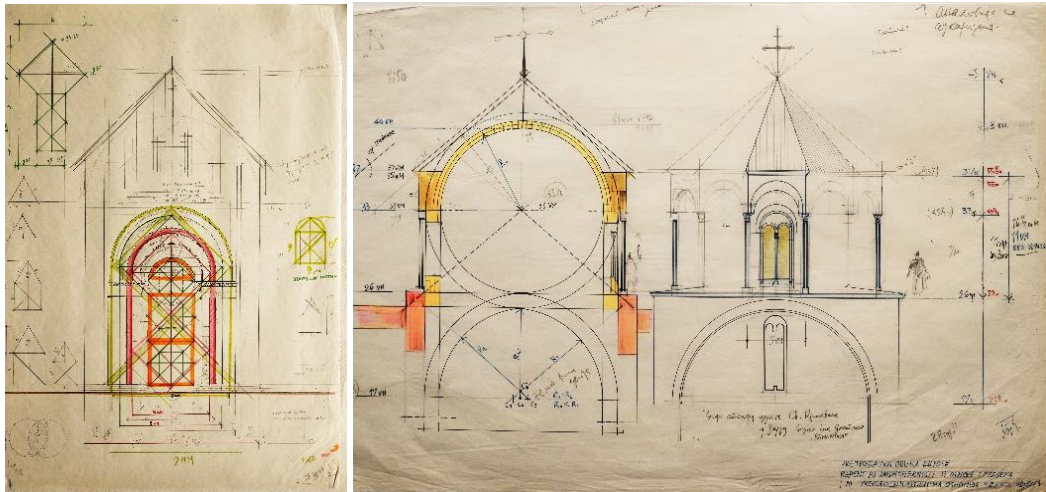


Figure 7. *Geometric and proportional analysis of the Studenica Monastery: the dome and the portal of the Church of the Mother of God.*

- Notes/studies on geometry and on architectural geometry (geometrical construction of various existing or conceptual architectural elements). These geometrical studies most often contain numerical/proportional analysis also. These short studies are often mixed with notes taken while reading literature, fragments of (copied) literature etc.
- (Possibly) notes/concepts for short theoretical texts.
- Texts published about the author, about the author's architecture, as well as some published texts by the author himself.
- A small number of issues of periodicals containing Milan Zloković's writings on geometrical analysis.
- Tenure-application documentation, including the autobiographical notes.
- Awards certificates, certificates of appreciations, inquiries from architectural magazines etc. – including also an official letter from the jury of the October Award that the school in Užice was considered among frontrunners for the year 1981.
- Teaching slides.
- Miscellaneous documentation pertaining to the author's architectural designs.
- Relatively small number of personal photographs, photographs of members of his family, of ancestors, as well as other documents related to his family heritage and Kušići more broadly.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE ARCHIVE AND POTENTIALS FOR ITS FURTHER USE

The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. It is a question of the future, the question for the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise, and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come.

Jacques Derrida, Archive Fever [26]

The deposition, restructuring and public activation of this archive provides several avenues for reconstitution of the historiographical image of its author and collector.

Primarily, as it is noted in the introduction, this provides both the opportunity and the material necessary to gather elements of his oeuvre in order to see them sequential and interconnected. If the chapter on previously published sources is read with more attention, it becomes apparent how gradually his opus became fragmented, through changing (that is: narrowing) scopes of research – from the whole Yugoslavia to its constituent parts. Vulović certainly has not been the only architect – nor the only one from Yugoslavia – whose body of work remained dispersed beyond newly created state borders. Nuance, however, matters and the case of Petar Vulović serves somewhat as an outlier. First, the SFR Yugoslavia was a relatively decentralized country and society – if not in terms of ideology, foreign policy or military, then certainly in terms of culture, in terms of the dynamics of the production of space etc. However much the architectural scene was decently unified in exchange of ideas and results, architects produced predominantly within their own socialist republics. Petar

Vulović was one of the rare authors who (at least initially) had very equally distributed buildings throughout a total of four republics. Still, this does not provide sufficient gravity to (a possible) thesis that his work is today partially overseen because of the disappearance of the unified state and cultural space. What does provide this gravity, we believe, is a very specific poetics of this architect. He seems to have been an author deeply engaged with the geometric matter of architecture, ever willing to *search* deeper inside of it. In the archive, his notes and drawings imply such an orientation. The archive also brings forth his receptiveness to qualities and to significance of *place*. With such a devoted, recurring and gradual effort – anchored, additionally, in the same programmatic type (financial institutions) – Petar Vulović set off to design a unified sequence of five buildings (Makarska-Cetinje-Koper-Belgrade-Kraljevo) which, perhaps, provides a small but sturdy fragment of a unified Yugoslav architectural identity, otherwise almost always a sum of regional approaches, schools and milieus.

Off course, the oeuvre of Petar Vulović and its significance does not solely come down to the aforementioned sequence. Herein lies the second avenue for reconstitution of the author's historical image through the reading of his archive. In the second phase of his career (ostensibly from the nursery school in Ivanjica up to the SDK in New Belgrade) he does change the language and becomes more open to the succession of forms, but, as the archive possibly indicates, his architectural instincts (of establishing a *meaningful* order, and almost pedantically controlling the form) continue to exist/develop along the same lines. The archive seems to re-confirm what has once often been said (in various texts and otherwise): that Petar Vulović maintained an architectural outlook and creative process of almost mystical *attention*.

With these fine qualities of the architect's creative process, we finally come to the question of the possibilities of the use for the archive. As the introductory quote above implied, the archive was not entrusted in order to yet again be relegated exclusively to shelves. It hopefully remains to be reorganized – and presented – in accordance with certain lines, and these lines are formed from what we possibly *know* about the author's creative process, but still far more about what we can *read* from the material. The SDK opus is in itself a story of at least two lines to read into. The first one is related to the world of *structure*: a daring entry and an exploration of a young architect (Makarska and especially Cetinje), which transitions into tested patterns (Koper, Belgrade) and refinement (Kraljevo). The second line to read in SDK is, off course, the envelope, the façade - and the way in which the author demonstrates, essentially, his *trust* in geometry (Figure 8.). It is also a trust that persistent and careful effort would hopefully result in, perhaps not some definitive answers or truths, but in an organic (almost natural) sense of aesthetic satisfaction. That approach is in and of itself fully classical, which, as the archive now amply demonstrates, was indeed one of the stronger inclinations of Petar Vulović. Still, he was also able to understand form differently, with intimations of vernacular (Ivanjica nursery), or with far more open compositions in primary geometry, with careful but *light* restraint in the secondary (Užice). In his full maturity as an author (SDK New Belgrade) he is able to command several lines at once: still being a devotee of geometry and order, but managing to reference other architectures and his own formative influences (Milan Zloković, before any other) and to have a kind of architectural conversation with them. This is, we believe, observable in the architecture of this building itself (and was noted by others duly at the time), but is nonetheless quite explicitly mentioned in some of his (published and unpublished) interviews, as well as, maybe, retroactively gleaned from some of his unbuilt later work.

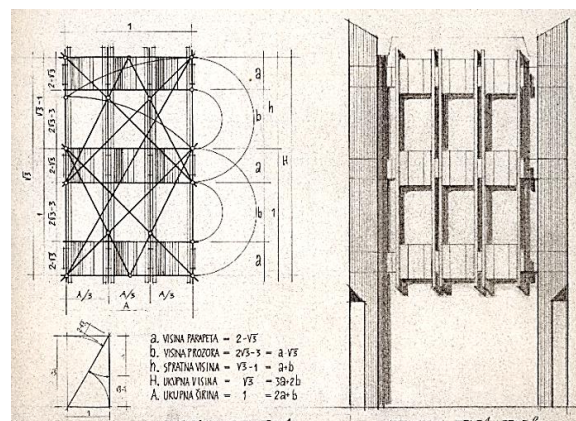


Figure 8. Geometric analysis of The SDK branch office building in Kraljevo showing proportional relationships of facade surfaces and prefabricated elements.

It is in many ways appropriate that the archive of Petar Vulović will be preserved and presented at a school of architecture. He was, after all, a teacher and a thinking man of architecture. His built achievements are exemplary. Still the central reason for a school to bring forth this material is because it can teach, both those still learning as well as active architects, what it means to be a true and lifelong *student* of architecture.

8. CONCLUSION

Professor Petar Vulović (Kušići 1931 – Belgrade 2017), an architect and a teacher of architecture, remains among the most notable figures of high, late and new architectural modernism in SFR Yugoslavia, yet his oeuvre and his perspective on architecture still lacks a systematic analysis or even, perhaps, a proper recognition – especially within the post-Yugoslav political and cultural context. This new context left some of the most important pieces - necessary for understanding of his body of work - dispersed behind several new state-borders and between several new cultural domains. A completely new opportunity for renewal of interest and new observations of Vulović's work arose with the deposition of his archive at the University of Banja Luka Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy. The paper here presented thus has two basic research trajectories. One simply facilitates re-centering of Petar Vulović within histories of Yugoslav modernism: through reconstruction of his biography (based in the archive material), through systematization of work previously published in relation to him (also relying on the archive for the material not easily available otherwise) and finally through initial explorations of the content of the archive, which is being prepared for adequate public availability. The content is presented through a set of categories ranging from architectural designs, through studies of architectural geometry, to a rich collection of paintings and drawings (etc.).

The other research trajectory engages more closely with the content of the archive itself, thus threading the path facilitated previously. Therein Petar Vulović is re-discovered as an author highly invested in inner geometrical laws and workings of architecture, in a way comparable to classical attitudes towards the art of the built form. He is re-discovered as an author willing and interested to perform relatively small variations inside the timeframe of almost decade and a half, during which he produced a series of objects which, as such, stand out within the modern architecture of Yugoslavia. However much this might testify to his narrow focus, the archive also reveals him to be an author who could keep this (geometry-oriented) focus active, yet continue to evolve creatively into different kinds of architecture, both in terms of programme and in terms of form. This simultaneous dedication of Petar Vulović towards both depths and horizons of architecture promises that his legacy – and the representation and reminder of this legacy in the form of publicly available archive – can continue to teach and to inspire.

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