11TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# ON ARCHITECTURE – CHALLENGES IN DESIGN

# PROCEEDINGS

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SUSTAINABLE URBAN SOCIETY ASSOCIATION

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**Preface**

At the beginning of the 21st century, faced with the challenges of climate change, depletion of resources, high environmental pollution, and hints at an uncertain future, we are questioning the various roles of architecture. Whether technological development and the use of new concepts in design, the use of new materials in construction, the use of new tools in the creation of concepts can provide an answer, is the theme of the conference and exhibition “Challenges in Design”.

The new concept of architectural objects and the use of materials in the isolation of objects and the concept of facade envelope are an inspiration and a challenge in creation. Is art a part or is it against the concept of an architectural work – art vs architecture. Whether architecture and new media and the use of virtual and augmented reality can be tools in architectural design is the question of the position of architecture in the digital era – from parametric design to VR and AI, as tools in design. In addition to new buildings in the transformation of the city and the change in the structure of activities, there are many huge abandoned industrial buildings, which refers to the topic of reconstruction – reworking of the city and architecture – reworking of architecture and the city – reuse of abandoned buildings and places.

The conference will explore and discuss the complexity and different meanings of architecture. These topics will consider the essence of architecture through all its dimensions, always thinking of it as an art and a philosophical reflection on architecture. The essence will be considered through different points, processes and trends that contribute to new aesthetics and functionality: globalization, new approaches to design, innovative technologies, projects, and materials. A special block of topics is focused on the challenges in architecture and urban design in terms of how we can reshape the future in creating sustainability after the pandemic and how we can reset the sustainable development goals for the challenges of the pandemic – from the perspective of research, policy, or practice.

In the past year, many conference programs were focused on that topic, such as the New European Bauhaus initiative for green sustainable cities, or the COP 27 UN conference on climate change and impacts, many also implemented educational programs at universities, as well as charters and declarations in associations. That is why it is particularly interesting how cities will be organized in future development, how to improve the quality of work and life, and how architecture can help through the organization of space and materialization. In particular, the further improvement of information technology, which has made an outstanding contribution, enabling the holding of study programs in the faculties, as well as the holding of conferences and meetings.

Editor

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**The New Architecture of the Palace of Justice in Belgrade: Remodeling the Serbian Built Environment Towards the Spaces of Inclusivity**

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**Abstract**

For decades, the issue of accessibility of the built environment remains one of the key topics in the societies focused on creation of equitable spaces, appropriate for use of all their citizens. The Serbian Planning and Construction Law recognizes the necessity of accessibility standards, issuing the set of accessibility norms and defining them as mandatory technical measures, standards and conditions of design, planning and construction that ensure unhindered movement and access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly.

In response to the Reworking architecture/ city thematic stream, this paper aims to explore how can the remodeling of built environment, more specifically, public buildings, enhance their functionality for the people for mobility impairments. To do so, it will analyze the case study the reconstruction (arch. Z. Abadić) of the Palace of Justice in Serbia, a masterpiece originally constructed in 1973 (architects Z. Žunković, M. Živadinović). The largest judicial facility in Serbia, housing The High Court in Belgrade, the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, the criminal department of the Second Court in Belgrade and the Second Prosecutor's Office, the Palace of Justice was fully renovated in 2019.

This paper will focus on a specific aspect of the building's remodeling approach which was least discussed in terms of architectural contemporaneity – its accessibility. The research discusses the design strategies employed to make the building accessible to the citizens with mobility impairments. The paper will answer the following questions – what was successful about the particular design decisions regarding the Palace of Justice's accessibility, what could have been done differently – and why. Ultimately, the paper implores the necessity of reworking Serbian architecture – and public spaces – to transform them into inclusive environment that could be equally enjoyed by all its citizens.

Keywords: accessibility, Palace of Justice in Belgrade, remodeling, inclusive spaces design, movement equality

**1 Introduction**

Built environment has been considered an expression of dominant societal values for centuries, and simultaneously, defined as an active constituent in the process of betterment of a society. As the paradigm of equal rights and justice entered the global discourse of social politics, marginal groups advocates argued for buildings and public spaces that could be used equally by all members of a society. Gaining traction since the second half of the 20$^{th}$ century, social tendencies towards inclusivity and equality left a mark on the built environment professions. This influence is the most evident in legislation regulating the accessibility standards across the world. However, since the 1970s socially aware designers advocated the idea that creating accessible built environment simply to meet the law enforced standards is not enough, suggesting that the needs of the widest possible range of users should be placed at the core of architectural thinking. Though supported by the various UN and EU policies and initiatives, the practice of placing the notion of inclusivity at the very inception of design thinking is penetrating built environment professions at a slower pace. Most commonly, built environment professionals integrate accessibility solutions in later stages of design development, simply to meet the legislation standards. The challenge is even greater when it comes to the interventions to the existing built environment.

This paper opens the discussion of the accessibility design strategies in Serbia through the case study of the Palace of Justice reconstruction in Belgrade. The example of reconstruction was selected because over fifty percent of Serbian built environment is more than half a century old. Therefore, adapting the existing built environment to meet the contemporary accessibility standards stands for a pressing matter in Serbia. The paper opens with a condensed overview of history of design practices which put the needs of all members of a society at the center of design process in the international context, showing the corresponding policies adopted by the international community. The second part of the paper discusses the example of the Palace of Justice in Belgrade. The paper shows that though the reconstruction successfully brought the building up to the contemporary accessibility standards, the ideas about inclusivity were not of particular importance when formulating the reconstruction design. This finding confirms the claim that building professionals are slower than policy makers in adopting the inclusivity strategies as a core component of their practice.

## 2 Design Approaches as Strategies for Inclusion

### 2.1 Built Environment as Means of Social Equality: A Historical Overview

In their informative title about inclusive design, a team of researchers recently offered a well condensed history of generational aspirations to create inclusive built environment that would be suitable for a broadest range of users – and truly expressive of the social equality tendencies which gained traction since the second half of the 20th century (Maisel *et al.*, 2018). They traced the origins of this type of design thinking to the 1950s 'barrier-free' designers in the United States and Europe, who began the early work of removing obstacles in the built environment for people with physical disabilities, addressing the immediate needs of severely injured World War II veterans. The following decade saw the rise of various social movements (such as feminism or civil rights), bringing new attention to the questions of equal rights and social justice (Klatch, 1999; Mackenbach, Hu and Looman, 2013). In that climate, marginal groups, including persons with disabilities, advocated for a change, influencing designers and policy makers. In the United Kingdom, architect Selwyn Goldsmith wrote the groundbreaking *Designing for the Disabled* (1963), which remained a leading architectural access guide for built environment professionals globally for decades.

The disability rights movement spread throughout Europe and North America during the 1970s (Rembis, Kudilck, and Nielsen, 2018). Since this period, advocates began to argue against the medical model of disability toward the social model, in which disability is defined by the relationships between people and their built and social environments. They warned that discrimination can be a direct result of inadequate built environment. Demanding 'accessible design,' which moved away from adaptive solutions added to existing objects and toward the integrative ideas which should be present at design inception, activists made design choices part of the social equality equation (Lifchez, 1987). During the 1980s the concepts of 'barrier-free' and 'accessible' design evolved further. In 1983, architect Ron Mace proposed the concept of 'universal design', proposing that design that works for those who are disabled also works better for the entire population (Preisr and Smith, 2011).

The 1990s witnessed a global spread of the universal design concept, directly related to the concurrent legislation. In the United States, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act outlawed discrimination based on mental and/or physical disabilities and prodded accessibility requirements for public buildings. The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act in the United Kingdom prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities in relation to employment, the provision of goods and services, education, and transportation. In Continental Europe, two major centers were established – Design for All Europe (1993) and the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (1999), where director Roger Coleman used the term 'inclusive design.' At the turn of millennium, in 2001, the World Health Organization (WHO) redefined disability through the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health and emphasized functional status over diagnoses. The WHO described disability as a contextual variable, intersecting with social and economic status. Inclusive design was cited as a strategy for enhancing people's daily experiences and lifelong attainment. In addition, in 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Most recently, in 2015 the United Nations adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals, setting ambitious global targets to be achieved by 2030 in the sectors of health, education, water, sanitation, energy, and nutrition – underpinning all areas is an emphasis on equality and inclusivity.

The recent popularity of inclusive and equitable design strategies has also been driven by the reality of the aging of the world population. Over the next twenty years, the older population will increase by more than 50% in many developed countries. Moreover, in a 2023 article, the WHO estimates that 1.3 billion people experience significant disability. This represents 16% of the world's population, or 1 in 6 persons (WHO, 2023). It has also been estimated that more than a quarter of Europeans experience difficulties in movement throughout their lifetime (Gačić, 2013). Therefore, having that most people at some point of their lives can come into a state of reduced mobility – young / old age, pregnancy, temporary injuries, carrying heavy burdens, etc. – the accessible environment is a necessity to a large group of people, not just for persons with disabilities.

### 2.2 'Person-Centered' Design vs. Accessibility as an Afterthought

As shown previously, in response to the new 20th- and 21st- century societal expectations and demands, generations of designers developed various approaches to create built environment that can be used independently by the greatest possible number of users: universal design, inclusive design, design for all, etc. (Mosca, *et al.* 2019). Differing in methods, they are all gathered round the idea of an 'human-centered' design. The statement included in the technical manual of the European Concept for Accessibility (ECA) explains that 'fundamental basis of a European philosophy for accessibility is the recognition, acceptance and fostering - at all levels in society - of the rights of all human beings, including people with activity limitations… to an ensured context of high human health, safety, comfort and environmental protection. Accessibility is an essential

attribute of a "person-centered", sustainable built environment' (ECA, 2003). The manual postulates that the principles of design for all and the concept of universal design make the cornerstone of a fully inclusive society (ECA, 2003: 8).

The manual heavily criticizes the fact that the built environment is predominantly constructed on assumption of 'there being an 'average person'. In the past, the problem of accessibility was considered a direct result of the individual's deviation from 'the norm'. The person was 'the exception', hence 'the problem' (ECA, 2003: 43). Sara Hendren asks the same question, challenging the readership to take a step back and consider 'who is the world designed for' (2020)?' Who, and what physical and cognitive abilities of the human body, do architects typically have in mind when they design a project? To aid the architect's work there are nationally described space standards and accessibility requirements for buildings. However, in the words of Jos Boys: 'improving the design of built space is not just about "adding" disabled people to existing environments to better meet their "needs." It is about exposing and challenging underlying attitudes, assumptions and practices that frame disabled people in particular and limited ways, both in everyday life and through the education and practice of architectural and urban design (2015, 36).' Similarly, the ECA technical manual describes as problematic the most common response to accessibility demands – adding special facilities to an existing building, such as ramps or wider doors. According to the manual this response reinforces the idea that certain individuals are 'exceptions to the rule' and stigmatizes them by obliging them to use, for example, separate entrances, often at the rear of the building. Furthermore, most of those modifications are add-ons, following some afterthoughts, rather than results of a planned design process (ECA 2003, 44).

Taking into consideration the broadest possible spectrum of human conditions, the truly equitable design approach should, therefore, emerge at the very beginning of design process and follow the project's progress from the draft to the construction, inform post-occupancy evaluations, and even reflect further throughout research (Preiser 2011). Unlike simply meeting accessibility codes and legislative framework, which often occurs as a 'review' in the middle or final design phases, universal design, design for all, inclusive design, and other strategies, are informed by a holistic approach to the process of developing and creating buildings, landscapes, systems, and cities. They are not orientated toward an end product. Rather, they stand for an active way of design thinking and practice based on the premise that if a single member of a society has specific needs, they become those of a society as a whole.

Due to the previously listed efforts, and strongly supported by legislation and building regulations globally, accessible solutions have become a standard feature of newly erected buildings. In Serbia, the Law on Planning and Construction defines accessibility standards as 'mandatory technical measures, standards and requirements of designing, planning and construction to ensure free movement and access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly' (*Official Gazette* 72/2009, 81/2009). This regulation relates to the standards which ensure free movement and accessibility by removing architectural barriers. According to the Book of Regulations on technical Standards of Accessibility, the accessibility is the result of application of technical solutions in design and construction of buildings, which allows the people with disabilities and reduced mobility uninterrupted access, movement, stay and work on an equal basis with others (*Official Gazette of RS* 19/2012). The mandatory elements of accessibility are the elements for designing and constructing, which determine the size, features, installations, appliances and other equipment of the building to ensure access, movement, residence and work of persons with disabilities and reduced mobility with the same quality as other persons (Official Gazette of RS 22/2015). The legislation, then, strictly regulates the accessibility standards in newly constructed buildings.

In contrast, the existing built environment, erected according to the standards of the past, remains a true challenge to creation of inclusive spaces that can be used equally by all members of the society. International practice shows that when changes need to be made to existing structures, the many different interests are often difficult to reconcile, especially in the case of heritage or buildings erected with a specific purpose. Focusing on a local Serbian example, the reconstruction of the 'Palace of Justice' building, the following section explores the practical challenges and strategies employed to remodel the existing built environment and update it in accordance to the contemporary accessibility standards.

**3 Towards the Spaces of Inclusivity: necessity of contemporaneity or what is new in reconstructing?**

Reconstructing on the notion of 'accessibility' (in its implicit and explicit meaning and effect) demands a particular mode of interpretation aimed at creating a new sense of architecture. Commitment to this sort of design approach should be primarily directed toward solutions in the present and within existing conditions. According to the 2022 national Long-Term Building Renovation Strategy document (*Official Gazette of RS 27/2022*) the current state of public buildings in Serbia, especially those of the institutions, are not state of the

art.[1] Mainly they are functionally obsolete and technically and technologically outdated. The building stock in Serbia approximately comprises a total of 2.2 million private and about 25,000 public buildings (N.Blagojević et al. 2023).[2] About half of all buildings are older than 50 years (*Long-term strategy*, Official Gazette of RS 27/2022). Given this condition of public facilities, the problem of accessibility principally is related to the need to create a better - more *contemporary* built environment to meet the goal of 'buildings and places that can be used and enjoyed by everyone' (*Building for Everyone 1*, 5).

The *contemporaneity* in this case should integrate all architectural qualities with modernizing interventions in relation with the time – seeing architectural design as a discipline which should lead to 'good practice to ascertain the needs of the range of expected users as early as possible' (*Building for Everyone 7*, 6). The requirements of our time place emphasis on a need for integrative architectural (*contemporary*) design approach as part of 'fluid, evolving patterns of practice that regularly traverse, transcend and transfigure historical disciplinary and conceptual boundaries'[3] (Rodgers and Bremner, 2011). Today's architectural design practice consequently moves in the realm of greater openness and accessibility of the built environment, both in its spaces and in its programs, as 'a design process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation' (Steinfeld and Maisel, 2012). 'Creating an environment that can be used by all people, regardless of their age, size, disability or ability,' (*Building for Everyone 1*, 1) is to identify and refine architectural ways of thinking in relation to demands of creation of an 'accessible and inclusive built environment' as a necessity of time. 'Accessibility' in architectural design is now a 'must' for the architectural discipline to keep up with the time, as the demands for *equal presence* (*The EIDD Stockholm Declaration*, 2004) where the object of architecture mediates the space for the realization of these principles in our time: 'In other words, to be contemporary is to be able to make a critical association with the present' (Ereš, 2023, 17). The methodological approach to the reconstruction project should therefore follow a time-based principle that combines the inherited values of the building design with the innovativeness of the architectural interventions. In the context of Serbian build environment, a step towards the 'design for all' approach should as well clearly determine the strategy of redesigning the massive volume of existing buildings.

**3. 1 The Palace of Justice – Case of a Modernist "Urban Physiognomy"**

The courthouse in Savska Street in Belgrade, better known as the Palace of Justice, is the largest building in the Republic of Serbia intended for judicial authorities. It is a unique complex of several judicial bodies with a total gross area of almost 29,000m$^2$ and more than 60 courtrooms.[4] The construction of the building was completed in 1973 according to the winning competition proposal, which was done by architects Zoran Žunković, Mihailo Živadinović and Božidar Simonović jointly with the constructor architect Oskar Hrabovski.[5] In terms of the form and structure of the program, the building is articulated by two forceful compositional elements: a nine-story tower and a lower three-story cubic wing. The firmness of the compact form emphasizes the refined connection in between the upper body of the building and the ground floor; whereby the lower ground level and ground floor *opens* the building program through the public plateau. What is perhaps the most recognizable feature of the building is its striking appearance which expression consists of architectural materiality assembled in concrete, brick, and transparent glass, giving the building look of an ever-fresh presence of modernity.[6]

The building was constructed from 1969 to 1973, when it was put into use after a design process that lasted from 1963 until 1966. This long period of realization (1962-1973) included a whole series of transitional changes that took place not only in the technical and technological aspects (Suša 1974), but also in the requirements of constant reforms and modernization of the judicial and administrative system. These constant modifications

[1] See also 'Nearly zero energy building in Serbia', Project: https://www.euzatebe.rs/en/projects/nearly-zero-energy-buildings-in-serbia

[2] The building stock was classified based on the floor area of residential buildings which account for 164 million m2 or 83% of the total floor area of all buildings in Serbia.

[3]'This mutability means that design research, education, and practice is constantly shifting, creating, contesting and negotiating new terrains of opportunities and re-shaping the boundaries of the discipline.' (Rodgers and Bremner, 2011)

[4] See: https://www.1x2studio.com/projects/20191101.htm acc. September 23, 2023.

[5] The project for the Palace of Justice was obtained from the open competition held in 1962, whereas the competition jury chose the design of Serbian architects Zoran Žunković, Mihailo Živadinović and Božidar Simović for the execution. The project took several years to be finished as the construction of the building which began in 1969 was finished in 1973.

[6] Due to its architectural features, the "Palace of Justice" is ranked among the most representative and significant buildings of post-war modernism in Belgrade and Socialistic Yugoslavia. As such, from the mid-seventies to present day, it has been recognized by critics in some of the most notable reviews of the achievements of Yugoslav architectural practice.

were reflected in numerous adjustments of the initial architectural design brief. Concerning these alternations, in order to firmly establish the conception of the building, the programmatic aspects were strictly set by the architects in the field of the modernist functional design approach.


Street view from Savska street (Slobodana Penezića Krcuna street), 1973 source: 'Palata pravde u Beogradu,' *Arhitektura urbanizam* 8(73), 23
Street view 2019 after the reconstruction, source:https://www.1x2studio.com/projects/20191101.htm

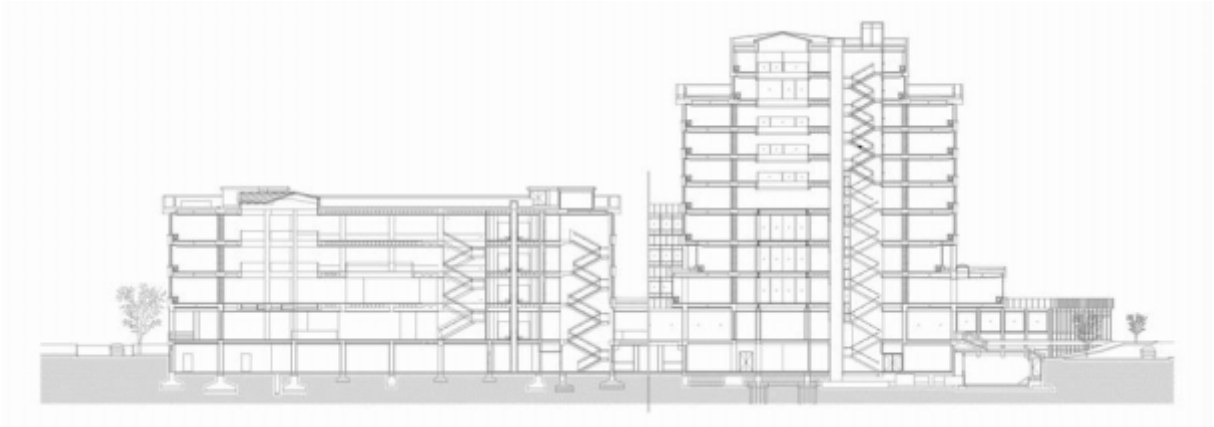
Architect Branislav Milenković, in his article about the Palace of Justice formulates the manifested requirements for constant adjustments, even during the construction phase, as a kind of exposure to *impermanence* caused by 'overturns that were changing previously adopted directions' (Milenković 1973, 25). At the same time, however, Milenković also points to the deeply rooted solidity of the essential architectural idea of the building`s setting. Following Milenković`s argumentation this idea is anchored as follows: 'the spatial conception of the court buildings is primarily determined by the urban physiognomy,' which is settled by aligning it with the level of the narrow street at the rear as the 'boundary line of the "constitutional" plane'. Consequently, the architects made this 'constitutive plane' as a pivotal positioning level, 'aligned' on one side 'with the terrain in order to be in a dominant position towards Slobodan Penezić Street, to regulate and justify its appearance in relation to the urban arrangement and the block' (Milenković 1973, 25).[7] The arrangement of the object, in conjunction with its surroundings and the morphology of the terrain, confirms that 'the conception of the space of court buildings is determined primarily by its urban physiognomy' (Milenković 1973, 25) which establishes accessibility, access and public open spaces as the primary starting point of the project.

**3. 2 The Interweaving of Flows - The Programming Principle of Accessible Platform**

In order to comprehend the approach, scope, and the idea of the reconstruction, it is needed to grasp the conception of the initial design solution. According to one of the authors, architect Mihailo Živadinović, the thought of the building is composed by two compositional elements 'with two different contents: vertically the same program of trials or administrations are grouped in cube, while horizontally the services of the same institutions are connected' (Milenković 1973, 25). The authors have lucidly placed two elements that at the same time, both compositionally and programmatically, differentiate the zones with overlaps on the ground floor. Živadinović further insisting that 'the ground floor and the basement are reserved for general and common services, as well as for the observers' (Milenković 1973, 25). Consequently, the architects of the initial project engaged the area of the basement, ground floor, and the parterre in a decisive way, as a kind of programming principle of an easily accessible platform which is *inviting* for the participation and presence of the public.

Starting from the ground floor, where the processes of administrative, judicial, and service functions take place, the zones intertwine through a flat horizontal flows and vertical movement. Correspondingly, architect Živadinović lists the '"constitutive" plane' program as follows: 'On the ground floor, in addition to the entrance halls, there is a hall, a counter hall, restaurants, a club, etc., as well as operating spaces that must be located on the ground floor for service purposes: substation, generator, kitchen, etc. The basement is reserved for other technical services: heating, air conditioning, archives, cloakrooms, reception prison, etc.' (Milenković 1973, 25). The ground floor parterre is here defined as the access plateau, and it is intended for the widest public - the 'audience' as the necessity for constructing public participation. This plateau, as a continuous flat surface which cover the whole plot, simultaneously brings a sense of 'accessibility' and 'openness' to the flow of employees, solicitors, clients, visitors, audience, and passersby.

[7] Slobodana Penezića Street was renamed, today it is Savska Street.



Longitude section, 2019 after the reconstruction, source: https://miesarch.com/work/4840

With this sort of building access strategy, as Milenković notes, the architects create the "'constitutive' plane", not only as a precise and consistent relation of the architectural base and morphology of the terrain, but also as a synchronous experience of movement that intertwines with the architectural materiality, the continuous presence of the horizon, and the overall effect of the building program as a spatially mediated sense of an open agora.

**3. 3 The reconstruction as affirmation of the '"constitutive" plane'**

The very intensive use of the building has led over the years to numerous adjustments and changes that contradicted the original logic of the program's design and the buildings spatial physiognomy. These adjustments were primarily related to the reorganization of the administrative units, the adaptations of the spaces, as well as changes in the program structure due to the interruption of the designed flow of the process. This series of ill-inert and uncoordinated modifications resulted in disrupting the conception of the working activities within the mandatory judicial protocols. All of this led to the condition in which the space of the building could no longer perform the expected function of the facility in a safe and appropriate manner (Petrović 2016). The reduced functionality of the facilities and the disordered flow logic were also reflected in the limitations of the accessibility of certain areas for users as well as for employees.

According to period press, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, as the user and one of the investor of the reconstruction (Petrović 2016), defined the expectation from the project as 'a spatial, programmatic, functional, technical and technological improvement and modernization of working conditions and standards, with implementing all the necessary facilities, systems and equipment for efficient working process' (Petrović 2016). In order to relate these general requirements for the 'modernization' and the upgrading of judiciary buildings and facilities [8] to the more specific spatial and programmatic qualities of the particular structure, it was necessary to define the priorities through the comprehensive value-based line of project principal determinations. In difference to the generalized tasks, the design approach settled accurate proposal. The architectural office '1x2 studio' from Belgrade, which already has extensive experience with the design and reconstruction of judicial buildings in Serbia [9], was commissioned to design the reconstruction of the building. The author of the reconstruction project architect Zoran Abadić, together with the team of architects and engineers, carried out the reconstruction project in two years in period 2012-14.[10] At the beginning of the design process, according to the authors of the reconstruction, there was a series of dialogues with the authors of the project, architects Žunković and Živadinović, 'during which, in relation to the authentic design principles and overall setting of the building, the basic principles of the reconstruction were traced out' (Ereš and Mađanović, 2023).

[8] 'The project forms part of a broader project – Upgrading of judiciary buildings and facilities, which is an integral and critical part of Serbia's extensive National Judiciary Reform Strategy and will assist in facilitating the country's EU integration and association.' (https://miesarch.com/work/4840).

[9] See more at https://www.1x2studio.com/projects_non-residential.htm and the publication 'Model Court Guidelines for Basic and Higher Court of the Republic of Serbia' (2015), Abadić, Z. at al, Belgrade: Grafolik.

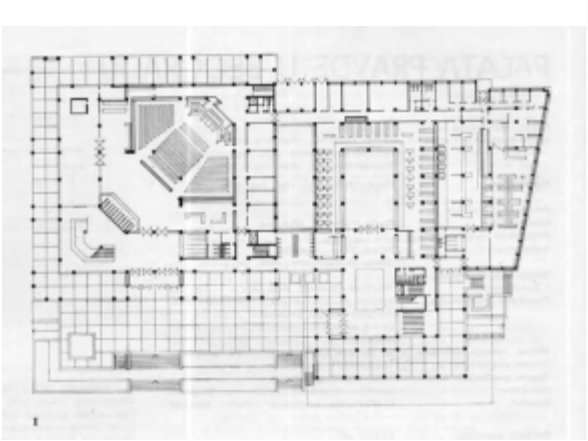
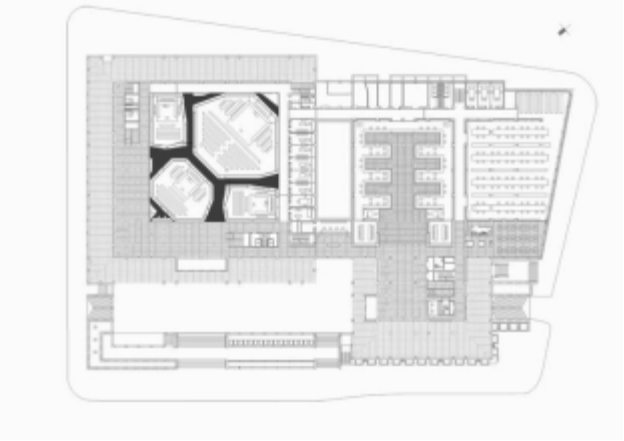
[10] The architectural team also included architects Dušan Milovanović, Jelena Zagorac, and Jelena Bogosavljević and associates Mirjana Lučić, Dušan Nikolić and Milian Karaklić (https://www.1x2studio.com/projects/20191101.htm)


Street view (Vojvode Milenka street), 1973 source: 'Palata pravde u Beogradu,' *Arhitektura urbanizam* 8(73), 23
Street view from Savska street 2019 after the reconstruction,
source:https://www.1x2studio.com/projects/20191101.htm

In the later descriptions of the reconstruction design process, the questions of the importance of the relation to the inherited architectural milieu and the matter of the flows which was facilitated by the building accesses, approaches and entrances were particularly emphasized: 'Vehicular and pedestrian approaches have been retained from existing streets and directions, designed in accordance with the regulations, especially for persons with disabilities or persons with reduced mobility. It is intended to accommodate and for functioning of the judicial authorities of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration' (https://miesarch.com/work/4840).

**3. 4 The main interventions and the idea of thoughtful differentiation**

Placing the thoughtful logic of flows to the center of interest, the project prioritizes the affirmation of the qualities of the inherited building conception. According to the author of the reconstruction, architect Zoran Abadić, the area of the ground floor was found to have the greatest potential for reaffirming the ideas and authentic qualities of the building: 'With the reconstruction, we wanted to restore and improve the zones that had been "lost" in the changes made spontaneously over the years. Our intention was to restore a clear zoning according to processes, programs, and contents, considering the strict security procedures necessary for the smooth running of the parallel processes of users, employees, and visitors' (Ereš and Mađanović, 2023). The task of reconstruction of the Palace of Justice therefore set the task of the movement assesment as a way to thoroughly approach renovation of multi-layered program and multifaceted spatial structure of the building. According to the author of the reconstruction, who takes up the issues 'of enhancement of the architectural idea as a kind of reaffirmation,' (Ereš and Mađanović, 2023) the reconstruction opened up issues of contemporary interpretation of the building space conception through: 1) articulation of program zoning, 2) preservation of the authenticity of the materiality of architecture, 3) synchronization of flows, circulation and the increasing of accessibility, which should simultaneously allow separation and control of the audience, users and the staff.

Groundfloor plan, 1973, source: 'Palata pravde u Beogradu,' *Arhitektura urbanizam* 8(73), 24
Groundfloor plan, 2019 after the reconstruction, source: https://miesarch.com/work/4840

The major spatial intervention was the removal of the bulky staircase to the left of the main entrance. This was done with the aim of creating space of new courtrooms in line with the goal of 'concentrating the public area of the program as much as possible on the ground floor' (Ereš and Mađanović, 2023). At the same time, two smaller stairwells were constructed to take over its function, as well as the construction of two more spacious elevators, one in the lower wing and the other in the tower. Toilets for the disabled were also added on each floor. Beside fulfilments through typical elements required by-law guidelines (disabled elevators, toilets, the dimension of corridors and entrances, etc. *Rulebook - Official Gazette of RS* 22/2015), to provide the design in accordance with the present-day demands, the architects were forced to seek broader approach to issues of accessibility. To do so, the focus of the reconstruction was put on *strategies* of delicate reinterpretation of values of building conceptual base. Aiming to build the new relation between the public program of the courtrooms as well as set of public judicial services on one side, and the semipublic spaces of offices and judicial facilities on the other. This line of approach reaffirmed the necessity of improvement of the synchronicity of flows of different process that take place at the same time in the shared spaces. In this case, the design process was directed to on an integral approach to the demands of security procedures and multifaceted circulations of different categories. Scheme was developed from the point of the 'access plateau as a space of "amortization" of inflow of a large number of people' (Ereš and Mađanović, 2023), as an entry area to the contents of the building, wherefrom the public splits to clients and visitors. Well thought fluidity of forking trajectories is attaining the fundamental task of the reconstruction. This task was set as a reinforcement of the architectural qualities of the design concept of the building and within that the strengthening of the public areas by making it accessible as much as possible. The spaces created by adaptation meaningly upgraded the common areas, inserting three new courtrooms into the ground floor herewith evolving the plateau deeper to the public services of the building. By these set-ups of the 'constitutional plane' architects of reconstruction reached the possibility of recompositing and rebranching the programs in a way to achieve a sensible reaffirmation of the architectural project and at the same time to attain the new quality of modernized space both for the openness to the public and for the comfort of the workplace.[11] By these means project provided a thoughtful understanding of differentiation of accesses, approaches and entrances reaffirming the spatial segments that constitute the space and architecture of the building. This thoughtful differentiation shaped an efficient and renewed logic of program zoning, security flows and circulation tracks.


Detail of the façade; Courtrooms foyer, Source of the images: https://miesarch.com/work/4840

**4 Towards inclusive spaces - conclusions on the case of the reconstruction**

Reconstruction has without a doubt brought the building up to the contemporary laws, standards and regulations of accessibility. However, the investigation of the accessibility solution clearly showed that the ideas of inclusivity and equality were not of primary importance when developing the reconstruction design. As warned against in the literature about contemporary design strategies focused on equality, accessibility measures in the reconstruction project were a matter of responding to the legislative requirements, not one of the guiding ides. This can be considered an indication of the fact that even though the UN and EU conventions, recommendations, and guidelines foster the universal design and design for all principles as the basis for a truly inclusive society, it will take time for built environment professionals to catch up with the equitable design philosophies that these approaches foster.

On the other side, it should be noted that the complexity of the building program, various constraints, and the fact that the reconstruction took place within a protected, valuable architectural property meant that the models of inclusivity and equality could not be set as of primary importance when developing the reconstruction design. The issue of accessibility in this case also reveals that the guidelines of contemporary inclusive design strategies cannot always be applied to specific cases in different urban environments and circumstances of the reconstructions. For example, the main accessibility challenge in case of the Palace of Justice reconstruction was the fact that it was not possible to provide enough 'designated car parking – car parking spaces reserved for the use of car users with disabilities, whether as motorists or passengers', as well that 'travel distances should be minimized where possible' (*Building for Everyone 1*, 5). Considering this guideline, it was not achievable to develop a new capacity for designated parking spaces due to the limited amount of open space available, but also due to the problems and constrains of alternative means which could be Belgrade's public transport system. Perhaps some of these problems could be solved systematically by introducing 'all-humans-centered' methods and approaches, which should necessarily involve other disciplines, but also different stakeholders, in parallel with the design strategies.

The case of the reconstruction of the Palace of Justice reveals the structure of the intervention as a particular design approach based on the capacities of architectural knowledge to bridge the span between the values of the prior building conception and the time-based principle of the reconstruction as a set of contemporary acts. This sort of structuring aims to widen the perspective on "accessibility" from the basic "bureaucratized" architectural elements (ramp, handrail, minimal dimensions of openings and passages, minimal clearance, etc.) to a more advanced approach of more comprehensive and integral consideration of architecture as a design practice that structures *the public sphere*. The reconstruction in question was carried out as a kind of reinterpretation aimed at affirming precise correlations of surfaces-planes, movement, and materiality, based on the profound differentiation of the public realm, institutional space and common space. In regard to this case, we can conclude that the potential of architecture (as a design and as building practice) to interweave different notions of space and programs stems from the necessity for free movement as a kind of flow that defines accessibility as a wider plateau of a humanistic passage toward a more equitable version of our world.

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