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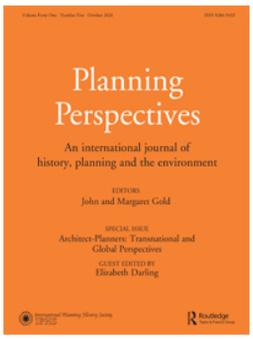
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Co-producing development: Yugoslavia and the UN Centre for Housing, Building, and Planning

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the reciprocal relationship between Yugoslavia and the United Nations Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (CHBP) within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme's technical assistance. Situating this cooperation within the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War and the growing significance of the Global South in international development, it argues that the UN's technical assistance apparatus was shaped less by the dominant powers of the Global North than by intermediate actors operating between North and South and closely engaging with Global South priorities. While the CHBP facilitated the circulation of planning knowledge and technical expertise, Yugoslav experts, institutions, and planning practices simultaneously influenced the Centre's agenda, professional networks, and operational strategies. Using the South Adriatic Regional Development Plan as a case study, the article analyses this mutually constitutive relationship, highlighting both the opportunities generated through international cooperation and the practical challenges encountered during implementation. In doing so, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the development of international planning expertise and situates Yugoslavia's role within the complex configuration of the UN technical assistance apparatus.

KEYWORDS

Yugoslavia; Montenegro; United Nations; Centre for Housing; Building and Planning; Cold War; development; technical assistance

Introduction

Established in 1965 under the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (CHBP) became a key institution in advancing global urban governance. It served as a hub for regional and urban planning expertise, facilitated international design cooperation, and played an important role in shaping the broader UN technical assistance framework.[1] Yet, despite its multilateral character, the CHBP was far from an idealized coalition of states committed solely to international cooperation. Precisely because it operated through a multilateral framework, it also became a site of geopolitical contestation, limiting the unilateral influence sought by the UN's most powerful member states. It is therefore not surprising that the establishment of the UN technical assistance programme was a contested process, driven largely by a coalition of Third World countries in which Yugoslavia played a particularly prominent role despite its European geography. The support of the First and Second Worlds was secured only to

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[1]Ciborowski, "United Nations Centre for Housing, Building, and Planning," 1086.

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the extent necessary to ensure the legitimacy of the emerging UN technical assistance framework. Against this background, using the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning and Yugoslavia as its focal points, this article examines the reciprocal relationship between the two, showing how the UN circulated expertise while Yugoslav experts and institutions simultaneously influenced the evolution of international development planning.

As Ijlal Muzaffar demonstrated in his work on the UN Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance across postcolonial African and Asian contexts, modernization was seen as a useful cover-up tool in sustaining fundamental imbalances produced by the Keynesian model, which came only as a substitute to colonial practices.[2] The architecture, in this context, is wittily perceived as a 'rabbit under the magic hat', acting as a formal protagonist of the modernization agenda. Łukasz Stanek, on the other hand, showed that modernization initiatives in the Global South should be understood as products of intersecting forces. These went far beyond domestic aspirations, and were deeply entangled in the Cold War geopolitics, shaped by rivalry with the Soviet Union.[3] Meanwhile, Ayala Levin demonstrated that modernization went hand in hand with non-alignment, which emphasized South–South cooperation.[4] In this context, she showcased the role of Israel in advancing an alternative model of development, one it framed as independent from Western colonial legacies, while paradoxically relying on practices shaped by its own settler-colonial experience in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Compared with these models of international collaboration, the paper claims that the CHBP planning framework did not follow a simple, one-way diffusion, whether from 'West to the rest', 'North to South', or even 'South to South'. Instead, it exemplified a multidirectional, cross-national mode of exchange. This dynamic was made possible by a paradoxical inversion in which the CHBP's agenda increasingly resonated with the development priorities of the Non-Aligned Movement, helping to strengthen its institutional position within the UN. In turn, countries of the Global South began to benefit from technical assistance in housing, building, and planning in ways that differed markedly from pre-1965 practices. The process involved both providers and recipients of technical knowledge emerging from the Global South, while the leadership reflected this shift. The Centre in New York was initially guided by Ernest Weissmann (1903-1985), a veteran of the UN technical assistance apparatus whose career began in 1950 as head of the Housing, Town and Country Planning Section within the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Drawing on fifteen years of experience and in direct cooperation with Yugoslavia's initiatives in the UN, he played a leading role in the establishment of the CHBP in 1965.[5] This was followed by directors of the Centre such as Robert Joseph Crooks (Trinidad), and Paul Eliel Mwaluko (Tanzania), while Adolf Ciborowski (1919–1987), a Polish national, served as Deputy Director for Research and Development.[6] Thus, the team assembled by Weissmann carried forward the institutional memory of the 1950s, providing a strong foundation for assisting developing countries. Although the Centre remained embedded within the power structures of the Global North, its staff composition and work programme aligned its development philosophy more closely with the realities and needs of the developing world.

In that context, the scholarship of Ljubica Spaskovska is valuable because it demonstrates that Yugoslavia was an active architect of internationalism, especially through the Non-Aligned

[2]Muzaffar, *Modernism's Magic Hat*.
[3]Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism*.
[4]Levin, *Architecture and Development*.
[5]Bulatović, "Mainstreaming a Regional Planning Discourse within the UN Technical Assistance Programme," 21-3.
[6]The team was aided by Colombian Rafael Mora Rubio, as the chief of housing section, Alberto Gonzales Gandolfi from Argentina, chief of building section, and Wilson Garces from Ecuador, chief of planning section.

Movement (NAM) and South–South cooperation.[7] In addition, scholars like Paul Stubbs place NAM within the broader histories of transnational solidarity, development, decolonization, and global socialism, while Sara Lorenzini assesses how NAM helped foster a sense of unity and a common platform for the newly independent countries in the UN.[8] These contributions are especially useful for framing Yugoslavia as an active participant in shaping the Global South rather than simply as a Cold War intermediary. Adding to this, the paper reconstructs the institutional mechanisms through which these broader political aspirations were translated into practice within the UN, particularly through the CHBP and its technical assistance programmes. In other words, it contributes to the dialogue by explaining how non-aligned internationalism was operationalized through UN institutions, rather than focusing primarily on the ideology and diplomacy of the NAM itself.

Moreover, existing scholarship on the relationship between Yugoslavia and the UN technical assistance mechanism has overwhelmingly focused on the reconstruction of the town of Skopje following the 1963 earthquake, treating it as the principal example of UN involvement in the country.[9] While this literature has generated important insights into international planning, post-disaster reconstruction, and Cold War cooperation, it has also overshadowed a much broader spectrum of UN technical assistance activities in Yugoslavia. Other major missions, including the South Adriatic Regional Development Plan (1967–1969), the North Adriatic Regional Development Plan (1970–1972), and the post-earthquake reconstruction programme in Montenegro after 1979, have received little sustained scholarly attention. By moving beyond the exceptional case of Skopje, this article situates Yugoslavia within the wider evolution of UN technical assistance and demonstrates that its engagement with the organization extended far beyond a single post-disaster intervention.

In addressing this gap, the paper foregrounds Yugoslavia as an analytically significant case study, focusing on the Centre's pilot initiative for the South Adriatic Regional Development Plan (1967–1969) in the Socialist Republic of Montenegro as one of the six constitutive republics of Yugoslav federation. This project serves not only as an empirical anchor, but also as a strategic entry point for assessing how ideas, methods, and institutional practices were translated across different contexts of Yugoslavia.

In this sense, it is important to outline that while Yugoslavia did not share the post-colonial experience that characterized many countries of the Global South where CHBP was active, it nevertheless occupied a distinctive position within the broader history of international development. Its role cannot be understood solely through the conventional Cold War dichotomy of donor and recipient, or through a simple distinction between so-called developed and developing countries. Rather, Yugoslavia's non-aligned status and intermediary geopolitical position enabled it to engage with both worlds simultaneously. At the same time, several of its constituent republics, most notably Montenegro, displayed material, economic, and infrastructural conditions that closely resembled those of many countries commonly classified as 'developing'.[10] In this sense, although Yugoslavia did not share colonial inheritance, parts of the federation experienced developmental challenges comparable to those addressed by UN technical assistance programmes across the Global South. This placed Yugoslavia in a unique position in which it participated in shaping international development agendas, while simultaneously serving as a testing ground for planning

[7]Spaskovska, "Building a Better World?," 331–51. Spaskovska, "A Nonaligned Business World," 413–27.
[8]Stubbs (ed.), *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement*," 133–55; Lorenzini, *Global Development*, 41.
[9]Tolić, *Dopo il terremoto. La politica della ricostruzione negli anni della Guerra Fredda a Skopje*; Kalliopi et al., *The Future as a Project*," 140–63; Babić, "The Yugoslav Skopje," 66–78; Tolić, "The Protagonists of Skopje's Reconstruction," 38–49; Kokalevski, "Performing the Archive: Skopje—From the Ruins of the City of the Future"; Marina (ed.) *The Skopje Project*.
[10]Ramet, "Controversies in the Economic Sector, 1965–90."

approaches designed to confront problems of underdevelopment. Such a dual status makes the Yugoslav case particularly valuable for understanding how the circulation of development knowledge extended beyond the conventional boundaries of the post-colonial context.

In addition, rather than treating the Adriatic Plan as an isolated episode, the paper situates it within the broader arc of the organization's institutional evolution, tracing a continuum from EPTA (1949–1965), through CHBP (1965–1976), to UNEP (1973–1976), and ultimately CHS–Habitat (1978–present). These phases are approached as distinct yet interconnected trajectories, each reflecting shifting priorities, epistemologies, and operational frameworks within the UN system. Such a longitudinal and comparative perspective enables a more coherent and critically grounded understanding of CHBP's contributions, moving beyond fragmented or project-specific interpretations. Within this framework, Yugoslavia emerges as both a recipient of international assistance and an active interlocutor in shaping its terms and outcomes.

Yet, Yugoslavia was also a major donor to the Global South, especially in the emerging post-colonial contexts of Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as demonstrated by the works of Jovan Čavoški or Tvrtko Jakovina.[11] This is particularly useful because it illustrates that Yugoslavia was exporting expertise to the Global South before many of the UN's large-scale technical assistance programmes reached maturity. This strengthens the argument that, by the time the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (CHBP) was established in 1965, Yugoslavia already possessed substantial experience in international cooperation. Rather than entering the CHBP merely as a recipient of UN expertise, Yugoslavia brought with it a well-developed network of political and technical relationships across the Global South, allowing it to contribute actively to the Centre's agenda and the broader evolution of UN technical assistance.

As a result, the paper contributes to a rethinking of the conventional model of unidirectional knowledge transfer by reframing it as a set of multidirectional exchanges both in the institutional and technical sense — 'from the South to the North and back again', or 'from the East across the West to the South' and similar. Such a perspective opens up more nuanced ways of understanding the circulation of knowledge during the Cold War (1948–1991), emphasizing reciprocity, adaptation, and negotiation rather than simple diffusion. In this light, the still largely overlooked institutional history of the CHBP offers valuable insight into the broader shift from relatively crude post-war development paradigms toward more comprehensive, reflexive, and inclusive forms of technical assistance that began to take shape by the end of the Second Development Decade. Crucially, this transition did not occur in a linear or predetermined manner, but emerged through processes of trial and error, methodological recalibrations, and conceptual re-articulations, developments that were themselves the product of sustained interaction among actors from the so-called First, Second, and Third Worlds.

Methodologically, the paper draws on a diverse body of archival material, including records from the UN Archives in New York, the Frances Loeb Library at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and institutional archives in Montenegro—a former Yugoslav republic that participated in a CHBP technical assistance mission. By bringing these sources into dialogue, the study reconstructs both the formal structures and the informal dynamics that shaped the Centre's work on the ground. As an initial contribution to a still emerging field of research, the paper represents a contribution toward unpacking the complex and layered history of the CHBP, including its projects, institutional logics, and the diverse actors involved. Hence, it aims not only to recover a neglected chapter in the history of international development, but also to provide a foundation for future

[11] Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata*; Čavoški, "Overstepping the Balkan Boundaries," 557–77

studies examining the intricacies of twentieth-century global knowledge networks and their lasting implications.

Geopolitics in session: Cold War influences on the General Assembly

The beginning of the 1960s brought momentous changes in the geopolitical map of the world. The communist and capitalist blocs each sought their own sphere of influence, offering socio-political and economic models to the newly independent countries across the Global South. Cold War development competition between East and West operated across three interconnected spheres: developing people through health and education, developing societies through industrialization, infrastructure, population policies, migration, and inequality, and developing the material world through urbanization, agriculture, and resource governance.[12] This rivalry produced broader consequences, including heightened global tensions and increased pressures on these states to navigate a polarized international environment.[13]

Also in 1961, the world saw a formal emergence of the NAM at its first summit in Yugoslavia. It came as a driving force behind aspirations for an alternative outlook on global economic and political issues, sponsored by the joint mission of the countries predominantly from the Global South.[14] As a newcomer in a conflicting international political arena, the NAM increasingly relied on fragile mechanisms of the UN as an international platform where the coalition could hope for some meaningful results. Thus, despite being nominally independent, the UN advanced its agenda of modernization and nation-building under the new banner of the 'Development Decade'.[15] The rapid and largely unexpected surge of decolonization during John F. Kennedy's short presidency (1961–1963) generated, according to Craig Murphy, an immediate demand for assistance among newly independent states.[16] In the words of Richard N. Gardner (1927–2019), a key figure in the Kennedy administration's Bureau of International Organization Affairs, when the United States was out there alone, 'putting down conditions, then rocks started going through the American embassy windows'.[17] As a result, a multilateral framework was considered to be a meaningful tool for easing political tensions while fostering an inclusive approach. In this sense, while the UN did not have 'national interests' in the same way as the communist or capitalist blocs did, it nevertheless developed its own agenda, shaped in part by the demands and priorities of what was then commonly termed the 'Third World'.[18]

At the beginning of the 'Development Decade', of the 96 member states in the UN, at least 60 were classified as underdeveloped countries. Under the principle of 'one country, one vote' in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the growing number of post-colonial states gave them significant collective voting power, enabling them to exert greater influence over the Assembly's deliberations and decisions.[19] At the same time, these countries understood that their influence depended on coordination if they were to translate numbers into real political leverage within the UN and so as to act as a 'pressure group' therein.[20] As the article from the *New York*

[12]Unger et al., eds., *The Routledge Handbook on the History of Development*, 71-218.
[13]Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*.
[14]Stubbs, ed., *Non-Aligned Yugoslavia and the Global South*, 10.
[15]Sluga, "The Human Story of Development: Alva Myrdal at the UN, 1949–1955," 62.
[16]Murphy, *The United Nations Development Programme*, 99.
[17]Ibid.
[18]Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization," 271.
[19]Haque, "The United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement," 482.
[20]Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History*, 92.

Times shows, with a usual vote mismatch including Yugoslavia, Israel, Cyprus, and other countries being categorized within a 'standard' voting group, the UN General Assembly represented an important international arena for obtaining allegiances.[21] In support of this argument, it is telling to outline the telegram George F. Kennan (1904–2005), then the US Ambassador in Yugoslavia, sent to President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) in 1962, stating that:

> It's a relatively simple thing to determine our economic policy towards the countries at the two extremes of the ideological spectrum ….But there is a grey area, in between, where things get much more complicated. Our job here is to influence people in directions we think are conducive to world peace …. It is not a question of aid to Yugoslavia or no aid ….What is involved is simply the question whether we are to be allowed sufficient flexibility to conduct an effective policy not just towards Yugoslavia but towards this grey area as a whole.[22]

In fact, the voting dynamics in the UNGA clearly illustrated Kennan's point. The Afro-Asian Bloc ('gray area'), with around 42 votes, often held the key position in decision-making processes, while the combined strength of the Western and Soviet blocs, totalling roughly 32 votes, was insufficient to secure outcomes without Afro-Asian support.[23] As a result, this bloc frequently acted as a decisive 'swing vote' in key resolutions concerning decolonization, disarmament, international recognition, and technical assistance mechanisms. In the broader context of the Cold War, this dynamic diluted Western influence within the UN, while the Soviet bloc, despite its ideological coherence, remained limited by its smaller numerical base (Figure 1).

In addition, the NAM further complicated the predictability of voting dynamics. Rather than blindly following the decisions of either of the superpower blocs, many newly independent states evaluated issues on a case-by-case basis, making voting outcomes less certain and turning influence into a matter of ongoing negotiation. In this environment, both the United States and the Soviet Union actively sought to attract the support of these countries through diplomatic engagement and development aid. However, many Third World nations simultaneously pursued alternative pathways, increasingly turning to the UN as a neutral platform for accessing technical assistance and development support outside the direct influence of either bloc.[24]

Among the first significant achievements of such politics was the adoption of the UN resolution on urbanization in 1962 – the initiative launched by Yugoslavia and its functionary Ernest Weissmann, then the director of the Housing, Building and Planning Branch (HBPB).[25] This move signalled a turning point in recognizing regional planning as a critical international issue requiring coordinated policy responses, especially in the post-colonial context. Also, the shift laid the groundwork for an important institutional transformation. The struggle for more autonomy within ECOSOC resulted in the branch's evolution into a semi-independent CHBP, reflecting a growing need to strengthen its operational scope and political relevance.[26]

Even though that outcome did not completely reflect an overwhelming need for assistance in the Global South, this development can be seen as one of the first tangible outcomes of the Third World asserting influence on developmental issues within the UNGA. While such resolutions were not

[21]Editorial, "The Members of the United Nations – and the Blocs intro which they divide," *New York Times*, Review section, (Sept 18, 1960): 3.
[22]John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, "Further to Ambassador Kennan's call," Folder 9, Box 128A, Yugoslavia General, 1962–1963 (1962): 2.
[23]Editorial, "The Members of the United Nations – and the Blocs intro which they divide," *New York Times*, Review section, (Sept 18, 1960): 3.
[24]Haque, "The United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement," 465.
[25]Bulatović, "Mainstreaming a Regional Planning Discourse," 21-23
[26]Ibid.

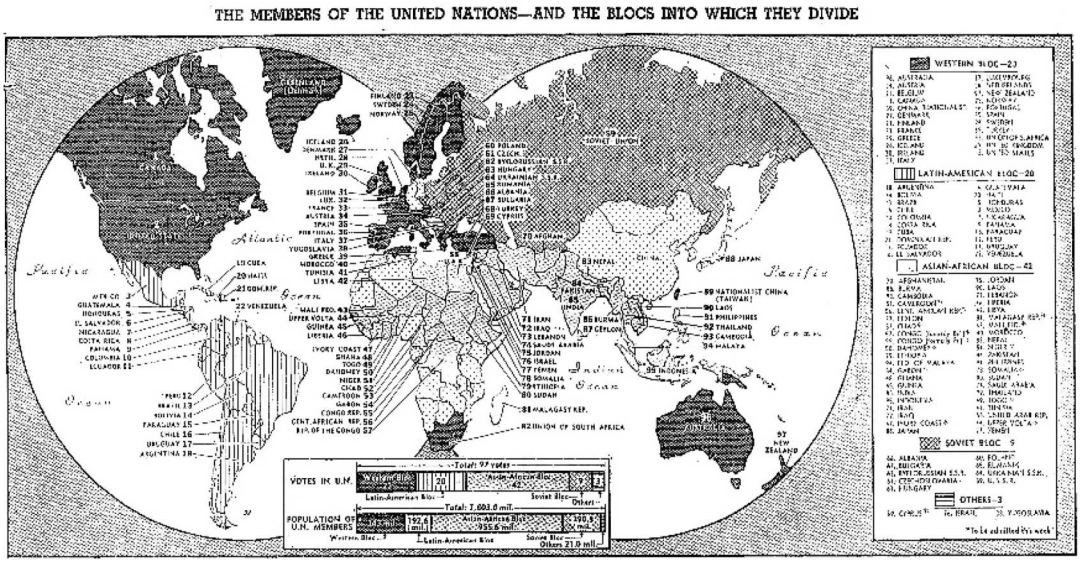


Figure 1. United Nations General Assembly voting blocs, 1960 (Editorial, 'The Members of the United Nations – and the Blocs into which they divide', New York Times, Review section, (Sept 18, 1960): 3).

always enforceable in practice, they nevertheless demonstrated that the collective voice of newly independent and developing nations could shape international priorities, particularly around issues such as urban development, housing, and planning. At the same time, the CHBP started gaining authority within a broader landscape of competing global initiatives tied to Cold War geopolitics. Efforts such as Khrushchev's 'gift diplomacy', which promoted Soviet planning expertise abroad, or the United States' schemes of soft-influence, reveal how aid became a domain of ideological and technical competition.[27] In this context, the creation of the CHBP can be interpreted as a direct byproduct — or 'side effect' — of these rivalries.

Unlike its counterparts backed by superpower funding and strategic interests, however, the CHBP lacked a strong and stable financial foundation. Instead, it was largely sustained by normative commitments, backed by the ideals of international solidarity and the Third World's developmental philosophy of 'catching up' with more industrialized nations. This made the CHBP more fragile but, arguably, more representative of a collective global aspiration toward equitable urban development.

Beyond non-alignment: toward technical assistance

The primary function of the CHBP was to oversee the intellectual and technical direction of development projects, including the recruitment of experts and supervision of field missions, while the ultimate administrative authority remained with the Office of Technical Co-operation (OTC), with the UNDP acting as an executive agency.[28] However, CHBP's specific weight lay in its mandate,

[27]Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism*; Stanek, "Gift, Credit, Barter"; Schembs, "Urban planning in the Americas during the Cold War," 1–5; Masey and Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and Their Role in the Cultural Cold War*; Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front*; Arnórsson, "The Architectures of the Marshall Plan in Europe: France, Greece, Germany, ca. 1948–1952 and Beyond,"; Cody, *Exporting American Architecture, 1870–2000*.

[28]UNDP had a single Governing Council representing 37 countries, 19 of them 'developing'.

which extended beyond simple advisory work, as it systematically evaluated requests from the Third World governments based on technical feasibility and their potential contribution to broader socio-economic development.[29] In addition, it was responsible for assembling international teams, evaluating subcontractors, and coordinating training programmes, often in collaboration with both public and private actors.[30] As Prakash, Casciato, and Coslett claim, the Cold War rivalries not only showed substantially different models of modernist urban reconstruction, but more importantly offered the path for postcolonial nations to selectively draw from both systems, leading to the creation of a hybrid and context-specific version of modernism.[31] It is exactly in this context that the CHBP functioned as a hybrid institutional mechanism through which technical cooperation in housing, building, and planning was operationalized, combining state-led initiatives with inputs from global markets and professional networks from East, West, and South at the same time.

The composition of the Centre's staff was equally significant from a geopolitical perspective. With a relatively small but highly professional team, around 60 staff members, including 40 professionals, the CHBP relied heavily on the experience drawn from the Global South itself.[32] This was not merely a practical response to demand but also a strategic choice that reinforced the UN's image as a neutral and representative international body. Leadership transitions further illustrate this logic (Figure 2).

Drawing on his experience in post-war reconstruction through UNRRA, his involvement in the design of the UN Headquarters, and his work at the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Weissmann was appointed Director of the Housing, Town and Country Planning (HTCP) Section within ECOSOC in 1950, where he leveraged the technical expertise, institutional authority, and international network acquired through these earlier appointments to make regional planning a cornerstone of the UN technical assistance programme throughout the 1950s. In addition, Weissmann's Yugoslav background gave him an additional impetus in the process in which his country was an ardent spokesperson for the Global South in international relations.[33] Beyond consolidating his position as the central figure in the UN's technical assistance apparatus, this experience also allowed Weissmann to cultivate a trusted cadre of planners, architects, and technical experts encountered during these earlier missions, many of whom he later recruited and promoted within CHBP, ensuring continuity between the formative years of UN technical assistance and its institutional expansion after 1966. Thus, after his retirement in 1966, the directorship passed to Robert Joseph Crooks (1966-1974), whose background in the Caribbean and long-standing involvement with the Centre provided both institutional continuity and geopolitical symbolism. Crooks's close cooperation with Weissmann stemmed back to the Puerto Rico Seminar in 1956, assisting him in the foundation of the Sociedad Interamericana de Planificación (Inter-American Planning Society).[34] As someone who thus possessed substantial knowledge of the administrative procedures, operational protocols, and the large-scale planning management, his appointment was probably highly endorsed by Weissmann himself. At the same time, it certainly left ample space for Weissmann to further influence the work of CHBP, now from the position of a senior UN advisor.[35] This will especially be visible in the Centre's pilot missions in Yugoslavia, where he will

[29]Ciborowski, 'United Nations Centre for Housing, Building, and Planning' 1086;
[30]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "The Role and Activities of the Centre for Housing."
[31]Prakash et al., eds., *Rethinking Global Modernism*, 13.
[32]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "The Role and Activities of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, Other Units in the United Nations Secretariat, and the Specialized Agencies in the Field of Housing, Building and Planning, 1974."
[33]Avermaete, Casciato, *Casablanca Chandigarh: A Report on Modernization*, 61-2.
[34]Bulatović, "Mainstreaming a Regional Planning Discourse within the UN Technical Assistance Programme," 13–7.
[35]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "EW's Career Timeline: Employment and Employers."



Figure 2. Directors of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (l. to r.): Ernest Weissmann from Yugoslavia (1965–1966), Joseph Crooks from Trinidad (1966–1974), Paul Eliel Mwaluko from Tanzania (1974–1978); Deputy Director for Research and Development, Adolf Ciborowski from Poland (1966–1973) (United Nations – Geneva and New York City. The Ernest Weissmann Archive, DES.2013.014379936, Folders G01-012 (1–2). Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and the Media Documentation Bureau – Service for public relations of the Government of Montenegro).

assume a significant role on the UN part.[36] Crook's successor, Paul Eliel Mwaluko (1974–1978), also brought experience from both national government in Tanzania and the UNDP, reinforcing the pattern of leadership rooted in post-colonial administrative experience.[37] However, Mwaluko's term was marked by an already fading influence of the Centre, as the preparations were already underway for the foundation of an independent Centre for Human Settlements in 1976.[38] Both appointments, nevertheless, signalled an important shift away from purely Western technocratic dominance, conspicuous in the EPTA organization from 1950 to 1965, toward a more globally representative governance structure, even if underlying power asymmetries persisted.

Alongside Crooks and Mwaluko, the research and development branch of the Centre played a crucial intermediary role, linking high-level policy frameworks with technical implementation. Guided by a Polish national Adolf Ciborowski (1966-1973), the branch conducted studies, disseminated knowledge, and organized professional exchanges across the UN's network of institutions worldwide.[39] Ciborowski's appointment to this role can also be associated with Weissmann, with whom he worked closely during the post-earthquake reconstruction of Skopje (1963–1965), drawing on his extensive experience from the post-war rebuilding of Warsaw.[40] Thus, the participation of planners from varied geopolitical contexts, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and beyond, highlighted how Weissmann assembled a team with whom he maintained close personal and professional ties, while turning his extensive post-war experience to a broader institutional network of knowledge production.

In operational terms, the outreach to over sixty countries predominantly from the Global South reflects not only a growing demand but also the Centre's responsiveness to the priorities of newly independent states. Because projects were initiated through government requests, the programme provided a unique lens into how these states defined their own development challenges, which were not always considered in purely technical terms.[41] To better illustrate this

[36]B.R., "Projekat Južni Jadran u završnoj fazi," f.p.
[37]United Nations Archives, "Regional Technical Assistance Programme."
[38]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "HABITAT – various A/CONF.70 papers, 1975."
[39]Editorial, "Obituary: Adolf Ciborowski 1920-1987," 185–7.
[40]Ciborowski, *Warsaw Rebuilt*.
[41]Keenleyside, *International Aid: A summary with Special to the Programmes of the United Nations*, 141.

fact, it is useful to examine CHBP's cooperation activities map from 1976, whereby each country appears as an ostensibly neutral recipient of technical assistance within an overall scheme. However, when seen in a geographical light, the underlying spatial distribution of projects reflects broader patterns of global power and influence.[42] The concentration of activities in Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America indicates regions where the pressures of post-colonial transformation, rapid urbanization, institutional fragility, and economic restructuring were most acute.[43] At the same time, the inclusion of countries such as Cuba, South Korea, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Iceland reveals the strategic positioning of CHBP interventions along key fault lines of the Cold War, particularly in zones where political alignment was fluid or contested.[44] In other words, while the UN activities were formally seen as 'neutral', its operations can equally be seen as both technically driven and geopolitically situated. By offering expertise without an apparent political conditionality, the CHBP thus helped position the UN as an intermediary capable of supporting development while maintaining a degree of geopolitical balance (Figure 3).

Furthermore, the involvement of the CHBP in the Global South must be understood as part of a larger effort to support state-building process. A detailed breakdown of Centre's activities illustrates how technical assistance functioned as a key instrument in this sense. The pattern reflects a broader geopolitical reality, in which newly independent states faced profound structural challenges. After decolonization, many countries inherited fragmented administrative systems, weak institutions, and economies oriented toward extraction rather than balanced development.[45] Rapid urbanization, population growth, and limited technical expertise made it difficult for these states to effectively govern their territories. It is in this context, in which the technical assistance in territorial administration, land policies, urban planning and regional development can be seen as a key component in the consolidation of an autonomous state-building apparatus, contributing to the long-term influence strategy of the UN development diplomacy.[46] Also, these sectors formed the backbone of governance as they enabled governments to organize space, regulate land use, and deliver services to their populations. By helping countries establish planning frameworks and bureaucratic systems, the UN aimed at making these states more administratively coherent and capable of exercising authority over their territories.[47]

Likewise, this type of assistance had a clear geopolitical dimension shaped by the Cold War. During this period, newly independent countries were often arenas of ideological competition between global powers. Development programmes were therefore seen as a tool for stabilizing these states and preventing political unrest, which could make them vulnerable to external influence. Although the UN presented itself as a neutral actor, its development frameworks often aligned with dominant global economic and governance models, promoting forms of planning and administration that would fit within an international order.[48] As David Webster argued elsewhere, this meant 'developing in the Western model: not necessarily becoming more like America, but certainly moving closer to a non-communist economy with elements of economic planning,

[42]United Nations, *Technical Co-Operation Activities*, 7.
[43]Ibid., 9-39.
[44]Ibid., 17, 18, 24, 39.
[45]Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; Muzaffar, *Modernism's Magic Hat*
[46]Ciborowski, 'United Nations Centre for Housing, Building, and Planning,' 1087.
[47]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "The Role and Activities of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, Other Units in the United Nations Secretariat, and the Specialized Agencies in the Field of Housing, Building and Planning, 1974."
[48]Muzaffar, "The Periphery Within."

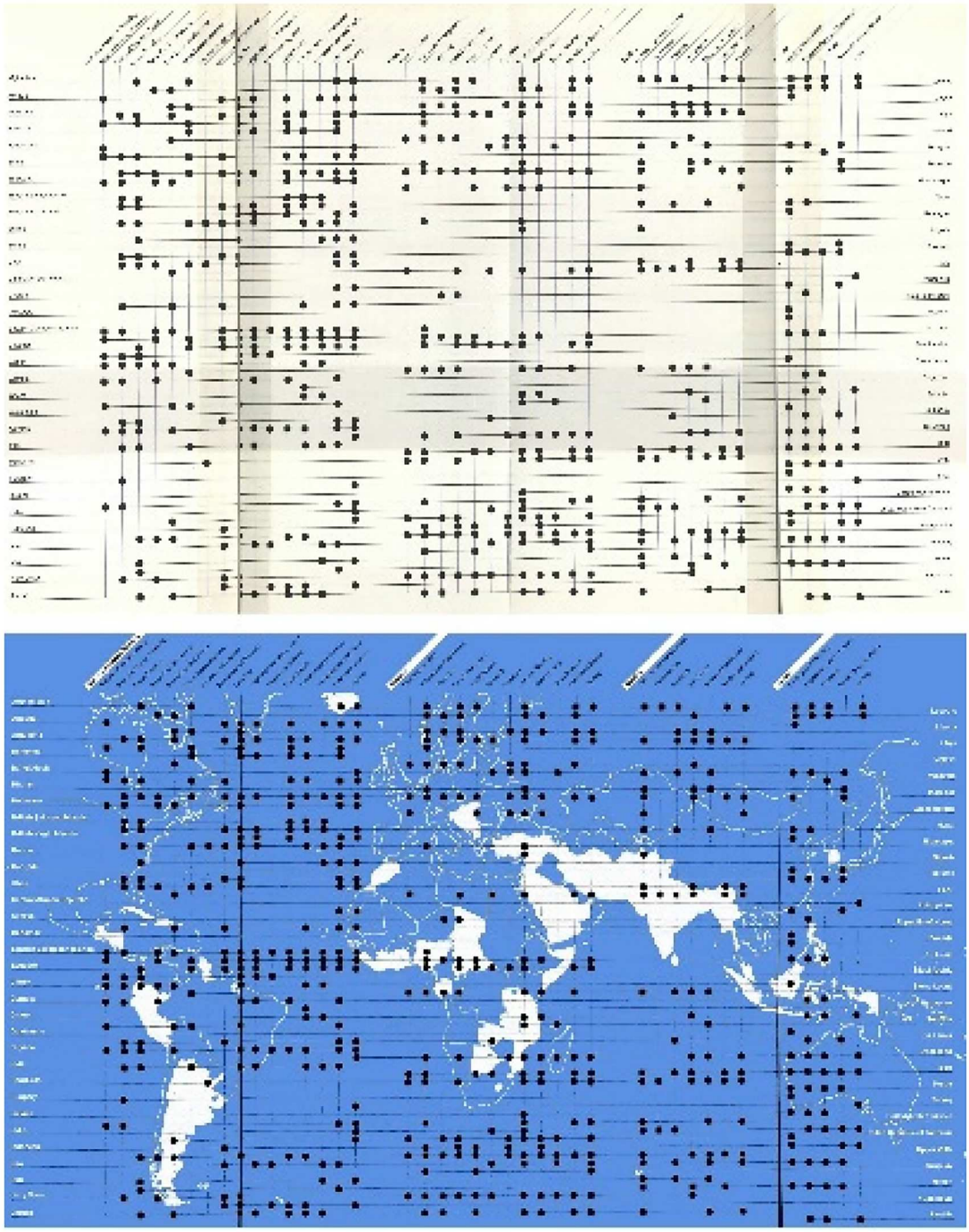


Figure 3. Original diagram showing the distribution of CHBP technical cooperation activities (top), alongside an author-produced map-based diagram illustrating their geographical distribution (bottom), 1965–1975 (United Nations, *Technical Co-Operation Activities*, New York: UNCHBP, 1975): 7; Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design).

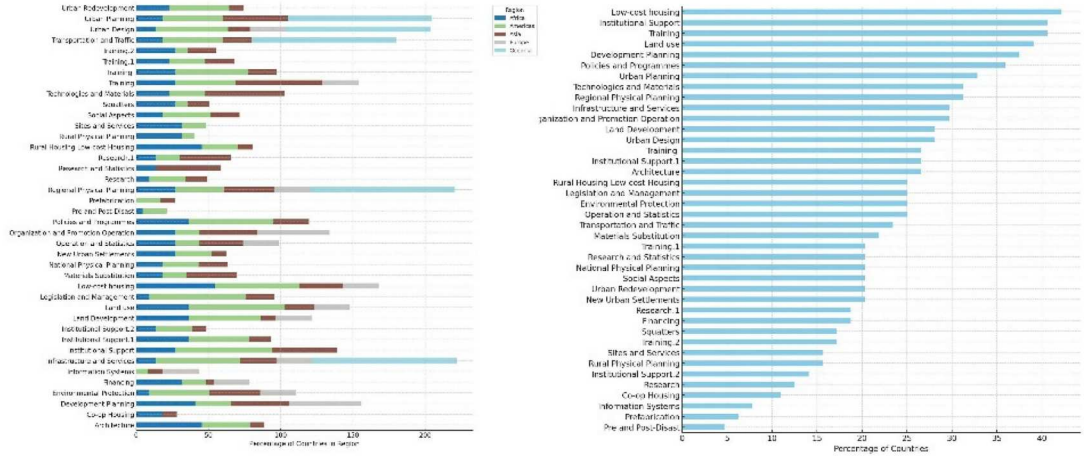


Figure 4. Analytical breakdown of technical cooperation activities in housing, building, planning and tourism, 1965–1975 (made by author according to the data from the *Technical Co-Operation Activities*, New York: UNCHBP (1975): 7; Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design).

with the ultimate destination somewhere on the spectrum of Western liberal and social democratic models' (Figure 4).[49]

In this context, while low-cost housing appears as the most frequent individual activity, the analytical diagram clearly demonstrates that planning was the Centre's dominant area of intervention. It shows the pattern in which the control over land was understood as fundamental to political authority, enabling the extractive basis for taxation, regulation, and resource management. In many post-colonial states, land systems had been shaped by colonial extraction and were poorly suited to equitable governance. By supporting the creation of cadastral systems, zoning regulations, and regional plans, the UN helped governments assert control over space and population.[50] This process allowed states to map, manage, and integrate diverse regions under a central authority, making them 'legible' from a contemporary state apparatus perspective. Underpinning this scheme were also grand infrastructure projects, highlighted in the diagram. Investments in housing, transportation, and public services enabled economic integration and improved living conditions, but they also strengthened state presence across national territories.[51] Roads, utilities, and urban systems connected regions and populations, making governance more effective while simultaneously integrating these countries into global economic networks. In this sense, infrastructure functioned both as a development tool and as a mean of embedding post-colonial states within the broader international system.

However, it is important to emphasize that this form of assistance was not without its limitations and critiques. While in principle departing from the EPTA's small-scale and short-term practices, CHBP's development models often remained constrained by top-down planning paradigms, which did not always align with local social, cultural, or economic particularities of various post-colonial geographies. This sometimes led to mismatches between formal planning systems and informal practices on the ground. Moreover, reliance on external expertise and funding created new

[49]Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization," 259-60.
[50]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "The Role and Activities of the Centre for Housing."
[51]Ibid.

forms of dependency, raising questions about the autonomy of post-colonial states in shaping their own development paths.[52] On the other hand, nevertheless, lead figures were well aware of the fallacies which the Centre carried with itself.[53] In fact, the drawbacks stemmed from the fact that the Centre was still operating on the bottom level of ECOSOC financial and administrative hierarchy, with a modest pledge in technical personnel and research funds. This is why the Centre's focus was equally directed towards institutional development and training.[54] Many newly independent countries lacked trained planners, engineers, and administrators because expertise had been concentrated in colonial powers. UN programmes addressed this gap by building local capacity through education, technical assistance, and the establishment of planning institutions.[55] As in the case of codifying spatial practices and surveys, the training was not simply about transferring skills. In fact, it aimed at the creation of administrative and technical foundations through which governance would become more standardized and more easily aligned with existing international norms. As such, education and training became a strategic tool in softening the edges of colonial practices, relying primarily on domestic resources and capabilities.

It is precisely this ambiguity that prevents CHBP activities from being merely characterized as a new form of colonialism in the traditional sense. This is further reinforced by the fact that the Centre was deeply embedded in a broader 'Third World project', within which, much like in the preceding decade, social democratic nationalists regarded advisors dispatched through the UN as collaborators, rather than superior administrators.[56] This was particularly pertinent in the case of the CHBP, which itself relied heavily on the support provided by the G77 club in the UNGA. As such, the relationship between the givers and receivers of the technical assistance can in the majority of cases be framed as a consensual compromise lying somewhere between a state-building process and the binding terms of long-term structural dependency on the Global North.

Four stages, four projects: rethinking UNTA development through Yugoslavia

Parallel to the process of gearing up the Centre, a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the UN-led technical assistance in housing, building and planning across its four developmental phases (1949–1976) has consistently been identified as a major challenge by UN officials.[57] This difficulty is particularly evident in the largely data-deficient transition from the Housing, Building and Planning Branch (1951–1965) to the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (1965–1976), followed by the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (1973–1976), and ultimately the creation of the Centre for Human Settlements (1978–present). Within this sequence of institutional transformations, a clear understanding of the scientific and methodological foundations underpinning these shifts tends to dissolve into fragmented and isolated project or biographical analyses.[58] This fragmentation is further compounded by the wide geographical scope of UN interventions, spanning diverse regional contexts and development conditions, which makes it difficult to construct a coherent, comparative framework of analysis.

[52]Prakash et al., eds., *Rethinking Global Modernism*, 12.
[53]The Ernest Weissmann Archive. "HABITAT – various A/CONF.70 papers, 1975."
[54]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, 'World-Wide Trends in Training of Regional Development Planners, 1971.'
[55]Ibid.
[56]Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization," 271.
[57]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "HABITAT – various A/CONF.70 papers, 1975."
[58]Muzaffar, *Modernism's Magic Hat*; Land, *El Proyecto Experimental de Vivienda (PREVI), Lima*; Shannon et l., *Human Settlements:* ; Kohlberger et al., "Ekistics Data; Shoshkes, *Jaqueline Tyrwhitt*; Tolić, *Dopo il terremoto*.

Against this backdrop, the case of Yugoslavia offers a particularly valuable point of entry. Between 1963 and 1985, the country served as the site of four major UN-led technical assistance missions, including the Skopje reconstruction project (1963–1965), the Regional Development Plan for the South Adriatic (1967–1969), the Protection of the Human Environment in the Yugoslav Adriatic Region (1972–1977), and the Revision of the South Adriatic project (1979–1985). Thus, a pattern that time-wise sharply follows the transition within the ECOSOC body allows these projects to be interpreted as a sequence of pilot missions implemented in response to key shifts in the organizational regimes of UN assistance. In addition, each mission saw personal engagement of Ernest Weissmann and Adolf Ciborowski, establishing a direct link between top-management agenda and implementation strategies on the ground. While the paper recognizes the inherent limitations of drawing conclusions from a single country's experience, it nonetheless underscores Yugoslavia's unique position in a long-term analytical perspective of UN assistance. In fact, such approach can help illuminate patterns and continuities that might otherwise remain obscured, and can provide a foundation from which further comparative studies may develop more robust methodological and interpretive frameworks.

After World War II, Yugoslavia's technical cooperation with both East and West evolved through shifting dynamics. Initially, it aligned with the Soviet bloc by signing the Soviet-Yugoslav Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance on April 11, 1945.[59] However, following the Tito–Stalin split three years later, Yugoslavia reoriented its international engagement toward the UN. Although not entirely free from the geopolitical influence of the superpowers, the UNGA became an emerging venue where countries like Yugoslavia could articulate independent perspectives on global issues. In 1950, Yugoslavia formalized cooperation with several UN executive agencies, which began providing technical assistance to the country.[60] However, relying on the still-young UN system, which was only about five years old at the time, represented a gamble, both geopolitically and in terms of administrative capacity. Recognizing these limitations, the Yugoslav leadership also signed its first technical assistance agreement with the United States in 1952.[61] While this initial cooperation fulfilled its immediate objectives, which were influenced by the Soviet blockade, it gradually exposed an ideological contradiction. As the note by George F. Kennan to the US State Department from 1962 shows:

> Nothing we did served to produce any great change in Tito's view of himself as a communist … he persisted in viewing American aid cynically and without gratitude, as something extended for selfish imperialistic reasons which placed no claim on his appreciation. He avoided, where he could, being put in the position of asking for our aid or expressing public appreciation for it; he did his best to avoid bringing to public attention its nature and its extent.[62]

Thus, while being highly dependent on US aid throughout the 1950s, Yugoslavia was simultaneously improving its profile within the UN, distancing itself from the Cold War-divided aid schemes. An archival record from EPTA's 1965 publication *15 Years and 150,000 Skills*, shows that the country was among the top five recipients of UN technical assistance for the past fifteen years.[63] Sharing the position with India, Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia, Yugoslav association with the evolutionary path of the Global South became a valuable vehicle for promoting its own

[59]Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 17.
[60]Janev, *Kulturna diplomatija*, 102; Editorial, *Partners in Cooperation*.
[61]Bogavac, "Yugoslavia and International Technical Cooperation," 128.
[62]John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, "Current Situation with Respect to U.S. Policy Toward Yugoslavia," Box 448, Yugoslavia General 1961-1963, (Nov 1962): 5.
[63]United Nations, *15 years and 150,000 skills,* 131-3.

interests in the context of UN-led development initiatives. On one side, it was reflected through Yugoslav advocacy for the establishment of the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED) from 1951 to 1959, only to result in the foundation of the Special Fund (SF) as the US alternative to the original proposal.[64] On the other side, it was a promotion of its own cadre within the bureaucratic apparatus of the UN, most vividly represented by the role of Weissmann as the chief of the Housing, Building and Planning Branch (HBPB) from 1951 to 1965.[65] In addition, contravening the logic of geography, Yugoslavia became associated with the Asian bloc within the G77 group, as the only country from the Global North to become a member of this club.[66] Such experiences informed Yugoslavia's gradual shift to UN-affiliated programmes, which in ideological terms, stood closest to the social-democratic model the country sought to cultivate through authentic forms of self-management and non-alignment (Figure 5).

A steady increase in UN technical assistance, thus, culminated in the post-earthquake reconstruction of the city of Skopje in 1963.[67] The project was critical in two principal ways. First, the city emerged as 'post-war convergence of liberal and socialist internationalisms, one that engendered a temporary global consensus around the primacy of modernism, welfare, solidarity and development'.[68] The first of such magnitude and scope, the Skopje master plan was celebrated as a visionary outcome of international collective effort, embodying the achievements of scientific and technological progress alongside the principles of transnational solidarity and cooperation.[69] In addition, besides its practical role in the actual reconstruction of the city, the project played an even bigger administrative role in HBPB's transition to the Centre within the ECOSOC. It was a sign that amid fierce Cold War rivalries, international collaboration between actors from the East and West was actually possible, while the UN could play the main role in cultivating those circuits of knowledge.[70]

At the same time, Skopje marked the final phase of the first part of the UN technical assistance development from 1949 to 1965. Predominantly characterized by signature-style planning models refashioned to the circumstances of the emerging post-colonial world, the project carried with itself an aura of 'futurism' which, from this point on, would occur only as an exception rather than a commonly cultivated practice. In fact, it was Weissmann's later criticism of these models which emphasized a 'strict dichotomy between a socio-economic base and a technology-based environmental model'.[71] Under the banner of the 'limits to utopia', Weissmann particularly outlined Le Corbusier's 'fascination with technology', Buckminster Fuller's 'scientific mind' and Kenzo Tange's future city proposals, reminiscing about his proposal for the reconstruction of Skopje.[72] For these reasons, the case of Skopje can also be understood as the culmination of a period often described as the 'lost decade', which, according to Ijlal Muzaffar, fell short due to inappropriate technology and a misjudged scale.[73]

[64]Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 160-7.
[65]Bulatović, "Mainstreaming a Regional Planning Discourse within the UN Technical Assistance Programme," 21-3.
[66]Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 173.
[67]UNDP, *Skopje Resurgent*; Tolić, *Dopo il terremoto*; Lozanovksa, "Kenzo Tange's Forgotten Master Plan for the Reconstruction of Skopje"; Lozanovska and Martek, "Skopje Resurgent"; Andonova and García González, "Beyond the Curtain"; Mattioli, "Unchanging Boundaries."
[68]Spaskovska, "Constructing the 'City of International Solidarity'": Non-Aligned Internationalism, the United Nations and Visions of Development, Modernism and Solidarity, 1955–1975," 141.
[69]Ibid., 155.
[70]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "Skopje Reconstruction, bulk 1963–1983 – Your Aid to Skopje January – June 1965."
[71]Weissmann, "Planning and Development of the Metropolitan Environment," 436-7.
[72]Ibid.
[73]Muzaffar, *Modernism's Magic Hat*, 34.

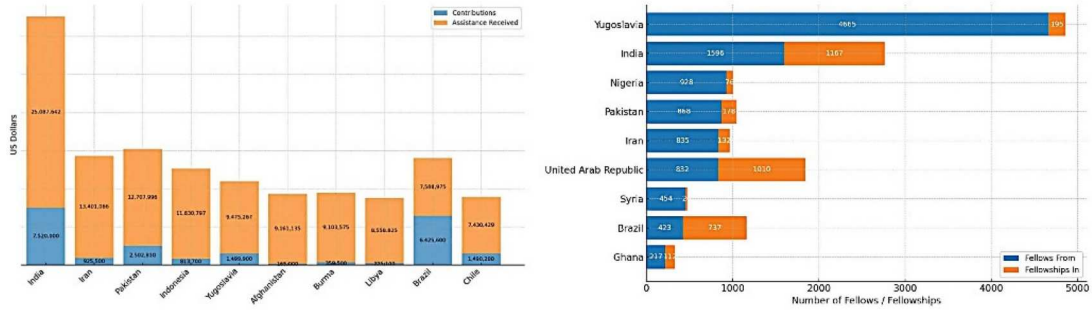


Figure 5. Yugoslavia was the fifth biggest recipient of the UN technical assistance in the world, after India, Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia (left), with the highest number of Fellows sent to the UN training programmes (right), 1950–1964 (diagram was created based on the data from the publication EPTA: *15 years and 150,000 skills*. New York: United Nations (1965): 131–133).

Conversely, after 1965 these practices were widely countered by a more comprehensive approach through regional planning and infrastructural schemes, the most common activity within the CHBP portfolio until 1976. These were conducted often by an anonymous consortium of specialized experts from around the world, distancing themselves from a 'star-architect' approach. In fact, as Shannon, d'Auria, and De Meulder have observed, during this period the synergistic and integrative aspects of design seemed to diminish in importance, while so-called 'sites and services' programmes emerged as the dominant tools in planning practice. As such, they 'required other forms of design than the blueprint planning that Doxiadis and his generation were still practicing and advocating for'.[74] In this light, a pilot project of the CHBP was conducted in Yugoslavia, providing technical assistance to the Regional Development scheme for the South Adriatic. A radically different approach to Skopje, covering 400 kilometres of the Adriatic coast, relied heavily on the complex mathematical operations and evolving forecast analysis in space-use scenarios for the tourism industry. Departure from design-driven projections to highly scientific revenue-based estimates, only sporadically aided by potential design propositions, offered a fundamentally different image of the UN technical assistance. In fact, it brought to the fore a cross-disciplinary approach, whereby mathematically driven space calculus indirectly shaped the relations between large-scale morphological characteristics of terrain and small-scale design concepts responding to these conditions (see the next heading). While such an approach marked a distinctive phase in the CHBP development, it also created a feeling that 'understanding was clouded by the sudden rush of technological improvement and population increase', as Weissmann himself observed in the evaluation of the new programme (Figure 6).[75]

In addition, developing in a particularly sensitive context of the Club of Rome's report on the *Limits to Growth*, the project generated new controversies due to its ambiguous environmental outcomes, its highly technocratic orientation, and the growing concerns about socio-ecological awareness.[76] These concerns were soon addressed in another pilot UNEP initiative in Yugoslavia between 1972 and 1978, resulting in the comprehensive document dubbed *Protection of the Human Environment in the Yugoslav Adriatic Region: Project Findings and Recommendations*.[77] While

[74]Shannon et al., *Human Settlements: Formulations and (Re)calibrations*, 17.
[75]Weissmann, "Planning and Development of the Metropolitan Environment," 419.
[76]Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth*.
[77]United Nations, *Protection of the Human Environment in the Yugoslav Adriatic Region: Project Findings and Recommendations*.



Figure 6. South Adriatic Project headquarters (left) and the caption of experts in Montenegro, 1968 (l. to r.): Đorđe Minjević (Montenegro), Claude Sauer (France), Milorad Vukotić (Montenegro), Giorgio Piccinato (Italy) (Media Documentation Bureau – Service for public relations of the Government of Montenegro and the family archive of Marta Vukotić-Lazar).

some authors have argued that UNEP behaved as a 'Trojan horse', undermining the spatial dimension of the UN technical assistance initiatives, it is equally important to emphasize that the Yugoslav experience leads this claim to a different conclusion.[78] Although UNEP recommendations for the Adriatic coast remained largely aspirational, functioning more as a catalogue of normative goals than as enforceable policy instruments, the project document's main contribution lay in its managerial guidelines and operational strategies. These were explicitly designed to address the structural inconsistencies and institutional weaknesses that had become apparent in the CHBP approach.[79] Consequently, it served only as a preparatory framework for a new phase of UN intervention, one that prioritized more nuanced forms of regionalization, emphasized the 'city-region' paradigm, encouraged the involvement of local actors, and adopted a more inclusive approach to the historical, economic, and social dimensions of local development. In this sense, it can be claimed that while UNEP did in fact represent a 'Trojan horse' diluting the interest in spatial planning issues, it was an equally important marketing tool for attracting global attention in a twenty-year-old struggle for an independent housing, building and planning agency within the UN itself. This is particularly visible from the efforts led by Weissmann from the beginning of the 1950s, culminating in the preparatory meetings in Vancouver (1973) and Dubrovnik (1975). Serving as ideological platforms, the meetings paved the way for the Habitat conference in 1976 and, consequently, an independent Centre for Human Settlements (CHS) in 1978.[80]

Finally, the post-earthquake reconstruction of the Adriatic coastline in 1979 marked the last major pilot mission directed from the CHS new headquarters in Nairobi. Continuing on the recommendations from UNEP, the new UNCHS-developed *Physical Plan of the Republic and Master Plans of Urban Settlements of Montenegro* adopted a distinctly different planning framework.[81] In general terms, as one of the authors of the project, Weissmann pointed out that 'these adjustments

[78]Shannon e al., *Human Settlements*, 17.
[79]Djordjevski, "The (Still) Beautiful Blue Adriatic," 11.
[80]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "UNEP – Human Settlements and Habitat (0101): Action Programme, 1973"; The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "A Habitat Special Report - Dubrovnik: An analysis of the Crisis in Human Settlements, 1975."
[81]United Nations, "Physical Plan of the Republic and Master Plans of Urban Settlements of Montenegro," Titograd: UNCHS (1985).

called for a questioning and revision of our basic concepts of the planning and development of our environment … to have ground rules for this planning and development process, we turn our attention now to the concept of the city-region'.[82] Rather than relying on centralized or uniform models, this model promoted a more articulated system of regionalization, structured around multiple 'gravity' centres or urban nodes that functioned as focal points for economic, social, and infrastructural development.[83] Furthermore, it emphasized a finer-grained reading of territory, taking into account the interplay of geographical conditions, historical development patterns, and existing social structures. By recognizing the specificity of each region, the CHS framework sought to move beyond standardized solutions and instead encourage context-sensitive strategies. In this sense, planning and design were no longer conceived as top-down impositions, but as processes shaped by local identities and micro-regional dynamics. Such a model opened the possibility for more authentic and adaptive forms of intervention, where development trajectories could emerge from within the particularities of each area rather than being externally prescribed as was the case in CHBP. It also reflected a broader methodological shift within UN assistance, toward integrating spatial planning with socio-cultural awareness, and toward fostering more resilient and locally grounded urban and regional systems.[84]

It is precisely within this sequence of events along the Yugoslav coastline that the working hypothesis concerning the evolutionary trajectory of UN interventions can be tested through examination of other missions carried out under its technical assistance framework. While, as previously noted, the intention is not to merely transpose a Yugoslav case onto other contexts, it is nonetheless essential to recognize how closely Yugoslavia was connected to the central actors driving this evolution, most notably Weissmann and Adolf Ciborowski. Both played a fundamental role from the Skopje reconstruction efforts through to the Vancouver Conference, and were deeply involved in the implementation of all UN projects in Yugoslavia.[85] In this sense, it is reasonable to treat Yugoslavia as an important example through which to interpret the development of UN technical assistance policies from 1950 to 1985. While I specifically examine here the contributions and fallacies of the SAP done by the CHBP, the remainder of the projects will be examined in subsequent iterations, as they significantly exceed the limits of this paper.

Pilot project: Regional development plan for the South Adriatic (1967–1969)

According to the UN seminar in Rome from 1963, tourism was considered to have an important role in the economic development of the low-income countries.[86] In addressing the Governing Council in January 1967, the Administrator of the UNDP Paul Hoffman (1891–1974), cited tourism as an area in which he expected the Programme to become more and more involved. He declared that 'tourism can be a rich source of foreign exchange earnings', meaning that from the perspective the deficit in the balance of payments of a recipient country could be eliminated.[87]

[82]United Nations, "Physical Plan of the Republic and Master Plans of Urban Settlements of Montenegro – draft," 18; Weissmann, "Human Settlements, Bureaucracy and Ideology: The Yugoslav Alternative," 1-36; Weissmann, "Humanizing Settlements," Background paper United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, New York: United Nations (1976); Weissmann, "Planning and Development of the Metropolitan Environment," 413.
[83]United Nations, "Physical Plan of the Republic and Master Plans of Urban Settlements of Montenegro," 44.
[84]For further analysis see Bulatović, "The Region in the Making."
[85]Ibid.
[86]United Nations, *Recommendations on International Travel and Tourism*, Rome: United Nations (1963); Bojić, "United Nations Experts and Spatial Planning of Tourism," 7–8.
[87]The Ernest Weissmann Archive, "United Nations International Tourist Year 1967."

Such approach consequently led to a significant increase in the technical assistance to developing countries in the organization of tourism and in the establishment of tourist facilities. As a pilot project, in January 1967, the Governing Council of UNDP approved the CHBP assistance project for Yugoslavia relating specifically to the development of tourist facilities.[88]

Starting from the broader geopolitical and economic position of the region within Yugoslavia, it was observed that the most developed areas were concentrated along the Sava–Danube corridor. This axis had long functioned as a primary spine of economic activity, transportation, and cultural exchange within the country. One of the key premises underpinning the SAP was therefore the need to articulate a complementary development axis oriented east–west, running roughly parallel to the Adriatic coastline.[89] The aim was to establish a new developmental focal zone capable of stimulating economic growth, enhancing regional integration along the Adriatic, and contributing to a more balanced spatial distribution of development across the federation (Figure 7).[90]

In this sense, marked by deep structural and historical differences between its regions, the federal union represented a complex constellation of divergent aspirations and uneven capacities to implement development strategies. Under the umbrella of international cooperation, UN involvement brought these disparities into sharper focus, particularly in the contrast between significantly developed Croatia (Group A, B) and Montenegro, as one of the least-developed republics (Group C), rendering the experience comparatively less applicable in the latter.[91] In other words, Montenegro functioned as Yugoslavia's own 'Global South'.

In this context, the UN missions in Montenegro reflected the structural political and economic asymmetries that characterized the Yugoslav federation itself, while also demonstrating why Yugoslavia regarded international technical assistance as an important instrument for the development of its less-developed republics. To illustrate this, it is useful to recall the remarks of Čento Andonov, a Macedonian representative whose position reflected Macedonia's broader strategic importance within the UN–Yugoslav relationship. As he observed, one of the principal achievements of socialist Yugoslavia was that Macedonia was 'no longer South Serbia', replacing earlier grievances over the denial of a distinct Macedonian identity with a political project aimed at forging 'brotherhood and unity' among all Yugoslav peoples.[92] Similar aspirations were evident in Montenegro, where socialist modernization was closely linked to the recognition of republican identities and more balanced regional development. These tensions had deep historical roots in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, where many southern regions perceived Serbian political dominance as threatening their distinct national identities. Although this situation cannot be equated with colonialism in the conventional sense, many of its immediate post-war developmental characteristics, including high illiteracy, weak infrastructure, limited institutional capacity, a shortage of technical professionals, and a predominantly agrarian economy, closely resembled the conditions that defined many newly independent states receiving UN technical assistance during the 1950s and 1960s. Technical assistance programmes in Montenegro or Macedonia were, therefore, not directed at arbitrary locations but at republics that occupied the federation's economically less-developed 'South'. In this respect, the UN's activities intersected with Yugoslavia's own efforts to reduce regional disparities, creating a dynamic in which the country's internal North–South divide mirrored, in certain respects, the broader developmental concerns that shaped the UN's work in the Global South.

[88]Ibid.
[89]Editorial, *Završni izvještaj*, 7.
[90]Ibid.
[91]Mattioni, *Aftermath*, 104-105; Minjević, and Mitrović, *Arhitekta Đorđe Minjević: Graditelj i prostorni planer*, 85.
[92]Radonjić, *Socijalizam u Crnoj Gori*, 275.

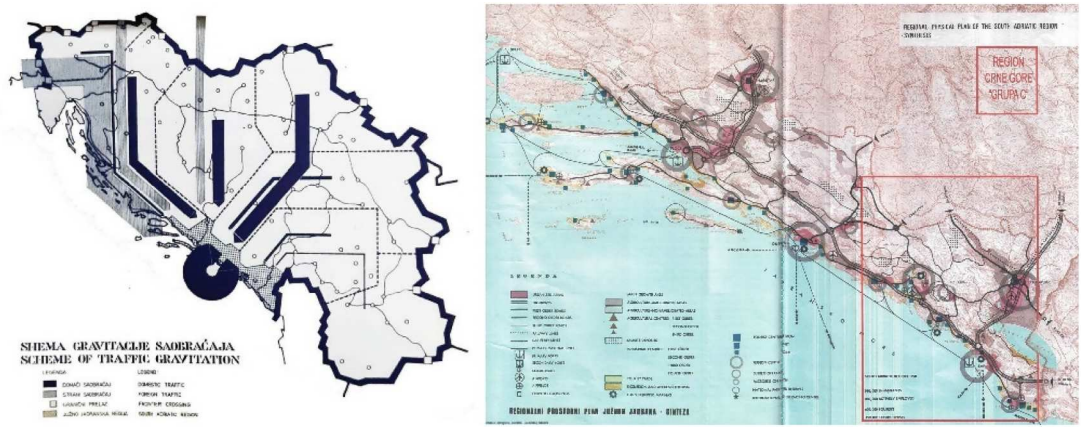


Figure 7. Position of the South Adriatic region in Yugoslavia (left) and the Development Plan with the territorial outline of the working Group C in the Socialist Republic of Montenegro (right), 1968 (Archive of the Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design, Montenegro).

In the case of Montenegro, this was most evident in the project's consolidation of local planning institutions, the training of professional cadre, and the establishment of a spatial planning code system, which had previously been almost completely absent.[93] In this context, it becomes especially important to recall James Ferguson's argument from *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* from 1994, which highlights the inherently depoliticizing function of development practices. The South Adriatic project, therefore, should not be understood merely as a technical endeavour aimed at advancing local planning models, but as an ostensibly neutral political instrument, fostering inter-republic cohesion while seeking to equalize levels of development. In this sense, the project can be interpreted as an 'anti-politics machine', particularly in the late 1960s, when nationalist tensions across Yugoslavia were becoming increasingly pronounced.[94]

In technical terms, the project relied on Polish methodology and French technology. The methodology was based on the so-called 'threshold development theory' developed by Polish planner Boleslaw Malisz (1910–1995) in 1964, while it was first tested on the regional level in Montenegro.[95] After this, the theory will find its broader application in the Global South, most probably promoted by Malisz's associate Adolf Ciborowski, Deputy Director for Research and Development within the CHBP.[96] The French contribution, on the other hand, was the IBM-based technology and interdisciplinary cadre provided by the well-known Omnium technique d'aménagement (OTAM) consortium from Paris.[97] With a highly developed background in forecast analysis and advanced IBM systems, OTAM was an important representative of the post-war French developmental apparatus. In this context, a hybridization process influenced by the experts from both East and West, left a significant footprint in the SAP.

First, by quantifying space through complex mathematical operations, new relationships emerged at the level of urban and architectural production. Echoing the Club of Rome's *Limits*

[93]Stamatović-Vučković, and Bulatović, *Montenegrin architecture 1945–1970*, 48-58.
[94]Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije: glavni procesi 1918-1985*, 301.
[95]Kozlowski, "Threshold Analysis," 66.
[96]Fergus and Okulu-Epak, "A Report on the Application," 159-62.
[97]Jambard, "Engineering, Bank and State in France: O.T.H. Facing the Crisis of the 1970 s-1980s."

to Growth, the threshold theory was framed by the presence of both physical and non-physical constraints within a territory. It proposed a planning process focused on identifying critical financial thresholds and assessing the costs necessary to overcome them.[98] Such an approach enabled a distinctly technocratic reading of urban growth potential, particularly in the early stages of the planning process. It allowed planners to systematically evaluate where and how expansion could occur, while simultaneously optimizing the use of space. Rather than relying on incremental or dispersed development, this method prioritized efficiency, calculation, and long-term spatial logic.[99] As a direct outcome of these layered planning and economic considerations, new hotel capacities were predominantly realized through a model of 'spatial concentration'.[100] This model not only aimed to respond to the economic imperatives of large-scale tourism development but also formalized a more integrated relationship between urbanism, architecture, and the broader spatial development policies of the republic. As a result, it sought to codify a sustainable, albeit highly controlled, mechanism for managing growth, balancing environmental constraints with the demands of modern tourism infrastructure (Figure 8).

In that sense, it can be claimed that the SAP operated as a top-down, spatio-managerial framework grounded in the externally derived logic of spatial analysis. Through a technocratic reliance on quantification, space was translated into a calculable resource, subject to optimization in pursuit of maximum economic return. Previously underutilized landscapes were reimagined as key assets within a long-term development strategy. This utilitarian logic was further reinforced through standardized architectural typologies, aligned with a model of concentrated development intended to address overall spatial scarcity.[101] That approach sought to reconcile intensive spatial consumption with projections of future financial performance, privileging efficiency and measurable output. At the same time, however, SAP also incorporated a body of recommendations developed by local experts, which foregrounded environmental sensitivity, historical continuity, and the specific social practices that had long shaped spatial organization in the region.[102] From this perspective, space was likewise understood as a latent resource, yet one that required careful and contextually informed intervention. In other words, development was considered appropriate insofar as it complemented or enhanced the existing natural and cultural conditions.

This duality was vividly reflected in the words of the Montenegrin architect and planner Milorad Vukotić (1932–1978), who observed that planners found themselves navigating a fundamental tension. The one between the imperatives of the tourism industry, which promised economic growth and increased regional prosperity, and the aspiration to uphold principles of aesthetic coherence, formal quality, and harmony with the natural environment.[103] These tensions became especially visible at the scale of architectural models, where the practical implications and dilemmas of the SAP were most directly articulated. The most prominent example of this 'double coding' process was developed by The Architect Collaborative (TAC) from Cambridge (MA) in 1974, encapsulating the competing logics embedded within the broader planning framework (Figure 9).[104]

[98]Boleslaw, 'Threshold Analysis as a Tool in Urban and Regional Planning,'171.
[99]OTAM, *Generalni plan Budve: Plan – knjiga 2*, 75.
[100]National Radio-Television of Montenegro Archive. "Recording (duration 00:19:36) Južni Jadran: Interview with Adolf Ciborowski and Miro Marasović, (1969)."
[101]Most prominent examples include proposals for the Hotel 'Lux' in Budva (1969), Hotel 'Garni' in Bečići, (1970), Hotel 'A' in Ulcinj (1971), Hotel 'As' in Bar (1974).
[102]United Nations, *Projekat Južni Jadran*: *Spomenici kulture*.
[103]Vukotić, "Projekt 'Južni Jadran'," 23.
[104]Shannon et al., *Human Settlements: Formulations and (Re)calibrations*, 17-21.

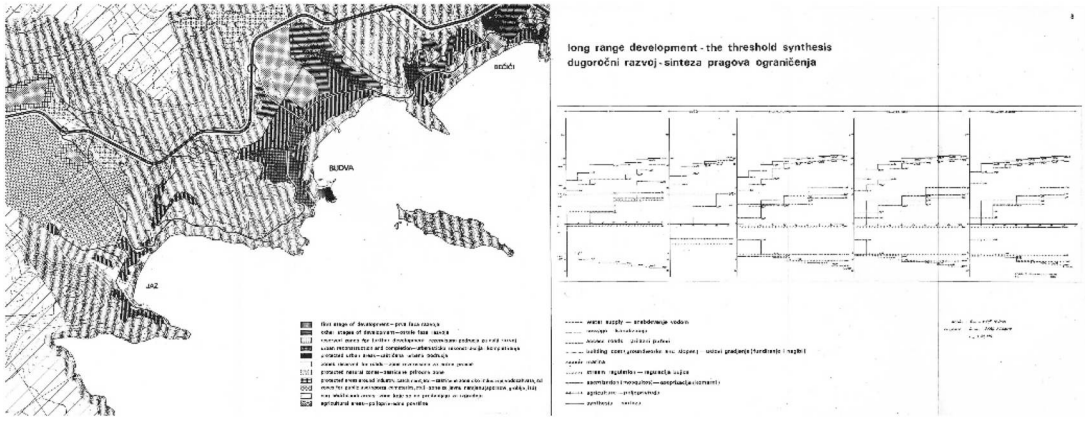


Figure 8. The identification of development thresholds as lines (left), and the calculation of costs necessary for their overstepping (right), Budva Municipality, 1969 (Archive of the Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design, Montenegro).



Figure 9. The Architects Collaborative (TAC) design alternatives for the 'Jaz' tourist complex in Budva, 1973 (Howard F. Elkus collection, 'Jaz Tourism Project, Budva, Republic of Montenegro, October 1973', DES.2023.0003, Oversize-box 1. Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design).

The first proposal was directly linked to the threshold theory by proposing a concentrated 'tower' scheme and taking advantage of the natural focus by placing the main resort community at an intersection of beach, sea, river, valley, and hills.[105] This location was at the west end of the beach crescent, where the small river Kučac meets the sea at the foot of the slopes of Cape Jaz that extends out into the Adriatic in a long peninsula to define the west edge of the bay. At the heart of this spatial organization was the central hotel tower, envisioned as the primary visual landmark of the resort.[106] All surrounding structures, pathways, and vistas were arranged to highlight and frame this tower, ensuring it functions as both a focal point and a guide for movement and

[105]Howard F. Elkus Archive, "Jaz Tourism Project, Budva, Republic of Montenegro, 1973 October," DES.2023.0003, Oversize-box 1, Book 1. Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design.
[106]Ibid.

sightlines throughout the space. In other words, as the project was planned to grow outward from this spatial and visual anchor, it was intended to eventually create a contrasting relationship between functional arrangements and natural environment.

The second proposal, on the other hand, was radically different, both in terms of the interpretation of the local environment and the new tourist offer. In fact, it responded to the changing nature of holiday architecture by offering an environment that contrasted with the dense, isolating character of modern cities from which most visitors come.[107] The resort therefore emphasized Mediterranean urban qualities: buildings were intentionally small in scale, varied in form, and integrated into landscaped surroundings rather than arranged as large uniform blocks as in the first proposal. Heights were limited to a maximum of ground floor plus two stories, with most buildings only one story above ground, reinforcing a human, intimate atmosphere. Instead of monumental hotel masses, accommodation was organized into clusters around a market centre and a sequence of small squares where people naturally meet in shops, restaurants, and shared facilities, encouraging everyday social interaction.[108]

The dilemma between a concentrated and dispersed model did not merely reflect internal contradictions within the SAP. It also revealed a broader debate unfolding within the CHBP programme itself. With the establishment of UNEP following the Stockholm Conference in 1972, a significant shift was realized toward more environmentally grounded approaches to planning, encompassing methodological, technological, and social dimensions. In this sense, the SAP and its subsequent design models can be seen as positioned within a transitional space between the earlier CHBP framework and the emerging priorities of UNEP. Although both initiatives operated under the umbrella of UN technical assistance, they reflected an ongoing effort, driven largely by Weissmann and Ciborowski, to transform the CHBP into a more autonomous entity within the UN system. UNEP, in this regard, can be understood as an instrument for advancing and operationalizing this agenda, a process that would ultimately culminate in the establishment of the CHS in 1976. The tangible effects of this institutional and conceptual shift became evident once again along the Montenegrin coastline. In 1979, a renewed mission led to a revised version of the SAP, alongside the adoption of the 'village' design model originally proposed by TAC in 1974.[109] This development illustrates, in a highly localized context, a broader transformation in the UN's planning approach, one that unfolded over the course of just over ten years, moving from technocratic, growth-oriented models toward more environmentally sensitive and context-responsive strategies.

Finally, although the SAP produced only limited 'visible' transformations along the Adriatic coast due to unsurmountable economic deficiencies, its deeper impact on the socialist planning context of Montenegro was far from negligible. The project introduced two lasting and structurally significant contributions, or in James Ferguson's words, 'side effects'.[110] First, the SAP played a crucial role in consolidating institutional capacity, most notably through the establishment of the Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design (RIUPD) in 1969.[111] This institution will emerge as a central actor in both domestic development initiatives and international engagements across the Global South, maintaining a prominent role until the dissolution of Yugoslavia in

[107]Howard F. Elkus Archive, "Jaz Tourism Project, Budva, Republic of Montenegro, 1973 October," DES.2023.0003, Oversize-box 1, Book 2. Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design.
[108]Ibid.
[109]For further analysis see Bulatović, "The region in the making. Ernest Weissmann, United Nations technical assistance, and Yugoslavia as a testing ground."
[110]Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, 13.
[111]Minjević, and Mitrović, *Arhitekta Đorđe Minjević*, 85.

1990.[112] This dynamic is evident not only in the Institute's project work in Montenegro, but also in its role in facilitating the transfer of knowledge to the Global South through technical assistance schemes, such as those implemented in Ethiopia, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Uganda, Libya, and others.[113] In this broader context, the institution can be understood as a key transmission node within a global circuit of knowledge distribution, operating through multidirectional exchanges that moved from the West, across the East, and toward the Global South. As other historians have shown elsewhere, this exchange also operated in the opposite direction, complicating, thus, linear models of knowledge transfer by foregrounding the reciprocal and entangled nature of these flows.[114] The resulting blurring of origins, authorship, and adaptation becomes particularly significant within the framework of UN technical assistance programmes, where expertise was continuously reshaped through local conditions and cross-cultural encounters. In this sense, the Institute's activities may be seen as distinctive, perhaps even unique, among other Cold War 'world-making' projects, as they reveal a more diffuse and interconnected process of knowledge production and circulation. As such, this phenomenon warrants further critical analysis in order to more fully evaluate its implications, both in terms of its historical specificity and its broader contribution to global development practices (Figure 10).

Second, on the internal level, SAP facilitated the integration of complex, mathematically driven models of spatial-economic forecasting, largely imported through international expertise, with a domestically rooted, design-oriented planning culture. The result was a hybrid planning paradigm that redefined professional practice within the republic, merging technocratic calculation with architectural and urban design sensibilities in a way that would shape subsequent development strategies. This was best visible in the new General Urban plan of the capital city Titograd in 1974, cooperatively produced by the RIUPD and OTAM. The project marked a shift in scale, which allowed the local planners to put the urban development plans within a wider framework of socio-economic spatial parameters tied to the whole region instead of the narrowed scope of the commune or municipality. As a result, it contributed to creating a more objective image of the plan realization, avoiding the fallacies of the signature-style planning, which made the earlier



Figure 10. Headquarters of the newly founded UN-backed Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design (left) and the first post-war generation of Montenegrin architects and planners supported by the UN Fellowship scheme (right), 1971 (Courtesy of the Media Documentation Bureau Archive – Service for public relations of the Government of Montenegro).

[112]Stamatović-Vučković, and Bulatović, *Montenegrin architecture 1945–1970*, 53-8.
[113]Interview with Božidar Pavićević (1933), head of the Republic Institute for Urban Planning and Design between 1974 and 1986.
[114]Smode Cvitanović, and Čavlović, "A Tacit Feedback," 1–22.

plans almost obsolete.[115] In addition, the new approach enabled the 1979 revision of the SAP project under the auspices of the CHS in Nairobi, marking a continuation and re-articulation of earlier planning principles within an evolving global planning and institutional context.[116]

Overall, the CHBP's engagement in Montenegro, mediated through the RIUPD, reflects the reciprocal transformation of domestic planning culture and UN technical assistance. Rather than producing immediate physical outcomes, its impact unfolded gradually through institutional change and evolving planning practices. As such, Montenegro provides a particularly revealing case for understanding the evolution of the CHBP's development philosophy and the broader trajectory of UN technical assistance.

Conclusion

The article traces the evolution of the UN technical assistance programme, with particular emphasis on its manifestation in Yugoslavia as one of its most prominent recipients. It demonstrates, on the one hand, what the UN represented for Yugoslavia, particularly in light of its position within the NAM, and how geopolitical considerations shaped the architecture of technical assistance during the Cold War. On the other hand, it presents Yugoslavia as an experimental ground where newly formulated planning strategies were tested at regional and urban scales, revealing the reciprocal relationship between national development and the evolution of international institutions.

Despite its relatively modest budget and semi-autonomous position within ECOSOC, the CHBP expanded within a decade to operate in more than sixty countries across the Global South. Its activities extended well beyond individual projects, encompassing institutional development, planning legislation, regional strategies, and the standardization of planning practices. Rather than understanding technical assistance as a linear transfer of expertise from the developed to the developing world, the paper argues that planning knowledge circulated through multidirectional networks linking actors from the capitalist West, the socialist East, and the non-aligned South. In this process, the CHBP functioned not merely as a transmitter of knowledge but also as a platform through which planning ideas were adapted, negotiated, and transformed.

The case of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro illustrates these broader dynamics. Following John Paul Ghobrial's 'microhistorical approach', the article demonstrates how a localized developmental trajectory can illuminate wider transformations within the UN assistance framework.[117] The Montenegrin experience reveals the close relationship between domestic planning processes and evolving international development agendas, while highlighting the role of individual actors in translating global concepts into local institutional practice.

These findings support Stephen Ward's concept of 'negotiated imposition' as an appropriate framework for understanding the ambiguous relationship between donor and recipient.[118] Although participation in UN programmes remained voluntary, assistance was accompanied by normative expectations and institutional prescriptions. The most enduring effects therefore emerged not through immediate physical interventions but through the gradual restructuring of administrative institutions, planning cultures, and professional practices. At the same time, the

[115]Editorial, *Generalni urbanistički plan Titograda, Završni izvještaj*, 2.
[116]For further analysis see Bulatović, "The region in the making. Ernest Weissmann, United Nations technical assistance, and Yugoslavia as a testing ground."
[117]Ghobrial, "Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian," 1-22.
[118]Ward, "Transnational Planners in a Postcolonial World," 109.

CHBP exposed the structural limitations of development without sufficient financial resources. Closely connected to broader international financial mechanisms, UN recommendations frequently required investments that exceeded the capacities of recipient states.

It is exactly this ambiguity which situates the CHBP somewhere in between ideologically, economically, and politically imposed narratives and an alternative modernization model which, albeit intrinsically political, cultivated space for a negotiated type of development. One that, within the highly asymmetrical power relations of the Cold War, represented a compromise between advancing the aspirations for greater global equality among the so-called developing world and providing the institutional foundations for long-term state-building at the national level.

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