

PROSTOR

33 [2025] 1 [69]

A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING  
ZNASTVENI CASOPIS ZA ARHITEKTURU I URBANIZAM

UNIVERSITY  
OF ZAGREB  
FACULTY OF  
ARCHITECTURE  
SVEUČILIŠTE  
U ZAGREBU  
ARHITEKTONSKI  
FAKULTET

ISSN 1330-0652  
[https://doi.org/  
10.31522/p](https://doi.org/10.31522/p)  
CODEN PORREV  
UDC 71/72  
33 [2025] 1 [69]  
1-182  
1-6 [2025]



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**SPLIT'S RING ROAD**  
REALIZING INFRASTRUCTURES FOR THE VIII MEDITERRANEAN GAMES IN 1979

SCIENTIFIC SUBJECT REVIEW  
[https://doi.org/10.31522/p.33.1\(69\).10](https://doi.org/10.31522/p.33.1(69).10)  
UDC 711.4(497.583Split)"1979"



FIG. 1 SPLIT'S RING ROAD WITH URBAN SUBCENTERS AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE VIII MEDITERRANEAN GAMES: 1. THE CITY STADIUM (HOME STADIUM OF 'HNK HAJDUK SPLIT' FROM 1979), AND 2. THE SWIMMING-POOLS IN POLJUD, 3. 'RNK SPLIT' STADIUM IN THE SKOJ PARK (RECONSTRUCTION AND EXTENSION, REMAINED UNFINISHED), 4. SOCIALIST YOUTH CENTER (REMAINED UNFINISHED) AND RTV CENTER IN BOL, 5. SPORTS CENTER 'GRIPE' (RECONSTRUCTION AND EXTENSION WITH THE MAIN SPORTS HALL), AND SHOPPING CENTER 'KOTEKS' IN GRIPE (COMPLETED IMMEDIATELY AFTER MIS), 6. TENNIS CENTER IN FIRULE-ZENTA (RECONSTRUCTION AND EXTENSION), 7. HOTEL 'MARJAN' (EXTENSION), 8. CROATIAN NATIONAL THEATER (RECONSTRUCTION AND EXTENSION), 9. MARITIME PASSENGER TERMINAL (RECONSTRUCTION). THE SOLID BLACK LINE REPRESENTS THE RING ROAD WITH MARJAN TUNNEL AS THE DASHED LINE.



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SCIENTIFIC SUBJECT REVIEW

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.31522/P.33.1\(69\).10](https://doi.org/10.31522/p.33.1(69).10)

UDC 711.4(497.583SPLIT)"1979"

TECHNICAL SCIENCES / ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING

2.01.02 – URBAN AND PHYSICAL PLANNING

ARTICLE RECEIVED / REVISED / ACCEPTED: 4. 4. 2025. / 22. 5. 2025. / 16. 6. 2025.

## SPLIT'S RING ROAD

### REALIZING INFRASTRUCTURES FOR THE VIII MEDITERRANEAN GAMES IN 1979

RING ROAD

SPLIT, CROATIA

URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

URBAN PLANNING

VIII MEDITERRANEAN GAMES

The VIII Mediterranean Games held in Split (Croatia, then Yugoslavia) in 1979 presented a transformative moment, catalyzing the implementation of long-envisioned urban plans through the completion of Split's ring road. Within three years, this infrastructural backbone's final development reshaped the city by connecting emerging subcenters of sports and other public programs with existing ones while linking Split's southeastern and southwestern coastlines into a continuous system. The ring road facilitated the polycentric development conceptualized since the 1950s, integrating protective green zones with the

subcenters, while addressing critical traffic challenges. This article examines the institutional framework that enabled this ambitious project, led by the Urban Planning Institute of Dalmatia – Split, and analyzes how the implementation bridged multiple scales from architectural to infrastructural vision. The ring road represents a uniquely contextual implementation of post-WWII urban plans, responding to Split's particular topography and landscape while demonstrating how a mega-event provided momentum to realize comprehensive urban transformation with lasting impact on the city's spatial organization.

## INTRODUCTION

The VIII Mediterranean Games<sup>1</sup> held in Split in 1979 (*Mediterranske igre Split*, MIS) were a transformative event for the city, marking a period of significant architectural and infrastructural development and a pivotal moment in its modern history. The preparation for MIS evolved into an unprecedented urban renewal campaign that fundamentally reshaped Split's infrastructure, cityscape, and identity, accelerating implementation of planning concepts developed over three decades of post-WWII modernization. At the heart of this transformation was the completion of Split's ring road – a carefully conceived urban armature that served as much more than a mere traffic solution. This infrastructural backbone became the critical link that redefined the city's spatial and functional layout, interconnecting previously separated parts of the city into a cohesive urban system. By linking Split's coastlines and threading together emerging and existing urban areas, the ring road facilitated urban connectivity that had been envisioned, yet unrealized, in Split's urban planning documents since 1951.

The ring road's significance extends beyond its functional role in traffic management. It catalysed Split's evolution from a centralized urban model toward a network of interconnected activity nodes. By weaving together newly developed sports and recreational zones with the existing urban fabric, the ring

road created continuity between previously disparate areas of the city. It connected both upgraded existing facilities and new public programs built specifically for MIS – including sports stadiums, swimming-pools, cultural centres and shopping centres – while integrating these developments with established city districts (Fig. 1). Completing this system within the remarkably compressed timeframe of less than three years, as part of a cohesive urban vision, represents a distinctive achievement in late socialist<sup>2</sup> Yugoslavia's architectural and urban planning history. Unlike many urban planning initiatives of the era that remained theoretical or were only partially realized, the urgency and prestige of the Mediterranean Games created the political will and financial resources necessary to fully execute this comprehensive vision. The Urban Planning Institute of Dalmatia – Split (*Urbanistički zavod Dalmacije – Split*, URBS)<sup>3</sup>, as the key planning institution, marshalled technical expertise and coordinated multiple scales of intervention – from infrastructural systems to architectural details – resulting in a successful integration of transportation infrastructure with the surrounding urban context.

What makes the ring road especially notable is its ability to go beyond the usual infrastructural projects of its era. Rather than imposing standardized solutions, it responds sensitively to Split's unique topography, existing urban patterns, and cultural context. The road's implementation reflects a sophisticated understanding of how infrastructure can serve multiple functions: facilitating mobility, defining public spaces, structuring urban growth, and creating new civic identity. Today, driving along the ring road offers an experiential journey through Split's modernist architectural achievements – a living exhibition of the city's architectural identity that continues to influence how residents and visitors alike experience the city. This article examines the planning, realization, and impact of Split's ring road within its specific historical, social, and urban context. While existing scholarship has documented individual aspects of Split's development during this period – from Tusek's (1996) catalogue of architectural competitions to Markovina's (2018) historical contextualization – this study offers the first structured analysis of the ring road as an integrated urban system. The research methodology combines archival investigation of original planning documents, morphological analysis of urban transformations, examination of institutional frameworks, and assessment of the infrastructure's relationship to both designed facilities and existing urban fabric. Rather than attempting a comprehensive reconstruction of

each developmental phase, which would extend beyond available archival resources, this article focuses on the ring road's project methodology and its lasting impact on Split's spatial organization and identity, illuminating how a mega-event opportunity was leveraged to realize a more ambitious vision of urban modernization.

## SPLIT'S URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNIZATION THROUGH MIS

After World War II, Split underwent significant change in its urban landscape, influenced by socialist principles and modernization.<sup>4</sup> Urban planning during this period emphasized industrial growth, housing for rapidly growing cities, and infrastructure development. The urban development of Split at that time was regulated through several major documents and plans, which then became the basis for a number of detailed plans. The major regulative base was laid out by the Directive Regulatory Plan of Split (*Direktivna regulaciona osnova grada Splita*) from 1951, Studies for the General Urban Plan of Split (*Studije generalnog urbanističkog plana Splita*) developed between 1957-1961,

Decision replacing Split's urban plan and its coastal area (*Odluka koja zamjenjuje urbanistički plan Splita i obalnog područja*) from 1968, Project Split Peninsula – a program proposal for the executive urban plan (*Projekt splitski poluotok – prijedlog programa za provedbeni urbanistički plan*) from 1975, and the General Urban Plan of Split (*Generalni urbanistički plan Splita*, GUP) from 1978 (Grgić, 2011). The primary problem the city faced were housing shortages due to widespread wartime destruction. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, industrialization and internal migration to Split intensified, and while industrial plants were developing, housing construction lagged behind (Klemić, 2004). By 1957, the crisis peaked: with around 81,000 residents and only 16,000 apartments (8.8 m<sup>2</sup> per person), Split needed at least 6,000 more units (Muljačić, 1969). Urban authorities responded by forming Split Management Bureau (*Zavod za gospodarenje gradom Splitom*), later evolving into Split Development Enterprise (*Poduzeće za izgradnju Splita*, PIS), a municipal housing company. Most new flats were purchased by state enterprises for their employees or reserved for Yugoslav Army members. Efforts focused on building “economical apartments” like the E-57 model – small, low-cost units. Between 1958 and 1962, hundreds were built using URBS standardized designs (Klemić, 2004). A major shift occurred with the development of concentric construction sites – areas where identical buildings were mass-produced. Between 1956 and 1967, new housing districts (e.g., Spinut, Bol, Skalice, Plokite, Škrapi, Lokve) emerged on the city's outskirts, surrounding the existing urban fabric, developed as solitary neighborhoods (Grgić, 2011). Their interconnection though, as well as satisfactory social and other infrastructure, were slower to develop. By the early 1970s, the innovative Split 3 project<sup>5</sup> was already transforming the eastern part of the city with its pedestrian-oriented urban design, representing a significant evolution in Split's urban planning approaches that paralleled the broader rethinking of the city's polycentric structure occurring in the lead-up to MIS.

The city's Mediterranean climate and coastal position made outdoor activities central to urban life, leading to systematic development of sports facilities that established sporting culture and organizational capacity. Key venues emerged along the coastline through the 1950s and 1960s – open-air entertainment and cinemas in Bačvice, swimming-pools in Zvončac, Spinut and Zenta, tennis courts in Firule, as well as swimming, water polo, rowing and sailing clubs – establishing a pattern of sports and recreation

<sup>1</sup> The Mediterranean Games are an international multi-sport event held every four years among countries in the Mediterranean sea region. Established by Muhammed Taher Pasha during the 1948 Olympics in London, they are defined as “a regional sporting competition held in accordance with the rules of the Olympic Games” (Šviderski, 1989, cited in Zekić, 2016). From Alexandria (1951) to Split (1979), they were held in Barcelona, Beirut, Naples, Tunisia, Izmir, and Algeria, under the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Greek Olympic Committee in Athens (Markovina, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Late socialism (1974-1990) in Yugoslavia was characterized by political decentralization following the 1974 Constitution, economic stagnation and increasing foreign debt, gradual market liberalization and openness to Western influences, evolution of self-management toward a more technocratic approach, and an increased focus on regional development.

<sup>3</sup> URBS, acronym retained from the previous name *Urbanistički biro* – Split which operated from 1957 to 1967.

<sup>4</sup> Split experienced remarkable demographic growth between 1945-1991, one of the highest in socialist Croatia. The population increased from 48,248 (peninsula limits) in 1948 to 189,388 in 1991. The Municipality area (including today's towns Kastela and Solin) grew from 97,146 in 1948 to 266,835 by 1991, with growth particularly pronounced between 1961-1971 (Vidak, 2002a).

<sup>5</sup> The construction of Split 3 was the largest and most ambitious socialist housing development in the city, which marked the apex of central planning. Envisioned in the late 1960s and built through the 1970s-80s, it covered over 350 hectares, for 37,000 residents, and embodying the socialist self-contained urban neighbourhood (Tusek, 1996). Though it included schools and shopping centres, many planned amenities were never realized, including the envisioned secondary city centre and coastal tourist infrastructure.





FIG. 2 SPLIT IN 1968 – REALIZED AND PLANNED SECTIONS OF THE RING ROAD (BOLD LINE INDICATES COMPLETED SEGMENTS), AT-GRADE RAILWAY, AND SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE (CROATIAN SPORTS CLUB ABBREVIATIONS RETAINED IN ORIGINAL FORM): 1. 'JK LABUD' AND 'JK MORNAR' SPORTS MARINA IN BALUNI BAY, 2. 'PK' AND 'VK JADRAN' OUTDOOR SWIMMING-POOL (1936) IN ZVONČAC, 3. 'JK SPLIT' SPORTS MARINA, 4. 'PK' AND 'VK MORNAR' OUTDOOR SWIMMING-POOL (1955), WITH 'VK GUSAR' AND 'VK MORNAR' ROWING CLUBS IN SPINUT-POLJUD, 5. SPORTS COMPLEX IN POLJUD (AS PLANNED BY THE ARCHITECTS FRANO GOTOVAC AND VLADIMIR JAMAN IN 1967-68), 6. 'RNK SPLIT' STADIUM FOR FOOTBALL AND ATHLETICS IN THE SKOJ PARK (1950s, REMAINED UNFINISHED), 7. 'RK SPLIT' HANDBALL COURT (1968), 8. 'KK JUGOPLASTIKA' BASKETBALL HALL (1968) AND 'NADA' FOOTBALL AND HANDBALL FIELD IN GRIPE, 9. 'TK SPLIT' TENNIS COURTS (1950) AND 'POŠK' OUTDOOR SWIMMING-POOL (1957) IN FIRULE-ZENTA, 10. 'STARI PLAC' FOOTBALL STADIUM (HOME OF 'HNK HAJDUK SPLIT' FROM 1911 TO 1979), 11. 'PK' AND 'VK JADRAN' INDOOR SWIMMING-POOL (1952).

zones (Figs. 2 and 3). The incremental development proved to be substantial – by the 1980s, the city had cultivated 155 sports organizations across 32 different sports branches, with approximately 500 active sports recreation societies, while Split athletes competed in ten Olympic Games, winning 178 medals across Olympic, World, European, and Mediterranean competitions (Petric, 1986). This foundation provided the basis for the more comprehensive sports infrastructure vision that would be realized through the MIS projects. The post-war period also saw significant interventions in the historic core and its surroundings, with restoration work in Diocletian's Palace and the development of hospitality infrastructure creating a dual identity for the city as both a heritage site and a modern tourist destination. Urban greenery became an important element of the modernization strategy, with several parks and green corridors planned throughout the city, such as the Emanuel Vidovic Park (*Park Emanuela Vidovica*), a grove near the SKOJ Park (*Park SKOJevaca*)<sup>6</sup>, and new trees in the then-thinned Marjan park-forest. Tourism rapidly developed in the 1960s and 1970s, and became an important segment in establishing the broader cultural strategy tied to the Non-Aligned Movement's

politics and the country's internationalization efforts. Facilitated by the growth of mass media and popular culture, tourism was crucial in shaping a desirable lifestyle both domestically and internationally. Sport culture was likewise strongly supported and organized at strategic state levels. In the initial post-WWII years, Yugoslavia undertook a comprehensive analysis of conditions for sports participation, formulated plans for institutions, created legal frameworks, enacted laws, and set goals for constructing gyms and educating professionals (Petrov, 2019). The convergence of tourism growth, state-supported sports culture, and Split's proven international competitive record positioned the city as a compelling candidate to host the Mediterranean Games, transforming decades of post-war sports development into the strategic foundation for international sporting diplomacy.

Split's mayor Jakša Milčić's bold vision to bring the Mediterranean Games to the city, first pursued in 1971 in Izmir, was ultimately realized when mayor Vjekoslav Vidak's second candidacy succeeded in 1975. The city won the vote against Casablanca by 16:9 and was therefore chosen to host the following Games. Though one of the most sports-minded towns in Yugoslavia, at the time when it

was entrusted with organizing the Mediterranean Games, Split did not have a single sports facility meeting the needs of such a large-scale athletic contest, let alone the overall municipal, traffic, technological and cultural infrastructure of the city (Miličić, 2009). The city's sporting excellence thus co-existed alongside infrastructural limitations, generating the urgent need for transformative urban development with new facilities and improved circulation to integrate them citywide. A sports program existed, along with the desired list of sports facilities without project documentation, but with no financial model in sight (Vidak, 2002b). The much-needed big investments were enabled by the signing of the Social Compact on the Organization and Financing of MIS in 1976 when the Split Municipal Assembly (*Skupština Općine Split*)<sup>7</sup>, together with the Socialist Republic of Croatia and all the other Yugoslav republics and regions (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) assumed responsibility for organizing the Games in three equal parts.<sup>8</sup> This financing principle became the cornerstone of the whole organizational procedure in preparing the event, formalized before Josip Broz Tito's approval to be the official patron of MIS in 1977 (Pezo, 1983).

### INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

The implementation of Split's ring road and the broader urban transformation catalysed by MIS emerged through a robust institutional

framework characteristic of late socialist Yugoslavia. This framework enabled the coordination of complex planning processes and the realization of ambitious infrastructure within an exceptionally compressed timeline.

By the late 1970s, Yugoslavia had developed a distinctive planning system that combined elements of socialist state coordination with decentralized decision-making. Unlike other socialist states that imposed rigid centralized planning, Yugoslavia's system operated through multiple levels of governance – federal, republican, communal (municipal) – each with specific planning responsibilities. A defining characteristic of Yugoslav planning was the integration of spatial planning within the broader system of 'societal planning'.<sup>9</sup> Through progressive legislation, urban planning in Yugoslavia established a comprehensive hierarchy of planning documents, from republic-level spatial plans to detailed implementation plans for specific urban areas. The MIS preparations coincided with what Tandarić, Watkins and Ives, in their work 'Urban planning in socialist Croatia' (2019), identify as the fourth evolutionary phase of socialist planning in Croatia (1973-1980), characterized by increased environmental awareness, more substantial public participation through local communities, and planning aimed at supporting long-term socioeconomic development. The 1973 legislation introduced a system of physical plans divided into development (long-term) and implementation (short-term) plans, with urban plans covering the settlement level and implementation plans projected for specific development areas (Tandarić et al., 2019).

The institutional structure for urban planning in Split followed a carefully designed system of checks and balances (Fig. 4). The Municipal Assembly held ultimate authority to adopt urban plans and other normative acts. Supporting this body was the Urban Planning Council (*Savjet za urbanizam*), which monitored planning processes, reviewed urban plans, and approved projects before submission to the Assembly. URBS served as the primary planning and technical body, and coordinated with PIS, a specialized municipal institution for urban development implementation. Together, these institutions played a crucial role in the spatial management of the city, mediating between planning concepts and their physical realization.

When Split's application to host the VIII Mediterranean Games was accepted in 1975, alongside physical infrastructure development, an organizational framework was established to coordinate the multifaceted event preparation (Fig. 5). The 'soft infrastructure'<sup>10</sup> was hierarchically structured with

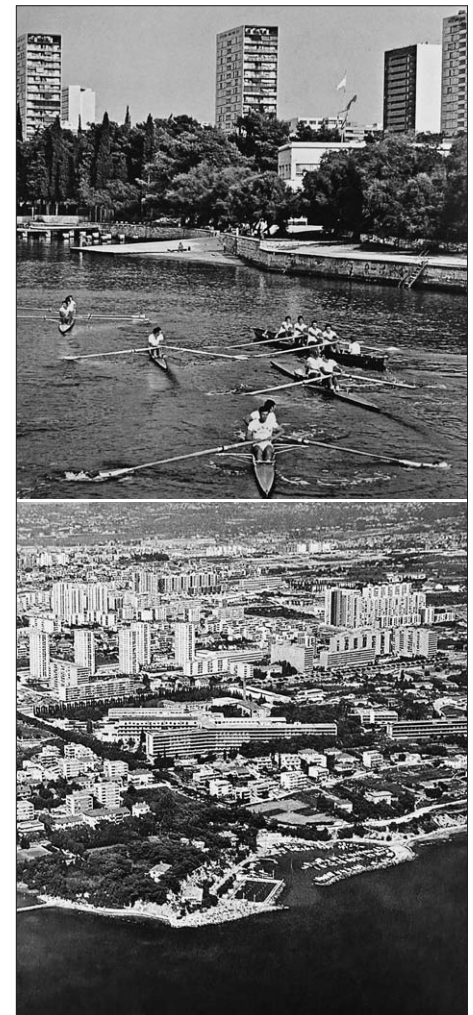


FIG. 3 SPLIT'S URBAN CONTEXT IN THE 1970S - INTEGRATING SPORTS FACILITIES WITHIN THE MODERN CITY FABRIC. ROWERS OF 'VK GUSAR' TRAINING IN POLJUD BAY, WITH HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDINGS (DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT IVO RADIC IN 1968) OF THE NEWLY DEVELOPED SPINUT NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE BACKGROUND (UP); AERIAL VIEW OF THE MARINA AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN ZENTA BAY, WITH FIRULE HOSPITAL (DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT ZOJA DUMENGIĆ IN 1969) AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OF SPLIT 2 AND SPLIT 3 DISTRICTS VISIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND (DOWN).

6 SKOJ, Cro. *Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije* – The League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia. The Park is also known as the Turkish Tower Park (*Park Turska kula*).

7 The city was governed by the Split Municipal Assembly also referred to as the Split Commune Assembly in official translations. As a socio-territorial unit, the Municipal Assembly was divided into municipalities (*općine*), which were subdivided into local communities (*mjesne zajednice*), representing the smallest socio-political units of self-governance within the socialist system. For specific information regarding Split's complex administrative structure in the late socialist period, consult the Split State Archives, fond HR-DAST-270 (*Skupština općine Split*).

8 In the end, Split participated with 42,33%, the Socialist Republic of Croatia participated with 32,32%, while the rest of the Federation participated with 14,20%, with 11,15% from other contributors (Vidak, 2002b).

9 In Yugoslavia, societal planning (*drustveno planiranje*) differed from social planning. While the latter typically involves guiding community development, societal planning focused primarily on directing economic development (Piha, 1973, cited in Tandarić et al., 2019).

10 Infrastructures are defined as "the systems that enable circulation of goods, knowledge, meaning, people and power" (Lockrem & Lugo, 2012, cited in Salazar et al., 2017), mostly associated with immobility and, as event structures, treated as temporary.



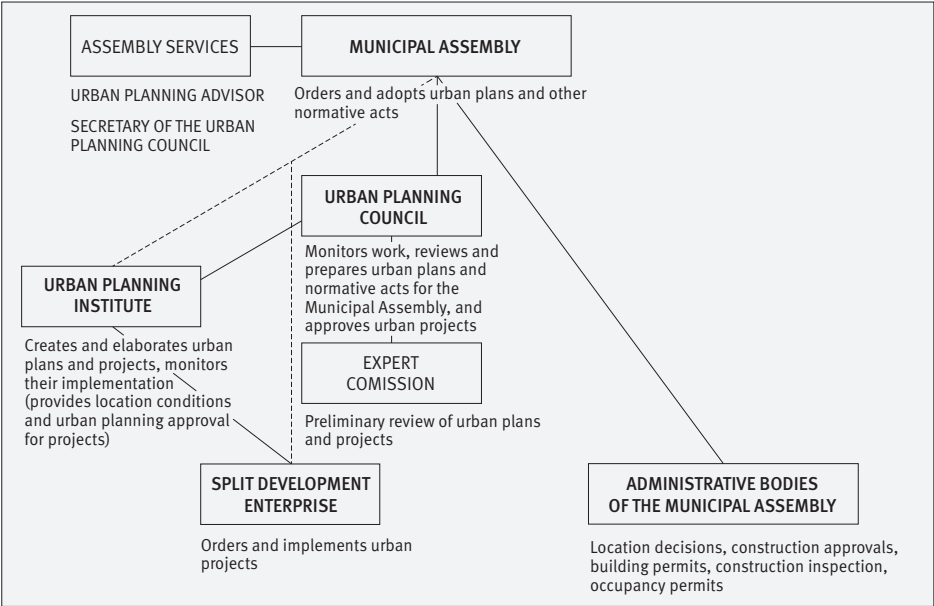
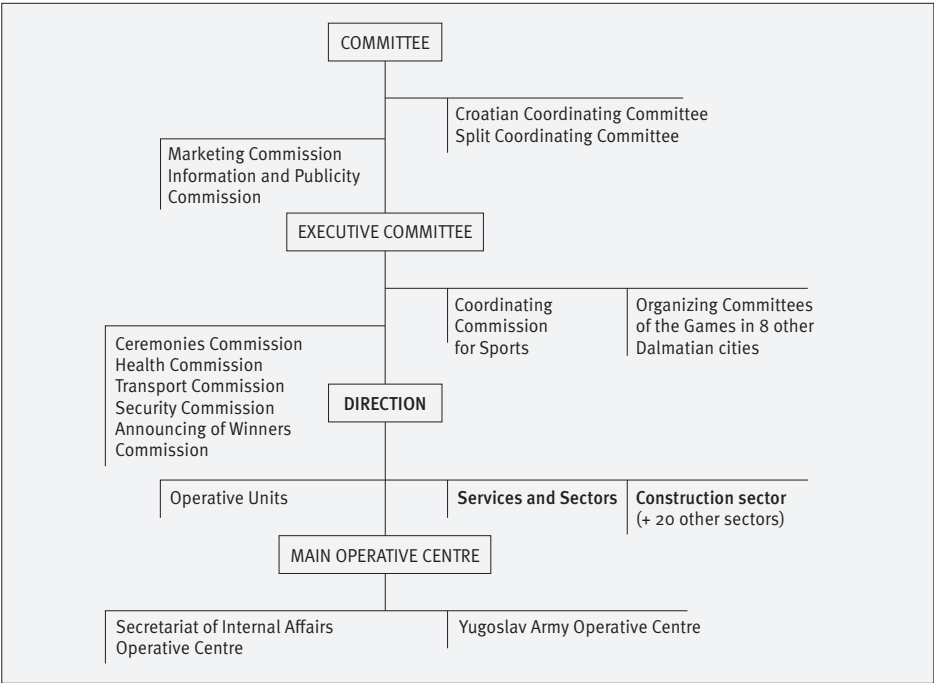


FIG. 4 ORGANOGAM OF BODIES IN THE SPLIT MUNICIPALITY ENGAGED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE URBAN PLAN

the Games Committee (*Komitet*) at the apex, consisting of delegates from administrative bodies, sporting organizations, and industry, overseeing all preparation and management. The Executive Committee (*Izvršni komitet*) was appointed from prominent officials to implement decisions, while the Directorate (*Direkcija*), established by the Municipal Assembly in 1977, handled technical organization and management across multiple cities in the Dalmatian region, establishing operational units at each venue (Pezo, 1983). Cru-

FIG. 5 ORGANOGAM OF THE VIII MEDITERRANEAN GAMES



cially, the organizational structure included a dedicated Construction Sector (*Sektor za izgradnju objekata*), which operated alongside twenty other sectors and services, highlighting the priority given to physical infrastructure in the preparation of MIS (Pezo, 1983). For the MIS projects, the client role was typically assumed jointly by the Municipal Assembly together with the Games Directorate, creating a direct institutional link between the city's long-term development interests and the Mediterranean Games' immediate requirements.

URBS emerged in 1947 as The Urban Planning Centre – Split (*Urbanistički centar – Split*), “the first and most significant urban planning and research institution in Split and Dalmatia, one of the oldest and largest such institutions in our country, unique in its organizational structure, the breadth of its professional activities, and its multidisciplinary staff composition” (Matošić, 2003). With its headquarters in Split, it was established in conditions when the city's economic and demographic growth could no longer be accommodated by pre-WWII planning frameworks. Due to a shortage of experts, the centre focused its work on the preparations for the 1951 Directive Regulatory Plan (Pervan, 1966). By the 1970s, URBS had developed into a sophisticated multidisciplinary institution with extensive experience in regional planning, architectural design, and infrastructure development. For MIS, the Institute adapted its structure with specialized departments – Department for Urban Planning (*Odjel za urbanističko planiranje*), Department for Urban Design (*Odjel za urbanističko projektiranje*), Department for Architectural Design (*Odjel za arhitektonsko projektiranje*) and Department for Infrastructure (*Odjel za infrastrukturu*) – with the latter established specifically during preparations for MIS due to the increased workload and complexity of tasks (Šimunović, 2019). Crucially, this multidisciplinary structure enabled the conceptualization of the ring road not as an isolated infrastructure project but as an integrated urban system.

Split's ring road represented the culmination of planning efforts that extended back to the immediate post-war period. The 1951 Directive Regulatory Plan of Split, developed by architects Milorad Družević and Budimir Pervan, established the foundation for Split's modern urban development (Fig. 6). The most significant direct precursor to the MIS projects was the 1978 GUP, led by architect Berislav Kalogjera who was also instrumental in developing the Regional Plan of Split (*Regionalni plan Splita*) from 1970. The infrastructure aspects of the ring road also benefited from the expertise of civil engineer Slo-

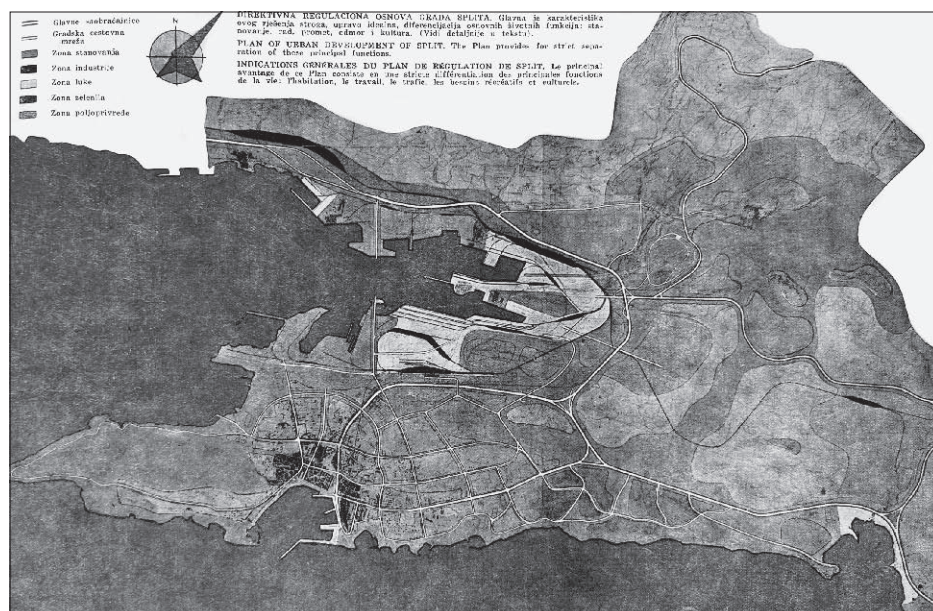


bodan Tedeschi, founder of the URBS's Department of Infrastructure, and later civil engineer Željko Maroević, who developed solutions for the road system based on their work on Split's traffic planning (Bajic-Žarko and Marasović, 2012). What distinguished URBS's approach was effective coordination across disciplines and scales, ensuring technical solutions aligned with broader urban objectives, allowing the Institute to transform long-standing planning visions into reality within a remarkably compressed timeline demanded by the Mediterranean Games.<sup>11</sup>

## THE RING ROAD: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

While the robust institutional framework provided the mechanism for implementation and enabled its execution, it was the sophisticated urban planning principles underlying Split's ring road that transformed it from mere infrastructure into a defining element of the city's urban structure and identity. The Mediterranean Games created a pivotal moment that translated decades of theoretical planning concepts into physical reality, bringing to fruition a long-standing planning vision that had, until then, remained largely unrealized.

The 1951 Directive Regulatory Plan, influenced by CIAM<sup>12</sup> zoning principles, already envisioned the ring road's potential, noting "a ring road approximately circumscribes the area of the present city" (\*\*\*) 1951), and proposed a coastal strip for sports and recreation from Poljud to Sustipan and from Katalinić Hill to Stobrec, alongside three planned centres: in Meje, Spinut-Poljud, and Trstenik.<sup>13</sup> Meje and Spinut-Poljud were already partially functioning with such purposes, although the implementation of planned facilities progressed too slowly and through minor, partial interventions (Matosić, 1967). The 1951 Directive Regulatory Plan's sound concept of separating industrial zones in the north from residential areas in the south with



a continuous green protective belt stretched alongside the ring road, established an ecological framework for the city's development, though its complete implementation was unfortunately compromised by illegal residential construction (Matosić, 1967). These concepts can be traced in subsequent plans, which further developed the city's foundational programmatic principles, established the boundaries of the urban conglomeration, and achieved greater alignment with existing legislation, as exemplified by the Decision replacing Split's urban plan from 1968. The Project Split Peninsula from 1975 (Fig. 7) advanced these ideas, emphasizing that "the implementation of the ring road would enable a more efficient connection between the city centre, coastal recreational zones, and residential areas, thus facilitating better distribution of urban functions" (\*\*\*) 1975). Also, it provided critical analysis of the existing green spaces and sports infrastructure in Split, documenting how "green areas in the city were usually not an integral part of a functional recreational system, but their role was rather reduced to a formal effect" (\*\*\*) 1975). This assessment revealed the spatial imbalance of green areas and the poor condition of concentrated sports facilities. By mapping sports facilities – from the northwest to the eastern coastal belt the project articulated a comprehensive vision where the ring road would not merely facilitate traffic but integrate these dispersed recreational assets into a coherent system that balanced high-performance sports facilities with spaces for 'mass recreation' accessible to all. Building upon these foundations, the 1978 GUP (Fig. 8) formalized the already implemented prin-

FIG. 6 DIRECTIVE REGULATORY PLAN OF SPLIT (*DIREKTIVNA REGULACIONA OSNOVA GRADA SPLITA*), 1951. THE LEGEND INCLUDES: MAIN TRANSPORTATION ROADS (*GLAVNE SAOBRAĆAJNICE*), URBAN ROAD NETWORK (*GRADSKA CESTOVNA MREŽA*), RESIDENTIAL ZONE (*ZONA STANOVANJA*), INDUSTRIAL ZONE (*ZONA INDUSTRIJE*), PORT ZONE (*ZONA LUKE*), GREEN ZONE (*ZONA ZELENILA*), AGRICULTURAL ZONE (*ZONA POLJOPRIVREDE*).

<sup>11</sup> The Institute's significant contribution to the Mediterranean Games was officially recognized when the Split Municipal Assembly awarded URBS with a special commendation for its contribution to the preparation of MIS (Bajic-Žarko and Marasović, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> CIAM, *Fr. Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* – The International Congress of Modern Architecture (1928-1959), was an international organization promoting modern architecture and urbanism principles, viewing them as economic and political tools for solving global issues, housing crisis and problems of modern cities.

<sup>13</sup> When the positioning of the Military Hospital prevented the realization of the main city stadium in Trstenik, as envisioned in the 1951 Directive Regulatory Plan, the Spinut-Poljud regulation (1962-1963) expanded the sports and recreation zone to accommodate it (Matosić, 1967).







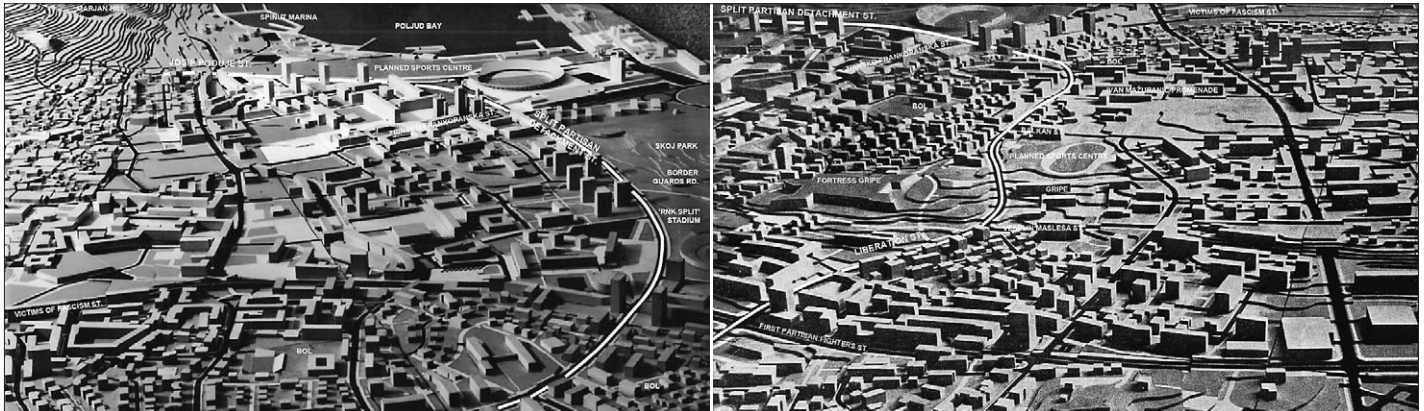


FIG. 9 THE RING ROAD SHOWN IN AN URBAN MODEL OF SPLIT: FROM MARJAN HILL AND POLJUD BAY TO BOL AREA (LEFT), AND FROM THE 'RNK SPLIT' STADIUM IN THE SKOJ PARK TO GRIPE AREA (RIGHT), 1967-68

other than those used for the competitions – was adopted in 1978 as a priority component of Split's Municipality Development Plan (*Srednjoročni plan razvoja Općine Split*) for 1976-1980, addressing comprehensive infrastructure needs including accommodation facilities, public utilities, and transportation infrastructure essential to the event's success while serving the city's long-term development goals (Pezo, 1983). According to the MIS Integral Plan, the ring road's implementation required sensitive integration with both Split's existing urban fabric – residential areas, parkways, and existing streets – and its broader infrastructure systems. Designed as the city's primary artery "the ring road encompassed multiple segments including Josip Poduje St. from the northern exit of the Marjan tunnel to Zrinsko-Frankopanska St., and Split Partisan Detachment St. to Balkan St. and the Main Sports Hall 'Gripe'" (\*\* 1978). Implementation involved significant infrastructure upgrades, including the widening of Josip Poduje St. alongside the stadium and construction of an underpass beneath Split Partisan Detachment St. at its intersection with Border Guards Rd. The development faced technical challenges<sup>14</sup> that required careful coordination with other construction projects in Gripe and SKOJ Park, resulting in some delays from the planned timeline (\*\* 1978). Particularly notable was the construction of the 870-meter-long Marjan tunnel<sup>15</sup>, which along with the reconstruction of a large number of city roads, intersec-

tions, and thoroughfares, significantly enhanced Split's overall transportation network while allowing the ring road to navigate the city's challenging topography.

The ring road transcended its functional role as mere infrastructure to become a defining component of Split's urban identity, weaving together landscapes, recreational spaces, and architectural landmarks into a new experiential framework. This transformative quality distinguishes the ring road from conventional infrastructure projects, highlighting its contextual implementation of post-war urban planning principles and its enduring legacy in fundamentally reshaping Split's urban structure and identity. By facilitating the shift from a monocentric to a polycentric city model, the ring road established a framework for balanced development that continues to influence Split's evolution. The project remains a powerful example of how short-term catalysts like sporting events can be leveraged to achieve long-term urban planning objectives while remaining sensitive to local context and needs.

## CONCLUSION

Split's ring road represents a contextual and enduring implementation of post-WWII urban plans, prompted by the preparation for the VIII Mediterranean Games in 1979. The project became one of the significant transformative endeavours that were brought about by MIS, accelerating decades of urban planning ambitions under the pressure of a major international event. Exceeding just a pragmatic traffic solution, the ring road redefined the city's spatial logic by linking emerging urban sub-centres and integrating them into a coherent, polycentric structure envisioned in Split's 1970s planning documents. It responded sensitively to Split's specific topography, bridging hills, coastline, and historical fabric, creating a network that complemented rather than disrupted the existing urban identity.

<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the Municipal Assembly announced a republic-wide survey competition for the urban regulation for part of Split's centre, entrusting the program development to URBS (Bjelajac, 2009). Although the competition was actually the third post-war attempt to establish a city axis of a pedestrian corridor from the old core northward toward the SKOJ Park (Tušek, 1996), despite the favourable MIS moment, it failed to be realized.

<sup>15</sup> For reference to all streets mentioned, see the List of Street Names in the appendix, which includes both socialist-era names (1945-1990) and current names.





FIG. 10 SPORTS AND SHOPPING CENTER IN GRIPE (DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECTS SLAVEN ROŽIĆ OF URBS, AND ŽIVORAD JANKOVIĆ; UP); SPORTS COMPLEX IN POLJUD (THE CITY STADIUM DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT BORIS MAGAS WITH THE CIVIL ENGINEER BOŽENKO JELIĆ AS THE CONSTRUCTION DESIGNER, AND THE SWIMMING-POOLS DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT IVAN ANTIĆ; DOWN)

MIS provided a powerful impetus for implementation, institutional focus, funding, and public attention toward a project that reshaped both infrastructure and identity of the city, with a legacy that lingers half a century later. Through the workings of the Urban Institute of Dalmatia – Split, the MIS initiative demonstrated an extraordinary synthesis of urban planning, architecture, landscape and urban design (Fig. 10). The coordinated realization of parks, green belts, sports and public facilities established infrastructural integration catering to local daily life, while the road's experiential qualities reinforced Split's modern image as both a Mediterranean city and a regional urban centre. With both sports and tourist facilities, public spaces and urban infrastructures, MIS came to be a landmark moment in the city's evolution, providing a model for event-driven development which transcends short-term spectacle to produce lasting urban transformation.

The political background and institutional organization which enabled such a systematic and comprehensive development on various scales should be viewed in a broader context of post-war modernization which brought about a wider urban and architectural transformation. Several cities experienced a comparable accelerated development brought about by sporting events fiercely supported by the state: beside the Mediterranean Games in Split in 1979, the Sarajevo Winter Olympics in 1984 and the Universiade<sup>18</sup> in Zagreb in 1987 epitomized the efforts the former country invested in positioning itself internationally through tourism and sports. The lasting impact of a new identity which, in the case of Split, was legible through large-scale infrastructures as much as through comprehensive visual identity development influenced the city of Split for decades to come.

<sup>16</sup> Implementation faced several technical challenges: drainage along Victims of Fascism St. and Border Guards Rd. required coordination with railway cutting construction; the Mazuranic promenade – Balkan St. segment was only partially completed, while the Balkan St. – Masleša St. segment of the Liberation St. remained unfinished by the time of MIS due to property rights issues and insufficient funding. Construction was carried out by 'Cestar' company, with 'Elektrodalmacija' responsible for lighting installation (\*\* 1978). The May 1<sup>st</sup> Promenade section from Gubec St. to Hektorović St. remained unrealized to this day.

<sup>17</sup> The Marjan tunnel concept can be traced back to the Implementing Urban Plan for the Marjan peninsula (*Provedbeni urbanistički plan marjanskog poluotoka*) from 1973 (Bjelajac, 2009), and earlier to the Detailed Urban Plan for the Marjan peninsula (*Detaljni urbanistički plan Marjana*) from 1971 (\*\* 1973).

<sup>18</sup> The Universiade (now called the FISU World University Games) is an international multi-sport competition for university athletes organized by the International University Sports Federation.

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6. Turistkomerc archive, Zagreb [CCN]

### ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

- FIG. 1 Authors, 2025 (according to PEZO, 1983)
- FIG. 2 Authors' intervention, 2025 (\*\*\* 1969)
- FIG. 3 Facebook group 'Split kroz povijest'
- FIG. 4 Authors, 2025 (according to KALOGJERA et al., 1966)
- FIG. 5 Authors, 2025 (according to PEZO, 1983)
- FIG. 6 \*\*\* 1951
- FIG. 7 DAS
- FIG. 8 AFZG
- FIG. 9 Authors' intervention, 2025 [DAST-URBS] (left); KALOGJERA, 1967 (right)
- FIG. 10 CCN

### LIST OF STREET NAMES

1. Balkan Street (*Balkanska ulica*) / Vukovarska Street (*Vukovarska ulica*)
2. Border Guards Road (*Put graničara*) / Glavičine Road, Ante Starčević Street, and Croatian Fraternal Community Square (*Put Glavičina, Ulica Ante Starčevića i Trg Hrvatske bratske zajednice*)
3. First Partisan Fighters Street (*Ulica Prvoboraca*) / King Zvonimir Street (*Ulica kralja Zvonimira*)
4. Ivan Mažuranić Promenade (*Šetalište Ivana Mažuranića*) / street name remained unchanged
5. Josip Poduje Street (*Ulica Josipa Poduje*) / Seven Kastela Street (*Ulica Sedam Kastela*)
6. Liberation Street (*Ulica Oslobođenja*) / Freedom Street (*Ulica Slobode*)
7. Matija Gubec Street (*Ulica Matije Gupca*) / street name remained unchanged
8. May 1st Promenade (*Šetalište 1. Maja*) / Bačvice Promenade, Josip Hatze Park, Petar Preradović Promenade, Firule Road, and Ivan pl. Zajc Street (*Šetalište Bačvice, Perivoj Josipa Hatze, Šetalište Petra Preradovića, Put Firula i Ulica Ivana pl. Zajca*)
9. Ognjen Prica Street (*Ulica Ognjena Price*) / Stjepan Gunjača Street (*Ulica Stjepana Gunjače*)
10. Petar Hektorović Street (*Ulica Petra Hektorovića*) / street name remained unchanged
11. Split Partisan Detachment Street (*Ulica Splitskog odreda*) / Croatian Navy Street (*Ulica Hrvatske mornarice*)
12. Veselin Masleša Street (*Ulica Veselina Masleše*) / Matice hrvatske Street (*Ulica matice hrvatske*)
13. Victims of Fascism Street (*Ulica Žrtava fašizma*) / Croatian War of Independence Street (*Ulica Domovinskog rata*)
14. Zrinsko-Frankopanska Street (*Ulica Zrinsko-Frankopanska*) / street name remained unchanged

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Conceptualization: A.Č., M.R.Č. and L.S.; methodology: A.Č., M.R.Č. and L.S.; formal analysis: A.Č.; investigation: A.Č.; writing – original draft preparation: A.Č. and M.R.Č.; writing – review and editing: A.Č., M.R.Č. and L.S.; visualization: A.Č.; supervision: M.R.Č. and L.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

