

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Constructing a Travel Landscape: A Case Study of the Sljeme Motels along the Adriatic Highway

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The construction of the Adriatic Highway began in 1954, the result of the belated modernisation of the Federal People's Republic of Croatia. The aim was to develop a unique transportation system and by doing so, to help create a cohesive territory from previously disconnected fragments of coastline. It was not until the 1960s, thanks to the state's increasing interest in tourism, that traffic increased dramatically. The Sljeme motel chain along the new highway, designed by architect Ivan Vitić in 1965, is emblematic of architecture developed primarily for travellers in cars.¹ These motels could even be perceived as extensions of the highway, a tourist architecture that differs from the subsequent period when tourist complexes were built en masse along the coast and designed exclusively as final travel destinations.

Introduction

Alison Smithson's book *AS in DS: An Eye on the Road* (2001) is an eyewitness account of a period when the ultimate purpose of driving was the journey itself. Her descriptions of a sequence of car trips, accompanied by a wealth of visual material, offer the reader an almost cinematic experience. Her words, drawings, and photographs allow us to see 'the new kind of landscape emerging from the new movement patterns made possible by the car' (Van den Heuvel 2008: 198). According to Dirk Van den Heuvel, the Smithsons found 'walking, visiting, moving through cities, sites, landscapes, territories' an 'intuitive form of survey' that helped interpret landscape as 'tracery of patterns ... as seen from the road' (2013: 198–199). Before their famous journey in a Citroën DS, Alison and Peter Smithson drove a Jeep. In Smithson's book, Bruno Krucker states that in 1956 Smithsons drove to Dubrovnik to a CIAM meeting in that very Jeep (Smithson 2001: n.p.). In 1956 no continuous paved road existed, so it would have been difficult for the Smithsons to reach Dubrovnik by car (hence the Jeep). Prior to 1956, sections of narrow gravel roads connected coastal towns to the hinterland. Since access to the coast was blocked in large parts by a mountain barrier, an uninterrupted route from the north (Rijeka) to the south (Dubrovnik) was not possible. According to Mumford (2002: 256), most CIAM members reached Dubrovnik on board a ship from Venice. This was during a time when Dubrovnik was part of the People's Republic of Croatia (PRC), one of the six republics of Yugoslavia.² The coastal road to Dubrovnik that was to become the backbone of the Yugoslav road network, the Adriatic Highway [Jadranska magistrala], came later, in the 1960s.³

The highway facilities and signalling equipment that followed the construction of the Adriatic Highway were

the typical structures that supplemented the driving experience and enhanced the enjoyment of it: signposts, viewpoints, resting places, restaurants, motels, and campsites. Between 1960 and 1970 the most prevalent travellers were explorers who valued the journey itself more than other considerations. However, this type of traveller soon changed with the rise of mass tourism. In the 1960s, highway infrastructure became a priority, since the cost of constructing a railway would have been too high, and therefore clearly uneconomical. Only five years after the completion of the highway, which served as the only available mode of transportation connecting the various regions along the coast, the number of foreign cars that crossed the borders into Yugoslavia rose from one million in 1963 to an astonishing 14 million by 1970 (Cullen 1979: 22). For this reason, the series of motels along the Adriatic Highway is a valuable testament to this specific point in the history of both coastal and tourist architecture.⁴

Framing the Adriatic Highway: Between *Autobahn* and *Autostrada*

Numerous European projects to construct fast, modern road networks began in the 1930s. Infrastructural systems of equal ambition initiated in Yugoslavia in the mid-1950s and 1960s also demonstrated an increasing interest in exploring the cinematic and visual potential of the experience of travelling.

The planning and execution of the German *Autobahn* network relied on purely functional and utilitarian concerns by including elements of pleasurable and safe driving (Vahrenkamp 2010; Geddes 1940). Demonstrating an acute awareness of the need to successfully frame the landscape, the designers of the *Autobahn* blended roads with their immediate natural settings through adjustments to curves and the accentuation of vistas (see Zeller 2011; Williams 2002). Echoes of these efforts in Yugoslavia are easily traced, as will be shown later.

Another well-documented example, that of the Italian *autostrada*, the Autostrada del Sole (1956–1964) in particular, differs somewhat from its German counterpart. The designers prioritised greater travelling speeds by creating long straight stretches of highways for fast, uninterrupted driving. Another novelty was the inclusion of spectacular roadside architecture, made possible by the financial impetus and branding power of corporations such as Agip and Pavesi (Greco 2010; Moraglio 2008).

Yugoslav, or more specifically Croatian, attempts at constructing a modern, safe, and aesthetically pleasing large road network clearly follow these international examples. The Adriatic Highway was a pioneering feat of civil engineering that began in 1954, but the intended pace was a struggle to maintain until 1958, when delays necessitated the launch of an additional federal investment programme. The construction process then gained momentum after the completion of the most challenging stretches, leading up to the opening ceremony in 1965.⁵ Through the systematic process of connecting previously semi-autonomous settlements and cities along the coast, the highway united the territory of the eastern Adriatic coast. Despite the modest material and technological means available, it was carefully planned and executed to both maximise driving pleasure and serve as a gateway for foreign visitors to explore the beauty of the coast. The construction of the highway initiated two parallel processes with far-reaching consequences. The first was the state-sponsored, large-scale development of the tourist industry, and the second was the excessive construction of private secondary housing, mostly on former vineyard plots, a move also intended to accommodate the influx of tourists. Both processes permanently transformed the coastline and the appearance and use of the road that had triggered these processes.

The Economic and Political Background of the Construction of the Highway

In spite of Yugoslavia's large investment into industrialising and electrifying the country during the five years after World War II, its standard of living underwent no significant changes until the 1960s (Dobrivojević 2013). The initial promotional campaigns for the highway in the 1950s were directed primarily at foreign visitors. The joys of travelling by car were already being touted as early as 1957, as in the following example from a tourist newspaper:

Tourist travel can really be compared to a performance or a huge event ... For a tourist visiting our country for the first time, such a visit is the 'premiere.' One of the basic tasks in tourism is to interest the tourists in visiting and to provide the impetus to visit those areas of our country that represent our rich tourist 'stage' through a varied and interesting natural, artistic, and historical screenplay. (Knežević 1957: 10; all translations are by Andy Jelčić)

The development of automotive tourism on the eastern Adriatic coast coincided with a time when the car was regarded as an object of adoration and a desired status

symbol for modern families. The automobile itineraries of the time presented driving as a search for new experiences, and pictures of beautiful coastal destinations were thus accompanied by detailed suggestions for leisure activities (JAZU 1965). The late 1950s saw the increasing interest of foreign tourists in the eastern Adriatic. In fact, for 'most tourist guides, a visit to Yugoslavia meant a visit to Croatia' (Duda 2003: 817) (Fig. 1).

The main reason for the delay between the modernisation efforts of road-building of Western European countries and that of Yugoslavia, apart from the geographical constraints of the narrow strip of inhabited land on which the highway was built, lay in the fact that the eastern

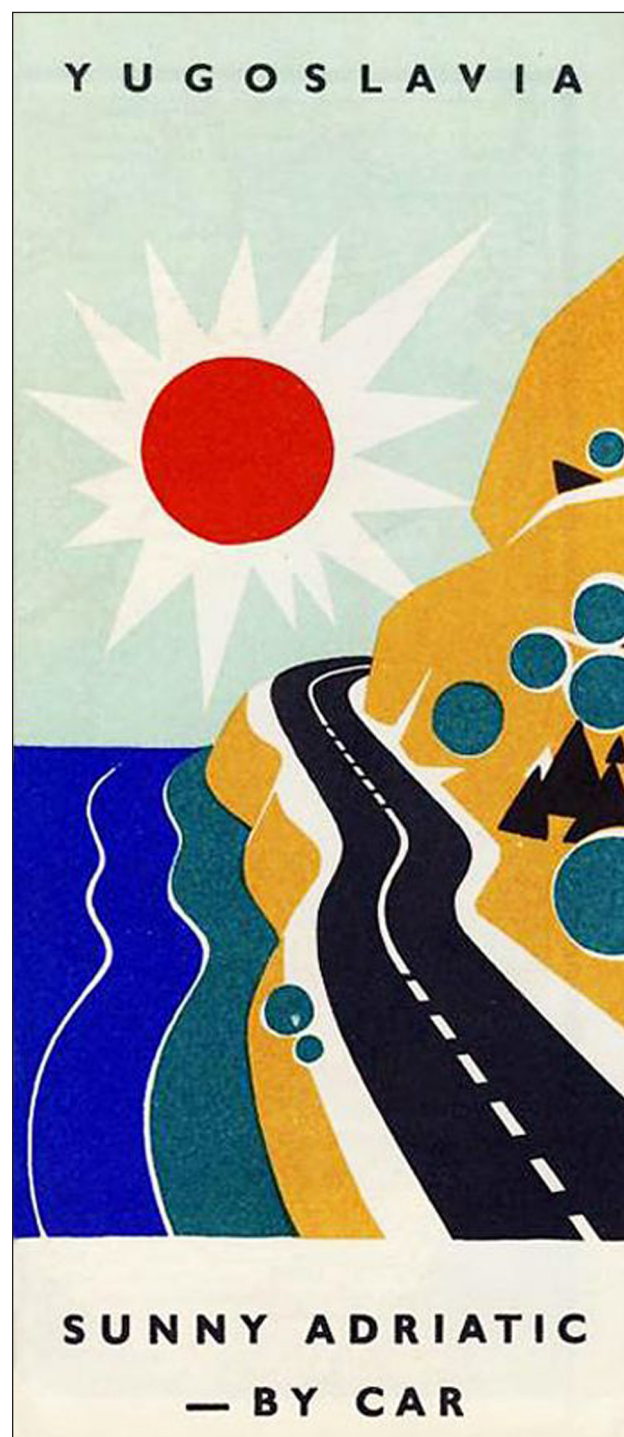


Figure 1: A typical cover of a Yugoslav tourist guide framing a part of the Dalmatian coast. Illustrator unknown.



Figure 2: Passenger bus driving over an old gravel road. This was the coastal environment before the construction of the highway. A postcard, from the 1930s; photographer unknown.

Adriatic coastline was historically divided between several competing centres of power (**Fig. 2**). The borders changed frequently, and had long prevented any long-term planning for the territory as an integral entity. The early 20th century, until World War II, saw a succession of states governing the Croatian coast, including the Austrian and Hungarian administrations of the dual Austro-Hungarian Empire; the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1919, with the Kingdom of Italy laying claim to large swathes of territory; and finally the Independent State of Croatia in 1941, a Nazi puppet regime. This excludes the various interim shifts in local government that also hindered the region's economic progress. It was not until 1945 and the inauguration of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) that the necessary political and economic preconditions for the development of the coast were met. However, post-war reconstruction turned out to be an uphill task for the newly formed state.

In its 1963 report assessing the first loan request for the construction of the southern section of the Adriatic Highway, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) gave a precise account of the current state of the Yugoslav road network:

Yugoslavia has a highway network of about 0.32 km per sq. km, compared to about 0.7 for Italy, 1.0 for Poland and nearly 3 for France ... In 1961 the number of motor vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants was 12, the second lowest in Europe; it compares to 40 for Poland, 143 for Italy, and 250 for France. But while the absolute level is still low, the progress made in recent years is very great. Thus the modern highway network has expanded from 3,482 km in 1955 to 9,000 km in 1962 and the number of motor vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants has increased from about 3 to 14 during this period. (IBRD 1963: 4)

The construction of the Adriatic Highway was preceded by the construction of a Central Highway, called the 'Brotherhood and Unity Highway' (begun in 1948 and completed in 1963) for political reasons. This traffic backbone, initiated immediately after World War II, though both were planned at the same time, stretched from the Austrian border to the Greek border, and it connected four capital cities of the Yugoslav republics:

Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, and Skopje. The purpose of its construction was to unify state territory both economically and symbolically – it was a conscious effort at nation-building, intended to further integrate the newly created multi-ethnic federation of nations. The two highways were to converge in Skopje in the Republic of Macedonia and form a circulation system that would open the country up to the West and enable unrestricted travel all the way to Greece, where tourism was already booming.

Economic interests would soon transcend initial political motivations. The Yugoslav project of expanding the highway network, with substantial foreign financial support, began 'to attract attention from across the Iron Curtain' (Schipper 2008: 214). The construction of the highway and its potential for tourism would spur Bulgaria (1965) and Poland (1971) to connect with Yugoslavia. In this way, the construction of roads attempted to bridge the standoff between the Eastern bloc and the Western European countries, in spite of the crisis in relations that had come to a head after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

The main condition of the IBRD for approving the loan in 1963 was the completion of the entire length of the Adriatic Highway, even if it meant leaving the final two sections of the Central Highway unfinished for the time being. Clearly, the bank saw a far greater potential return on investment with this road, which they associated with the rise in the tourist industry:

Net receipts from foreign tourism [in Yugoslavia] increased from US \$6 million equivalent in 1959 to \$23 million in 1962, and the coastal resorts accounted for nearly 80 per cent of foreign tourism. With the improvement of highways, the proportion of foreign tourists arriving by motor vehicle has increased from about one-half in 1959 to nearly two-thirds [in 1963]. (IBRD 1963: 12)

Plans for the construction of the highway revealed that investments in tourism required considerably less financing compared to industrial development, which had previously been the priority. As the more affluent Western European tourists would provide an increase in tourist revenue that domestic guests could not, the Yugoslav government began to encourage the influx of foreign visitors, though this orientation towards tourism put Yugoslavia in the position of being the only communist country outside the Eastern bloc to not restrict the movements of Western European tourists. According to Igor Tchoukarine:

'The Croatian planning commission ... estimated that tourists from Western countries represented 22.6 percent of all foreign tourists in Croatia between January and November 1948. Not surprisingly, tourists from socialist countries represented 69.6 percent of foreign fluxes' (2010: 110).

The numbers of Western European tourists continued to increase, as opposed to those (numbers pl.) of Eastern European tourists, which decreased in 1968 and represented only 16 per cent of all foreign overnight stays (Tchoukarine 2010: 123).

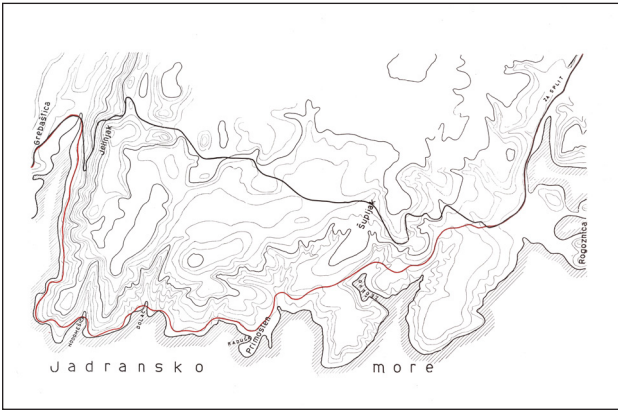


Figure 3: The new route meandering through a previously inaccessible coastal zone. Notice the different nature of the new (red) and the old (black) routes. From Kečkemet (1965: 25); photographer unknown.

Features of the Adriatic Highway

The laborious construction of the Adriatic Highway, named as such only after its completion, took 11 years. Sections of highway were constructed in succession from north to south and put into use as soon as they were completed (Varlandy and Čibej 1965).

On the Rijeka-Zadar section of the highway, which was completed by 1960, traffic grew nearly five fold between 1956 and 1961, from about 200 to 1,000 vehicles [per day]; on other sections, too, a doubling of traffic within a year or two after completion ... and a tripling not long thereafter, is not uncommon. (IBRD 1963: 13)

The imperative to complete the road as quickly as possible required huge domestic engineering and technological resources, and manpower above all; the workers included civilians (youth brigades) and the army (OTSJ 1960). Having no hands-on experience, engineers and workers struggled with stone day after day and invented new methods to conquer the steep and inhospitable terrain.

The route of the new highway was initially intended to follow the segments of existing roads and overlap with them (Fig. 3). This would allow the road to be pragmatically engineered and easily aligned, both economic considerations. However, other impulses began to influence its design. It became obvious that this major highway did not have a pre-established route, but one that was in fact often negotiated on-site in discussions with local government representatives (Celmić 2005: 95). Many coastal towns that lacked other resources did not want to be circumvented by the route; if the road did not pass close to a community, that community would not profit from the huge influx of foreign currency that would follow.

The design of the route could not follow the engineering of early planning stages, and not just because of the on-site negotiations with communities along the coast. In fact, while the construction of the highway had up to 1960 been managed primarily by construction



Figure 4: Characteristic austere scenery of the Adriatic Highway immediately after its completion and ready for tourist exploration. Compare with Figure 2. From Klemenčić (2004: 47); photographer unknown.

engineers, architects then began to participate, marking a critical change in how the highway was conceptualized. These architects played a vital role in formulating the paradigm shift in deliberations around the parameters of the route's design. They entered the discussion about the planning of the route with great passion, raising awareness of the road's aesthetic aspects and its landscape qualities, as opposed to the initial approach, which had been grounded in pure engineering pragmatism. They pleaded that, along with traffic principles, the design of the route should take wide panoramas into account and lanes should be shaped by conceiving of them as spatial art, so that a 'constant examination of views during the drive, along with keeping the driver concentrated, should provide both him and the passengers with many attractive scenes and experiences' (Boltar 1963: 18) (Fig. 4).

In an article of 1947 about designing highways in different landscapes, which was published by the technical magazine *Naše građevinarstvo* (*Our Construction*), the Croatian architect Antun Ulrich refers to pre-war German literature on the subject, citing Alwin Seifert and Erich Heinecke, among others. Seifert, a landscape architect from Munich, played a prominent role in 'the elevation of his aesthetic and artistic appreciation of nature into a valid guideline for road building' (Zeller 1999: 225). Ulrich relied on these aesthetic principles in his pioneering work. He warns of the shortening of perspective that can occur while driving, and stresses that highway design should avoid long, monotonous stretches during which the driver is forced to stare only at the road before him (Ulrich 1947: 137).⁶ He advises that such exceedingly long, straight stretches of road should be reduced by the addition of long curves. He also says that striking scenes are very desirable, and the slopes of embankments or roadcuts that are exposed to the driver's gaze should preferably blend into the terrain. In his words, only a 'harmoniously shaped route in terms of the plane and lateral view would yield a clear grasp of the traffic situation and lend a natural flow to the highway' (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: The greenery along the Adriatic Highway route formed a landscaped corridor. From Kečkemet (1965: 113); photographer unknown.

Ulrich's ideas about road design included bridges, viaducts, embankments, viewpoints, and other accompanying road infrastructure, adjusted, however, to fit into their surroundings:

One should not make the mistake of typifying their architectural design. A good solution requires that objects be accommodated to surroundings in which they have been built and harmonised with it to the greatest possible extent. Landscapes vary, so it is logical that the architectural design of particular objects will have to be variegated and characteristic of the areas through which the road passes. (Ulrich 1947: 142)

The early publication of this article coincided with the initial difficulties in the construction of highways in Yugoslavia and contributed to a lively discussion on the planning and construction of the Central Highway, which served as a testing ground for the concepts that would later be elaborated in the planning of the Adriatic Highway.

A 'Humanised' Road and 'Inhuman' Construction

The gradual improvement in working conditions in Yugoslavia and the nationwide introduction and propagation of annual paid vacations created the motivation and opportunity for a new kind of visitor to the Adriatic coast – domestic tourists. This was closely followed by consideration of ways to optimise every aspect of the time workers spent on their vacations, from the quality of the journey itself to the development of various types of accommodation (Duda 2010).

The rise of domestic tourism notwithstanding, facilitating the entry of foreign visitors was of far greater importance. In 1963, spatial planners calculated that a tourist coming from the northwestern border (which is where most of them entered Yugoslavia) would need six leisurely days of driving to reach the farthest Croatian destination in the south, Dubrovnik (Boltar 1963). It was clear that a journey this long required a succession of service stations, lodgings, shops, and entertainment facilities,

such as for mini-golf or sailing (Andrić 1961). However, Croatia could not compete with the Italian *autostradas*, which were well equipped with numerous emerging types of architecture. Instead, proponents of a new discourse on the 'humanised road' said that the Croatian coast offered something different: the 'attractiveness' and the 'aesthetic component' of the driving experience (Boltar 1963).

Propaganda for the highway focused on its beauty, though not just because of the humanised road discourse; following the Italian example of development was not financially feasible at that time. The construction of the highway was mostly financed by the state, while the accompanying infrastructure depended on local self-government and companies that, at the time, could not afford to build more ambitious services.⁷ Therefore, the feature promoted as the primary reason to use the highway was the individual freedom to explore the landscape the highway afforded. The tourist newspapers of the time idealised tourists as free-wheeling 'nomads' who picked their routes on a whim, stopped at attractive resting places, and pulled over at scenic outposts with open views of the sea, islands, and mountains (Pecikozić 1958). Newspapers advertised the locally produced Fiat Seicento car, known locally as the 'Fičo', equipped with a little boat on the roof. It gave even more exploratory freedom to the model tourist (OTSJa 1965).

The Italian *autostradas* and German *Autobahns* were fast transit roads whose routes generally avoided cities, making contact with them only at their outskirts. Compared to Italian roads with at least four parallel fast lanes divided by a green stretch, the Adriatic Highway must have looked like a local road (Sirišćević 1968). Its initial width of only seven metres was a response to the steep and rough terrain and indented coast, the line of which it closely followed, especially in its northwestern section. This narrow and winding road simply could not accommodate the intended speed of 70 kph. Drivers had to change direction, negotiate tight turns, evade fallen rocks, and drive along steep cliffs above the sea, so the speed often dropped to 30 kph (Boltar 1963). Slow driving, especially through the towns and close to the sea, shaped the highway's character. Instead of a fast transit corridor for masses of tourists, it would occasionally become no more than a busy town street. In fact, the inhabitants of towns en route turned it into their main artery. The most outstanding example of this is in the town of Omiš, where the highway was built over Fošal, the town's promenade (Celmić 2005). Instead of disrupting everyday life and its rituals, the highway blended into daily pedestrian flows.

With each completed segment, the planting of greenery along the route was discussed as a means of integrating the road into the landscape. Additional embellishments were proposed, including hiding traces of rough cuts made through rock that had been obstructing the route by planting Mediterranean greenery in front of it, especially pine trees. The demolition of all dilapidated and unseemly structures that obstructed panoramic views was often ordered, and where this was not possible, they were also hidden by trees (Gjurković 1959). Whatever the reasons, this greenery did enhance the aesthetic value of

the highway and made the route less monotonous. This special care in the route's design was also guided by the intention to launch 'an image of the country and life' that would unfold before the tourists' eyes (Ziani 1961: 6).

The manipulation and reuse of local stone contributed to the construction of the highway, and in fact local stone was later used to clad the Sljeme motel façades as well. The highway was built on uneven terrain: not only did the composition of the soil vary, but route designers had to be resourceful while arriving at economical solutions to the difficult terrain. As is apparent in a series of blueprints that show the cross-section of the highway (Bušelić 1965: 101), it only rarely passed through flat areas. The terrain had to be broken and the road had to cut through bedrock or run over ample stone bed loads, whose slopes were clad in hand-bonded broken stone (Fig. 6). The soil changed from the north to the south, from limestone to marl and sandstone, and these were also used as building materials for the highway in the construction of banks, slopes, side ditches, and delineating posts (Kečkemet 1965). Even today, we can observe the original segments of the stone elements from which the highway was built.

The newly accessible coastal area was now more attractive to tourism-related ventures, which would irrevocably change the visual field and the experience of travel. Although the highway had been heavily criticised for its inadequate relationship with the landscape ever since construction began (Seissel 1963: 3), the Sljeme motel chain was acclaimed for successfully blending into the immediate natural setting of individual sites. Both private entrepreneurs and organisations had been given the chance to purchase land along the coast and build various structures, and they immediately appreciated that one side of the highway was more valuable than the other.⁸ Architects had warned early on that the construction of the highway would divide the whole area into two sections of differing value. The part above the road had no access to the sea, and it was therefore of less value for tourist construction, while the area between the road and the sea was of the highest value and held the greatest potential for exploitation. In some places, the road passed close to the sea, prompting development on all land along the road for those stretches, thus irreversibly diminishing the quality of coastal landscapes. 'This tendency to use the coastal terrain along a narrow stretch', Josip Seissel writes:

As well as directing the construction towards the most valuable parts of the landscape, will soon bring us to a point at which the most beautiful parts of the Adriatic landscape are consumed, and only devalued areas will remain available at a time when we will perhaps be capable of better, higher-quality construction.⁹ (Seissel 1963: 3)

Both Croatian architects and tourists discovered the value of the highway's environment. Architects not only observed morphological and material variations, but also became aware of slight but discernible differences in the local Mediterranean ambience along the route from the north to the south. Careful study of the landscape along the way was to raise the issue of the possibilities and

limitations for building in particular locations.¹⁰ This is the historical context in which the Sljeme motel chain was built – everything was still a clean slate (Fig. 7).

Case Study: Sljeme Motels

Tourist development on the Croatian Adriatic 'really exploded' only after 1965, when the Adriatic Highway was completed (Mrduljaš 2013: 172). Maroje Mrduljaš notes that the Adriatic Highway 'triggered an accelerated spate of construction that produced numerous hotel complexes, generally characterised by well-elaborated modernist architecture' (173). Mrduljaš refers here not to motels, but in particular to the highly visible hotels built in the 1960s that could be distinguished as modernist icons, frequently placed in coastal towns and close to historic centres (as opposed to the mega-structures, hotels, and resorts that began appearing in the 1970s outside the constrained perimeters of towns). Three such hotels stand out: the Marjan Hotel, designed by Lovre Perković in Split (1963); the Excelsior Hotel by Neven Šegvić in Dubrovnik (1965); and the Ambassador Hotel by Zdravko Bregovac in Opatija (1966). By the late 1970s, an expanded range of tourist architecture typologies adhered to the structuralist principles of design by starting from the smallest hotel unit – the room. The multiplication of this single unit allowed for the exploration of diverse configurations had expanded to include pavilions, bands, terraced structures, and volumes with atriums (Mrduljaš 2013) (Fig. 8).

The development of motels took a different route from that of hotels. The Croatian hospitality sector, which conducted preliminary research on motel design, established some requirements, one of which was that the motels should accommodate local needs at minimum cost. Another was that all building material should be procured from local producers. Twenty locations along the Adriatic Highway were identified as sites suitable for the construction of motels. The first motel was built in 1961 in the town of Starigrad, with prefabricated elements. A couple of other buildings soon followed. The requirement to use as few construction elements as possible led to their technical and organisational uniformity (Alfieri and Marković 1959). These early motels were in no way suited to the



Figure 6: The cladding of slopes in hand-bonded broken local stone. From Kečkemet (1965: 48); photographer unknown.

specific climatic characteristics of the Mediterranean or the usual construction modes of traditional settlements with stratified, rich, outdoor areas.

The trend changed with the motels designed by the Croatian architect Ivan Vitić (1917–1984). He is a unique phenomenon among Croatian architects, as he approached every assignment with an equal sensibility towards the materiality, context, and plasticity of architecture. His sensibility towards the landscape is clear in his early work with Josip Seissel on the Pioneers' Town northeast of Zagreb, which demonstrates a strong interrelation between the architecture and its natural setting. The Pioneers' Town consists of 20 housing pavilions, a central restaurant, two hotels, an open-air theatre, a school, sports fields, and playgrounds. The natural sloping configuration of the site was here utilised by placing the pavilions around meadows in the upper zone and the sports fields below them. All of the pavilions are carefully spread out to allow unobstructed views while still providing the impression of a cohesive whole. The ruling principle of the town's final design was the authority of nature, which both influenced the design on the drawing board and modified it during the construction process. According to the architects, the goal was to maintain the scale of the surroundings and 'speak the same language as the neighbouring villages' (Seissel and Vitić 1948: 486). Individual buildings were built using locally found materials such as green shale and wood (Bauten für die Jugend 1953). Bearing in mind that the users of this complex were children, the 'pioneers', this was a rather thoughtful and deliberately didactic decision. Typical architectural production of the time, in contrast, consisted primarily of

housing slabs built with limited design ambitions, a crude range of materials, and austere finishing.

Before moving on to build the Sljeme motels, Vitić also designed a housing ensemble in 1953 on the island of Vis, in a somewhat different and more urban context. He distributed the architectural layout amongst several smaller buildings arranged in a tight composition on a constrained plot (Glažar 2005). This articulation and the interstices between the volumes enabled the equal treatment of and complex relationships between indoor and outdoor residential space that is typically present in traditional Mediterranean typologies. The ensemble itself consists of a range of architectural elements – terraces, outdoor staircases, and stone wall screens – all of which unambiguously refer to elements of the architectural language of Dalmatian towns as places of gathering and vibrant social life.

Another project must not be left out of this sequence of Vitić's prominent work – the Jadran hotel and its adjacent cinema and municipal building in the coastal town of Šibenik, built in 1959. This highly articulated complex was built on the waterfront, in place of a large section of the town that was destroyed in World War II. It was conceived as part of the new skyline of the town as seen from the sea. The hotel is set next to a traditional residential building. Vitić's design follows the volume of the existing building, but instead of repeating the stone texture throughout the façade, he uses it for portions of the ground floor and the outermost section, where it spans the entire height of the volume. This created a strong frame for the main façade, which he articulated as a complex composition of full-height glazing, brightly coloured stucco infills of various heights, and different fabric screens set behind glass. The other parts of the complex are finished with a combination of stone walls and stucco, even incorporating highly stylised arches in the entrance to the cinema complex. The buildings form a sequence of squares and passages, clearly denoting the architect's acute sensitivity to the tradition of Dalmatian towns (Fig. 9).

The Sljeme motel chain designed by Vitić consisted initially of six projects distributed along the coast, beginning in Trieste, Italy, in 1962, and the remainder heading south, in the Croatian towns of Umag, Rijeka, Biograd, Primošten, and Trogir, only three of them built in 1965. An additional motel was also planned in the Serbian town of Kragujevac in 1966. Three of the five motels planned



Figure 7: A comparison of the period just before the Trogir motel was built, when everything was still a clean slate, compared to today, a time of extensive construction. Used with permission from the DGU.

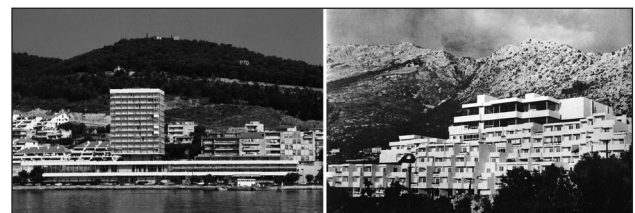


Figure 8: The Marjan Hotel in Split of 1963 by Lovro Perković and the Plat hotel of 1971 by Petar Kušan. The first hotel is designed as an elementary geometric shape, while the second is conceived as a multiplication of the basic room unit. Used with permission from the AHA.

in Croatia were built simultaneously, in Rijeka, Biograd, and Trogir, and they were designed for the Sljeme agricultural and industrial company (Fig. 10). The final motel, Košuta, constructed near Kragujevac, was commissioned by a Dubrovnik catering firm. They are all impressive works of architecture, succinct in their expression. Vitić presented the project in a unique, little-known series of self-published booklets, and in them we find a careful selection of photographs of his designs, as well as collaged blueprint motifs, cost estimates, and newspaper clippings (Vitić 1967) (Fig. 11). These booklets portray an architect aware of the possibilities of the image as a means of communicating and promoting his work.

Vitić separated the architectural design of this ensemble of motels into a sequence of functionally and formally differentiated buildings, unlike the earlier motels built along this route (Fig. 12). Those motels were compact, free-standing buildings with a parking lot facing the road, the designs completely oblivious to their natural settings and the creative possibilities offered by the landscape (Fig. 13). The paramount feature of Vitić's motels is the multiple and varied entrances into individual residential units, which were mostly connected by covered passages and immersed within a lush, Mediterranean landscape (Fig. 14). Although Vitić's motels were also designs repeated within a standardised construction framework, he approached each of the sites differently.

All three motels built in Croatia are on the coastal side of the Adriatic Highway, between the road and the sea (Fig. 15). The number and distribution of elements vary between the complexes, as the local situation requires. In one of his self-published booklets, Vitić rationalises the element of variation by saying that 'Adriatic Highway, with its cultural and historical natural aspects and with its endless variations, does not tolerate templates in the shaping of spatial sections, but rather demands a unified architectural rhythmisation' (Vitić 1967: n.p.) (Fig. 16). The changes in the distribution of the buildings' positions within particular sites go hand in hand with Vitić's evaluation of the highway as a long and monotonous path, and with his aspiration to use his motels to materialise

the dire need for diversity and the articulation of a spatial 'rhythm'. At first glance, the motels in Trogir and Biograd might seem identical, but they are not. They are determined by their access from the highway, the shape and size of the plot, and the potential to achieve an optimal view from the units of lodging. Both complexes consist of a reception building with two annexes connected by covered passageways and accesses that run perpendicular to the highway. However, the approach from the highway reveals distinctively different spatial sequences because the orientation of units is optimised according to the

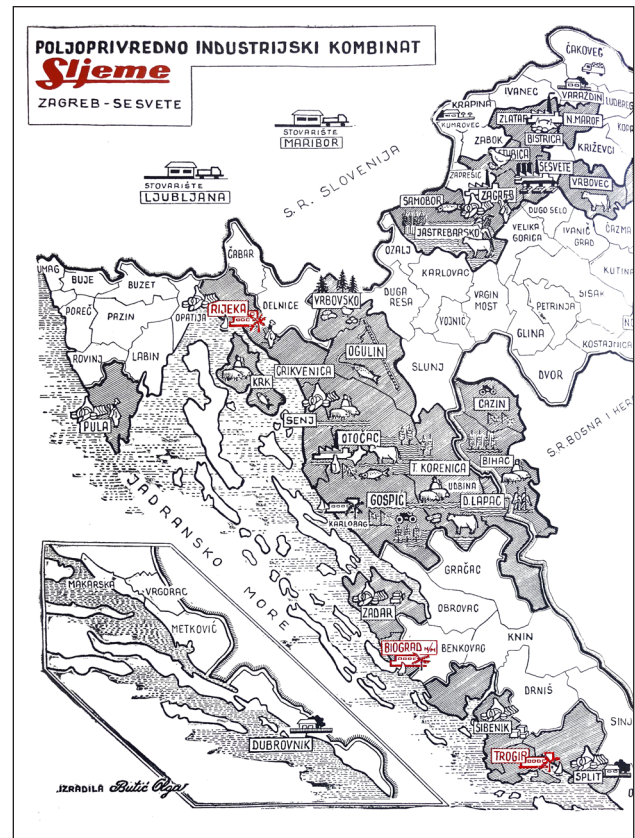


Figure 10: Sljeme corporation's map of operations, showing the sites of three of the motels. Notice that the location of the motels is regularly chosen according to the company's production facilities. From Butić (1965: 7).

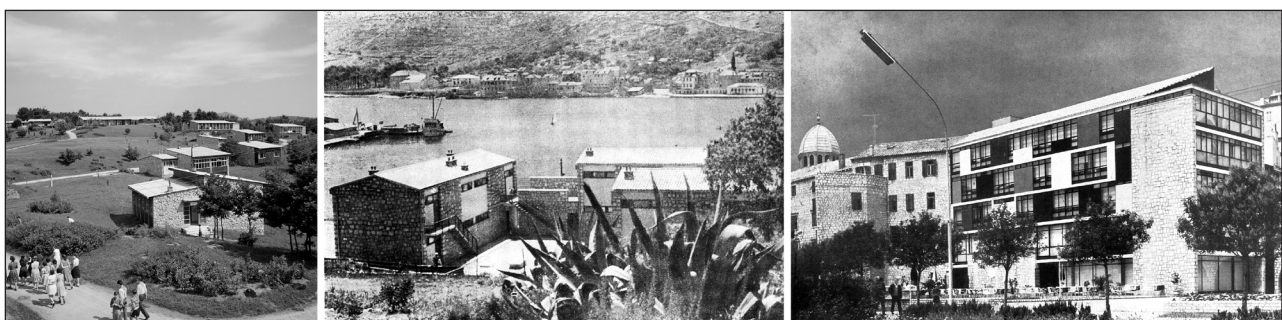


Figure 9: Three of architect Ivan Vitić's distinctive projects that display an equal sensitivity towards the context and materiality of architecture: his Pioneer's Town in Zagreb of 1948, a residential ensemble on the island of Vis of 1953, and the Jadran hotel in Šibenik of 1959. Used with permission from the HDA and AHA.



Figure 11: A collage of pages from a series of self-published booklets by architect Vitić showing the ground plan and a photograph of the motel in Rijeka and also a photograph of the motel in Biograd. Used with permission of the AHA.

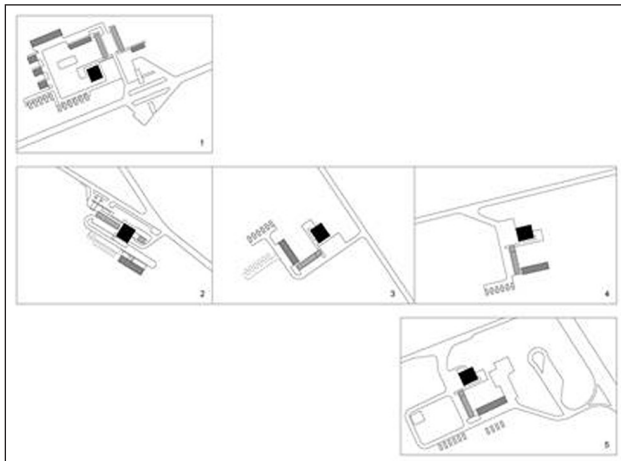


Figure 12: Five motels presented in a spatial sequence. (1) Trieste, (2) Rijeka, (3) Biograd, (4) Trogir, (5) Krajujevac. Each one consists of a U-shaped core with independent bungalows around it. Note the architectural operations of mirroring and rotating in Biograd and Trogir, and dismantling and assembling longitudinally in Rijeka. Drawn by Melita Čavlović.

variations of each site. Vitić rotates and mirrors the architectural axes and also translates the individual pavilions so that the rear side in Biograd becomes the front side in Trogir (Fig. 17).

All three motels draw from Vitić's initial design for the unbuilt Trieste complex. The original blueprints and the perspective drawings from 1962 show that it would have been the most complex structure of the entire system, with the greatest number of accommodation units, and it would have introduced a U-shaped core consisting of the main building with two annexes. This core would later be repeated in the construction of three of the motels, with a cluster of independent bungalows placed around it. The well-known logo of the Sljeme company, a boy wearing elements of a folk dress, is present on a tall advertising column depicted on the perspective view of the complex, which leads to the conclusion that this project may have been the first of the Sljeme motel chain.

In the sequence of motels built in Zagreb, Vis, and Šibenik, it might seem that Vitić subdued his design ambitions to a certain extent in the motel system project. However, in the perspective drawing of the Trieste complex from 1962 Vitić shows a shift from architecture for pedestrians (Pioneers' Town, Vis, and Šibenik complexes) to one clearly designed with drivers in mind. He extended the perspective drawing to include the small town of Basovizza at the outskirts of Trieste within the frame. He thus demonstrated his awareness of the sequence of views in which his motel would appear to drivers on the highway (Fig. 18). He enabled the equal, unrestricted access of cars to all structures within the complex while placing parking lots immediately in front of the units. Almost everything in the structure is designed to accommodate to car travellers. The main building contains a reception desk, a kitchen, a restaurant, and an open-air terrace, with the guest rooms on the first floor. There are two separate annexes and two types of detached pavilions. The basic unit of lodging is derived from the smallest of the accommodation facilities, a series of bungalows clustered around the core. Other structures are formed by multiplying this initial unit, ranging from other bungalow types with two to three units to three-storey annexes with a greater number of rooms. The decision to create a system out of one unit, whether by detaching it from or including it in a complex,



Figure 13: Three examples of motels built along the Adriatic Highway demonstrating their inferiority in comparison to Vitić's motel chain. From left to right, motels in Starigrad, Karlobag, and Ičići. Used with permission from the HDA and AHA.

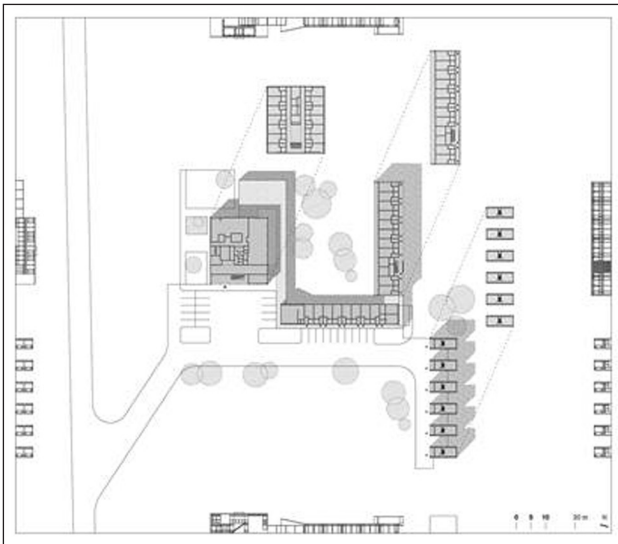


Figure 14: The Trogir motel, representing the entire motel chain. The number and distribution of the entrances and the organisation of the plot is strongly determined by the separation of the design into several architectural units. Plans and elevations drawn by the author according to the original blueprints, with permission of the HMA-HAZU.



Figure 15: The Trogir motel as an extension of the Adriatic Highway, with the historic town centre in the background. Used with permission from the HDA.

would open the possibility to approach the entire ensemble from a town-planning perspective, transcending the requirements of mere guest accommodation.

Vitić, a passionate driver, drew front views of the annexes with automobiles parked in front to a remarkable level of precision, even greater than in the actual motel designs themselves. These parked cars, each of them different, dominate the foreground instead of the façades of the buildings. This is therefore not a generic architectural motif drawn with the help of a template, but one made with the care and interest of an architect dedicated

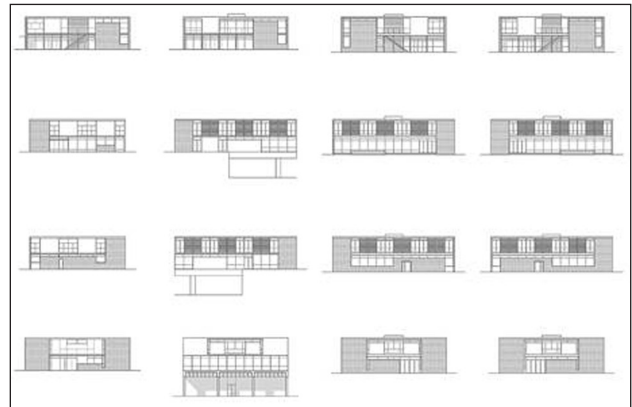


Figure 16: A comparison of the elevations of the main buildings. From left to right: Trieste, Rijeka, Biograd, Trogir. Drawn by the author by courtesy of the DAR and HMA-HAZU.



Figure 17: Lush Mediterranean greenery as an equal contributor to the total design. Used with permission of the MGT.

to exploring the driver's experience; in doing so, Vitić presents us the contours of his specific interpretation of the Adriatic Highway and the nascent phenomenon of car travel.

The surroundings of all the motels on the Croatian Adriatic are designed in an orthogonal system, within which all individual buildings can be reached by car. Individual bungalows and the interstices between them do not only frame segments of nature and bring rhythm into the landscape – they enable the cars, for which the interstices were left, to have a view of the sea or the trees. The view through the windscreens of the parked cars is the same as that from the rooms of the pavilions. The bungalows are the most compact and most poetic part of all of the designs. These two-storey structures were intended to be occupied by a single family. On the ground floor, only three metres wide, is a living room and sanitary facilities, while the first floor houses two bedrooms, accessed via a steep stairway resembling a ladder. Although the size could not offer the level of comfort that would soon be demanded by tourists, these cramped dimensions hint at the intended brief stay of the guests, while simultaneously

directing them towards the more intensive use of the external areas of the motel complex.

These accentuations of rhythm, views, and invitations to use the landscape reflect the architect's design process. He displayed a specific sensibility for a close relationship between a new means of transportation and the type of tourist structure developed to best accommodate it. He utilised the scenery as seen from behind the wheel as one of the key elements in organising his architectural complex.

Vitić's orchestration of movement through the ensemble, the organisation of the elements of the complex, the free compositions enabled by the skeletal construction of the elevations, and the framing of views was particularly successful in the case of Preluk Motel near Rijeka. This motel project won the 'Borba' Award, which was considered at that time the highest professional prize in Yugoslavia (Peulić 1966: 2).¹¹ The motel is located on a very steep and cramped slope overlooking the sea, and the view of the open sea and the islands is spectacular from its elevated position (Fig. 19). However, the terrain has forced Vitić to abandon the trademark U-shape of his core buildings. They are now set longitudinally, along the ridge. The main building and the shop stand above the access road, while the one-storey annex is dug into the ground, with the ground-level terrace as its roof. Below this linear core, Vitić added another annex and additional bungalows. Vertical retaining walls along the downward-sloping road are clad in stone to blend in with the surroundings and to control the view of the driver.

According to the original design, when a driver enters the complex from the highway, the road would first take the driver under the motel's main building, which towered above the road. A sharp turn would then open the view to the sea in an almost ceremonious, solemn approach to the parking lot, where car passengers could enjoy the views of the open sea. This coincides with Alison Smithson's observations about the experience of driving:

The permutations of movement within the capabilities of the private car can be experienced in the pattern of things seen from it. Monitoring the sensations of movement so experienced can



Figure 18: A perspective view of the Trieste project. This is the first and the most complex of the Sljeme motel chain. Courtesy of HMA-HAZU, Ivan Vitić Archive, item 2.

raise the mere mechanics of movement to a level of appreciation giving us thereby a taste of a sensibility about movement. (Smithson 2001: 151)

While the cost estimates of all the motels demanded the elevations be made of stone, they do not specify the exact kind or finish. However, a comparison of the types of stone and bond patterns utilised in the cladding of each of the motels shows an exclusive use of stone from local quarries nearest the sites, which Vitić had requested (Fig. 20). A comparison of the elevations reveals three distinctly different methods of stone bonding used for three different micro-ambiances. While the structure in Rijeka was clad in plates of broken stone, the slabs aligned horizontally in rows, cyclopean masonry was used in Trogir, and 'common bonding of broken stone' was used in Biograd (Peulić 1976: 113).

Walls seem to be the main architectural element of Vitić's formal procedure, be it the retaining walls, partition walls, or the exterior load-bearing walls. They are carefully distributed and guided by the idea of directing, hiding, or framing views. His retaining walls are sometimes detached, as in Rijeka, but in most cases they are used either as the accentuated volumes of single units, in the case of the bungalows, or as stone-clad containers of the long rows of rooms wedged between the opposing walls.

The case of the only motel constructed outside of the Dalmatian context is final proof of the intentionality of this assimilation and adaptation strategy. Vitić built the final motel in this series in the vicinity of the continental town of Kragujevac, southeast of Belgrade. It consists of the characteristic three-part U-core, near which we find a series of 10 bungalows, which together constitute the largest of these motel complexes. The Kragujevac motel overlaps with those built on the coast in almost every sense, except in an aberration in the final cladding – brick, the local construction material, was used here instead of stone. This motel continues to demonstrate that a firm framework of construction and composition allowed the appropriation of local materials and variations in organisation while still preserving the structural code of the original project. The motels designed for the Adriatic coast are valuable evidence of Vitić's specific process of creating a model flexible enough to allow for subtle variations that is nevertheless a system legible in all of the built motels.

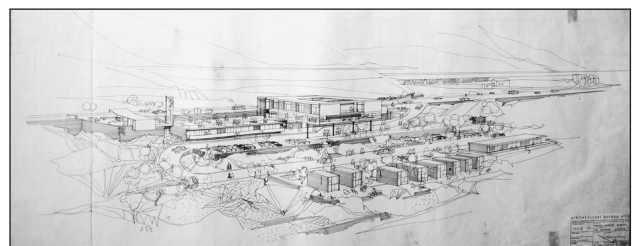


Figure 19: A perspective view of the Preluk motel near Rijeka located on a steep slope facing the sea. Courtesy of HMA-HAZU, Ivan Vitić Archive, item 14.

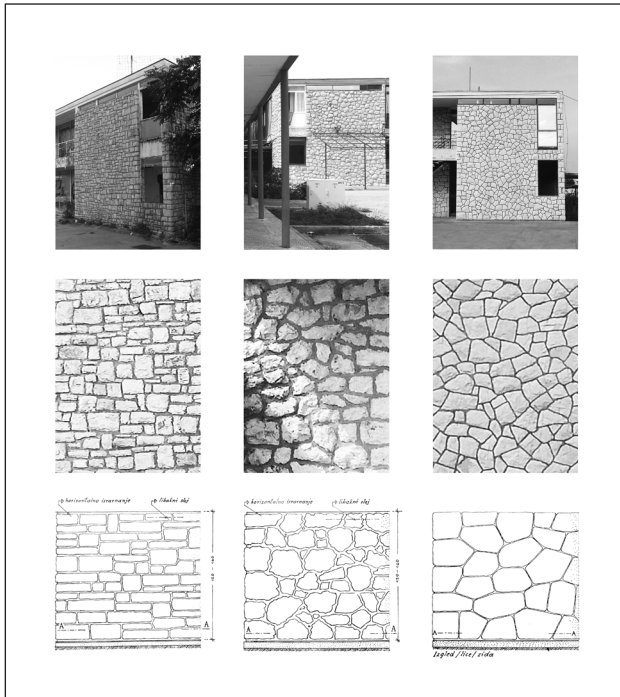


Figure 20: A sequence showing segments of the elevations of the three motels in Rijeka, Biograd, and Trogir, from left to right. The comparison reveals the use of variations of stone wall infills as a localising element. Compiled by Melita Čavlović.



Figure 21: The current decaying condition of the Trogir motel, from the 'Magistrala' photography project. Used with permission of photographer Bojan Mrđenović.

Conclusion

The development of the contemporary highway system, which coincided with the development of air travel, irrevocably changed how tourists arrived at the Adriatic coast, thus changing their perception of it. It also brought about an expansion of typologies of traffic infrastructure. In the latter part of the 20th century, with the planning of trans-European corridors within the broader context of tourist migrations, the importance of this area has changed. New itineraries, together with decades of expansive construction, slowly blurred the articulation of the original route of the Adriatic Highway. The repertoire of its construction elements, from its stone safety posts to its stone walls clad by hand, has aged and eroded, as have Vitić's motels. Today, the motels in Rijeka and Trogir have been left to decay. The only one still being used for tourist purposes is the one in Biograd. Their deterioration has resulted from multiple causes, primarily changes in ownership

that came in with the shift from socialism to capitalism after Croatia's establishment as an independent state in the 1990s. Recently, efforts to bring them back into use have been aided by a growing interest in preserving post-war modernist heritage. Only two of the motels from the Sljeme chain were recognised by the state as cultural heritage in 2013 and 2015, and are therefore listed for protection. Nevertheless, the state has done little to raise awareness of their decay and the need to protect them – instead, the impetus for this has come from the work of an NGO called Loose Associations. The motel chain deserves to be systematically re-evaluated, as well as protected, as a testament to a rare, successful synergy of the technical, architectural and landscape design culture (Fig. 21).

Notes

- ¹ Sljeme is the name of an agricultural and industrial company that produced and sold meat and meat products. In addition to investing in the only Croatian example of a motel chain on the Adriatic coast, they also invested in restaurants and snack bars, and worked intensively on expanding their catering services network.
- ² The 1963 Yugoslav Constitution changed the name of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) into the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). This effected a change in nomenclature of all of the Yugoslav republics. The People's Republic of Croatia (PRC), also mentioned in the main text, was subsequently renamed the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRC).
- ³ This essay will use the term 'highway' in the sense of a major state road with two lanes. The use of the term highway, or 'motorway' in the Croatian case may differ even within the same publication; for example, in describing the first Yugoslav traffic backbone, the Autoput Bratstva i Jedinstva, Dragan Popović (2010: 280) calls it the 'Brotherhood and Unity Motorway', while Kate Meehan Pedrotty (2010: 340) calls it 'Brotherhood and Unity Highway'.
- ⁴ About 600 km, the greatest portion of its total length, was built within PRC. Its route was determined by the highly indented Adriatic coast.
- ⁵ The Slovenian town of Kopar in the immediate vicinity of Trieste and Italy was chosen as the beginning of this route. Construction was continuous from north to south, but the intensity varied, dictated by technically difficult parts of the terrain and delays in financing.
- ⁶ Antun Ulrich (1902–1998) graduated from the Kunstgewerbeschule in Wien under Professor Josef Hoffmann. He was to establish himself in Zagreb in the 1930s, where he was one of the first to bring the ideas of the international style to Zagreb's milieu. After World War II, he founded his own private office in Zagreb (Uchytíl, Barišić Marenčić and Kahrović 2009).
- ⁷ The construction of the Adriatic Highway cost almost 52 billion dinars. Financing came from an international loan (23%), federal resources (57%), republic resources (14%), and the Yugoslav Army budget (6%) (Kečkemet 1965: 120). The southern part of the highway was built with an international loan from IBRD.

- ⁸ In 1967, the Institute of Urbanism in Zagreb observed that these 'linear sequences of buildings ... are alien to the heritage of Adriatic landscape'. Instead of distinctive roadside structures with emptiness between them, a continuous stretch of low-quality structures appeared.
- ⁹ All-encompassing construction on the Adriatic coast continues to this day. According to an official analysis of the Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning, about 150 km of the Adriatic coast had been urbanised by 1960. In the period between 1960–2000, an astonishing fivefold increase was recorded, from 150 km to 837 km (MGPU 2012: 65).
- ¹⁰ The issue of context is used in the same sense in which the Smithsons elaborate upon it. As Van den Heuvel notes, they 'would consistently emphasise the importance they attached to the issue of context, speaking of "specificity-to-place", and "the building's first duty is to its context" (2008: 23).
- ¹¹ Not only did the Rijeka motel win the 'Borba' Prize from the *Borba* newspaper, Vitić was also the first to receive this prize, which was to become the most prestigious architectural award in SFRY. (Tolić 2012: 372).

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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