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Staničić, Aleksandar

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Negotiating Borders Through Spatial Practices

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POLITICS AND ARCHITECTURE OF BORDER CROSSINGS

The Case Study of Gevgelija in North Macedonia

Aleksandar Staničić

Globetrotters around the world—at least the ones who decide to do their globe-trotting on land—know that they can get a pretty accurate first impression of the country they are about to enter by examining the spatial organization, architecture, and appearance of a border crossing. Willingly or not, the architecture of those places depicts in crude, bare essence the cultural and political climate of the state they belong to, its global geopolitical position, and bilateral relations with the neighboring states with which they share a border. For example, the border between Belgium, where I live, and the Netherlands, where I work, is in some places marked by a white line on floor tiles that runs through coffee shops, houses and, I assume, bedrooms (fig. 1). Two different types of light bulbs (shining in different colors) used in Berlin during the Cold War division reveal where the border-wall between East and West Germany used to be. Border lines that separate Brazil and Bolivia demonstrate cultural discrepancies, such as opposite stances toward deforestation and the preservation of nature. If architecture of a border zone can be described as "*frontières plastiques*: an equilibrium between social forces," as suggested by Jacques Ancel,[1] then this is best visible in the formal and spatial appearance of a border crossing.

By the same token, observing the temporal transformation of borders over a longer period of time can reveal significant changes to a country's sociopolitical structure and policies. The peace-time (re)bordering of Europe after the Second World War, first due to the creation of the European Economic Union and then as a response to the migrant crisis, are just two telling examples. On the one hand, spatial regimes imposed on border crossings are there to serve their primary purpose, control over movement of people and goods; on the other, the aestheticization of those places, through intricate architectural designs, speaks to the intrinsic connection between art, architecture, and power (understood here as both political power and the power of projecting certain image), such as the one we see, for example, in the design of capital cities.[2] In many instances, this status is also confirmed by the (symbolic) dismantling of border walls through acts of artistic creation, performance, civil disobedience, and destruction.[3]

Figure 7-1 Border between Belgium and the Netherlands, Baarle-Nassau, 2021. Photo: author.

This chapter examines one case in particular, the Gevgelija border crossing on the Greek-North Macedonian border, as its architectural and spatial transformation over the years can be considered a true indicator of one particular society's cultural and economic transformation in the wake of the collapse of former Yugoslavia. The crossing lived its golden age during the 1960s, when it marked the place of entry into the socialist Yugoslav federation from then-friendly Greece. When the country started sliding gradually into neoliberalism in 1980s, a shopping mall became the spatial dominant of choice. Demolition of the modern and culturally symbolic architecture in early 1990s announced the break-up of the federal state and set the stage for the notorious Skopje 2014 project, with a souvenir shop selling motives from ancient Macedonia and a mastodont casino dominating the local landscape. Finally, today it has become a place of conflict, where thousands of refuges are struggling to overcome its insurmountable wire fence on their way to western Europe.

At the same time, by virtue of its being on the Eastern Mediterranean Route, Gevgelija can also be perceived as part of this new international legal entity that exceeds the borders of the EU.[4] In this chapter, I support that argument by showing how, ironically and perhaps tragically, it is the architecture of separation that "helped" Gevgelija become part of this new oppressive and global apparatus, elevating it—probably for the first time in its history—above strictly national(istic) representations. Finally, I end this chapter with a brief

discussion of the implications of studying the spatiality and aesthetic appearance of border crossings for architectural research and practice.

But before I offer the historical overview of the spatial transformation of the Gevgelija border crossing, I will try to place this discussion in a broader theoretical and disciplinary context.

01. ON BORDERS ZONES, BORDER LINES, BORDER WALLS, BORDER CROSSINGS, BORDER ARCHITECTURE, AND—AESTHETICS.

As much of the current literature on borders has pointed out, reducing borders to a single line on a map—or in a 3D space, to a boarder wall—would be a gross oversimplification. A "lines in the sand" agenda, as argued by Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams,[5] cannot capture all the complexity of the formation of border lands and border zones. What may well be the result of the "modern cartographical representation and institutional arrangement of the border as a line—first in Europe and then globalized through the whirlwind of colonialism, imperialism, and anticolonial struggles—has somehow obscured this complexity and led us to consider the border as literally marginal."[6] Instead, we should be focusing on the *process of bordering* (or more recently, *borderscaping*)—a "messy here-and-now micro-politics of everyday life" that is "interpreting borders as socio-cultural practices, experiences and discourses."[7] This approach, in turn, acknowledges "the multiplication of different types of borders but also […] the reemergence of the deep heterogeneity of the semantic field of the border. Symbolic, linguistic, cultural, and urban boundaries are no longer articulated in fixed ways by the geopolitical border. Rather, they overlap, connect, and disconnect in often unpredictable ways."[8]

But if the materiality of the border line is indeed a fiction,[9] what is the political and semantic significance of border walls, and perhaps more related to this chapter, border crossings? In this chapter I suggest it is about defining and ordering the society within, through the act of differentiation from the illusive "other" but also through aesthetical representation and, as we will see, cultural appropriation.[10] This echoes the recent writings of Wille et al., who argue that "every demarcation is an act of differentiation, which implies the constitution of meaning, just as every definition is based on the principle of bordering. The border differentiates, categorizes and hierarchizes and puts the differentiated units into relation with each other."[11] Similarly, Thomas Nail writes that

> the border is both constitutive of and constituted by society. […] Accordingly, society is first and foremost a product of the borders that define it and the material conditions under which it is dividable. […] The border has become the social

condition necessary for the emergence of certain dominant social formations, not the other way around.[12]

The implication is that borders, more than representing simple divisions between states, have the potential to create separations and categorizations between people on a global level. This is especially the case if, following the argumentation of Étienne Balibar, we understand borders as "polysemic, meaning that they represent different things to different people; [...] borders are becoming more diffuse in the sense that they no longer constitute the site in which politics, culture and socioeconomics coincide—that is, the border is no longer at the border."[13]

Border crossings then—and not just as the administrative procedures required to cross a border but also as the physical and aesthetic appearance of such places—rather than disrupting and negating the hegemony of a border line, represent a place where bordering, understood as the act of polysemic human differentiation, is repeatedly confirmed and practiced.[14] As Sandro Mezzadra and Neilson Brett remind us, "sorting and filtering flows, commodities, labor, and information that happens at borders are crucial for the operation of these actors," migrants but also global political actors.[15] The act of crossing a border is fundamental for experiencing all its underlaying intricacies, that is, "only in crossing it, can the border become tangible and understandable."[16] But this act also carries an enormous transformative potential that goes hand in hand with the in-between state of an unknown limbo, "a phase of antistructure, of ambiguity, of a blurring and a levelling of differences."[17] Crossing a border is always a step into an unknown, but in passing that threshold, "specific socially valid structures liquify, enabling new structures to form."[18]

With such high symbolic and performative importance, it comes as a surprise that the architecture of border crossings is rarely studied. Especially from the aesthetic and artistic perspective, authors tend to focus much more on border walls. For instance, Ronald Rael's *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the US-Mexico Boundary* proposes a series of new, speculative architectural designs to consider the nature of the wall between the United States and Mexico.[19] In the same vein, in *Border Wall Aesthetics: Artworks in Border Spaces* Elisa Ganivet revisits the history of border wall aesthetics and compares more recent border-related works by multiple artists.[20] Even more prolific is the work regarding the architectural design in border regions.[21] In her book *Two Sides of the Border: Reimagining the Region*, Tatiana Bilbao proposes a series of architectural and landscape interventions for the wall between Mexico and the United States, exploring the potential it contains to be reconsidered and recalibrated.[22] Another significant contribution to "thinking futures" that brings together the emergent theory of "border thinking" with innovative thinking on design,

decoloniality, and globalism is the volume *Design in the Borderlands*, edited by Eleni Katalantidou and Tony Fry.[23] Similarly, the volume *Architecture of the Borderlands*, edited by Teddy Cruz and Anne Boddington, provides design and theory-based meditations on the nature of borders from a range of architectural commentators.[24] Even Anoma Pieris's edited volume *Architecture on the Borderline: Boundary Politics and Built Space* does not discuss specifically the architecture border crossings, with all its societal, cultural, and political implications.[25] This chapter on the Gevgelija border crossing in North Macedonia, its shifting politics and architecture that has followed sociopolitical transformations in recent decades, is a small contribution to the above discourse.

02. THE "GOLDEN AGE": BUILDING A SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

The Gevgelija border was established only after the end of the First World War. Right from the beginning it represented the point of delineation between two friendly and allied countries—Greece and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovens.[26] The rise in significance of the Gevgelija border crossing coincides with the considerable efforts put forward by socialist Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s to build its international reputation as a bridge in a deeply polarized world. Two events marked this era. First, in 1961, the First Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement was held in Belgrade. Yugoslavia was the founder and unofficial leader of the "third block" that, during the Cold War, functioned as a counterbalance and appealing alternative to two major blocks—Eastern and Western. This allowed Yugoslavia to extend its influence over third-world countries, portraying itself as a friendly and open society and gaining access to an untapped market that spread from South America, through Africa, to Eastern Asia.[27] Despite being a socialist dictatorship at its core—the Communist Party of Yugoslavia monopolized the entire political system for decades—the country in this process of globalization appropriated many characteristics and cultural values of the capitalist West, while maintaining close political and cultural ties with other nonaligned countries, many of which survive to this day.[28] This allowed Yugoslavia not only to carve out a privileged position in a world divided by the Cold War but also to build a platform for rich cultural and economic exchange in which architecture played an important role.[29]

The second event was the 1963 earthquake that devastated the city of Skopje, today the capital of North Macedonia. The earthquake killed more than one thousand people and destroyed nearly 80 percent of the city, most of which featured traditional houses from the Ottoman era. In an unprecedented act of solidarity for that time, more than thirty-five countries across the iron curtain divide volunteered to participate in rescue missions and later

reconstruction efforts, sending both personnel and building material.[30] In local folklore it is often said that this was the first time after 1945 that Soviet and American soldiers met on the ground. Sizeable donations coming from the United Nations solidarity fund allowed for a thorough urban renewal.[31] The most notable result was the master plan for Skopje city center proposed by famed Japanese Metabolist architect Kenzo Tange.[32] The plan put Yugoslavia on the world architectural map, while the broad international effort put into this reconstruction strengthened the country's position as a global mediator.

It was amid such a political climate that a competition for the new custom-house in Gevgelija was held in 1965. The reasons why Yugoslavia decided to dedicate such attention to this border crossing remain unclear, but we can speculate that its construction was part of Skopje's urban renewal, in an effort to modernize the south of the country and connect it to the Mediterranean. Aleksa Korolija and Cristina Pallini argue that it was also part of the construction of the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity, which cut through the entire country, connecting Slovenia with Macedonia.[33] Youth Work Actions (in Serbian, *Omladinske Radne Akcije*) that made such huge infrastructural endeavors possible became embedded into the Yugoslavian myth, while joint participation helped build long-lasting social connections and tolerance across the country. During that time Yugoslavia also constructed other buildings with the purpose of elevating its international reputation, such as refugee centers for asylum seekers, also sponsored by the UN.[34] The similarities in the architectural language of those buildings and the Gevgelija customhouse, as we will see, are notable.

Detailed information about the competition, such as the brief, the composition of the jury, or the list of participants, were not preserved. The winning design was the work of Mihajlo Mitrović (1922–2018), a renowned Serbian architect, who for most of his life worked independently and left a substantial legacy both as a builder and architectural critic.[35] Mitrović's style is widely recognizable as a successful intertwinement of traditional and sculptural elements with modernistic architectural expression, most notably present in his asylum for refugees in Banja Koviljača.[36] He employed the same principles in designing the Gevgelija customhouse (figs. 2–6). The building combines modern forms and a characteristic open plan with traditional materials such as small format terracotta, reminiscent of the traditional wall brick patterns of old Macedonian monasteries.[37] On the northern facade, facing the road that would ultimately take us deeper in Macedonian and, further still, Serbian countryside, the architect placed plaster cast motives—replicas of famous medieval sculptures that could be found in ancient Serbian monasteries down the road. Mitrović understood the border customhouse as an outstanding tourist information desk, a facility that "will awake tourist's desire to explore further the country they are about to enter."[38] The lightness of the concrete structure
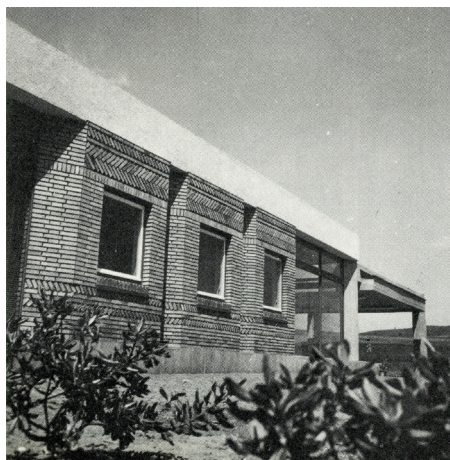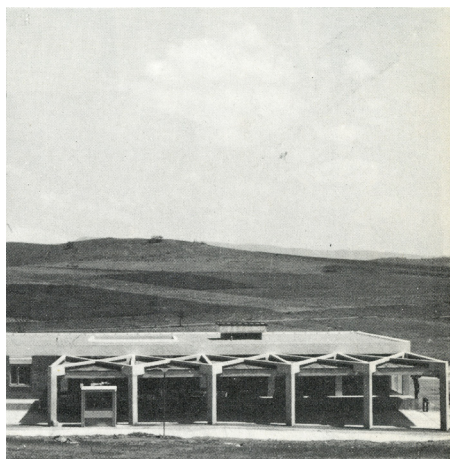
Figure 7-2—Figure 7-6 Gevgelija customhouse, Mihajlo Mitrović, 1965, details. Source: Mihajlo Mitrović, "Zapis o tri moja dela," 1970.

reflected the casual style of the Gevgelija border crossing, stripped almost entirely of the strictness and formality usually associated with its primary function. Instead, the cast of a white lion from the Studenica monastery greeted guests and welcomed their visit, inviting them to explore its natural habitat, hidden deep in the wilderness of the Balkan Mountains.[39]

This deviation from the strict postulates of modernism is not at all unusual for the endemic architectural style that flourished in Socialist Yugoslavia. The political rift between Josip Broz Tito and Joseph Stalin led to Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Soviet Bloc in 1948. In an effort to distance itself from cultural influence of Socialist Realism advocated by the Soviet Union, and also in an effort to develop an architectural style that would suit the new progressive image it was trying to establish, the Yugoslav Communist Party allowed a great amount of freedom and individualism to Yugoslav architects. In addition, trying to play "the third block" card meant opening society, and consequently its borders, to foreigners and foreign influences. Consequently, the country slowly shifted toward a more liberal society, developing a soft kind of socialism characterized by the self-management (in Serbian, *samoupravljanje*) of all public resources. The proclaimed maxim of "brotherhood and unity" encouraged the exchange of workers, ideas, and cultural influences across the country. Some historians even argue that the Yugoslav leadership of that time managed to successfully mask the authoritarian grip over the country with the glamour of capitalist West, to the point that the image it was broadcasting to the world was more bourgeois than socialist.[40] On this wave of international and transcultural exchange, and in combination with the strong socialist component that put the needs of people first, architecture took a leading role in economic progress and the cultural emancipation of society. These tendencies were evident in the development of a unique "Yugoslav" architectural style that marked the entire postwar period, to which Mitrović contributed significantly with his work.[41]

03. DISINTEGRATION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND SLOW SLIDE INTO NEOLIBERALISM

After the death of Tito in 1980, the clamps of socialism started to loosen up, and the country slowly drifted toward neoliberalism. A proliferation of private capital, a phenomenon absolutely unimaginable only a couple of decades earlier, started to take over the Yugoslav economy.[42] A new class of nouveau riches appeared that gained its wealth at the expense of state-owned industry, driving many of those public firms to bankruptcy. Foreign capital was allowed to enter the market while privatization was seen as the best, if not the easiest, way to save jobs and manage failing industry. This was also the period when the first

Figure 7-7 The shopping mall that was built adjacent to Mitrović's customs house, which was later removed.

signs of society's political and economic stratification started to appear. The planning sector and institutional management of public spaces began to yield under those influences, allowing private interest to dominate the public ones.[43] Many public spaces were seen as valuable resources up for grabs. Planning institutions legalized such behavior by changing urban plans at all levels, leading to the emergence of "investors' urbanism" (in Serbian, *investitorski urbanizam*).

This shift became immediately visible in the morphology and spatial organization of border crossings. In the case of Gevgelija, it manifested through the construction of a shopping mall right next to Mitrović's customhouse (fig. 7). Unfortunately, pictures from that period are very difficult to find, but according to Mitrović's testimony, the shopping mall was situated only a couple of meters away from his building, rendering it completely invisible from the point of entry into the country. That way, in his view, the message of cultural exchange he was trying to send was not only rendered insignificant—it was completely erased, while priority was given to more mundane functions. At the same time the ominous voices of nationalist awakenings became louder and louder, announcing Yugoslavia's final disintegration in a series of conflicts throughout the 1990s.

In the prelude to the Macedonian declaration of independence in 1991, Mitrović's building was demolished, unavoidably causing some controversies. In an interview I conducted with the architect in 2014, he vigorously defended his stance that the Gevgelija customhouse was demolished because of the

"unconcealed animosity toward the historicistic tinge in his opus." He also added that this was only a small instance of a systematic suppression of architecture that contained Serbian nationalistic imagery, citing as other examples buildings by Momir Korunović in Ohrid and Bitola. According to Mitrović, the goal of this calculated action was to purify the country, which was now seen as tainted by Serbian cultural influence (which had been significant since the Macedonian liberation from the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan wars at the beginning of the twentieth century) and to set the ground for the creation of a completely new Macedonian national style in architecture. In that same interview I asked Mitrović about the optics of imposing Serbian cultural symbols on the Gevgelija customhouse and why did he not use, for example, motives characteristic of other parts of the country. He denounced the implication, stating that the road from Gevgelija leads straightforwardly through Macedonia to Serbia, therefore it was only logical to present sculptural motives from Macedonian and Serbian monasteries.[44]

There are no records in Macedonian archives that would clarify the motives for the building's demolition, but interviews I conducted with a few people involved shed some light on the story.[45] The first person I interviewed was Mr. Todor Jugov, who at the time was the director of the so-called Self-Managing Interest Community for Housing of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. Mr. Jugov was in charge, among other things, of all customhouses in Macedonia. He told me he remembered the customhouse in Gevgelija, which was in use only from 1965 to 1980. He remembered it as an "architecturally very beautiful and proportionate building"; and he also remembered the white lion on the facade but was tellingly unaware of its provenance or symbolic meaning. According to him, the building was unfortunately inadequate for its primary function since its capacity was not calculated to deal with Gevgelija's heavy traffic flow. He testified that it was a federal decision to demolish Mitrović's customhouse and to build in its place the new one, with four times the capacity. Since the new customhouse was also designed by an architectural firm from Belgrade, he rejected the notion that there were nationalist or political motives for the demolition of the original building.

Even more revealing is the testimony of Prof. Mihailo Tokarev from the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje. He and his brother Andrej, at that time young architectural students, worked with Mitrović on final design solutions for the Gevgelija customhouse. Professor Tokarev's view on this matter is also different from Mitrović's. He thinks that the customhouse was, above all, a conceptual and miniscule building, with an insufficient capacity to bear the demanding flow of people and vehicles. Soon after the building opened its doors, all those small impracticalities came to the surface. Partly because of its dysfunctionality and partly because of negligence, Mitrović's customhouse

was first abandoned, and then completely demolished. Professor Tokarev denies even the slightest possibility that nationalist motives had anything to do with its destruction. In his words, "If there's someone or something to blame, it's the general lack of acknowledgement of modern Yugoslav architecture and its formidable standard-bearers among the people in state planning apparatus who make purely practical decisions."[46]

04. NATIONALISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND RESURGENCE OF BORDER WALLS

It could also be argued that the lack of appreciation for Yugoslav socialist modernism, as well as the lack of proper protection mechanisms, is the key issue here. Regardless of the technical motives for the destruction of the Gevgelija customhouse, the failure to acknowledge its architectural qualities and endemic (Yugoslav) modernist heritage later paved the path for the much-criticized reinvention of the Macedonian national style, notoriously embodied in the infamous *Skopje 2014* project.[47] The identity void that appeared after gaining independence—in the case of North Macedonia, for the first time in its modern history—is something that all ex-Yugoslav republics have in common.

Figure 7-8 The souvenir shop at the Gevgelija border crossing.

Figure 7-9 The "Flamingo" casino-hotel in Gevgelija.

Architecture played a big role in this intense nation-building, not only by rein-vigorating national symbols of the past but also by negating (and in many in-stances, openly destroying) shared Yugoslav heritage.[48] In North Macedonia, the government of the then-ruling nationalist party VMRO-DPMNE decided to claim continuity with the ancient Hellenistic heritage, although 70 percent of modern-day Macedonians have Slavic origin. It can also be argued that the complex political situation in a country where largely Muslim Albanians con-stitute almost 25 percent of the population certainly played a significant role in this decision; claiming a solely Orthodox Christian medieval heritage would be unacceptable to nearly a quarter of the population, so compromise was found in "neutral" Hellenism, to the great dismay of neighbouring Greece.

As part of this project, a small souvenir shop selling statuettes of Philip II of Macedon and Alexander the Great was opened in 2013 on the Gevgelija bor-der crossing by the then-Macedonian minister of culture (fig. 8). The role of border buildings as touristic billboards of sorts was yet again reaffirmed, but this time the content of the message was significantly different from the one Mitrović was trying to send with his customhouse (this is not to mention the fact that the new building was much smaller in scale and lacking proper architectur-al language). This act of cultural appropriation provoked an outrage in neigh-bouring Greece, which already—because of the dispute over the new country's name—had been blocking Macedonian integration into European institutions for decades.[49] In the latest act of spatial postmodern transformation at the Gevgelija border, a gigantic casino (because of its form, one would assume, appropriately named "Flamingo") was constructed in its background, dwarfing the border crossing itself (fig. 9). Ominously hovering above the border, it could be read both as the ultimate symbol of the triumph of the neoliberal turn em-bodied in "investors' urbanism" and a tombstone to Mitrović's idea of Gevgelija being a place of transcultural emancipation and exchange.

Figure 7-10 Migrants gathered at the Gevgelija train station.

Figure 7-11 Barb-wired wall on the Greece-North Macedonian border.

This spatial transformation was accompanied by a change in the adminis-tration of movement of people and goods through the border. The admission of Greece to the EU in 1981 hardened the border line with Yugoslavia—a non-EU state. The Macedonian declaration of independence and the dispute

over the new country's name made the border with Greece even harder. The Schengen agreement, which officially became part of EU law in 1999, cancelled hard borders between EU member states, but it relied on the strict control of the EU's outer border, Gevgelija included. Thus, supranational political entities directly impacted the regimes of control on a local level and the spatial forms that facilitated them.

The fluidity and changeability of borders was demonstrated yet again in the final act of spatial and symbolic transformation of the Gevgelija crossing in 2014, when thousands of refugees were precluded from crossing to Macedonian territory from the Greek town of Indomeni (figs. 10–11). Not formally recognizing the Macedonian state name, Greece refused to issue travel documents to migrants, who then remained stuck in the buffer zone between the two countries. The barbed wire that was installed on this border, just like the ones between Serbia and Hungary or Serbia and Croatia, reminds us that Europe is in constant peril of the "Balkanization" of its territory. Physical and legal mechanisms are being put in place here to repair fissures in (border) walls and protect the power systems of wealthy countries, at the expense of the poor and underprivileged. In order to be able to control the movement of migrants through the Eastern Mediterranean Route, the EU introduced a system of check points and legal procedures, in which Gevgelija was a very important point.[50] Ironically, the fact that it became part of this new oppressive apparatus brought new global attention to the border crossing, so that its one-sided nationalist representation, embodied in its distinct and symbolic architectural forms, was put aside and replaced with a much less nuanced and globally recognized symbol—an insurmountable border wall.

05. CONCLUSION

Formal border crossings give expression to a very particular kind of sociopolitical relation, because they always reflect official state politics, whether as posters for national identity or spatial manifestations of various political systems established to maintain control over the movement of people. In the case of the Gevgelija border crossing, formalized sociopolitical forces were historically emphasized and always brought to the surface, to the point that it is possible to study North Macedonia's political and cultural transformation by analyzing the architecture of that place alone. In 1960s, during the pinnacle of Yugoslavia's diplomatic activity, this border crossing was given premium treatment, with one of the most prominent Yugoslav architects at the time—Mihajlo Mitrović—given the opportunity to design a customhouse. The architect's

modernist high-design was a showcase of the country's progress, hospitality, and openness to the world, and also a display of the country's cultural riches to be explored. As Yugoslavia's political significance stared to weaken both internationally and domestically, the progressive modernism of Gevgelija border crossing was replaced with a more utilitarian approach, wherein the customhouse disappeared completely. Following the country's independence, a search for national identity became the dominant political imperative, embodied in the appropriation of ancient Greek classicism and "investors' urbanism," which was showcased in the spatial dominance of privately-owned casinos. Finally, supranational political entities enforced the erection of barb-wired fences to stop refugees from entering the Eurozone, showing quite literally how architectural objects, forms, and symbols are used as a tool by various sociopolitical forces to define a particular territory. This chapter is a reminder that

> Europe's borders arise and move, surveil and intervene, perish and continue in other guises. Borders are not only avatars of politics or instruments that carry the burdens of history and the Westphalian past that can be used at will; they also translate and mediate politics by creating moments where the conditions of territory are reproduced.[51]

It is also a stark reminder that the price of the perceived freedom of movement of people and goods in the Eurozone is the ruthless hardening of border infrastructures, and border architectures, at its peripheral territories.

There are several possible implications of this correlation for the ways we study and produce architecture. First, we could argue that the power of architectural theory and history in this context resides in providing more nuanced readings of the politics of representation and the broader impact of spatial conflicts by studying the architecture of borders and border crossings themselves. Secondly, borders are conditioned territories constantly in the making, places where histories of the past and realities of the present blend and project cultural values into the desired future. Since the task of the architect is inevitably to interpret and translate those values into form, the architect's (ethical) responsibility is to understand the broader implications of their designs and then to actively participate in the formation of these conditioned territories, both as designers of space and participants in public debate. All aspects of architecture, from *what* we design, *how* we design it, to how we *communicate* our ideas can be put to use to reveal spatial conflicts, tackle social injustices, and propose alternative realities.[52] If borders are indeed places of political plasticity, where sociopolitical forces are taking form, architects should be the ones creating moulds.

NOTES

1. Jacques Ancel, "Les frontières: Étude de géographie politique," *Recueil des cours* vol. 55 (Paris, 1936), 52.

2. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version," in *Selected Writings, 4: 1938–1940*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 251-83; Lawrence Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008).

3. Elisa Ganivet, *Border Wall Aesthetics: Artworks in Border Spaces* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019).

4. Melina Philippou, "The Spatial Extensions of the Right to Seek Asylum: The Eastern Mediterranean Refugee Route," *Footprint* 14, no. 2 (2020): 49–68, https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.14.2.4486.

5. Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams, "Critical Border Studies: Broadening and Deepening the 'Lines in the Sand' Agenda," *Geopolitics* 17, no. 4 (2012): 727–33, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2012.706111.

6. Sandro Mezzadra and Neilson Brett, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), vii.

7. Anthony Cooper and Søren Tinning, eds., *Debating and Defining Borders: Philosophical and Theoretical Perspectives* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 38. See also: Anssi Paasi, "A Border Theory: An Unattainable Dream or a Realistic Aim for Border Scholars?" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Doris Wastl-Walter (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 11–31;
Chiara Brambilla, "Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept," *Geopolitics* 20, no. 1 (2015): 14–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2014.884561.

8. Mezzadra and Brett, *Border as Method*, vii.

9. Christian Wille et al., eds., *Border Complexities and Logics of Dis/Order* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2023), 16.

10. David Newman, "On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18, no. 1 (2003): 13–25, 15.

11. Wille et al., *Border Complexities and Logics of Dis/Order*, 17.

12. Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

13. Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (London: Verso, 2002). Paraphrased in Cooper and Tinning, *Debating and Defining Borders*, 38.

14. Or, in words of Erving Goffman, "crossings are however subjected to specific rules determined by the establishment of borders itself. These rules for crossing do not neutralize the border but rather confirm it. This regulated form of crossing is structurally affirmative." Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974). Quoted in Wille at al., *Border Complexities and Logics of Dis/Order*, 19.

15. Mezzadra and Brett, *Border as Method*, ix.

16. Wille at al., *Border Complexities and Logics of Dis/Order*, 20.

17. Ibid., 21.

18. Ibid.

19. Ronald Rael, *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the US-Mexico Boundary* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

20. Ganivet, *Border Wall Aesthetics*.

21. For a more detailed overview, see Grazia Tona, *Border Formation: The Becoming Multiple of Space* (PhD diss., Delft University of Technology, 2023), https://doi.org/10.7480/abe.2023.08.

22. Tatiana Bilbao, *Two Sides of the Border: Reimagining the Region* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2020).

23. Eleni Katalantidou and Tony Fry, eds., *Design in the Borderlands* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

24. Teddy Cruz and Anne Boddington, eds., *Architecture of the Borderlands* (Chichester, West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1999).

25. Anoma Pieris, ed., *Architecture on the Borderline: Boundary Politics and Built Space* (London: Routledge, 2019).

26. For the detailed and critical overview of the history of Yugoslavia see: Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

27. The literature on "Cold War" architectures and architectural exchanges is abundant. For global overviews see Łukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Łukasz Stanek and Tom Avermaete, eds., *Cold War Transfer: Architecture and Planning from Socialist Countries in the "Third World,"* *The Journal of Architecture* special issue, 17, no. 3 (2012); Łukasz Stanek, "Introduction: the 'Second World's' Architecture and Planning in the 'Third World'," *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 3 (2012): 299–307; Tom Avermaete, "Coda: The Reflexivity of Cold War Architectural Modernism," *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 3 (2012): 475–77.

28. For the Yugoslav focus see Vladimir Kulić, *Land of the In-between: Modern Architecture and the State in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1945–1965* (PhD diss., Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin, 2009), https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/9bd7ff79-f279-4c77-9b4c-925839d6adea; Vladimir Kulić, "'East? West? Or Both?' Foreign Perceptions of Architecture in Socialist Yugoslavia," *The Journal of Architecture* 14, no. 1 (2009): 129–147; Vladimir Kulić, "An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism: Yugoslavia at EXPO '58," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012): 161–84; Vladimir Kulić, Timothy Parker, and Monica Penick, eds., *Sanctioning Modernism: Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities* (Austin: University of

Texas Press, 2014); Danica Milan Stojiljković and Aleksandar Ignjatović, "Towards an Authentic Path: Structuralism and architecture in socialist Yugoslavia," *The Journal of Architecture* 24, no. 6 (2019): 853–76.

29. Many people in the former Yugoslavia idealize this period as the "Golden Age" of the republic. Even today, it is popularly believed in most former Yugoslav republics that this unique brand of "soft socialism" has been adopted by many European countries, and that its model is being used by the European Union itself. The politics of nonalignment is still so prevalent in Serbia that, arguably, Serbian political leadership still tries to mimic it. I explain this in detail in Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs. Public Dialogue: The Spatial Memorialisation of Conflict in Belgrade after the 1999 NATO Bombing," *The Journal of Architecture* 26, no. 3 (2021): 371–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365. 2021.1897645.

30. For more on this see: Goran Janev and Blaž Križnik, "From Open City towards Grand National Capital: Mapping the Symbolic Reconstruction of Skopje," presentation at the workshop "Remapping Skopje," October 2008, https://www. scribd.com/document/14056508/ Mapping-the-symbolic-reconstruction-of-Skopje; Divna Pencik, *Skopje City Centre on 1965*, https://www.scribd.com/ presentation/62475437/Skopje-City-Centre-on-1965.

31. United Nations Development Program, *Skopje Resurgent: The Story of a United Nations Special Fund Town Planning Project* (New York: United Nations, 1970).

32. Kenzo Tange, "Skopje Urban Plan," *The Japan Architect*, no. 130 (1967): 30–69. https://www.scribd.com/document/37608929/Kenzo-Tange-JA-n130-May-1967pdf; Mihail Tokarev, *Edicija 100 godini moderna arhitektura, kniga 3. Pridonesot na Makedonija i Jugoslavija (1918–1990)* (Nezavisno izdanje. Istorisko-kristicki pregled, 2006).

33. Aleksa Korolija and Cristina Pallini, "The Highway of Brotherhood and Unity as a Cross-Cut into the Yugoslavian Epic," *Histories of Postwar Architecture* 3, no. 6 (2020): 93–120, https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/10116.

34. I discuss this in detail in Aleksandar Staničić, "Refugee Shelters done Differently: Humanist Architecture of Socialist Yugoslavia," in *Making Home(s) in Displacement: Critical Reflections on a Spatial Practice*, eds. Luce Beeckmans, Alessandra Gola, Ashika Singh and Hilde Heynen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022), 173–96.

35. Aleksandar Kadijević, *Mihajlo Mitrović: Projekti, graditeljski život, ideje* (Beograd: S. Mašić: Muzej nauke i tehnike: Muzej arhitekture, 1999); Mihajlo Mitrović, *At the Turn of the Century: the Architecture of Energoprojekt between 1951–1995* (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1995).

36. Staničić, "Refugee Shelters done Differently." In Banja Koviljača Mitrović used those motives to "bring local traditional architecture closer to foreigners, to perhaps inspire them to learn more about local culture."

37. Mihajlo Mitrović, *Mihajlo Mitrović: Izložba arhitekture, Muzej primenjene umetnosti Beograd, 13–25. april 1971*, exhibition catalogue (Zagreb: Sitotisak studentski centar Zagreb, 1971).

38. Mihajlo Mitrović, "Zapis o tri moja dela," *Arhitektura Urbanizam* 66 (1970): 6–11.

39. However, when I asked Mitrović in 2014, who then was ninety-two years old, why he didn't put on the facade motives from Catholic cathedrals or Muslim mosques, both of which were abundant in Yugoslavia, he dismissed my implication immediately. Mitrović was no stranger to nationalistic motives in his later work, such as the sculpture of an eagle on a residential building on Takovska Street in Belgrade that "looks" toward the ruins of Radio-Television of Serbia, bombed by NATO in 1999. Interview with the author held in Belgrade on 17 July 2014. See also Staničić, "Refugee Shelters done Differently."

40. Vladimir Kulić, Maroje Mrduljaš, and Wolfgang Thaler, *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Berlin: Jovis, 2012).

41. Ivan Štraus, *Arhitektura Jugoslavije: 1945–1990* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991).

42. P. H. Liotta, "Paradigm Lost: Yugoslav Self-Management and the Economics of Disaster," *Balkanologie* 5, no. 1–2 (2001), https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/681.

43. Miodrag Vujošević, *Planning in the Post-Socialist Political and Economic Transition* (Belgrade: Institute for Architecture and Spatial and Urban Planning of Serbia, 2003); Slavka Zeković, Miodrag Vujošević, and Tamara Maričić, "Spatial Regularization, Planning Instruments and Urban Land Market in a Post-Socialist Society: The Case of Belgrade," *Habitat International* 48 (2015): 65–78.

44. Rael, *Borderwall as Architecture.*

45. Here I want to use the opportunity to express gratitude to my dear friend and colleague Milena Shundovska from Bitola for all her help and support in conducting this investigation.

46. Interviews with Todor Jugov and Mihailo Tokarev were conducted in early 2016. Perhaps an important lesson here is to be extremely critical and wary when you are interviewing living architects about their work. A well-known architectural critic in Serbia, Bojan Kovačević, once said—in jest of course—that he can't wait for some famous architects to perish so he could evaluate their work properly!

47. Janev and Križnik, "From Open City towards Grand National Capital"; Jasna Stefanovska and Janez Koželj, "Urban Planning and Transitional Development Issues: The case of Skopje, Macedonia," *Urbani Izziv* 23, no. 1 (2012): 9–-100.

48. Aleksandar Staničić, "Transition Urbicide: Post-war Reconstruction in Post-socialist Yugoslavia," in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Cultural Heritage and Conflict*, ed. Ihab Saloul (London: Palgrave Macmillan, *forthcoming*).

49. In 2018 two parties reached an agreement by which FYR of Macedonia would change its name to North Macedonia and renounce its pretensions to Hellenistic cultural heritage, so it could finally continue its integration into the European Union and NATO.

50. Philippou, "Spatial Extensions of the Right to Seek Asylum."

51. Huub Dijstelbloem, *Borders as Infrastructures: The Technopolitics of Border Control* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), 173.

52. Armina Pilav et al., "How to Spatially Mediate Conflicts?" *Footprint* 14, no. 2 (2020): 1–10.

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