4 The Yugoslav Skopje
Building the brutalist city, 1970–1990

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Introduction

In the summer of 1963, the city of Skopje crumbled to the ground. The early morning hours of 26 July brought screams of terror from the rubble of what was a growing modern city only a day before. At 5.17 a.m., an earthquake struck the capital of Macedonia, rendering over 80% of the city unliveable. In the next two decades, a brutalist city of “international solidarity”¹ and Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity”² arose from the remnants of Skopje’s historical urban layers, entwined with Yugoslav communist ideology and Cold War political negotiations.

Skopje is the capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, now the Republic of North Macedonia, a country in the Western Balkans. It is a city on the periphery of European politics and 20th-century architectural and planning historiography. A city that stood on the fringe of Yugoslav political space and architectural developments after WWII became a beacon of hope for the Yugoslav government and the United Nations during the 1960s when the local and international architects and urban planners together envisaged the modernist city to be built in the aftermath of the 1963 earthquake. Unlike peripheral cities of other state-socialist countries that largely saw architecture as derivative of that of the centre, Skopje stood a unique ground for urban experimentation, only facilitated due to the vast destruction of the earthquake and the Cold War need for diplomacy. Nonetheless, the city of “international solidarity” and its utopian architectural project met the reality of the Cold War Yugoslav politics and its economy of debt: by the late 1960s, the international community deemed its part in the project completed and departed from Skopje; the brutalist capital of the Balkans built from exposed concrete and in minimalist design, emerged from the hands of Yugoslav architects throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.

Following the 1963 earthquake, the international community came together under the patronage of the United Nations and created plans for the reconstruction of Skopje: 1964 and 1965 saw the production of a master plan and the city centre plan, respectively. In a joint effort with Yugoslav

DOI: 10.4324/9781003327592-6
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architects and Eastern European and Soviet planners and experts, the global architectural community manufactured plans for Skopje in a unique diplomatic effort of the Cold War decades. In Skopje, architects from the global geopolitical West worked with their counterparts from communist Europe, utilising Skopje as a ground ripe for experimentation. As a result, the global architectural community unearthed plans seldom seen in Western Balkans: the brutalist Skopje was to be a city of progressive 20th-century architecture, diplomacy and knowledge transfers. The resulting urban plans were of a modern, brutalist city, one fit for a particular country such as Yugoslavia, a participant in neither of the two embattled sides of the Cold War division; ever since parting ways with the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavia stood isolated from its former state-socialist allies.

As the 1970s unfolded, the progressive and optimistic urban plans for the city centre and the Skopje metropolitan area remained largely on paper. The brutalist city of western architects and their socialist counterparts – the metabolist city centre of Kenzo Tange and the multi-level traffic system – were constructed only partly, and the plans were significantly pared down. The city arose in a more modest Yugoslav iteration of brutalist architecture. As the geographer Stefan Bouzarovski wrote in 2011, the “public finance gradually started to dwindle during the 1970s”, and the local and national governments soon faced the necessity for the “downscaling—and in most cases, cessation—of construction activities aimed at implementing the urban development provisions of the 1964 Master Plan” (Bouzarovski 2011:267). The Japanese architect Kenzo Tange’s monumental proposal for the city centre met a similar fate. Outside of the segments of City Wall housing structures and the City Gate railway station, the Japanese architect’s arresting colossal buildings are found mainly in archives or reproduced in monographs (Figure 4.1). Ultimately, ideological and financial anxieties of the 1970s and 1980s in Skopje and Yugoslavia unearthed the city known for its brutalist architecture created by local, national and few international architects.

The city of Skopje and its architecture of the second half of the 20th century exist on a dual periphery. The collaborative production of the 1960s Cold War reconstruction plans for Skopje and the particular brutalist architecture of the 1970s remained on the architectural and geopolitical periphery of the global events of the era. While Yugoslavia held a place of importance as a country effectively straddling the Iron Curtain, an interest in the country’s urban developments – similar to the one paid to Yugoslav politics and the economy at large – was only extended to Belgrade, the capital, and even then, not in a far-reaching manner. Skopje, the capital of the southernmost Yugoslav republic, held no such place in the political constellation of the second half of the 20th century. Further, the architectural and urban historiographies of the era have paid little attention to Skopje; this has only come to change in the past two decades and most often by architectural historians from and in the region. While Skopje’s relative
The architectural historian Carmen Popescu traces the marginalisation of Eastern European architectural history – within which the architecture of the Western Balkans ostensibly falls – and argues that this marginality was mainly due to its “alterity – both cultural and political”. The othering of Eastern Europe and the Balkans can be traced back to the European Enlightenment when the region served as the “internal other”, and following the post-1989 globalisation, much has remained the same in this context. Popescu further argues that this marginalisation is partly methodological, as the canonical discourse seeks to address the architecture of Eastern Europe from the perspective of pre-established “grand narratives”, which do not apply to the region in their original context. The rhetoric of “‘creative’ centres” and “‘following’ peripheries” only furthered the otherness of the architectural particularities of the region’s urban spaces during the 20th century, and it persists to a large extent nowadays, demanding extensive contextualisation in its attempt to explore the region (Popescu 2014:9–11). In this context, we seek to historicise the Cold War peripherality of brutalist architecture of Skopje: on the fringes of ideological spaces of Yugoslav economy and architecture, the Macedonian capital of the 1960s stood as a fertile ground for vast architectural
experimentation missing in the more prominent urban environments in the country and further.

This chapter examines the period of the 1970s construction of Skopje and the peripheral place the city holds as a repository of brutalist architecture in the contemporary architectural discourse. The chapter further explores the peripheral place Skopje and Yugoslavia held in the post-war architectural space and in the context of the intricate links of global knowledge exchanges. The overwhelming focus of the contemporary scholarly community on the involvement of the UN, international architects and the master and city-centre plans produced in the 1960s obfuscates the history of the effectively Yugoslav construction of brutalist Skopje. Local and regional architects designed the structures erected in the 1970s and early 1980s; they were based on the modernist-era plans and under the influences of Tange’s brutalist tendencies and constructed by local companies. As such, they tell a story of the construction of a Yugoslav city and its complex urban identity.

The Yugoslav politics, economy and knowledge transfers: 1970–1990

By 1970, significant shifts in the ideologically bipolar world destabilised the established political patterns of the clear division between the global West and its Soviet-led counterpart. New concerns arose in the Cold War political arena: the two decades of the Vietnam War had led to a global economic decline, and the 1973 oil crisis further disrupted the balance of power between the ideological East and West. The development of the Non-Aligned Movement – in which Yugoslavia held a dominant position – further contributed to the imbalance of power as the formerly colonised Third World countries established and asserted their independence. Following the crush of the Prague Spring in 1968, the fragile stability of the post-war years was gone; reawaken hostilities engrossed the globe in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These events profoundly altered global politics and the economy, and although the economic reform of the 1960s briefly “made possible the economic boom of the late 1970s” (Ramet 2006:228), they consequently swayed an already unstable Yugoslav economy of self-management.

During the 1970s in Yugoslavia, there was a continuous increase in architectural production: the Yugoslavs held their steadfast focus on the modernisation of the country, and “the opportunities grew even more after Yugoslavia’s policy of non-alignment opened the door to Third World markets”. As the architectural historians Vladimir Kulić and Maroje Mrduljaš argue, to practice architecture in Yugoslavia was a lucrative endeavour, and “until the early nineteen-eighties, the booming urbanisation made sure that jobs were aplenty” (Mrduljaš and Kulić 2012:29). Yugoslav architects studied in the country’s newly founded schools of architecture – influenced by the country’s interwar modernist traditions – and with liberties to travel for education and professional training. They produced an urban environment that merged local traditions and local architectural modernisms with
international inspirations and impacts. Throughout Yugoslavia, the architecture of the 1970s mainly featured works of late-stage modernism bound to the vanishing tenets of the International Style, and the architects only sporadically engaged in experimentation with brutalist architectural language.

The brutalist Skopje was the outcome of the architectural expertise of Yugoslav architects and the continuous transfers of knowledge, both national and international. Knowledge transfers and exchanges amongst architects from Yugoslav republics, as well as with their counterparts and educational institutions in the United States and Western and Eastern Europe, have been instrumental in the reconstruction of Skopje since the project’s inception. In 1970, the historian Derek Senior wrote that international and local experts – “over a hundred consultants from more than twenty countries” – worked together to create urban plans for Skopje, “constantly exchanging ideas and experiences”. The Soviet government donated a factory of prefabricated elements and dispatched Soviet specialists to provide “expertise in training local professionals” (Mariotti and Hess 2021). Czechoslovak, Bulgarian and Romanian governments donated complete buildings, and the UN facilitated the allocation of academic fellowships: the Skopje reconstruction project manager, the Polish planner Adolf Ciborowski, had the “task of selecting, in consultation with the local authorities, the 14 professionally qualified candidates to be awarded Special Fund fellowships” (Senior 1970:123–4).

UN officials envisaged these fellowships to be awarded to experts in the fields pertinent to earthquake destruction and reconstruction: the fourteen awards were given for “post-graduate work in seismology, town planning, architecture, traffic engineering and water engineering”, with experts selected from different universities around the globe, including the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States. Host countries were typically those that played a significant role in the 1960s UN work in Skopje or those with vital expertise in seismology as paramount for the safe future of the city. Ciborowski recommended that the fellowships run “from the end of the Project’s planning period so that the best use might subsequently be made of the successful candidates’ services in working out the detailed implementation of a Master Plan they had themselves helped to prepare”. The UN awarded the fellowships to professionals already involved in the reconstruction of the city, many of whom would come to define the urban fabric of 1970s Skopje (Senior 1970:124).

Seven Macedonian architects left Yugoslavia to participate in the United States-sponsored master’s degrees at American universities. After spending time at the American public and private universities and interning in American architecture studios, “they all returned to Skopje to design some of the most prominent structures” in the new city (Mrduljaš and Kulić 2012:46). The architects who returned from the United States left an architectural mark on Skopje evident to this day and influenced the new generations of architects, either as teachers or through their works that
came to form the cityscape of the North Macedonian capital. Through these means, Skopje “served as an open-air classroom for a younger generation of Yugoslav architects” (Stierli and Kulić 2018:22), a space for experimentation where global know-how merged with local architectural traditions, both modernist and historical.

The canonical supposition that the creation of brutalist Skopje rests on the influences exclusively assigned by the UN and the United States exhibits a simplistic understanding of the events that transpired: the architecture of the Macedonian capital was created in a multifaceted manner that overarches this assumption. The construction of Skopje’s built environment took place through an amalgamation of interwar modernism, regional particularities and centuries-long heritage, along with the transfers of knowledge from various parts of the ideologically divided globe that built the city’s multilayered urban fabric. The following examples illustrate the processes that constructed Skopje and the links between the local, national and international influences and actors.

Building the brutalist Skopje

On 26 July 1970, on the seventh anniversary of the earthquake, the Macedonian daily newspaper *Nova Makedonija* recalled the destruction of 1963. Journalists praised the construction completed in the years prior. The unknown author of the short front-page article emphasised the perseverance of Macedonians and the Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity” that had rebuilt the city (*Nova Makedonija* 1970:1). The Skopje City Council reportedly took pride in the “rational execution” of new buildings and the repair of damaged ones, further highlighting that the rebuilding of the city was not yet over and that it can only be done through the camaraderie and compassion of all Macedonians (*Nova Makedonija* 1970:1). The article concluded with the statement that the memory of the earthquake and the reconstruction project had transformed the city into a living monument and a vehicle for progress.

In the 26 July 1969 issue of *Nova Makedonija*, only a year prior, journalists regarded Skopje as a construction site. The city was a transformed modern capital, novel architecture plentiful throughout (*Nova Makedonija* 1969:6). In 1966, the local and national construction firms – *Granit* from Skopje, for example – erected the first structures of the post-earthquake city. Still, the ambitious city centre plan was only partly executed: The City Wall residential complex and the new train station were the only segments of Tange’s proposal that stand today. Tange’s City Wall was planned in a format of “massive residential blocks circling the central area in a wall-like formation” (Grčeva 2013:3). The Japanese architect envisioned the residential complex as an “expression of permanency” (Tange 1967:38) and designed it in imposing overlapping segments. The lower elements of the buildings were constructed for seismic stability and housed commercial amenities, while the architect
planned for residential spaces on the upper segments of structures. Although Tange envisioned the City Wall to encircle the city centre perimeter and, perhaps, to serve as a psychological anti-seismic defence mechanism, the architect himself only designed one segment of the Wall. While Tange produced the initial proposal for the City Wall, the Macedonian architects completed the designs for different towers that constituted the large complex. Due to the financial obstacles, these followed Tange’s model only partly and exemplified the problematic of an indiscriminate application of global architectural trends in a country in a precarious geopolitical and financial position.

The optimistic notions that accompanied the erstwhile construction of the City Wall were dulled by the time of the completion of the structure. In its 5 July 1970 issue, Nova Makedonija reported that “after much anticipation”, the first tenants had finally moved into their new homes (Nova Makedonija 1970:10). The new dwellings failed to measure up to the high expectations set by the government and the ever-present rhetoric of urban progress; while the tenants conveyed to newspapers that the apartments were comfortable and spacious, they noted that the quality of construction was poor; the new inhabitants regularly complained about the faulty electricity, and draughty doors and windows. Those in pressing need of housing – Skopje’s citizens first lived in tents in parks and then in makeshift structures following the earthquake – brought up yet another concern: the city-administered allocation of units was extremely slow, and, by 1969, the city assigned the tenants to only thirty out of hundreds of future apartments (Nova Makedonija 1970:10). The construction process had been delayed, and many citizens of Skopje had to wait for long periods since the city allocated the apartments according to employment seniority and families’ needs. Architectural concerns accompanied these issues: the architect Živko Popovski wrote in 1981 that, while the towers were “healthy architectural productions” when taken on their own, as a complex, they were missing “visual motivations […] and urban character” (Popovski 1981:14). Still, at the time of the building’s completion and as the tenants were moving in, the design of the buildings was not the primary concern if it was at all, and the city government’s near-dogmatic treatment of the 1965 plan and its execution saw the local and national newspapers suppress any criticism that may have arisen.

In Skopje, the subdued high-rises of the City Wall stood as signifiers of the 1960s city centre plan and the role the UN and Kenzo Tange had played in the city’s reconstruction. However, the buildings that came to define the post-earthquake brutalist city were produced by local architects and, under the influences of local traditions, merged with international architectural developments. As the decade of the 1960s reached its end, Georgi Konstantinovski designed a building complex that would initiate a trend of brutalist architecture throughout the city. The Goce Delève Student Dormitories were completed in two segments: the first phase between 1969
and 1971 and the second between 1973 and 1977. Supported by one of the UN fellowships established in the aftermath of the earthquake, Konstantinovski first studied at Yale University under the supervision of Paul Rudolph, a visionary modernist and brutalist architect, and later interned in the studio of I. M. Pei, yet another modernist architect with a proclivity for combining traditional architectural influences with thoroughly modernist architectural principles. Konstantinovski’s Dormitories exemplify his professional development and merge the “sculptural, textured béton brut characteristic of Rudolph, with Pei’s geometrically rigorous forms” (Mrduljaš and Kulić 2012:46), illustrating the foundational elements of the 1970s architectural language in Skopje.

The Macedonian and Yugoslav public and architectural professionals deemed the Dormitories complex a marvel of brutalist architecture. Composed of four buildings of different heights connected by “flying bridges”, Konstantinovski designed Goce Delčev in exposed concrete, a key element in the Dormitories’ architectural expression. Architectural historians Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić argue that the complex allowed for an “exclusive use of that brutalist material par excellence (to) subvert the conventional modernist distinction between structure and enclosure, resulting an aesthetic reduction in terms of materiality and colors” (Stierli and Kulić 2018:161). Konstantinovski utilised national motifs and elements of traditional Macedonian embroidery – albeit minimally – as an inspiration for the Dormitories’ facades, further merging his local iteration of global brutalism with Macedonian heritage (Bogoeva 2018).

In his 2013 monograph, Georgi Konstantinovski summarised the design inspiration and fundamental architectural principles employed in Goce Delčev: the architect defined architecture as pure art that requires the architect to “inevitably be acquainted with architecture of past civilisations, so that he would be able to locate himself with his work in the period of time he lives and creates [sic]” (Konstantinovski 2013:11). The architect argued that to produce quality works of architecture, one must always study, further emphasising the notion of an architect as a social being, one required to acknowledge his or her place and role in society and the role society plays in the development of any architect’s design. Konstantinovski defined the basic principle of his architecture as “creating a space for living or working that will be worth for man [sic]” (Konstantinovski 2013:11). Arguably, this can be traced to Konstantinovski’s studies at Yale; the work with Rudolph and Pei influenced his architectural path regarding the use of materials and space. However, the local idiosyncrasies of Skopje and the architect’s attuned stance towards the city’s historical lessons pointedly characterised his architectural trajectory and the overall feasibility of his projects as much as his foreign education.

The Goce Delčev Student Dormitories – like Konstantinovski’s earlier work on the nearby Skopje City Archive constructed between 1966 and 1968 – illustrate the brutalist architecture of the 1970s. The large complex
constructed in exposed béton brut makes a mark in the urban fabric of the Macedonian capital and serves as a signifier of urban development: the Dormitories were constructed westward from the historic city centre and in what was to become the neighbourhood of Karpoš, interspersed with clean-lined modernist housing, hospitals and schools. The béton brut used extensively by Konstantinovski connotes a sense of progress and urban expansion sought in the aftermath of the war and the earthquake.

The Slovenian architect Marko Mušič designed the complex of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (Bogoeva 2018). Between 1970 and 1974, Mušič’s structures were erected in béton brut (Figure 4.2). They stand imposing, all elements of the composite urban unit seemingly alike. Nevertheless, distinctions between the architectural segments do exist. The Slovenian architect designed buildings of the University’s different faculties and departments with subtle distinctions mainly exhibited in the designs of the facades. The architectural historian Mirjana Lozanovska describes the University as “Brutalism in speed” and references Mušič’s work in comparison to Paul Rudolph’s design of the University of Dartmouth, further arguing that the Slovenian architect was “interested in other, parallel developments of Brutalism” (Lozanovska 2015:158), with more dynamic forms.

Mušič’s work is not only significant for the qualities of the architect’s design of the vast complex but also for its affirmation of inner-Yugoslav knowledge exchange processes and resulting projects: Mušič, a renowned

Figure 4.2 Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, 1970s. Postcard.
Slovenian architect, falls into a group of highly successful architects from the north-western Yugoslav republic. These architects were “exceptionally successful at architectural competitions around Yugoslavia, spreading their taste for expressive structural figures to other republics” (Mrduljaš and Kulić 2012:87). Like other brutalist structures of the time, the University complex serves as a signifier of space and the architectural manifestation of the monumentality of design and the use of béton brut. Mušič’s design of the University complex is not distinct from the rest of the brutalist structures in the city due to his different utilisation of béton brut; the architect’s design is different in its spatial explorations within the site and the surrounding urban fabric of Skopje and in his urban compositions of open and closed spaces, traditions extensively explored in the Slovenian architectural landscape.

Although structures clad in béton brut would come to permeate Skopje and essentially create its new urban identity, the modified traditions of European modernism still found their place in the city. The Museum of Contemporary Art, which overlooks the city from atop the Kale fortress just up the street from the Ottoman Bazaar, is strikingly dissimilar to the brutalist architecture of Konstantinovski. The building was a donation from the Polish government as a part of a collaboration of socialist countries: designed by the Polish Grupa Tigri between 1969 and 1970, the museum is a repository of an impressive collection of contemporary art.³ The structure is an archetypical modernist building with an open floor plan enclosed in glass with external columns supporting the upper floor. Constructed in reinforced concrete with coffered ceilings and completely painted in white, the Museum is a significant building in regard to its design, its prominent site and its donation from the Polish government as part of a multi-national socialist partnership. The construction of the museum and the donation of artworks exemplify the dual nature of socialist countries’ exchange: art and architecture were utilised as a tool of diplomacy and support as well as ideological exchange. At the same time, the art donation further facilitated the continuous process of knowledge exchange.

The architectural designs produced in the late 1960s and 1970s show few signs of uniformity. They gave birth to a new city, one that exceeded earlier Yugoslav architectural experimentations, similar examples seldom evident in the rest of the federation.⁴ The creation of the brutalist urban narrative of Skopje exemplified knowledge transfers of the era, both national and international. At the same time, it illustrated the place Skopje and Yugoslavia held in the global bipolar division and the problem of the historicisation of the architecture in the so-called periphery. The brutalist structures transformed the city into a locus of cutting-edge design based on urban plans created by international and Yugoslav planners further modified to fit the local histories and vernacular motifs. Konstantinovski’s Student Dormitories initiated and exemplified a new design path; the massive complex of the Dormitories illustrated the unique amalgamation of global trends, local executions and engineering feats of the Yugoslav industry.
Still, the architecture of Skopje did not receive uniform approval, and Macedonians were some of the brutalist city’s harshest critics. In his 1981 article in Zagreb’s *Arhitektura*, the Macedonian architect Živko Popovski outlined the development of the brutalist architectural style in Macedonia during the 1970s. Popovski – the architect of the 1973 modernist, streamlined and open-air Gradski Trgovski Centar shopping centre in Skopje (GTC) – opened his multipage treatise by acknowledging that the “results are not always in line with the wishes”. He both praised the new architecture of Skopje and offered a rare critique of the lauded brutalist structures, deriding the architecture of Konstantinovski as derivative of global architectural trends of the period. Popovski’s critique is centred on the fact that the architect’s employment of vernacular motifs was minimal, and the massive complex is almost wholly brutalist in its design and execution. Popovski further argued that the lack of an established school of architecture in Macedonia resulted in the creation of “parallelisms in architectural expression” – the first university-level studies of architecture in Macedonia started in 1949 at the Technical Faculty – perhaps best seen in the works of Macedonian architects who have studied in the United States and were exposed to Western influences (Popovski 1981:8–14).

**Conclusion**

The 1970s in Macedonia were a period of economic growth. After decades of receiving indispensable aid from wealthier Yugoslav republics, the economic tide changed, and in 1977 Macedonia “showed exceptional growth, especially in heavy industry”. Although not long lasting, the unexpected financial boom allowed for the construction endeavours that characterised Skopje during this period. The Yugoslav national budget for 1978 “nearly doubled the amount of money being turned over to the three underdeveloped republics and Kosovo [Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia]” (Ramet 2006:268). Still, while beneficial for the construction industry, these financial peaks and investments were exceptions, and “between 1975 and 1986 Macedonia’s economic position relative to the Yugoslav average declined steadily”. These economic developments only further emphasise the uniqueness of the built environment of Skopje: the city was designed and constructed despite the issues that engulfed the rest of Macedonia during its time as a Yugoslav republic with extensive financial support from the Yugoslav centres of power (Ramet 2006:271). By the late 1980s, Skopje was a distinctly different city than it had been 20 years earlier. Its population grew by almost half a million, and the city spread significantly. Brutalist structures permeated the Macedonian capital, and large parts of the city had been reconstructed based on the 1965 blueprints. The buildings clad in béton brut exemplified the urban identity of Skopje yet were only a part of the narrative: the urbanisation and technological advancement of the Yugoslav and Macedonian construction industry and the architectural know-how were on full display in the city by the early 1990s.
The 1970s and the 1980s ushered in widespread changes in global architecture. The era of modernism, dominated by the International Style, gave way to post-modernist explorations of high-tech and organic architecture; Yugoslav architects engaged with this transition only in the 1980s. By the mid-1980s, Yugoslav post-modernists became more prominent within the larger architectural field. Just as the 1960s in Yugoslavia “brought a taste for structurally advanced design with a pervasive focus on honesty of materials and of structure” that can be seen in regional brutalist explorations, the “taste for structure gradually lost its appeal with the onset of the 1980s” (Skansi 2018:66, 71). A new architectural period unfolded congruently with a political one, and the early 1990s brought upon violent ends in both architectural explorations and in the existence of Yugoslavia.

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Today, the brutalist architecture of Skopje has been applied yet another layer of peripherality: a local one. The neoclassical city centre reconstruction project, Skopje 2014, has seen the cladding of previously modernist structures in faux classical elements, the city labelled the “capital of kitsch”. While only a few brutalist structures were covered in the neoclassical façade of the new millennium, they were rendered an element of the past and left without the state’s financial support. Students in Konstantinovski’s Dormitories argue that the city “abandoned them;” the installations in the building are no longer, or barely, functioning. On its path towards the proverbial Europe – cultural, financial and geopolitical – Skopje’s brutalist heritage stands as a reminder of the urban periphery of the past, best left behind, as argued by local politicians. Architectural historians, socio-cultural anthropologists, urban geographers and sociologists reject this narrative and seek to examine the brutalist and modernist history of the city. The recent proliferation in publications dealing with the topic shows this interest is only growing: the question remains as to where Skopje’s urban heritage belongs in the unrelenting Western and westernised canon, as well as in the architectural space of contemporary Europe and the globalised world.

Notes
1 In the aftermath of the 26 July earthquake and after 85 countries from all over the globe sent aid to the demolished Macedonian capital, Skopje became known as the “city of international solitary”.
2 “Brotherhood and unity”, a slogan developed during the Liberation War in Yugoslavia (1941–1945) and employed by the Yugoslav communists throughout the country’s existence. The slogan designated the official policy towards Yugoslav nations and national minorities and granted them equal standing before the law.
3 The Warsaw Tigers was comprised of modernist Polish architects Wacław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki.
4 A notable exception is Mihajlo Mitrović’s Western City Gate in Belgrade. Commonly known as Genex Tower, the building was designed in 1977.
References


