THE STUDENT HOTEL

AN IMPULSE FOR THE ACTIVATION OF THE PUBLIC SPACES OF VELIKO TARNOVO

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THE STUDENT HOTEL

an impulse for the activation of the public spaces of Veliko Tarnovo

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CONTENT

01 THE OLD CAPITAL	5
INTRODUCTION HISTORICAL BACKGROUND URBAN ANALYSIS CITY SPIRIT	
02 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO	57
THE ARCHITECT THE BUILDING THE CONTEXT	
03 PROJECT	93
THE HOTEL AND THE CITY - INTERVENTIONS THE STUDENT HOTEL THE LINK THE PROMENADE	
04 EPILOGUE	151

"The ambition of this project is to rid architecture of responsibilities it can no longer sustain and to explore this new freedom aggressively. It suggests that, liberated from its former obligations, architecture's last function will be the creation of the symbolic spaces that accommodate the persistent desire for collectivity."

OMA - Office for Metropolitan Architecture

3

01 | THE OLD CAPITAL

INTRODUCTION
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
URBAN ANALYSIS
CITY SPIRIT

5





INTRODUCTION

◆ Fig.2 Bulgaria | Veliko Tarnovo
Province

← Fig.1 View from Tsarevets

Veliko Tarnovo is located in the central part of Northern Bulgaria in the foothills of Stara Planina Mountain south from the vast Danube Plain. The city is strategically positioned on the main roads connecting the Western Balkans with Black sea and Eastern Europe with the Middle East. The main motorway connecting Western and Eastern Bulgaria and the railway connecting Northern and Southern Bulgaria cross the city of Veliko Tarnovo. The closest airport is the one in Gorna Oriahovitsa, just 10km north from Tarnovo. This is also the location of the biggest railway station in Northern Bulgaria. The Yantra river bypasses the hilly terrain moving from South to North, thus divides the city in two.

Veliko Tarnovo is the administrative center for the Veliko Tarnovo Province and Municipality. The city covers an area of around 530 km² and is the largest in its District and the 15th largest city in Bulgaria. Tarnovo has a population of 68 859 people as of 31.12.2018¹ and is also one of the few cities in the country that have a positive natural growth.

There are several theories about the origin of the name of Veliko Tarnovo. Some believe it comes from the Latin "tres naves" or "three ships" referring to the three hills the city is built on - Tsarevets, Trapezitsa and Sveta Gora. (Fig. 3) Others argue the name of the city comes from a developed version of the slavic word "tern" or "tran" meaning "thorn". In the 1960's "Veliko" (great) was added to the name of the city in honor of Tarnovo's past as a former capital.² Because it was the capital of the Second Bulgarian State during the Middle Ages, the town of Veliko Tarnovo is nowadays referred to as "The old capital" or "The city of the tsars".

¹ Population by city and sex (12.04.2019), in: National Statistical Institute, https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/2981/ население-по-градове-и-пол, 4.10.19.

² Veliko Tarnovo, https://tarnovo.info/велико-търново/, 05.10.19.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Because of its strategic location and topography the territory of modern Veliko Tarnovo was inhabited since the prehistoric age. The area became a well-developed urban center so that Tarnovo has always had a central role in Bulgarian history.

PREHISTORIC AGE AND ANTIQUITY

During excavations in the 1970s a large settlement from the second half of the 6th millennium BC was discovered in the Western industrial zone of present-day Veliko Tarnovo - in the Katchitsa area. (Fig.4)

Cultural remains from the Copper, Bronze and Iron Age were also found on Tsarevets and Trapesitza hills. The first settlement on Tsarevets hill was established 4200 BC. However, the settlement that has existed for the longest period on the hill was the one of the Thracian tribe of the Krobyzoi. It was an economic center in central Northern Bulgaria.³

The first major Roman stone buildings on the hill of Tsarevets were built during the 4th century. (Fig.5) East from there, military fortifications guarded the secondary Roman road that went from Danube to Constantinople.

In the year 102, about 18 km north of Veliko Tarnovo, the Roman city of

Nikopolis ad Istrum (the city of victory by the Danube) was founded by Emperor Traian. The city's area was spreading across 27 hectares. It existed until the 7th century and it used to be one of the largest cities on Bulgarian territory for the time being.

During the 6th century a Byzantine town replaced the Thracian settlement on the hill of Tsarevets. Together with the fortress on the other side of the Yantra river's gorge, the fortifications on Tsarevets were of great significance for



Fig.4 Katchica area



Fig.5 Roman settlement - Tsarevets hill



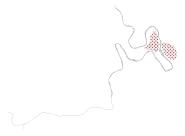


Fig.6 Thracian settlement - Tsarevets hill and Momina krepost



Fig.7 Early medieval settlement - hills Tsarevets and Trapesitsa

⁴ Koleva, D.: Antiquity, https://www. veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/gradat/istoriyana-veliko-tarnovo/antichnost/, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Official Internet Portal, 05.10.19. the defense and compiled the largest city in the Byzantine Empire. (Fig. 6) During the 6th century it was destroyed by the Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians, who then built their settlements there.

After the peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire the First Bulgarian state was founded with capital city Pliska.⁴

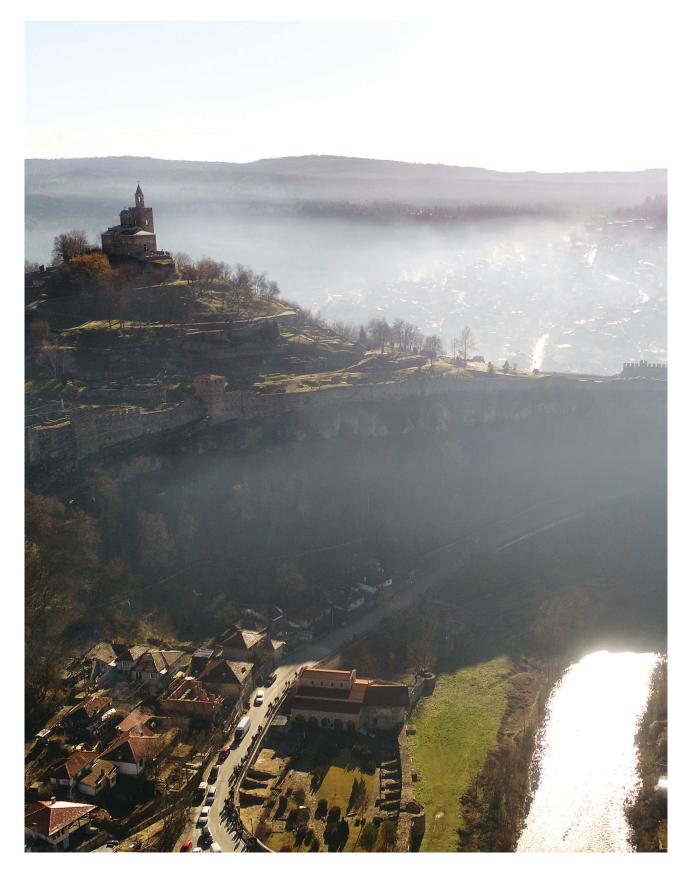
MIDDLE AGES - SECOND BULGARIAN STATE

Being the starting point of khan Krum's crusades to Constantinople, the existing Tsarevets fortress was turned into a feudal castle and later on into a royal palace. The early medieval settlement was scattered on the Tsarevets and Trapesitsa hills and alongside the riverbanks of Yantra. (Fig.7)

The First Bulgarian Empire extended its territory vastly during the rule of Tsar Simeon the Great, marking "the golden age" of the State. However, after his death the state was weakened and got conquered by the Byzantine Empire in 1018.

Asen and Peter's uprising against the Byzantine Rule was marked with success, thus leading to the re-establishment of the Bulgarian Kingdom with Tarnovo as a capital.

The Second Bulgarian State quickly becomes a political authority in the Balkans. Being the new capital, as well as the seat of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the supreme feudal aristocracy and supreme political power Tarnovo, called at the time Tarnovgrad evolved into the economic, military, cultural and religious heart of the country. The city was spread along the hills of Tsarevets, Trapesitsa and Momina krepost as well as along the valley and to the west from the main gate of the Tsarevets fortress. (Fig. 9)



◀ Fig.8 Tsarevets

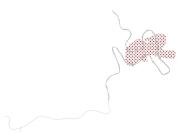


Fig.9 The medieval fortress - Tarmovgrad

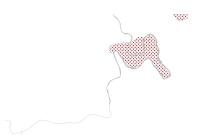


Fig.10 Oriental city Tarnovgrad

Koleva, D.: The Middle Ages, https:// www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/gradat/istoriya -na-veliko-tarnovo/srednovekovie/, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Official Internet Portal, 05.10.19.

⁶ Koleva, D.: Oriental city in the Ottoman Empire (XV-XVIII c.), https://www.velikotarnovo.bg/bg/gradat/istoriya-na-velikotarnovo/orientalskiyat-grad-v-osmanskata -imperiya-hv-hviii-v/, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Official Internet Portal, 06.10.19. During the reign of tsar Ivan Assen II Bulgaria reached its largest territory extending its borders to the three seas – Black, Adriatic and Aegean. The capital was growing simultaneously. Schools, churches, monasteries and civic buildings were erected. The Tsarevets fortress was turned into a royal palace with new towers, facilities and a drawbridge that complemented it. Gates connected the palace with the Franks Quarter – the Foreign Trader' District, Trapesitsa and the New Town (nowadays "Asenov District") – the Craftsmen and Traders' Quarter. Walls across the river and water towers were constructed in order to protect these new town districts from enemies.

The Solid walls of the fortress protected the palace – an area of 4872m² at 219 meters above the sea levels containing the residence of the Tsar, small and large throne halls, and the church "St. Petka Tatnovska". At 234m above sea level the Patriarchate was a fortified monastery with a centrally located church - "St.Spas", a south bell-tower and a ring of residential and administration buildings. During excavation on Trapesitsa hill, 17 churches and remains of a densely constructed residential neighborhood as well as the large monastery complex "St. Joan of Rila" were found. The third medieval fortress is located east form Tsarevets and is nowadays known as Momina Fortress. Further remains of medieval buildings were found along the Arbanasi Plateau, on the hill Sveta Gora and in the central parts of modern Tarnovo.⁵

OTTOMAN RULE

The Ottoman Invasion of Eastern Europe put an end to the autonomous development of the Bulgarian State in 1396. Its former great capital has fallen into despair. The citizens were killed, evicted or forced to embrace Islam. Turks settled in and around the destroyed fortress. The significant buildings in the cities – the symbols of the Bulgarian state, Christian religion and cultural identity were demolished and on their places konaks, mosques and tekkes were erected, thus forming the city's oriental spirit. (Fig.10)

The fortifications of Tarnovgrad progressively disappeared and the city continued to grow to the west, were the Charshia was established – the Craftsman and Trade center. Tarnovo was divided in Bulgarian and Turkish districts.

Even during the domination of the Turkish nationality the Bulgarian spirit was strong and didn't break for 5 centuries. As the symbol of the greatness of the Second Bulgarian State Tarnovo was a center of the rebellion flame. Series of unsuccessful uprisings took place or were planned in the former city of the Tsars.⁶

14 THE OLD CAPITAL | HISTORICAL BACKGROUND THE OLD CAPITAL 15

THIRD BULGARIAN STATE

After the Russo-Turkish War with the signing of the San Stefano treaty Bulgaria was declared an independent principality. Although the Third Bulgarian State has a new capital – Sofia - Tarnovo was still a significant part of the political, cultural and administrative reestablishment of now independent Bulgaria. The Konak in Tarnovo– the Turkish Town Hall - was one of the most remarkable buildings planed by the master craftsman Kolio Fitcheto during the Ottoman rule. It was also the place where the Bulgarian State Law was drafted, known as the Tarnovo Constitution. The First Grand National Assembly taking place in Tarnovo in 1881 elects Prince Alexander Batenberg for the head of the Third Bulgarian State. In 1908 it was from the Tsarevets hill where Prince Ferdinand declared Bulgaria an Independent State thus becoming King Ferdinand I of Bulgaria.

The following years were time of rebuilding and advancement for the Bulgarian cities. They were strongly influenced by western culture and trying to catch up with the rest of Europe and compensate the slow development in the past five centuries under Ottoman rule. The new bourgeois urban life calls for modern buildings, water supply, pavements, sewage, etc. The Stambolov Bridge, the railway station with bridges and tunnels, the theater, the National Audit Office, the Stone Bridge in Asenova mahala as well as many hotels, banks and industrial buildings were built during that period. (Fig. 11) The strong earthquakes in 1913 and 1928 managed to destroy a lot of the old residential and public buildings and became a reason for structural changes within the city. During the 1930's the abundant construction stabilized Tarnovo again.⁷

The first decades after the Liberation were also a period of rebuilding the

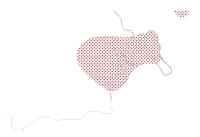


Fig.11 Tarnovo - the middle of the 19th century

⁷ Koleva, D.: The city after the Liberation and the Third Bulgarian Kingdom, https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/gradat/istoriya-na-veliko-tarnovo/gradat-sled-osvobozh denieto-i-pri-tretoto-balgarsko-carstvo/, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Official Internet Portal, 06.10.19.

Bulgarian self-esteem and national dignity. Tarnovo has made its first steps in establishing itself as a tourist center. The first Tourist Fellowship in Tarnovo was found in 1902 with the main task of "preserving the antiquities and creating favorable conditions for visitors of the old capital". In 1907 it published the first tourist guide in Bulgaria named "Travel guide for Veliko Tarnovo and the vicinity".

The culture-economic alliance "The old Capital" found in 1930 had the main goal of "uniting the citizens of Veliko Turnovo for cultural, educational and economic activities, mutual assistance, decoration, and turning the city into a leading tourist and resort center". In line of their objective they organized town-convocations and were responsible for the erecting and preserving of many of the monuments in Tarnovo. In 1938 the alliance "The old capital" and the fellowship "Trapesitsa" teamed up for organizing "The Cheap Week". For a week in June of 1938 cultural activities - lectures, discussions, excursions to the nearby monasteries, plays and concerts, etc. were planned in Tarnovo in order for Bulgarians from all over the country to get together. As an incentive and explanation of the name within this week the train tickets to and from Veliko Tarnovo were 50% cheaper.8

It was in the 1920's when Tarnovo started evolving as a resort town. Because of the clear mountain air and the beautiful nature many government officials, writers, artists from all over Bulgaria had villas in or around Tarnovo. Around this time the first intentions for turning the shores of Yantra into a city beach were discussed.⁹

King Boris III was the last monarch ruling Bulgaria before the country was invaded by the USSR and declared People's Republic ruled by the Bulgarian communist party, which put an end to the private and public construction at the time.¹⁰

16 THE OLD CAPITAL | HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

⁸ Vgl. Mitova-Ganeva 2009, 25-26.

⁹ Ebda., 32-33.

¹⁰ Koleva, D.: The city after the Liberation and the Third Bulgarian Kingdom, https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/gradat/ istoriya-na-veliko-tarnovo/gradat-sledosvobozhdenieto-i-pri-tretoto-balgarskocarstvo/, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Official Internet Portal, 06.10.2019.

During this period the architecture was part of the country's political and economic government. Only state planning organizations were commissioned with the architectural projects which were financed by state structures. The architectural commissions of private planners were limited to small private residential buildings and villas.

This is the time when the western neighborhoods of modern day Veliko Tarnovo were planned and built. (Fig. 12) In the 70's of the industrialized panel-construction were on their uptake, which made the erection of high-storied repetitive residential buildings in the Kolyo Fitcheto district possible. Industrial buildings were combined in industrial zones. Several administration buildings, cinemas and hotels were planned in the center of Tarnovo in the characterized style for the period combined with the tendency of the regionally influenced architecture, they tried to soften the contrast with the one-family revival homes of the old town.¹¹

Veliko Tarnovo was among the nominees for culture capital of Europe for 2019. The city wanted to embrace a concept for re-positioning its image as an innovative and creative city.

In 2014 the European Architecture Students Assembly (EASA) - a platform for cultural and educational exchange - took place in Tarnovo under the theme symbiosis. Architectural students from all over Europe were accommodated in Tarnovo and participated in workshops, visited lectures and exhibitions. Series of small and big scale urban interventions - temporary installations or permanent constructions gave Veliko Tarnovo a creative, colorful and fresh atmosphere.

On April 12, 2019 the 44th National Assembly officially proclaimed Veliko Tarnovo the "Historical and Spiritual Capital of Bulgaria". 12

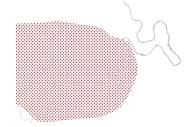
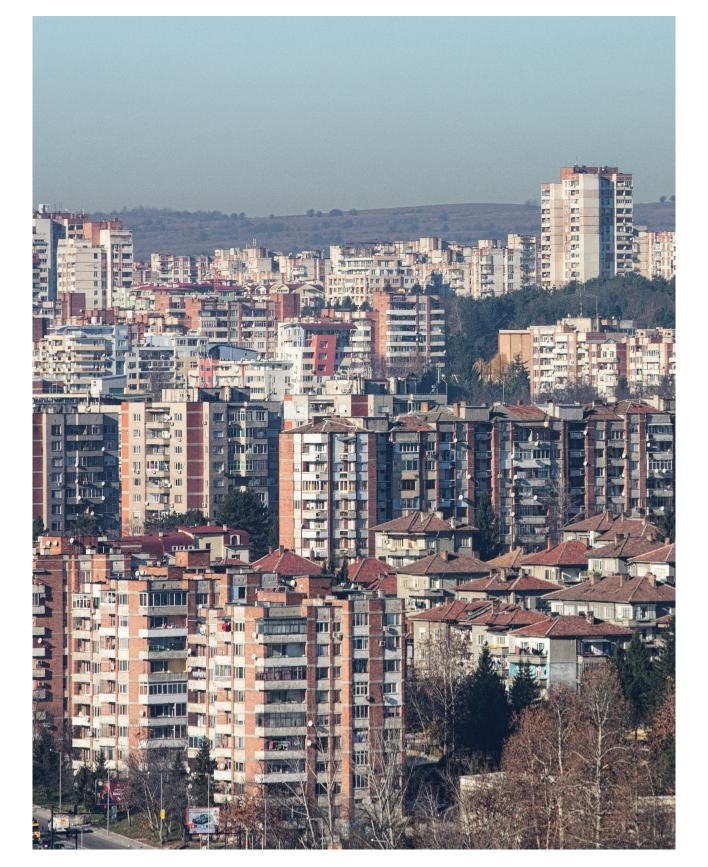


Fig.12 Tarnovo - the middle of the 19th century

► Fig. 13 View over the residential neighborhoods in western Tarnovo

¹¹ Vgl. Asenevtsi Monument: https://www. veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/kultura-i-turizm/ zabelezhitelnosti/pametnikat-asenevci/, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Official Internet Portal, 06.10.19.

https://www.parliament.bg/bg/desision/
 ID/156932, National Assembly of
 Republicww of Bulgaria, Solutions,
 01.10.19.



18 THE OLD CAPITAL | HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

the peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire marks the foundation of the First Bulgarian State with capital city Pliska

681

BULGARIAN STATE

010

emperor Basil I Byzantine emperor conqueres Bulgaria

1185

after the uprising orginized by future Tsars Ivan Asen I and Peter IV the bulgarian state is re-established with capital city Tarnovo

BULGARIAN

after the batte of Nicopolis Bulgaria is conqured by the Ottoman Empire 1396

1686

Second Tarnovo Uprising

1598

First Tarnovo Uprising

1700 **Marino Uprising**

1835

1856 Velchov's Conspiracy grandpa Nikola's Uprising hadzhistavrev's Uprising

1862

the First Grand National Assembly takes place in Tarnovo

1887

as a result of the San Stefano treaty after the Russo-Turkish War Bulgraia is declared an independent principality an year later Sofia becomes a capital

878

Veliko Tarnovo chosen by Tsar Ferdinand as the place to declare the independence of Bulgaria

1908

_ **BULGARIAN**

after the invasion of the USSR Bulgaria is declared a People's Republic and is ruled by the Bulgarian Communist Party 944 686

2014

2019

after the end of the communist rule in europe Bulgaria becomes parliamentary democracy

Tarnovo nominated for European Capital of Culture Tarnovo declared the historical and spiritual capital of Bulgaria

Fig.14 Timeline of the Bulgarian history



URBAN ANALYSIS

CONNECTIVITY

The main transport road E85 passes through Veliko Tarnovo and connects the city with the capital Sofia and "the sea capital" of Bulgaria - Varna (third largest city in the country). (Fig.16)

By 2024 the transport route connecting western and eastern Bulgaria as well as the transport corridors IV and IX - the motorway A2 - will be constructed just several kilometers north from Veliko Tarnovo, thus redirecting the traffic outside the city's streets.¹³

Because of the challenging terrain the inner-city connections could not evolve with the growing city in the 19th and 20th century. The main road connecting the Eastern and Western parts of the city - Stefan Stambolov Street, has to unsuccessfully serve all motorized vehicles, permanent residents and tourists, within the boundaries of the narrow Varusha area. This is where several civic institutions and many of the tourist attractions are located.

TOURISM

Veliko Tarnovo has a well-preserved architectural heritage and combines the spirit of all time periods of Bulgarian history and is therefore an attractive destination for Bulgarian and International tourists. In 2018 with its 126 hotels and guest houses Tarnovo has registered a revenue of 13 722 593 lev (0,94% of the revenue of the whole country from the stays) with 357 906 stays, 91 782 (25.6%) out of which were foreign tourists. ¹⁴ Due to the increasing interest in tourism the hotel industry in the city is blooming and Tarnovo continues to invest in tourist attractions. There are more than 20 museums and 28 monasteries as well as preserved medieval churches in Tarnovo. All of them are in close proximity to the city and that attracts visitors to the old capital.

◀■ Fig.15 View from Tsarevets

¹³ The Hemus Highway will be completed by early 2024. A new 160 km of highway will be built by the end of 2021. in: Agency "Road Infrastructure", Minisry of Regional Development and Welfare (28.05.2018),http://www.api.bg/index.php/bg/prescentar/novini/magistrala-hemus-she-bde-zavrshena-do-nachaloto-2024-g-novi-160-km-ot-autobana-she-bdat-izgradeni-do-kraya-na-2021-g/, 10.10.19.

14 Annual Data

Geographic representation of data for activities of accomodation by statistical zones, statistical areas and regions in 2018 (08.03.2019), https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/1978/годишни-данни, National Statistical Institute, Republic of Bulgaria, 08.10.19.

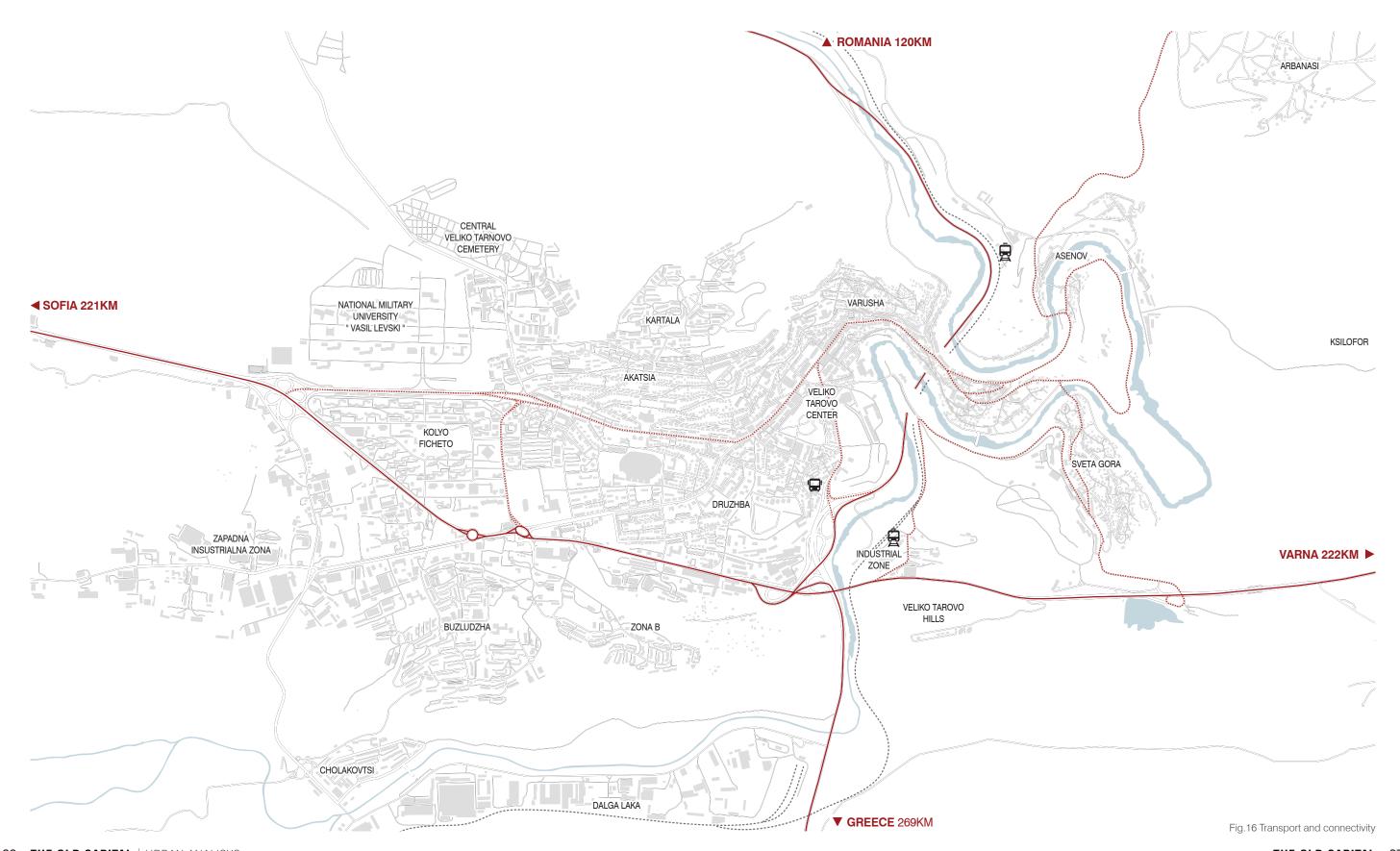
One of the oldest churches in Tarnovo dates back to the year 1230. The main tourist attraction in the old capital however is the historical hill Tsarevets where the remains of the medieval fortress and the Patriarchy still embody the glorious Bulgarian past and the strength of the national spirit. (Fig.18) The famous "Light and Sound Show" is a spectacle that takes place several nights a month using Tsarevets hill as a set and combines colorful floodlights with dramatic music and sounds to tell the narrative of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom.

EDUCATION

Veliko Tarnovo is a well-established educational center. Because of its 9 high schools and 4 higher education institutions, one of which the National Military University, the city has more than 20 000 students. The "St. Cyril and St. Methodius University" is the second largest in the country and offers various fields of study - humanitarian, economics and informatics. (Fig. 18) The regional network for cultural centers - the Chitalishte is well presented in Tarnovo. Chitalishte Nadezhda for example is established 1869 and is one of the oldest intellectual social hubs in the old capital.

ENTERTAINMENT AND LANDSCAPE

Veliko Tarnovo has a variety of entertainment options to offer - the Musical-Dramatic Theater "Konstantin Kisimov", the summer theater in the Marino Pole park, two cinemas, a paintball facility, several sports facilities the "Ivailo" Stadium and more. The city is surrounded by green landscapes and rich nature. The hills of Tarnovo offer a number of hiking trails and recreational areas. (Fig. 20)





28 THE OLD CAPITAL | URBAN ANALISYS THE OLD CAPITAL 29







CITY SPIRIT

In October 1907 an article about Tarnovo was published in the American magazine National Geographic. In the travelogue titled "Tirnova – the city of hanging gardens" the American traveler Felix J. Koch describes in a romantic and humorous way his stay in the, at the time, still oriental Tarnovo. He writes:

"[...] taking a car from the Tarnovo station and going along a nice country road among the tree-lined high cliffs, reaching the yellowish cliffs rising from a beautiful winding river, the city itself appears with all its grandeur.

[...] Where every house is bathed in color; roofed red baked tiles, walls painted in faded pink and brown colors, eaves and moldings reinforced by heavy blackened beams. Other houses are painted in yellow and blue.

[...] On the slopes the houses rise taller and narrower in all shapes - ever higher on the streets, which go gradually and in zig-zag so that one never knows whether the place he went to is at the top, or at the foot of the mountain. Accordingly, the houses are located just at the top of the road and when you look at the passing mules from below, it looks like they are walking on the roofs. The buildings in Tarnovo have another feature.

Usually, people in the Balkans are not particularly generous with windows, especially here their numbers can be taken as indicative of the owner's wealth. But whether people are poor or rich, the windows abound on the side of the house that faces the beautiful river. ^{II} 15



The old town of Veliko Tarnovo has not changed too much since 1907, when Koch visited it. The beautifully painted houses, with flowers on the balconies... if it wasn't for the cracks on the facades one would think they are frozen in time. Besides the cracks the only sign of time passing are the smiling elderly people sitting on wooden benches on the narrow streets in front of their houses. Like guardians of the past.

Walking through the Old town of Tarnovo is like going through a labyrinth. There is a good chance you'd lose your way. You first get lost in the colors, the faces, the textures, the stories they tell and can't stop walking until you lose your physical location. That doesn't bother you, there is something strangely romantic and cozy about being lost there. You feel warm, welcome. At some point you realize you want to prolong your walk. You hope you won't find your way back just yet.

Every once in a while a pocket space would open a miraculous view towards the valley where the river is enjoying its the stay just like you, making slowly its way north, meandering through the city. These short scenes revealing your location make you stop and stare. You can't help but wonder how did you get there?

Within the pattern from facades hanging above the cliff you choose the location for your next stop, then you take one last look of the astonishing panorama you got to enjoy and proceed to dive back and continue the maze. This time you try following your planned trajectory, but it's only until a few minutes later that you discover - you're not even near to the chosen destination.

Eventually you get out of the maze.. and back to the present.





[◀] Fig.21 Old town, the housefall

[▶] Fig.22 In the maze



Steep terrain is a very distinctive characteristic for Veliko Tarnovo. Walking through the town sometimes feels like climbing mountains. Locals often joke there are two directions in Tarnovo - uphill and downhill. There is a peculiar diversity within the most repetitive element in the city structure of Tarnovo - the staircases. The various colors and materials, sizes and forms make the tour around the city ever more exiting and fun.

One of the most colorful streets in Tarnovo is the Samovodska Charshia. The former market street was the arts and crafts center during the 19th century. The restored workshops and ateliers are a gathering point for tourists as well as a souvenir heaven for those who like crafted gifts. The love and attention the old craftsmen work with are truly impressing.

The never-changing Charshia is also the place you go when you want to get a taste of your childhood through the candy your grandmother used to get you when you were little. You can almost feel the nostalgia and memories that lay on this street.

Despite its old soul, Tarnovo isn't the conventional boring small town, where the museums are the only escape for the visitor. The city is a continuously evolving dynamic combination of traditional and modern activities. It is a place of contrast and contradiction. Between the small scaled one family houses one could see a background of concrete skyscrapers. The slow relaxing walk through the old town leads to a wide fast paced street dominated by cars. Contrast could also be noticed through a decaying century-old house block observed from a luxurious newly constructed apartment building right across of it, or a crow of a rooster, muffled by the clang of a bell...

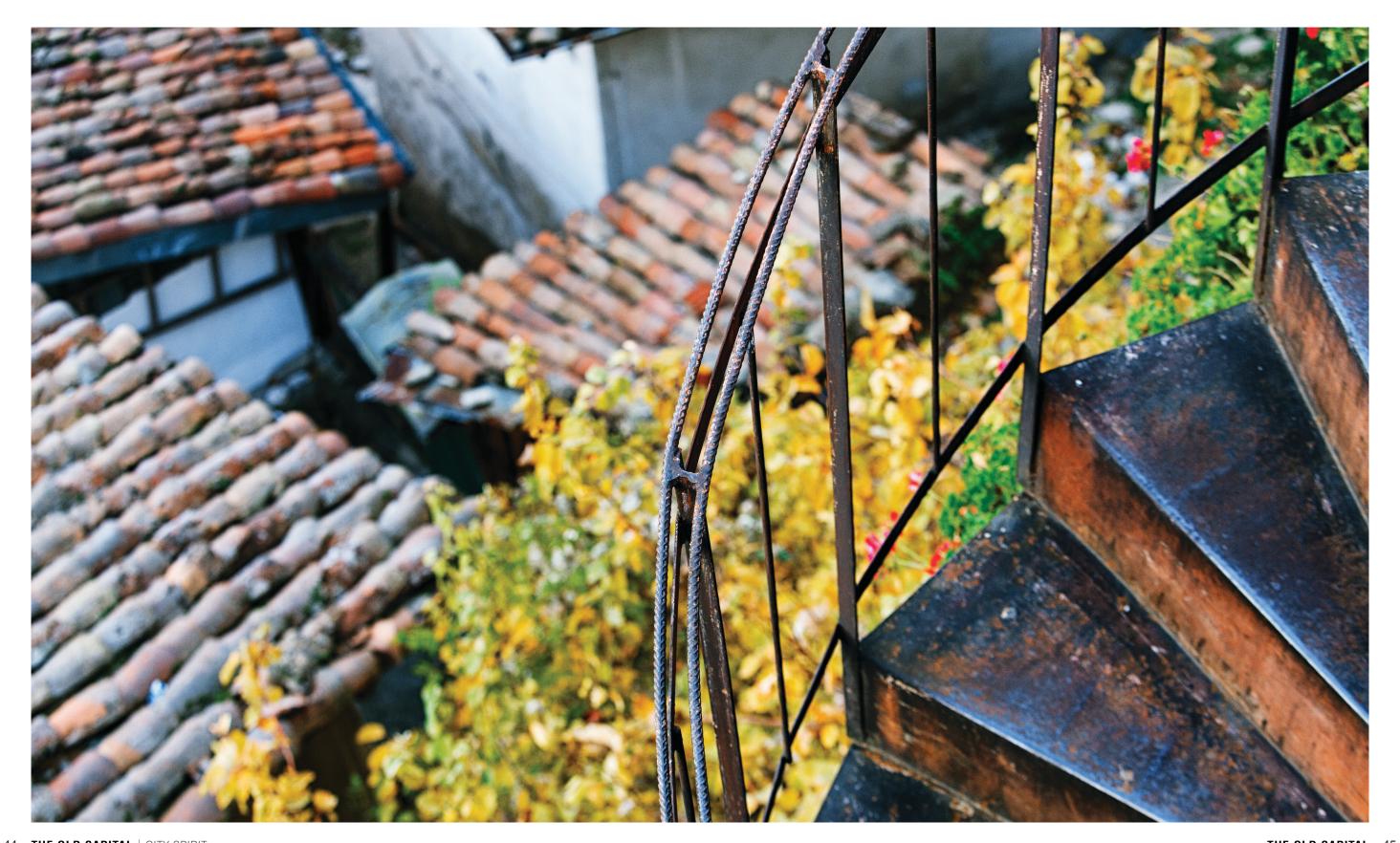
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In the whole book and especially this first chapter the numerous photographs are carefully selected in order for the reader to get a visual understanding of the city and its elements. Some of them aim to depict a particular situation, others to illustrate a feeling. The descriptions of the author alone could not be thorough and colorful enough to get across the incredible spirit and energy of the old capital and help the reader understand it with all of its complexities. The photos however can't be looked at as an entirely objective documentation of the city. They paint a romantic picture of Veliko Tarnovo seen through the eyes of the author of this book and the cameras of the talented photographers. These pages aim to evoke the interest of the reader and encourage him to go on site and experience the city for themself.

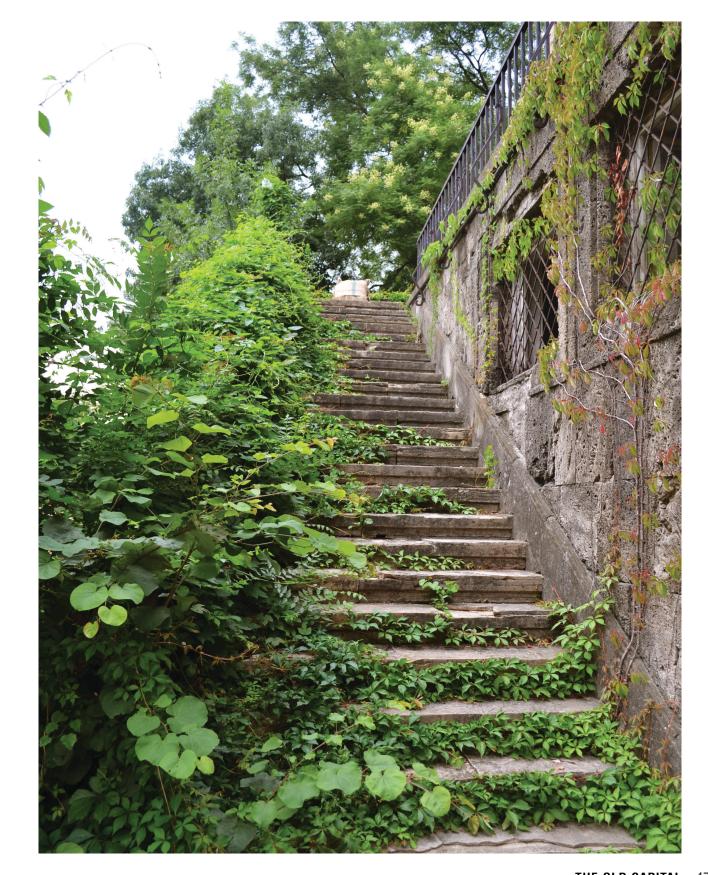
- Fig.23 View from the old town towards the "Boris Denev" Art Gallery on Boruna peninsular
- ► Fig.24 Samovodska Charshia
- ► Fig.25 Craftsmanship
- ►► Fig.26-28 StairCases
- Fig.29-30 Urban Instalations
- Fig.31 Tetris





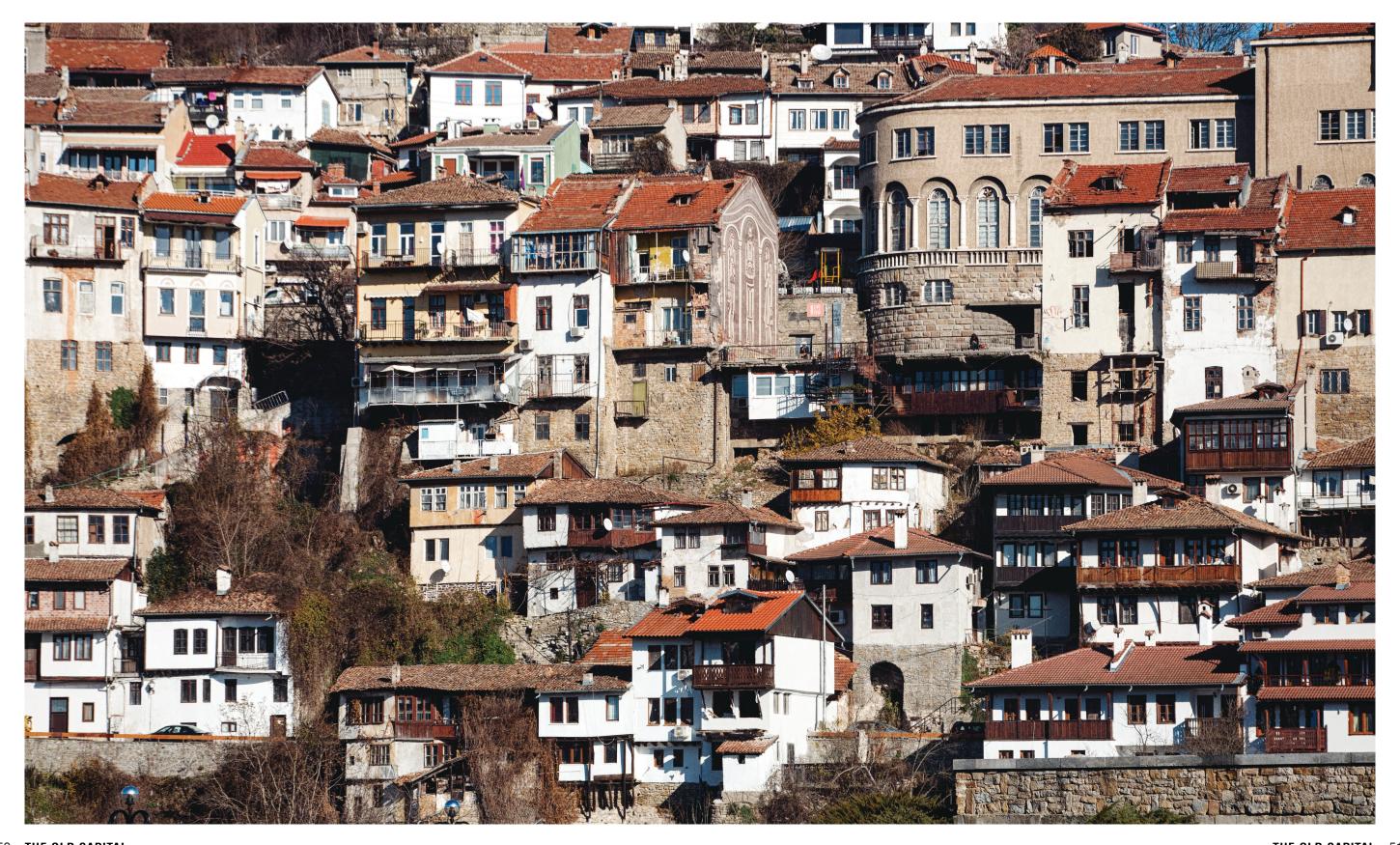


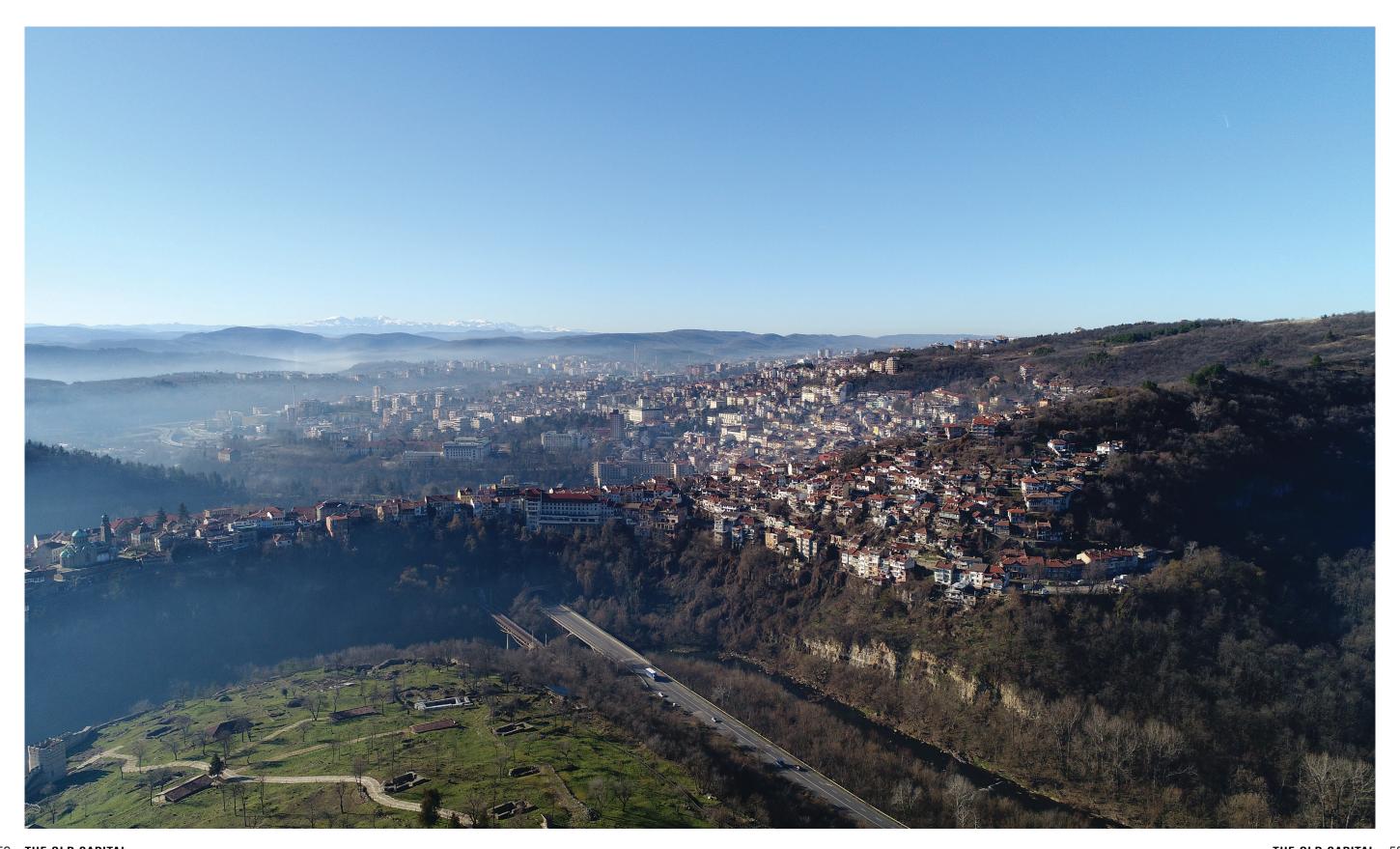














02 | INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO

THE ARCHITECT
THE BUILDING
THE CONTEXT

THE ARCHITECT

Nikola Nikolov was born in 1924 in Nova Zagora, Bulgaria. He graduated from the State Polytechnical University in 1949 and 2 years later he started his professional path in "Glavproekt". By 1957 he was already head of the project for the future resort "Sunny Beach". In 1962 he became a deputy minister of the committee for construction and architecture. Until his death in 1996 he had worked on many architectural and urban projects, all of which very diverse in scale and typology. He worked on the master plan on Sunny beach, the restoration of the historical city of Nesebar, the city center of Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo, as well as many schools, residential, exhibition buildings and monuments.¹

In 1999 Kosta Sandev published some of architect Nikolov's reflections on architecture and the architectural profession conducted from his 8 journals (1723 pages handwriting, drafted from 1983 to 1994). In Sandev's book "Arch. Nikola Nikolov. Thoughts about architecture. Diary" Prof. Margarita Todorova describes the architect as " the lonely knight of the Bulgarian architecture." He was always rethinking the achievements of both the world architecture and his personal work, searching for the architectural truth. He was always in a hurry, always working, dividing his focus between several projects. His passion about the profession was so deep that he always perceived his architectural environment very emotionally, not only as a creator but also as a user. He was able to communicate with the most exquisite and with the most ordinary environment, mentally experiencing it, embracing it, enlivening, refining and perfecting, reaching a peculiar personification with an admiration for the might of the nature and the potential of the building material.

Under the strong independent and often times described as harsh personality which helped him gain the authority of a leader, Nikola was a rich, lonely and vulnerable soul. After reading his diaries one would understand how painful and difficult it was for architect Nikolov to get rid of the questions, thoughts,

¹ Vgl. Sandev 1999, 172.

² Ebda., 7-12. ⁴ Ebda.,27.

anxieties and doubts about his creative ideas. He was very self-critical, but also hopeful that at least some of his buildings will remain.²

" 9 May 1987

Architecture is made for humans. It is beautiful when they enjoy it and when it awakens sublime feelings in them. It is such an art that connects beauty with convenience and utility. If it does not meet these needs - it is not appreciated. In humans' nature, feelings and understandings are always linked to complex, multifaceted needs. The excitement of the authentic beauty itself does not last unless one finds the necessary beauty for their life and work. Architecture has always had a direct impact on people. Direct and immediate influence is most lasting when they live, work and exist through it - when they feel it every hour of the day. Only then it plays its role of beauty and comfort. Only in such cases is its degree of beauty formed. It is an art insofar as it is a need for existence. There is no architecture beyond this boundary. Architecture is ugly when it does not inspire, it does not create comfort, it does not evoke emotions when it is unhealthy and one feels bad about it. Then it becomes a prison or a grave for man.³

3 March 1987

Architecture is the big art attained by the human, through which people communicate with the real world and the world of their dreams. Architecture is that "vessel" that holds the accumulating mixture of emotions and inspiration. Architecture is the great art of man, it attracts all, the creation of all with historical value. This explains its attractive power and hypersensitivity on behalf of all people." ⁴

INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 59

³ Sandev, 19.

[◄] Fig.32 View over Trapesitsa

[◀] Fig.33 Meanders of Majesty





62 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 63

THE BUILDING

The Interhotel in Veliko Tarnovo is situated in the central part of the city on the steep rocky riverbank of Yantra on one of its turns facing North-East. The opposite riverside - the Boruna peninsular is where probably the most spectacular view of the old town unfolds. The landmark of Tarnovo – Monument "Asenevtsi" – as well as "Boris Denev" Art Gallery (a former art school adapted by arch. Nikolov in 1983 for the purpose of a gallery) turn the cape into the art and culture hotspot it is today. The Stambolov Bridge (named after Stefan Stambolov - a revolutionist, regent, and Prime minister of Bulgaria between 1887 and 1894, born in Tarnovo⁵) connects the shores of the Interhotel and Boruna.

Planned in the 70s and completed in 1981 the Interhotel in Tarnovo is one of the last projects of Arch. Nikolov. In his journal the architect writes:

"I got to this object without thinking much about it. I got carried away. When I found out that it was a difficult task because of the terrain of the existing building around it as well as the tree vegetation along the picturesque Yantra, it was too late to go back. I have started and it was not easy to let go." ⁶

One of the main challenges of this project was the terrain. Between the water level and the hotel entrance there is a 20 meter height difference. The architect tried to arrange the ambitious program for a four star hotel in a spatial composition longitudinally along the riverbank and not height wise. He sought a solution that would not threaten with its volume, but blend in with the surrounding houses. In order to accomplish a spatially adequate result, he dispersed the required volume in the vertical axis by separating the night club and placing it closer to the river and horizontally he divided the hotel in 3 building blocks. This plastic spacial composition with a lot of air penetrations brings a great advantage to the project - a spectacular view from almost

- ◀ Fig.35 The Hotel
- ► Fig.36 Fragments of the building



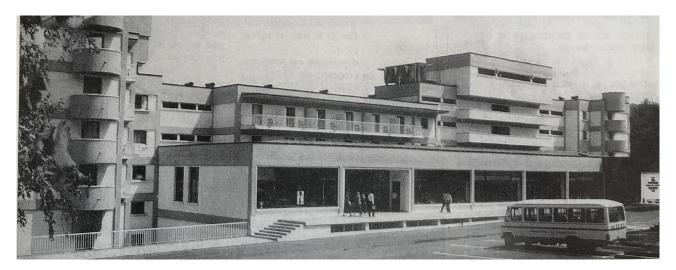
⁶ Sandev 1999, 128.











64 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 65

◆ Fig.37-41 Raw Beauty

every part of the hotel.⁷

"A building with a different purpose might have fallen into place too. The solution will be different, but the principles of the environment and nature remain forever valid. The decision of another author will be clearly different. On such a terrain, everything can be done as long as it is designed well." 8

According to arch. Zdravko Genchev the success of the project lies in the accurately large scale of the building which corresponds well with the "housefall" of Old Tarnovo, on the other side - the well thought through scale of the details matches the small size of the separate houses. The placement on "forest" of concrete pillars that grow out the limestone instead of a massive stone base is a further try to lighten the building's impact. That targeted perception of the hotel as a light, spontaneous, floating structure is an additional similarity with the old town. The gesture of openness to the surrounding once again proves the author's intention of working with the environment, not isolating his building from it.

The heart of the Interhotel is the large terrace - the author's interpretation of monastery courtyard. This open space is accessible from every side of the hotel, not only for guests. It is an extension of the restaurant and the center communication area between the separate elements of the building - the three hotel tracts and the night club in the lower level.9

The facade is finished with raw concrete and white stone cladding, underlining the division of the stories in order for the building to appear closer to the human scale.

Architect Nikolov demonstrates a rich formalistic language and uses symbolic references to the traditional Bulgarian houses and the court architecture. He combines various elements - round balconies, jetties, canopies, domes, that enrich the overall architectural impression. The rounded tiles on the roof and the scaled ones over the staircase connecting the upper and lower levels are a clear reference to the Turkish roof tiles used in the old town houses. The sculptural elements on both side tracts of the hotel represent the tsar's and tsarina's crowns. The translation of the traditional elements to contemporary materials and forms reflects Nikolov's modern vision.

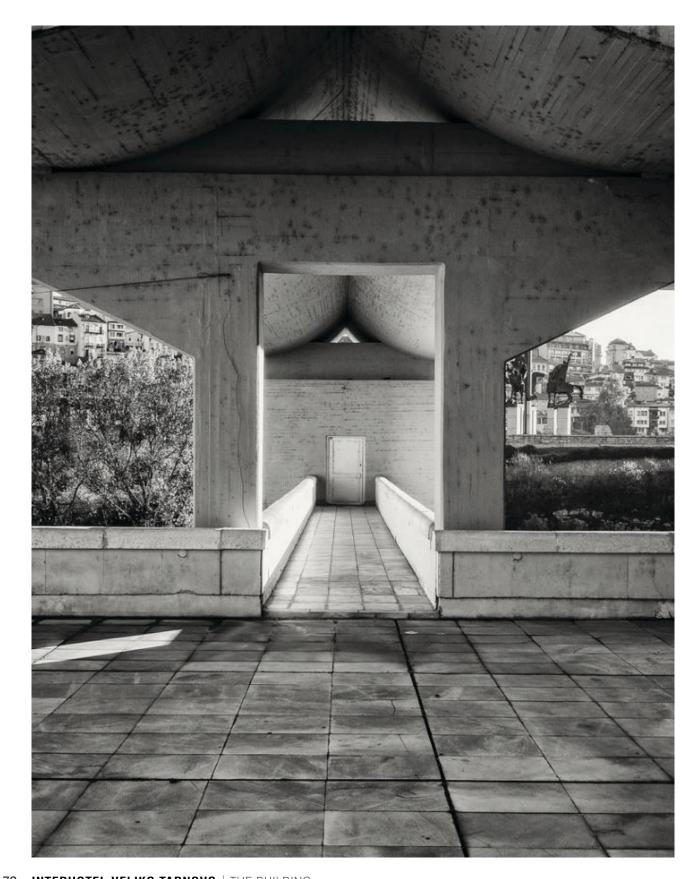
⁷ Val. Sandev 1999, 128-129,

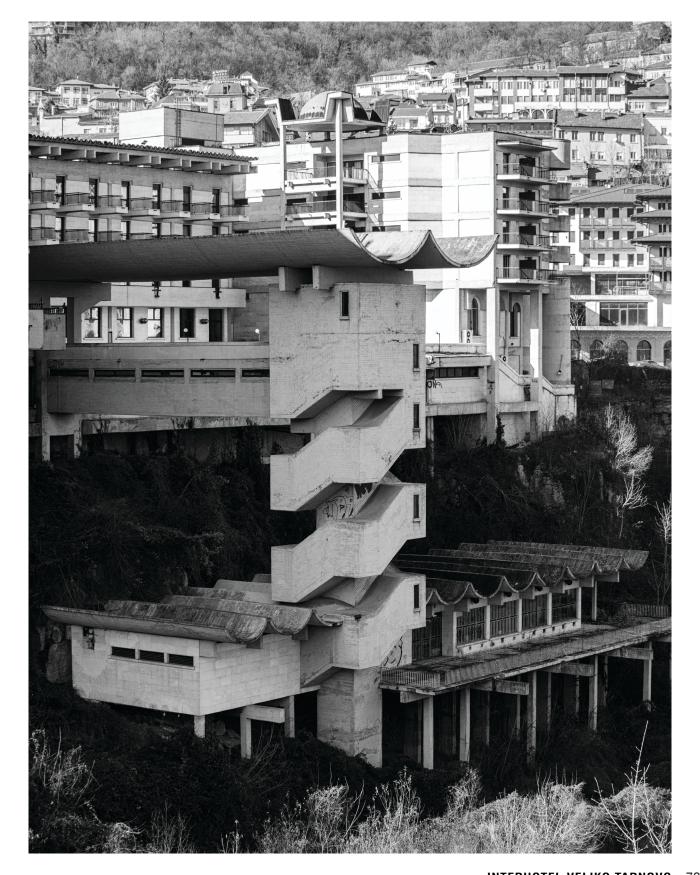
⁸ Ebda., 129.

⁹ Gentchev 1982, 3-12.











74 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO | THE BUILDING INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 75

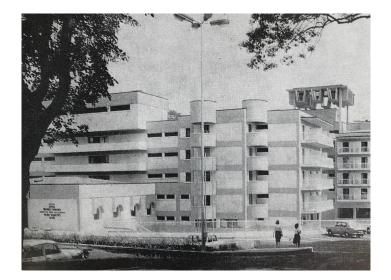
The architect concentrates his efforts in the lasting parameters of architecture - the conceptual, aesthetic and functional matters - in establishing the right position, scale, composition, materials of his jobs. Once he has marked the right points of intersection between inside and outside spaces he is not afraid of the transience of the fashion in the interior design.

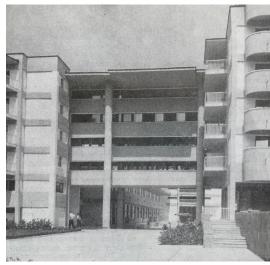
He applies the same frugal and romantic spirit of the general architectural image in the interior of the hotel as well. Although the spaces are quite large scaled, one can feel the authentic Bulgarian atmosphere. For the finishings in the interior the architect has chosen white plaster and different kinds of wood that bring out the warmth of the spaces. These traditional materials are once again combined and used in a contemporary way and are manufactured deliberately using modern techniques.

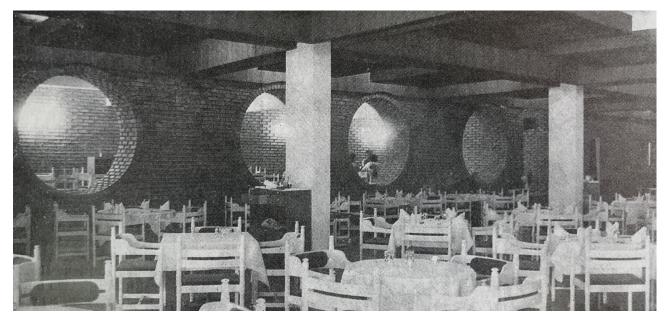
Arch. Genchev and his team criticize the author's choice of furniture, their point being a first-class building planned with so much attention and love for the detail, and such a strong architecture, could not agree with the standard furniture solutions chosen from a magazine. A further critic goes to the execution of the facades and the inability of the building team to cast the concrete in a satisfactory manner, thus forcing them to apply a coat of yellowish paint.10

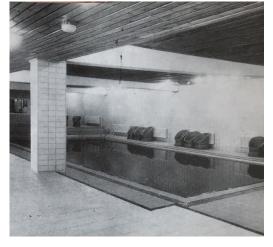
Although Nikolov is often accused of being a formalist, he works hard on the program and functional distribution within the building. The hotel has 188 rooms, 8 conference rooms with capacity from 12 to 1500 people, a restaurant, several dining halls, a lobby bar, a swimming pool and spa center.11

- ◀ Fig.42 The Terrace
- ▶ Fig.43 Fragments
- ▶► Fig.44 Plans





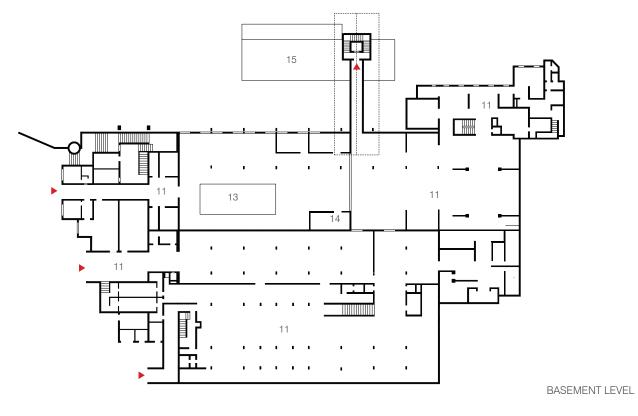


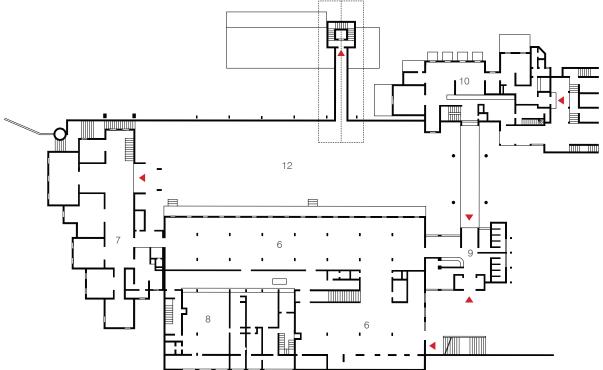


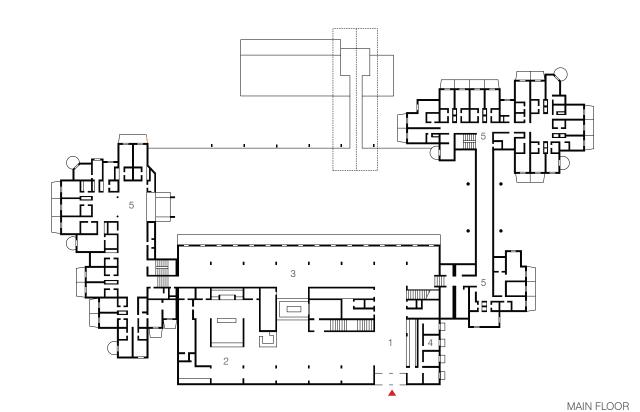


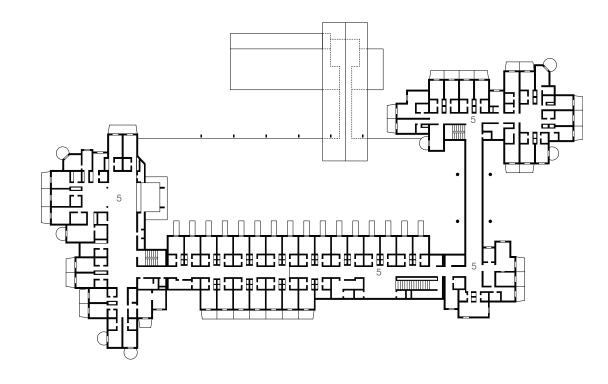
¹⁰ Gentchev 1982, 3-12.

¹¹ Interhotel Veiko Tarnovo, http://www.interhotelvt.bg/, 20.10.19.









1. Entrance 2. Shopping area 3. Living room 4. Office 5. Hotel rooms 6. Restaurant 7. Banquet halls 8. Kitchen 9. Restaurant entry

TERRACE LEVEL

10. Confectionery 11. Service rooms 12. Terrace 13. Swimming pool 14. Sauna 15. Night club

5 10 15 20

STANDARD FLOOR

The Interhotel is one of the best examples of the Socialist architectural heritage in Bulgaria. It is emblematic for the architectural paradigm of the Socialist Realism, but it is also very much influenced by the architectural movements of the Western Modernism.¹²

- ▶ Fig.45 View from the Old town
- Fig.46 Yantra's turn

SOCIALIST REALISM

The Socialist Realism marking the cultural development of the Soviet countries, derives from the Avant-garde aspiration for shaping the living environment in the lines of the new political order, using the cultural heritage as a foundation. The period could be divided in Stalinism and Post-Stalinism. The former - the period of the cult - ends with the demise of Stalin in 1953. The shift in the architecture of the Socialist Realism is expressed by alienating from the dogmatic content and orientation towards "the Architecture of Socialist Bulgaria".¹³

In the over-politicized years of the last decade Nikolov rang the bell: "To politicize architecture is a nonsense" 14

BRUTALISM

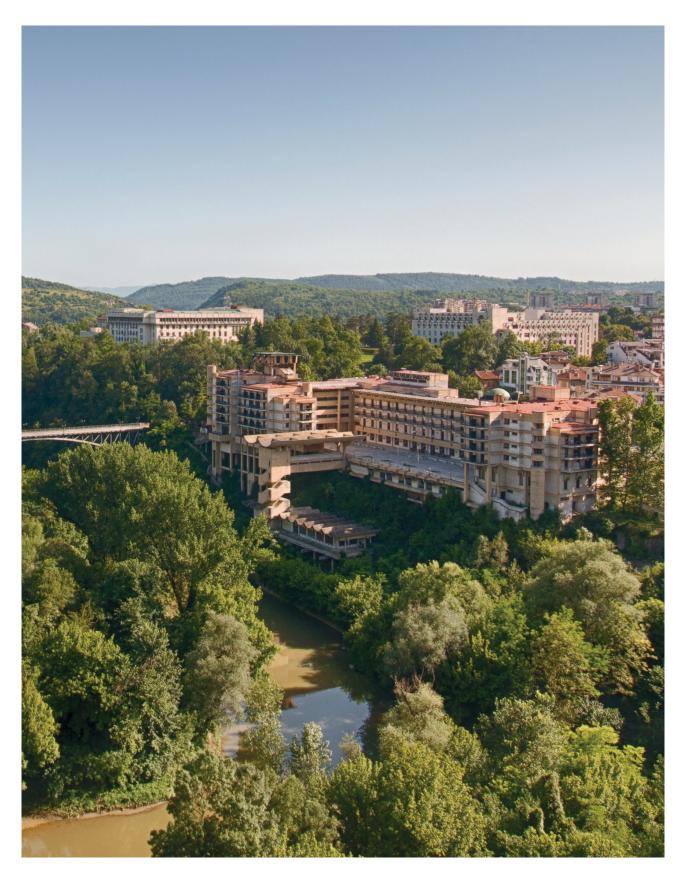
A big trait of the Brutalist architecture is the following of strict architectural moral codes, the critics on the aesthetic for aesthetic's sake and the use of materials "as found". The Brutalism in the Bulgarian architecture is influenced by the local context - monolithic volumes, use of elements deriving from the traditional Bulgarian architecture, construction details praising the terrain. ¹⁵

"Understanding a building's materials, the techniques which went into making it, and the historical context of its creation can transform an inarticulate and faintly threatening heap of concrete into an ingenious and elegant piece of artistic design and skilled construction craft." 16

CRITICAL REGIONALISM

The term "Critical regionalism" is formulated by Kenneth Frampton in 1983 and it is a cultural strategy herald of world regional culture. Frampton's Regionalism has to give meaning to the Modern architecture, make it more sensible to the past and future. In terms of architecture - the literal regionalism, viewed through the eyes of the critical creator.¹⁷

"Try to accrete your architecture with the environment, grow it out of the rock, connect it with water, with the trees, with the air. Let it root deep, make it an invisible part of the whole. Then it will live longer." 18 - Arch. Nikola Nikolov



INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO | THE BUILDING INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 81

¹² Vgl. Vasileva 2017, 9.

¹³ Vgl. Vasileva 2017, 26-29.

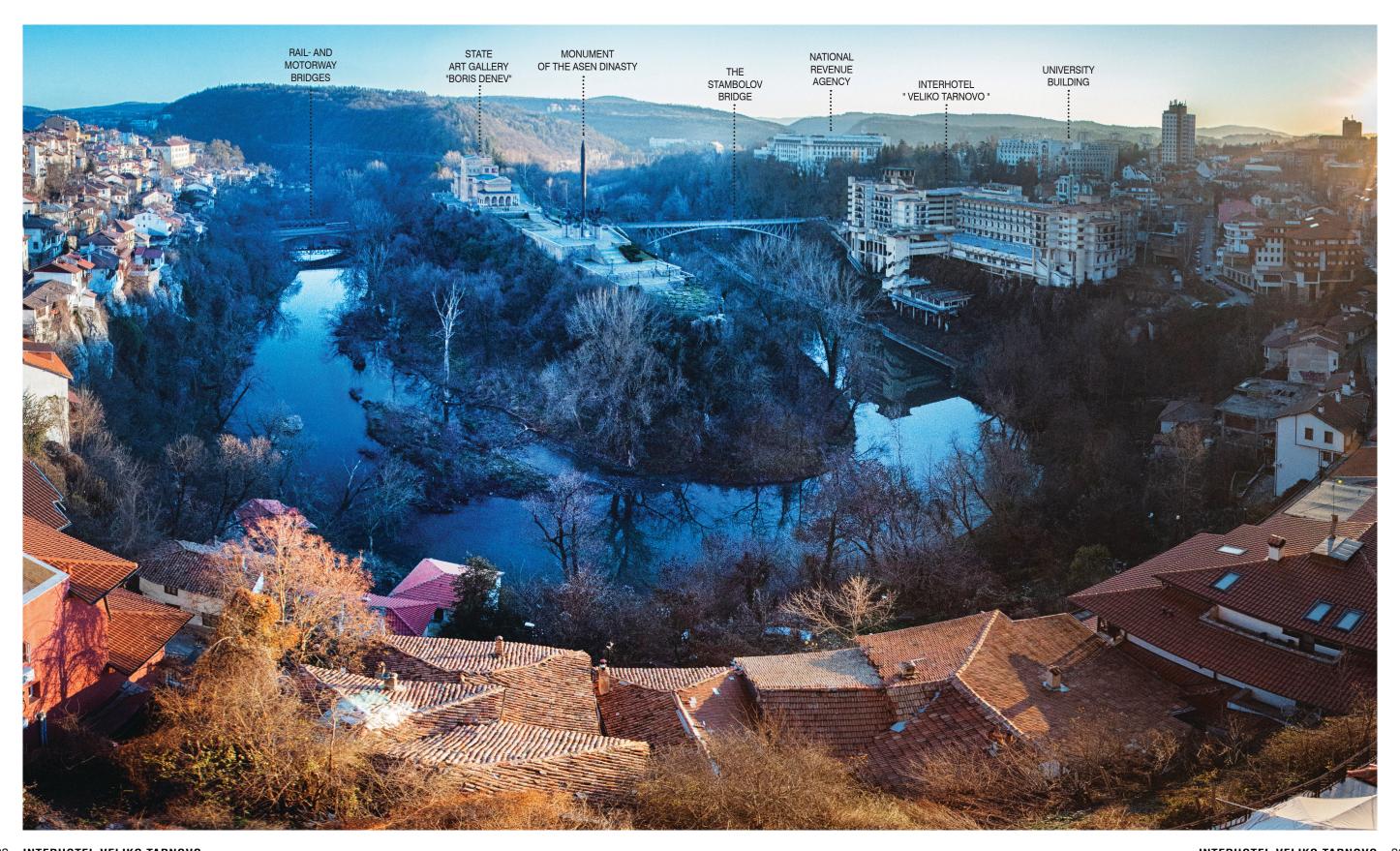
¹⁴ Sandev 1999, 10.

¹⁵Vgl. Vasileva 2017, 32-33.

¹⁶ Barnabas 2016, 5.

¹⁷ Vgl. Vasileva 2017, 39-41.

¹⁸ Sandev 1999, 16.



82 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 83

THE CONTEXT

THE STAMBOLOV BRIDGE

At the end of the 19th century, the emblematic for Veliko Tarnovo Stambolov Bridge was built to connect the modern part of the city with Boruna peninsular. It is part of a modern bridge and railway facility over the river, consisting of two tunnels, two railways and one pedestrian bridge, all of them very impressive in technical terms.

The bridge was designed in 1892 by the Italian architect Giovanni Mossuti and fabricated by the Austrian engineering firm Rudolph Philipp Waagner (now known as Waagner Buro). The construction team of Belgians, Italians and Bulgarians worked on the completion of the bridge, challenged by several severe floods that harmed the construction and slowed down the completion.

The bridge is a product of the insight of the remarkable politician, journalist, revolutionist and poet - Stefan Stambolov, born in Tarnovo. His grateful fellow citizens named the bridge after him. It is the first major manifestation of modern bridge construction in Bulgaria, one of the most important achievements on the Balkans during that period. To this day it is a delight for both Bulgarian and foreign tourists and has become one of the emblems of Veliko Tarnovo.¹⁹

STATE ART GALLERY "BORIS DENEV"

The notorious building on the Boruna peninsular was built in 1926 by arch. Hristo Totev as an Academy of Applied Arts. In the 50's the building changed it's purpose and became a district office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In 1983 the building underwent a reconstruction following the plans of arch. Nikola Nikolov and became a State Gallery, named after the Tarnovo artist - Boris Denev. ²⁰



101 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 85

MONUMENT OF THE ASEN DYNASTY

The 11 ton, 15 meters high Monument honoring the brothers from the Asen dynasty was completed in 1985 - for the 800th anniversary of the Asen and Peter's uprising. The monument represents them as horsemen around a sword, accompanied by their brother Tsar Kaloyan, and Tsar Ivan-Asen, son of Tsar Asen - all of them ruling the Second Bulgarian State in the capital city Veliko Tarnovo. ²¹

THE OLD MILITARY SCHOOL

The Old Military school was located south from the Interhotel and stretches west from the riverbank of Yantra up to the Park Marno pole.

South from the territory of the military school is located the transport node where the motorways connect Southern and Northern Bulgaria with the Eastern and Western parts of the country.

During the Ottoman rule the territory was just outside the city limits and was where the sultan's army was accommodated.

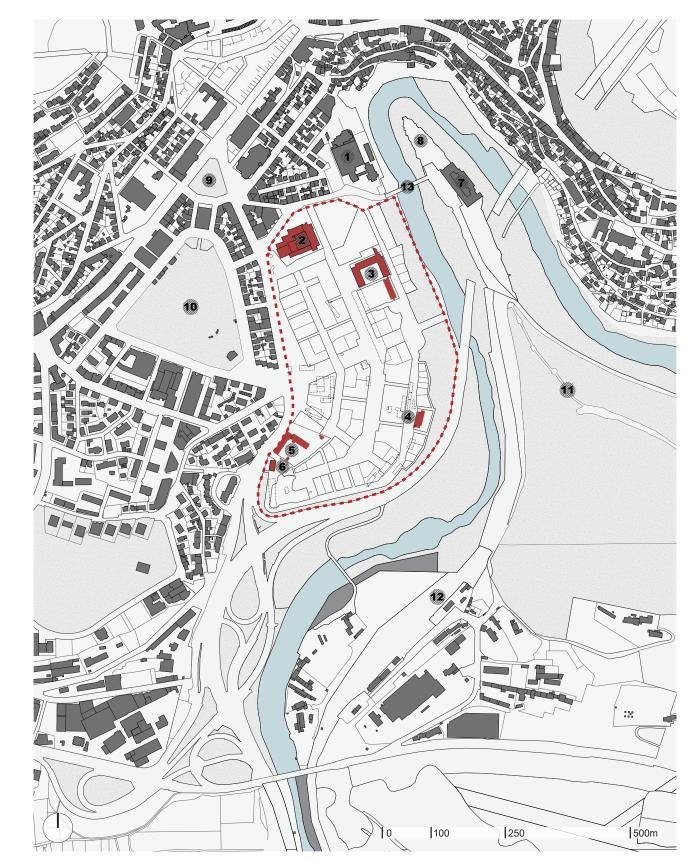
In 1887-1888 the flour factory "Belyanka" was built in the Southern part of the plot. Three years later the barracks for the 18th Etar's infantry regiment were erected.

The first general development plan of Tarnovo is developed in 1957 by Glavproekt, with the participation of Arch. Nikola Nikolov. According to the plan the territory of the old military school was defined as an exhibition. However, in the 1960's, the Military School "Vasil Levski" was moved from the capital Sofia to Veliko Tarnovo, using the premises of the old barracks. An additional residential block was built in the south-western part of the territory. After the erection of the current military school campus in the North-Western part of Veliko Tarnovo in 1979, the barracks near Yantra were used by different institutions. Exception was the building of the Military archive, which has preserved its function. A competition for the transformation of the former territory of the military school was launched in the 80's. Glavproekt Sofia prepared a construction and regulation plans for the area. Two buildings were built in the northern part of the plot following that very plan - the Communist Party house - currently Veliko Tarnovo's District Administration office and the Territorial Directorate of the National Revenue Agency - and the Regional People's Council - nowadays used by the Veliko Tarnovo University. The rest of the buildings in the plan were not completed. In 1997 a revisited general development plan of the city was developed by Arch. Agura.

According to the modifications of the regulation plan, approved in 2003, the territory of the former military school falls under these development categories: mixed central area, park area for sports and recreation and

- ◀ Fig.47 Boruna
- ► Fig.48 Secondary urban center
- 1. Interhotel Veliko Tarnovo
- 2. Former Communist Party House
- 3. District's Administration office
- 4. Former flour factory
- 5. National military archive
- 6. Residential building
- 7. Gallery "Boris Denev"
- 8. Monument of the Asen Dinasty
- 9. Monument "Maika Bulgaria"
- 10. Park Marno pole
- 11. Park Sveta Gora
- 12. Railway station
- 13. Stambolov bridge

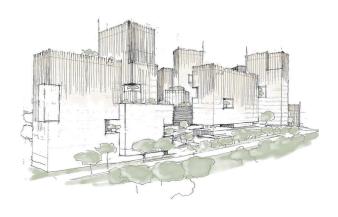
- ¹⁹ Vgl. Mitova-Ganeva 2009, 50-51.
- ²⁰ Boris Denev Regional Art Gallery, https: //tarnovo.info/борис-денев/, 10.01.2020.
- ²¹ Monument of the Asen Dynasty, https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/kultura-i-turizm/zabelezhitelnosti/pametnikat-asenevci/, 10.01.2020.
- ²² International Architectural Design Competition. Competition programme, https://www.velikotamovocentre.com/brief. html, 01.02. 2019.



INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO | THE CONTEXT

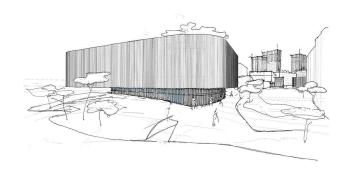
INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 87



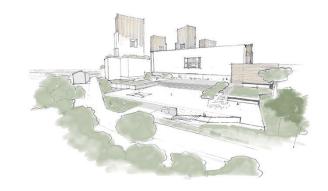












- ◀ Fig.49 Proposal for a new urban center by Claudio Nardi Architects
- Fig.50 The plot for the future urban core of Tarnovo

public green areas.

The team of Arch. Nikiforov was commissioned to draw up the plan of the street network, canalization and landscaping of the territory. According to that plan the plot is divided in 5 areas - representative, business, tourist (including construction of a high rise representative hotel), residential and green areas.²²

THE NEW URBAN CENTER OF VELIKO TARNOVO

In 2018 an international architectural design competition took place for transforming the territory of the former military school into a new urban centre for Veliko Tarnovo. The task was to create an urban core that will complement the central historical and modern areas of the city but also have a dynamic interaction with them.

The new urban center should stimulate public life by offering areas for various public events in different scales. The first phase of the planning is creating a master plan for the entire 189 000 m² of territory, distributing the following program: 20% - Public functions and culture, 10% - Administrative functions, 15% - Hotel accommodation, 25% - Commercial function, 5% - Education, 14% - Residential functions, 1% - infrastructure, 10% - Sport functions. The masterplan should propose various multifunctional spaces. The plot should work as an organic extension of the city fabric. The second task of the contest was the concept of an Exposition Center Building, part of the master plan. The Expo Centre should offer flexible rearrangement, allowing for small to large scale events to take place - e.g., exhibitions, congresses, concerts, etc.23

Among the 62 competitors from 10 countries, the Italian based office Claudio Nardi Architects was awarded 1st place. Inspired by the Tuscan city landscape of San Gimignano the winning proposal suggests building blocks of various heights with an open ground floor that offers permeable connections and a green landscape passing through the volumes, thus working as a seamless park.

The modern use of natural materials, used in the traditional Bulgarian architecture, combined with the green terraces and loggias on the upper floors as well as the green roofs of the non-monolithic structures, contributes to the pleasant atmosphere within the new urban centre of Tarnovo. The visual corridors and view from both the public spaces and exhibition hall were taken into consideration. The Expo center - a northern limit for the plot, will offer 4 different arrangements of the exhibition spaces and a panoramic terrace facing the development area.²⁴

²³ International Architectural Design Competition. Competition programme, https://www.velikotarnovocentre.com/brief. html, 01.02. 2019.

²⁴ New urban center and exposition center, https://www.claudionardi.it/en/, 02.02.2019.



90 INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO | THE CONTEXT INTERHOTEL VELIKO TARNOVO 91

03 | PROJECT

THE HOTEL AND THE CITY
THE STUDENT HOTEL
THE LINK
THE PROMENADE

" GRASP - As the meaning of a whole sentence is different from the meaning of the sum of single words, so is the creative vision and ability to grasp the characteristic unity of a set of facts, and not just to analyse them as something which is put together by single parts." ¹

THE HOTEL AND THE CITY

The goal of this thesis is not only to tell the story of the magnificent town of Veliko Tarnovo or the misconceived Interhotel. The first two chapters of this book serve as a foundation on which the following deliberations and the chosen interventions within this third segment of the thesis are build.

The theoretical part of this project chapter discusses the reasons for the present condition of the Interhotel, as well as the possible future for the building. Furthermore, it analyses its connection to the city and suggests several interventions on three different scales that would not only justify the preservation of the hotel, but would also make the existing building a turning point for resolving some of Tarnovo's urban planning issues and making use of its potentials.

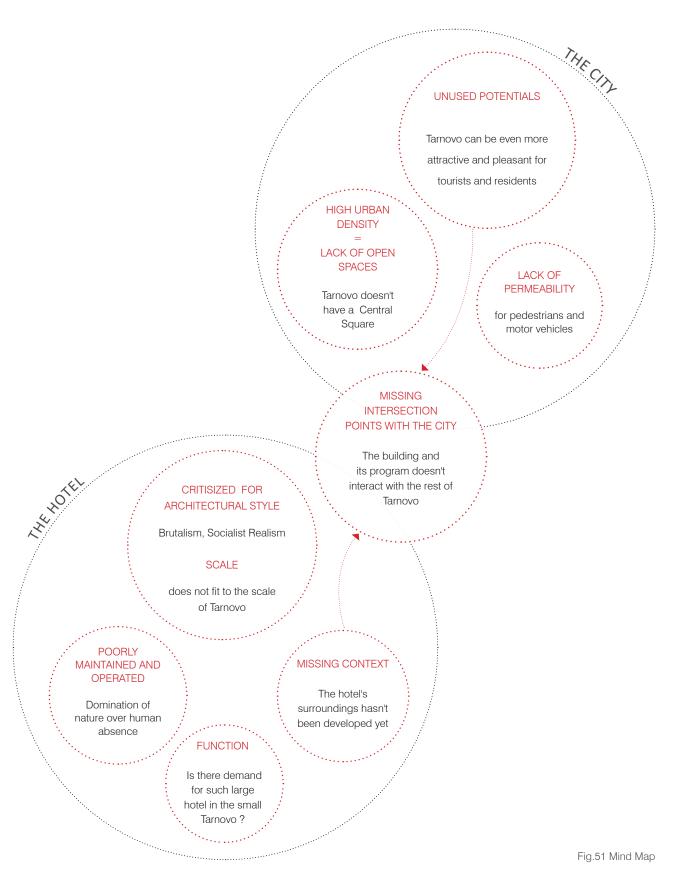
The Interhotel is one of the most condemned buildings in Tarnovo. There are several reasons for that, depicted within the following paragraphs.

CONDITION

The first and most trivial reason for the predominantly negative assessment of the Interhotel is its poor operation and maintenance. The hotel has changed several owners during the years. From its opening until the 90's it was run by Balkanturist - a government owned tour operator. The hotel was included in the list of luxury hotels from the Bulgarian chain "Interhotel", following the east-german model of the same name. After 1989 the hotels of that chain were privatized and thus owned by private companies.

Until the fall of the Party the Interhotel in Tarnovo was an institution. It was the place in Tarnovo where all government officials and important guests of the city would stay, where all big events for Tarnovo would take place. The hotel was known for its outstanding service.

¹ OMA 1995, 592.



https://failedarchitecture.com/the-poetry-of-decay/, 15.02.2020.

² Minkjan, Mark: The Poetry of Decay

After becoming a private property this former institution becomes a burden for its owners and the city. It is hard to keep up with the high standard of the hotel services. The ever-changing owners stop investing in the Interhotel so the building cannot be maintained, nonetheless, it has never stopped operating. In the last several years the hotel industry in the touristic center - Tarnovo - has been blooming. The Interhotel, however, is probably the worst rated place to stay in the city - one of the reasons it can never reach its visitor capacity.

Although the hotel isn't a favored place for accommodation, the feelings about the building's silhouette are rather mixed.

While Tarnovo's inhabitants despise the decaying structure for it defacing the beautiful city-scape, some of the tourists seem to visit Tarnovo only to see the awkward giant.

It seems like the architectural decay is very appealing not only to artists and photographers. The strong contrast between an urban derelict and its shinning surrounding, or in the case of Pripyat - the Ukrainian town abandoned after the Chernobyl mishap - the total domination of nature, the thought it can obliterate all traces of human presence is remarkable.. There is something very intriguing, something very nostalgic about an abandoned place.

"The city's scars are stimuli for the mind. They raise questions, about memories and imaginations of a foregone past, and of potential futures. They visualise the passage of time and the inevitability of collapse, reminding us of our own transience." ²

Despite the poetic reading, a decaying structure in a city center is a sign for an unhealthy development within the urban fabric, a wound that needs to be healed.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Arch. Nikolov's building does not awake mixed emotions just because of its poor condition, but also because of its architectural expression.

During the last decades the Eastern European countries started a process of eliminating the traces of their Soviet past. They entered a state of rejecting the fact this period ever happened and thus demolish buildings from that time, only because they carry the Soviet spirit. That led to the teardown of countless valuable pieces of architecture, that are in many cases replaced with mediocre and poorly executed constructions. The preservation of the buildings from that period however, should not be perceived as a reminder of a traumatic experience but beyond it, they need to be praised for their actual value. Taken out of their historical background or after the time needed for

PROJECT | THE HOTEL AND THE CITY

the healing process when they won't be misinterpreted, the structures from this era would be much more cherished than the blank architecture of the 21st century.

As for the city-museum that Tarnovo is, the Interhotel with its historical background should be looked at as a bold representative of its time - not less worthy than the one-family houses in the Old town of Tarnovo, built during the Ottoman rule.

"People cannot maintain their spiritual roots and their connections to the past if the physical world they live in does not also sustain these roots." ³

Another reason for subjectively rejecting the buildings from the second half of 20th century and the Interhotel in particular, apart from the fact they have been the main means of expression of the regime, is today's negative valuation of Brutalism. Every art architecture is valued by the masses and is inter alia a matter of taste.

"Today, 1960's architecture tends to be discussed in terms of taste and fashion – loved, then hated, now loved again by increasing numbers, in the way that music and clothing goes in and out of style. I have slowly come to believe that these buildings not only match the great architecture of any other period, but that they win out. The 1960's were objectively, almost measurably, the most exciting and artistically rich period in which to be an architect." ⁴

FUNCTION

As the hidden beauty of the brutalist gems might be obvious to educated architects, most of the people subconsciously base their affections towards

buildings on the simple deliberation whether they benefit from them or not. Contrary to the common notion, designing a successful building doesn't only mean to design a beautiful facade. The architectural discipline is a bit more complex than that. Some of the strongest features of a building can be the programmatic distribution, or the functionalities, that make everyday life better. As a satisfied user one does not judge the building by its appearance but by one's experiences in it. If one can't experience the inside of the building, one rates the facade.

A further reason for hostility towards the Soviet era buildings is the fact that they have either stopped operating after the fall of the regime or they have preserved their initial functions and configuration thus not evolving with the modern needs and trends. They become, therefore, outdated museums of communism, that understandably could not be attractive for the modern visitor. Since many of them are not used since the fall of the regime, one only connects the buildings with their last memories in it, that are in this case from that era. It is one of the reasons people can't let go of the past and dislike revisiting the Soviet memorials.

By visiting the Interhotel for example one gets the funny feeling that they have been time traveling. Shortly after entering the building one feels the oppressing spirit of the past. The reason is that the interior of the hotel has not changed much since its opening in the 70's. Although it has suffered several reconstructions, the hotel has preserved its atmosphere, its name and surprisingly its stars.

There are few examples, however, of structures that have found a new fitting function and have continued to attract visitors for their inner live.

PROJECT | THE HOTEL AND THE CITY

³ Alexander 1977, 132.

⁴ Calder 2016, 5.

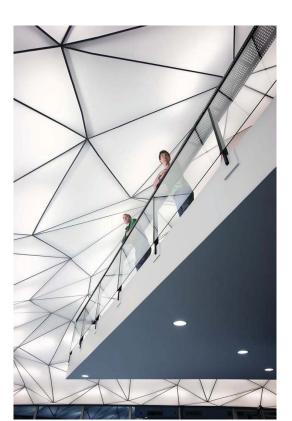
EXCOURSE: WELLNESSSKY, BELGRADE

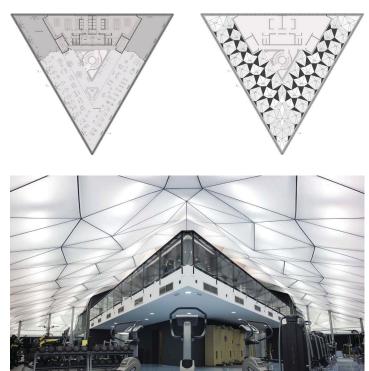
Being a part of a large recreational area in Belgrade, the Danube Flower was Fig.52 Wellnesssky, Belgrade erected in 1973 by the communist government and affirmed by the president J.B.Tito. Raising over 15 meters above the pedestrian promenade on the coast of Danube river, the triangular building used to house an exclusive restaurant up until its closure in the 90s after the fall of the regime. The building was considered an architectural landmark and one of Belgrade's monuments of the communist era.

The main bearing element of the concrete structure is the core, also an envelope of the two elevator shafts and the double spiral staircase. This allows for the building to float over the pedestrian esplanade, giving it a light expression. The 150m of fully glazed facade, open an incredible view over the riverbed and give the interior space a sense of endlessness.

After 15 years of decay the 1200m² building finally finds a new purpose when the Serbian based 4 of 7 Architecture Studio and the English SuperfusionLab design the high specification fitness centre - WellnessSky. The concept of the fitness studio lies on the idea of an active lifestyle, suggesting the sport center should be bright and spacious. The reflecting floor and illuminated ceiling should compliment the open floor plan by giving the feeling as if one has entered a cloud. The original structural grid of the ceiling was subdivided by a sequence of 390 backlit triangular panels suspended from a steel construction.

Completed for the second time in 2008, this project is a great example of a revitalization of a communist landmark, that translated into a contemporary design language and now finds a new purpose fitting the modern communal needs.5







100 PROJECT | THE HOTEL AND THE CITY PROJECT 101

⁵ Val. van Uffelen 2011, 358-361

CONTEXT - POTENTIALS - INTERSECTION POINTS

The Interhotel was designed as an addition to a masterplan developing the Fig.53 Urban life area of the old military school. As only three buildings from the masterplan have been built, the area could not become the hotspot it was planned to be. Nearly 30 years after the first masterplan for this region, the competition in 2019 brings the hope of finally filling in this void in the urban fabric of the old capital.

The lower volume of the Interhotel was situated exactly there as a reaction to the intention of the city to make Yantra accessible for boats.

In 2012, the Tarnovo based architectural Studio Matis was commissioned with developing a plan for a motor vehicles and pedestrians path on the riverbank of the side of the hotel and the old town. Shortly after that it becomes clear the plan will not come to life, thus one of the most attractive spaces in the city - the waterfront - remains unused.

There is an ongoing discussion about the Interhotel and the surrounding areas and their possible futures, however, there isn't a clear comprehensive strategy.

LACK OF OPEN SPACES AND PERMEABILITY

Because the natural growth of the city was limited by the terrain, Tarnovo has developed along the main transport axis of the city, passing through the old town. Because the establishment of this area as a "city center" was the result of the natural expansion without the interference of an urban planer, it is fair to say this "center" does not live up to the modern standards of the urban planning, the needs of the pedestrian or the visitors number. The morphology of Tarnovo's development leads to a lack of large public spaces or main square in the central zone, where large events could take place for example - a diversion from the densely overbuilt area of the old town.

" Each subculture needs a ceter for its public life: a place where you can go to see people, and to be seen." 6

As the current city center of Tarnovo in its pedestrian zone is dominated by tourists and the the streets - by motorized traffic, the central zones of the city become unpleasant for the inhabitants, thus the interaction between the user groups becomes impossible.

Well, on one hand there are the dense central areas of the city that lack public spaces, and on the other there are centrally located urban areas that have not been developed yet. It seems like several issues could be solved simultaneously.

In the meantime when the city does not provide the much needed recreational spaces, the people will get creative..



⁶ Alexander 1977, 169.

102 PROJECT | THE HOTEL AND THE CITY PROJECT 103

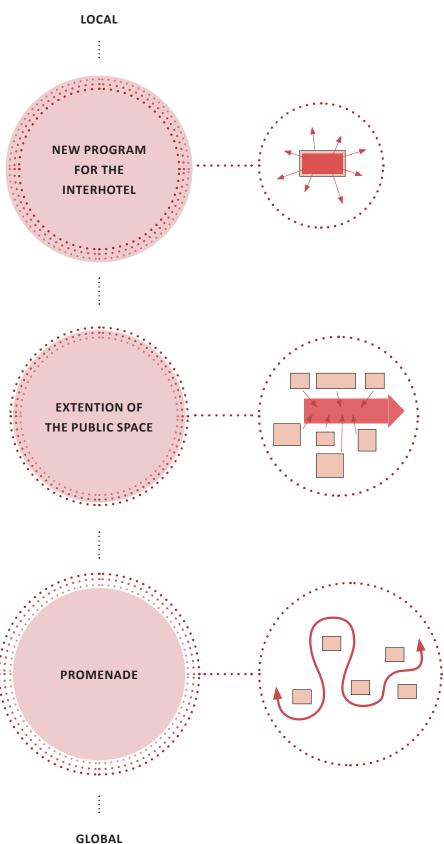


Fig.54 Interventions

INTERVENTIONS

► Fig.55 Your choices change lifes

Within this last segment of the work, building on the conducted research and the thorough analysis, there are three suggested interventions that have the task of revitalization of the Interhotel and including it in the urban fabric of Veliko Tarnovo.

This master thesis was motivated by the intention for the revitalization of the Interhotel and with the progress of the research this decision proved to be well-grounded. The architectural deliberations of the author, as well as the qualities of the spaces and the suitable location for such structure are under the few arguments that deters from replacing the building of Interhotel. The intervention of this local scale is concentrated on finding the best suitable

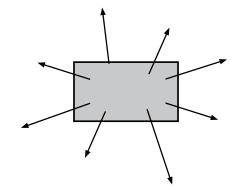
program for the existing building and turning it into a communication hub.

The next step is extension of the public space between the new-programmed hotel, the future expo-center and the existing building of the new urban core. The creation of outdoor public spaces is essential for a growing city like Tarnovo and a neglected topic in the urban planning of the city. A proposal for establishing connections between vital parts of the city compliment the newly developed zones and the suggested common spaces.

The third intervention on a more global scale is building on the original ideas for a path on the riverbank and suggests a promenade through the city along the river Yantra. The proposed esplanade not only reconnects Tarnovo on a new level, but it also suggests a variety of recreational activities and thus enhances the urban space.

The proposed steps for the recovery of the Interhotel and the surrounding area, extending their impact on a global scale will add to the qualities of life in Tarnovo and set the foundation for a healthy growing city.





THE STUDENT HOTEL

EXCOURSE: THE STUDENT HOTEL

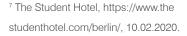
TSH is a vastly spreading brand of well-designed hotels combining student ▶ Fig.56-59 The Student Hotel accommodation with co-working facilities. The Student Hotels house not exclusively students but also leisure and business travelers and has to offer a fairly exiting co-working and co-living environment within colorful common spaces and an inspiring atmosphere. The hybrid accommodation model founded by the Scottish entrepreneur Charlie MacGregor aims to change the way people live, work and travel.

"We believe in blurring boundaries, so we've created a space where travel meets home, work meets play and design meets comfort."

The Student Hotels are not only a place where exciting encounters can take place, but also the place where successful collaborations can begin. This is therefore the right spot for young-spirited, open-minded, curious and creative adventurers.

"Collide with strangers. Our social spaces encourage new connections with like-minded explorers."

Starting with the flagship hotel in Amsterdam in 2006 the TSH Community has been rapidly growing. After completing projects in Hague, Groningen, Maastricht, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Florence, Berlin, Barcelona, Dresden and Paris, the 13th Student Hotel in Europe opens doors in Vienna in the beginning of 2020. Eighteen more hotels on six new locations in Europe are set to open soon. Considering the needs of both students and travelers, the Student Hotels are usually conveniently located in the city centers or with a view to a city landmark. 7







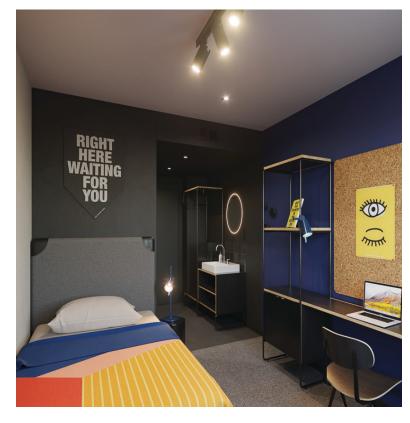




110 PROJECT | THE STUDENT HOTEL PROJECT 111









The duration of the stays in the Student Hotel are also fairly flexible, depending on the needs of the guest. Students can stay in a TSH facility from two weeks up to one year, until they find a suitable long-term apartment. The fully equipped rooms, shared kitchen and laundry space, games room, rooftop swimming pool or renting a TSH design bike are just few of the perks a student has as a guest. The rooms vary slightly in design and size depending on the type of stay they are meant for.

The fine touches, like the humorous slogans on the walls and the occasional slides or swings within the common rooms combined with the dashing design of the spaces makes them ever more exciting.

"One of a kind, after the first step into the hotel, it becomes immediately clear that this is no ordinay hotel."

Although it may seem like most of the Student Hotels have a similar design, every building reflects the unique spirit of its city. Some of the Student Hotels are specially planned and built for this purpose when others use renovated former factories or historic palazzos.

THE COLLAB

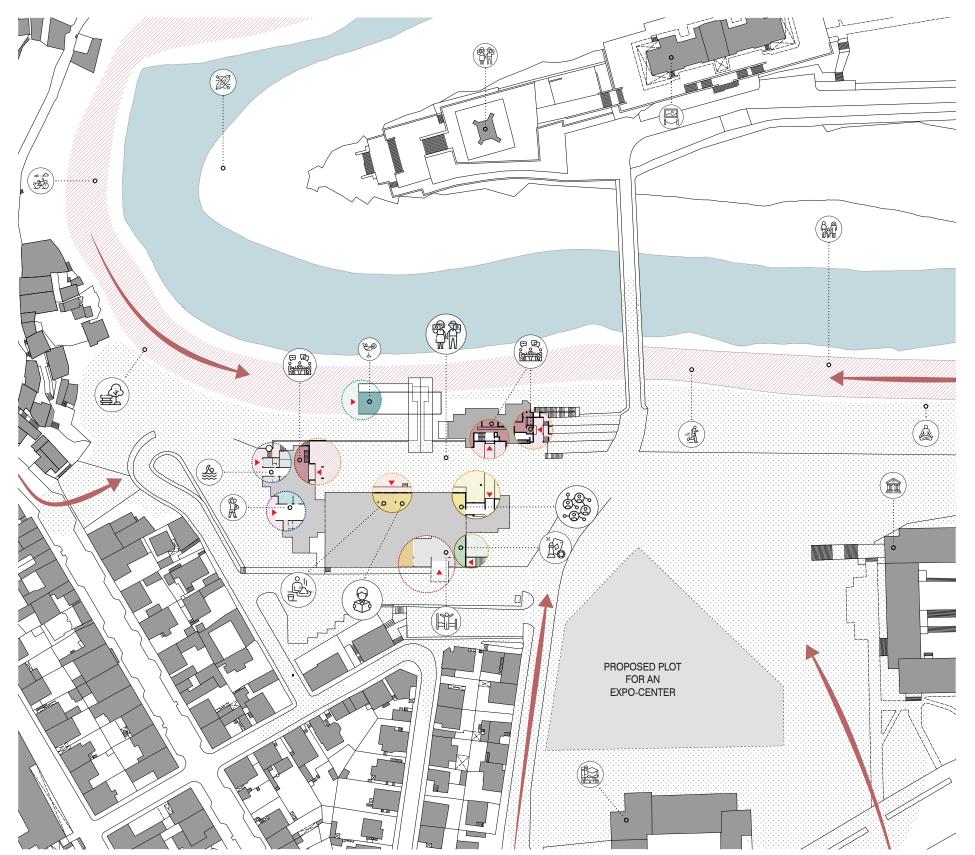
The TSH locations are carefully chosen not only because they are well established educational centers but also because of their entrepreneurial spirit. The collab spaces of the Student Hotels are a great beginning for the newcomers to the business scene. The opportunity to use the flexible co-working spaces and meeting rooms for your Start Up is a perfect opportunity for professionals from different fields to exchange experience and become part of the TSH network.

THE BED TALKS

The busy event calendar leaves little space for boredom in this institution. One of the highlights for the TSH community is The Bed Talks. Inspired by John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1969 Bed-In for Peace, the TSH team started their own Bed-In event. The program includes inviting of inspiring speakers from all over the world, getting them in a bed and making them converse about the things that move them, sharing ideas or discussing problems. The session ends with the promise that each of them will commit helping the other one somehow - from sharing an advice to starting a project together. ⁸

⁸ The Student Hotel, https://www.the studenthotel.com/berlin/, 10.02.2020.





THE STUDENT HOTEL IN TARNOVO

Because of the current condition of the hotel and its surroundings the gigantic building serves as a barrier between the city centre, the waterfront area and the Boruna peninsular. Its prominent location on the node between the old town, the city center, the residential quarter, the touristic hotspot Boruna and the future urban core of Tarnovo requires an extremely attentive selection of programs for the former Interhotel. The construction of the building on the other hand does not offer a long list in terms of variety of space functions. Since the building was skillfully designed as a hotel, a severe intervention in the building's structure would destroy most of its qualities. This very contradiction calls for a rethinking of the uniformity of the current hotel typology. Luckily enough the creators of The Student Hotel offer a fresh perspective on this matter.

The combination of living and working as well as the mix of user groups - students, business guests and tourists - corresponds perfectly with the location of the former Interhotel. The quality of the spaces, the views, the proximity to the city centre and the tourist attractions do match the needs of the holiday-makers. The vicinity to the university on the other hand as well as the typology of the rooms meet the needs of the students. Tarnovo's potential for establishment on the start-up scene suggests a demand for co-working spaces. By merging all these functions within the rooms of the existing hotel this former barrier becomes a hub, a meeting space for young, old, foreigners, locals, entrepreneurs or guests of the city.

The arrangement of public and semi-public functions within the lower floors, requires for the building to be accessible from several levels and from every side, thus opening up the building for the public. The large terrace serves as a recreational space for both guests of The Student Hotel and Tarnovo's residents.

The former Interhotel was planned with the intention for connecting several levels of the steep slope its built on. The building has its main volume located on a higher level connected by a staircase with an additional smaller building on the waterfront's height. Because of its favorable position within the valley, the lower building was initially conceptualized as a night club. As the hotel was poorly maintained the night club was the first to fall into despair. Nowadays one can barely see it within the flourishing vegetation of the riverfront.

The new arrangement of the spaces of the Student hotel allows for this volume to preserve its initial function. Being accessible from both the hotel level and the riverfront, the nightclub will function as a bar during the day, thus becoming one of the main stops along the future promenade.

The basement floor of the Interhotel used to house a swimming pool, that is undergoing renovation for several years now. Since the rest of the floor houses service rooms, the floor has been closed for visitors.

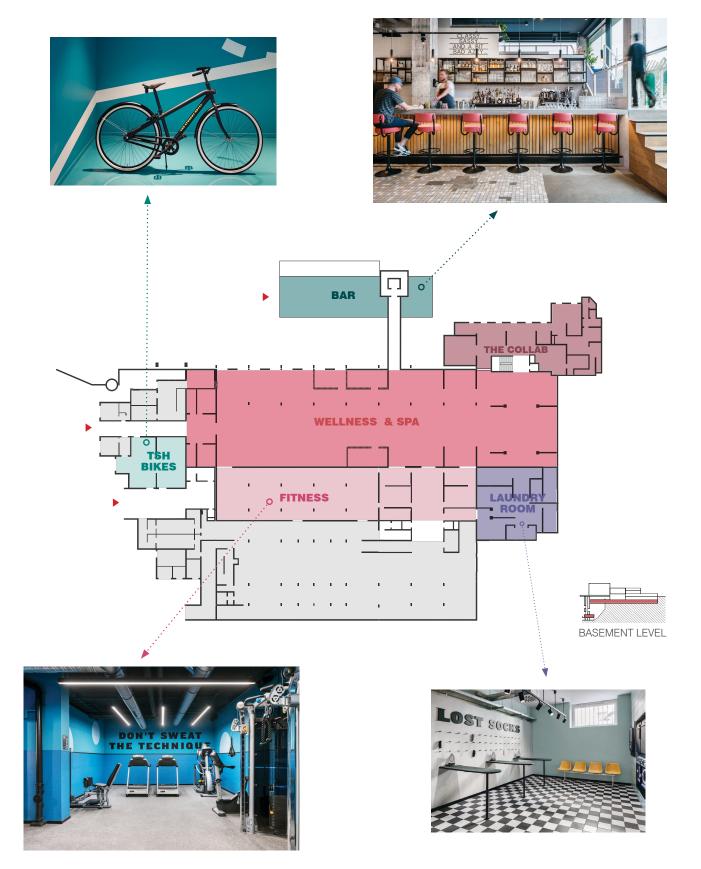
The Student Hotel suggests the usage of the swimming pool spaces by complimenting them with a Wellness zone and Fitness. Accessible from both the north side of the plot and the higher levels, the hotel offers a sport and health center for external guests and visitors of the Student Hotel.

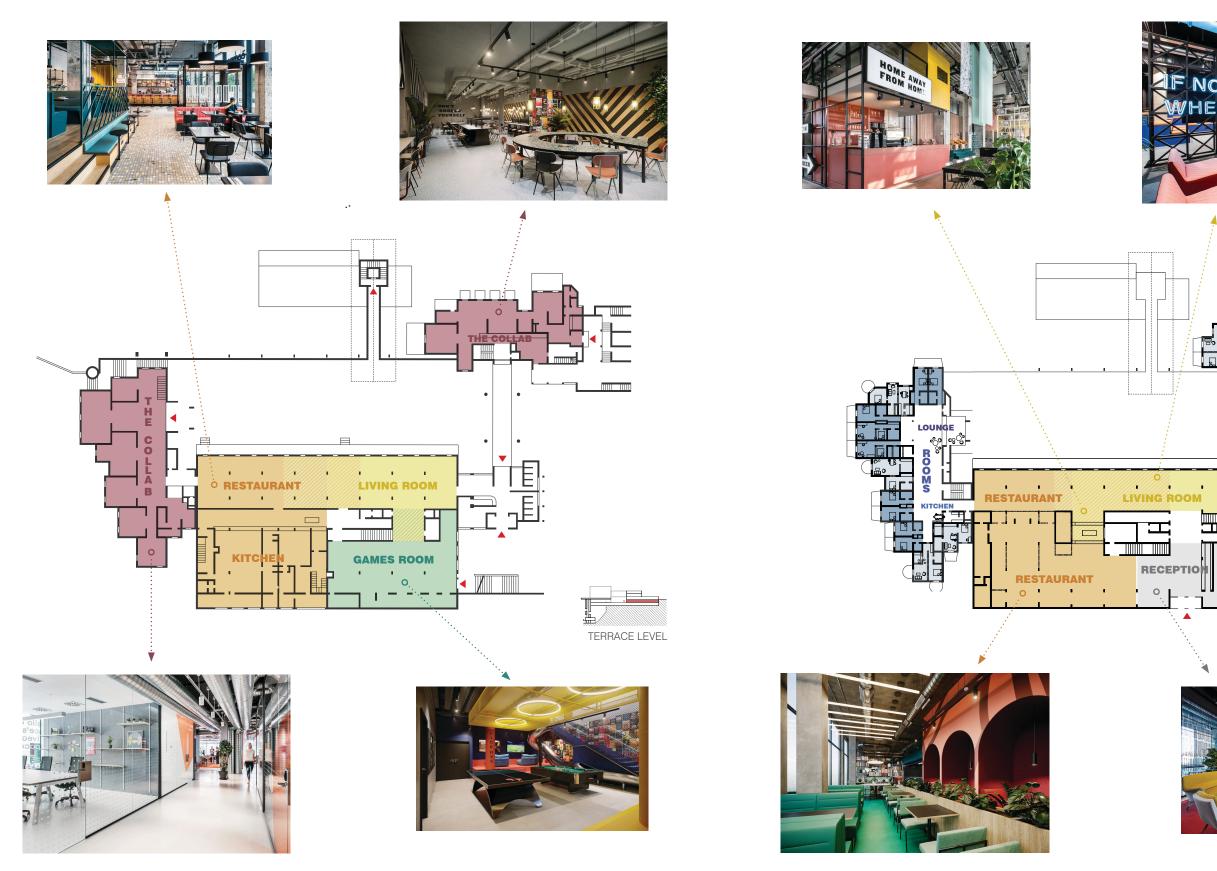
The north entrance of the building is also where the students can get their rental TSH bikes, included in the student package. A laundry room for the student guests is conveniently located on the south edge of the main volume.

The Collab - the co-working spaces on the level of the terrace - are located within the former banquette halls in the northern wing of the building and the confectionery in the southern block. The quality of the banquette halls - to serve as meeting rooms or large-space offices, as well as the smaller-scale rooms in the confectionery - offers a wide range of possible flexible office spaces for a variety of usage scenarios. Because the Collab could be rented by hotel guests, as well as local entrepreneurs, there will be a constant visitors flow. When not occupied the spaces could be used for a variety of temporary events.

The restaurant is intentionally situated right between the Collab and the living room. As that would be the space that both hotel guests and visitors will share it will be the main crossing point between students and entrepreneurs. The living room is the place where the hotel guests could spend their time while interacting with each other. Since it stretches over two floors the space allows variety of arrangements and situations. The fluent transition between the restaurant and the living room allows the variation of their extents, depending on the time of the day or occasion. This is also where the highlight of the social calendar of the Student Hotel - the Bed Talks - could take place.

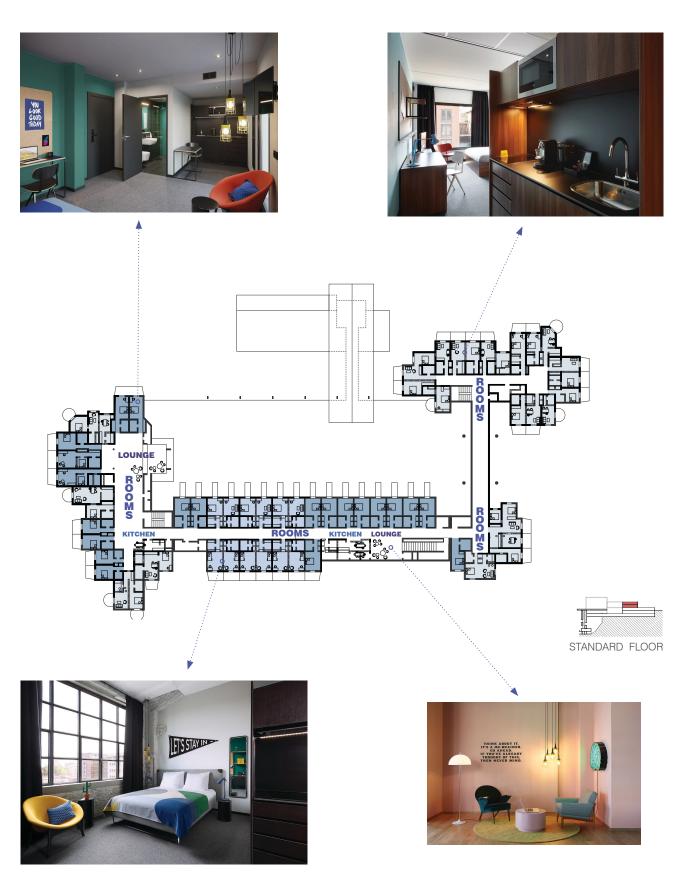
- ◆ Fig.65 The Student Hotel Veliko Tarnovo - entrance levels
- ► Fig.66-81 References TSH, floor plans





120 PROJECT | THE STUDENT HOTEL

MAIN FLOOR



► Fig.82 Housefall

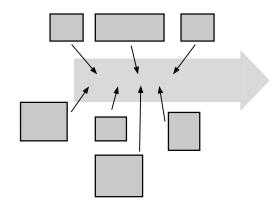
The main floor and the terrace level are the heart of the student hotel. Since the collab, the restaurant and the living room are all accessible from the terrace - that turns it into a gathering point for all user groups where the internal life of the hotel fluently flows into the outdoor space.

The flexible composition of the former Interhotel was defined by the layout of the rooms in terms of favorable exposure and view. The three room blocks have different qualities and thus could satisfy the various preferences of the visitors. The new arrangement uses the existing room structure for the most part. Some rooms are extended towards the corridor, while others are merged in order to form an apartment or a twin room. The rooms vary in size and type, depending on the length of stay. The single-bed, twin or threebed rooms for the short or long-term guests are fully furnished, they have a private bathroom and a shared communal kitchen on the floor. The suites and studios have either several bedrooms or workspaces and have a private kitchen - convenient for long-term guests or even families with children. The hotel services also vary depending on the length of the stay. A weekly room cleaning and a monthly linen changing are optional for the long-term guests. The lounges on each floor provide semi-private common spaces for the inhabitants - an additional opportunity for guests from different social groups and with different interests and goals of stay to converse and spend time together.

The Student Hotel is conceptualized as a social hub in the heart of Veliko Tarnovo. It is a place for togetherness and new friendships, for leisure and work. It is a place where people from different backgrounds, at different ages, people with different ideas and goals have the chance to actively interact with each other and even set the start of a mutual project.

122 PROJECT | THE STUDENT HOTEL PROJECT 123





THE LINK

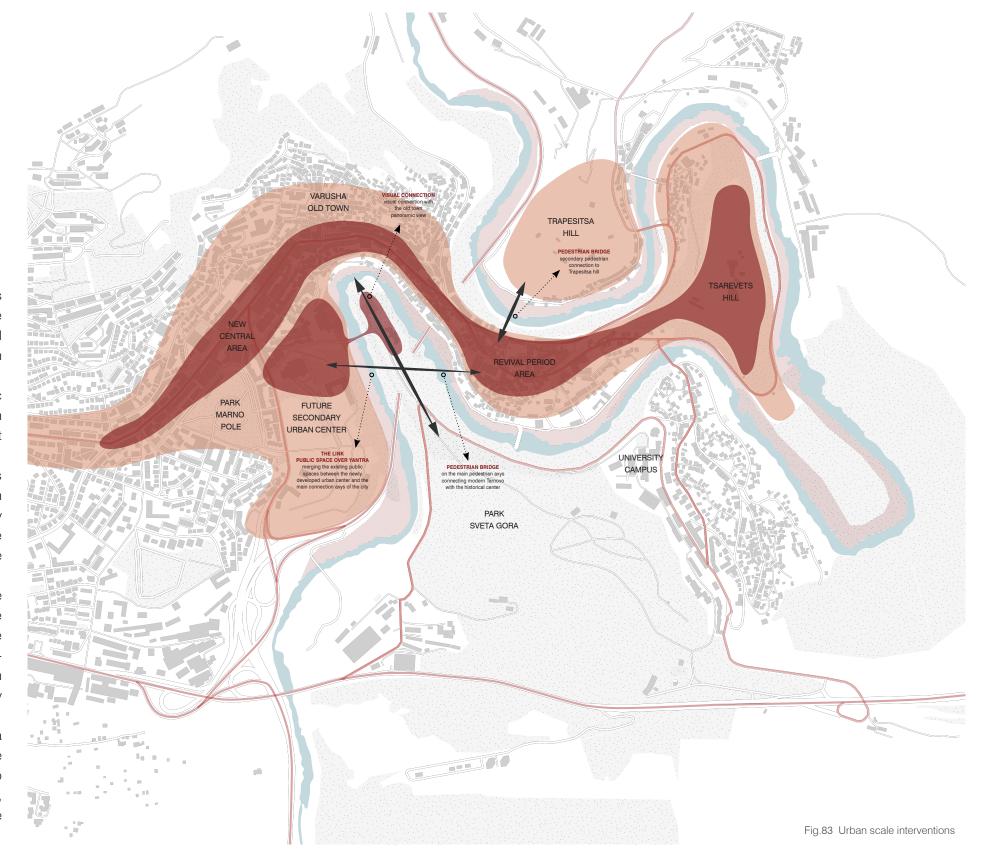
RECONNECTING VELIKO TARNOVO

Veliko Tarnovo's landscape is one of its most thrilling characteristics - it has always determined the city's development, it is the reason for its valuable architectural heritage and is to blame for the breathtaking views from all around the city. Tarnovo's terrain is also the biggest challenge for the urban planning, the well-functioning communication as well as transportation.

Because of its linear development, the city doesn't have a central public space, but a main street - the main pedestrian and automobile connection through Tarnovo. It is also the current city center for public life. The closest to a plaza on this strip are several pocket squares with a view over Boruna.

The Boruna peninsular is the most visited site in this touristic hub but is accessible only from the Stambolov bridge. The next possible pedestrian connection between the riverbanks is the one north from the university campus. A lack of pedestrian connections to Boruna over Yantra from the East as well as a link between the hill Trapesitsa and the main street and the old town are noticeable.

A connection between the node of the current central strip, the northern edge of the future secondary urban center and the park Marno Pole - which is the beginning of the modern residential quarters of Tarnovo, with the most active part of the old town, where the entrance of the fortress Tsarevets is located - will ease the pedestrian flow through the city. It will ease the connection from the Student Hotel and the western part of Tarnovo with the main university campus and will activate the area between the gallery and park Sveta Gora. Although a link on the axis "old town - monument - gallery - park Sveta gora" could be conceivable, at this point the river should be retained as the physical boundary that it is. There is an intense suspense between the two spots off the edge of Boruna, looking towards the old town and vice versa, divided by the mighty Yantra. The void resulting far into the distance, and the contradiction to the proximity makes the view so incredibly thrilling.



128 PROJECT | THE PANORAMA LINK

THE LINK

The Student Hotel as well as the future exposition center and the existing public buildings in the area suggest the need for a common public space. The same goes for the node on the opposite riverbank where the visitors of the gallery and the monument meet. If the river wasn't dividing them, the area in between would naturally develop as a plaza. Since that is not the case, the two areas could be connected intentionally. An extension of the Stambolov bridge or a second wider link between them could compensate the lack of space on the riverbanks and serve as the missing main square of Tarnovo.

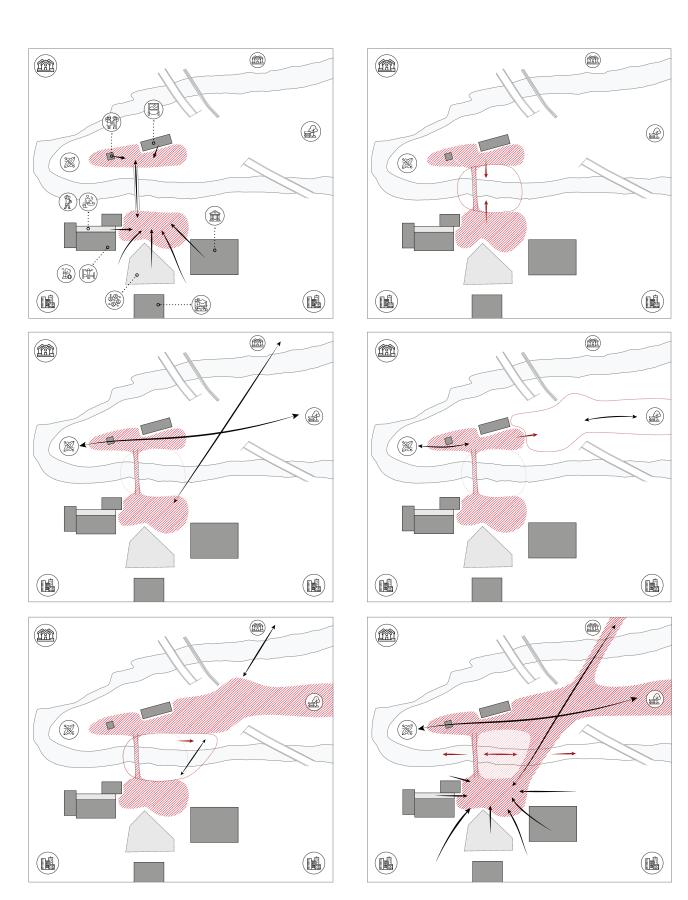
Following the concept for the reconnection of the city, two pedestrian bridges on the axis "Student hotel - Boruna - old town" should be developed. Their meeting point on the axis connecting the monument and the park Sveta gora, will be thus activated and serve as an extension of the public space on Boruna. The link between this point and the future communication hub - the Student Hotel and exposition center will be the focus of this segment of the project.

"Encourage gradual formation of a promenade at the heart of every community, linking the main activity nodes, and placed centrally, so that each point in the community is within 10 minutes' walk of it. Put main points of attraction at the two ends, to keep a constant movement up and down." ⁹

Within the densely built growing cities inhabited by a rising population, space is a valuable resource. The flexible use of space is a key for planning efficient structures, that satisfy various requirements of diverse user groups. By combining the need for a pedestrian connection and the one for common spaces, the Panorama Link should serve simultaneously as a bridge and a plaza as well as offer a multi-functional city-space.

► Fig.84 Linking public spaces

⁹ Alexander 1977, 173.



EXCOURSE: PASSERELLE SIMONE-DE-BEAUVOIR, PARIS

After eight years of planning and construction the Footbridge Simone-de-Beauvoir is finally completed in 2006. The 304m long promenade over the Seine connects two completely cut-off districts, the National Library on one side and Parc de Bercy and the Paris Cinnémathèque on the other. The passarelle bridges go over not only the Seine, but also the two busy highways along both riverbanks.

The intention was however to create not only a much needed connection, but also a pleasant spot to contemplate the river, to rest and enjoy the landscape.

" My aim was to cross the river Seine in one stretch, without intermediate piers, and naturally link the two river banks without any cumbersome construction. I wanted somewhere to pause in the middle of this three hundred metre promenade, somewhere to stop and take advantage of the river, breath in the air, appreciate the light and admire Paris." 10

- Dietmar Feichtinger

The strength of the concept lies not only in the variety of uses and qualities of the space over the water, but also in the elegance of the engineering solution. The bridge consists of two opposing curves that stabilize each other with the help of vertical struts forming the central span of 194m. Both ends of this central span rest on supports, which also carry the lateral parts of the bridge. Because of the rhythmic discrepancy of the curves, the access points are on two different levels on both sides, all routes however, are connected in the center of the passarelle.

Simone de Beauvoir is now one of the symbols of the growth of the city towards east and one of Parisians' favorite spots.

► Fig.85-89 Passerelle Simone-de-Beauvoir, Paris











¹⁰ Lavou 2006, 16.

EXCOURSE: SKURU BRIDGE, SWEDEN

The Skuru Parkbridge by BIG is a project combining a pedestrian promenade with a motorway bridge, thus questioning the established boundary between nature and infrastructure.

The forest on the two riverbanks is connected by a bow, building an artificial mountain and serves as a logical extension of the landscape.

Inspired by the traditional bridge building principles, the Skuru Parbridge is a combination of two simple geometric forms - a line and an arc. Following the forms of the existing bridge close by, this structure has much more to offer. The fine symbiosis between well-functioning infrastructure and social interaction will serve as an activator of the region. The park has an amphitheater, a climbing wall playground, a training station, and recreational spaces.

The arc serves as a supporting structure for the motorway on the upper level. Concrete pillars provide additional stability for the construction and is where the drainages of the motorway are hidden. The road bridge is slightly rotated to allow for good views from the existing bridge close to the new one. ¹¹

- ► Fig.90-92 Skuru Bridge, Sweden
- ► Fig.93 Murinsel, Graz







¹¹ Vgl. Futagawa 2012, 122-127.

¹² Murinsel Graz, https://murinselgraz.at/en/, 17.02.2020.

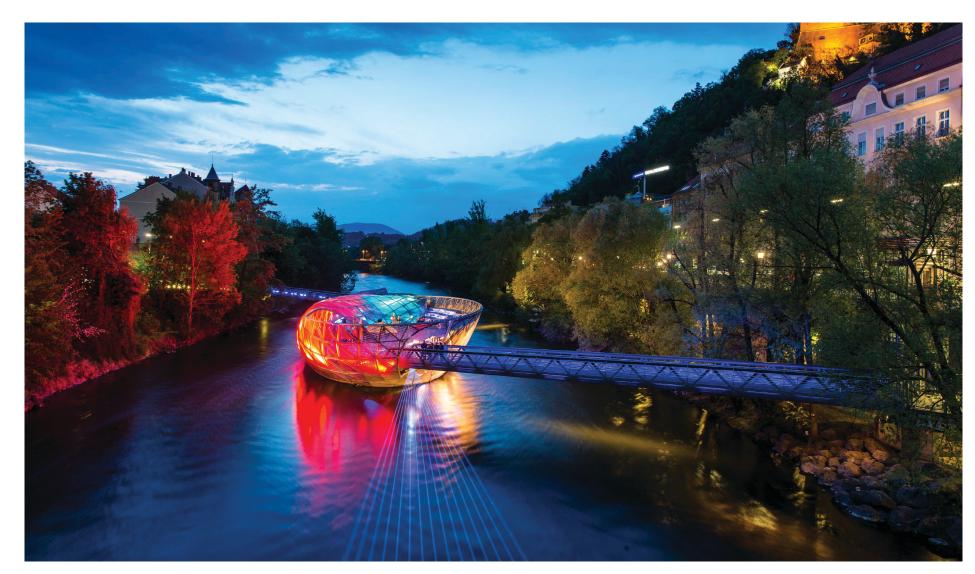
EXCOURSE: MURINSEL, GRAZ

The Designed by the New York based artist and architect Vito Acconci, the artificial island in the river Mur was built in 2003 for the occasion of Graz being the cultural capital of Europe. Next to Schlossberg and the Kunsthaus by Peter Cook, Murinsel is one off the landmarks of Graz.

Acconci's intention was not to create a bridge, but a dynamic flow of differently used spaces. The metal envelope twists and turns so that it creates a dome on one side and it turns into a bowl on the other. While the dome contains a café, the bowl serves as an amphitheater, the space in between is a children's playground.

Accessing the structure through a platform, approaching the center and lowest point, the visitor perceives the Island as well as the water from an unusual perspective. The composition opens the rare opportunity for the city to be viewed from the riverbed level opposing to the common case when one is looking from the high land down to the water. The island itself is such a peculiar object, so unusual for its context, that just looking at it from distance is fascinating. ¹²

The spot on the Hauptbrücke where one sees the Kunsthaus to the left, the Murinsel in the middle and Schlossberg to the right is one of the most exciting points in the city.



The chosen references do not only support the idea of extended functions of bridges, but show three different scenarios of implementation of structures, that play a different role in the city.

The Passerelle Simone-de-Beauvoir for example was motivated by the need of connection and then extended its initial purpose, becoming one of the most pleasant public spaces in Paris. The Skuru bridge is planned as an extension of an existing motorway, thus combines an improvement of the infrastructure with enhancement of the environment.

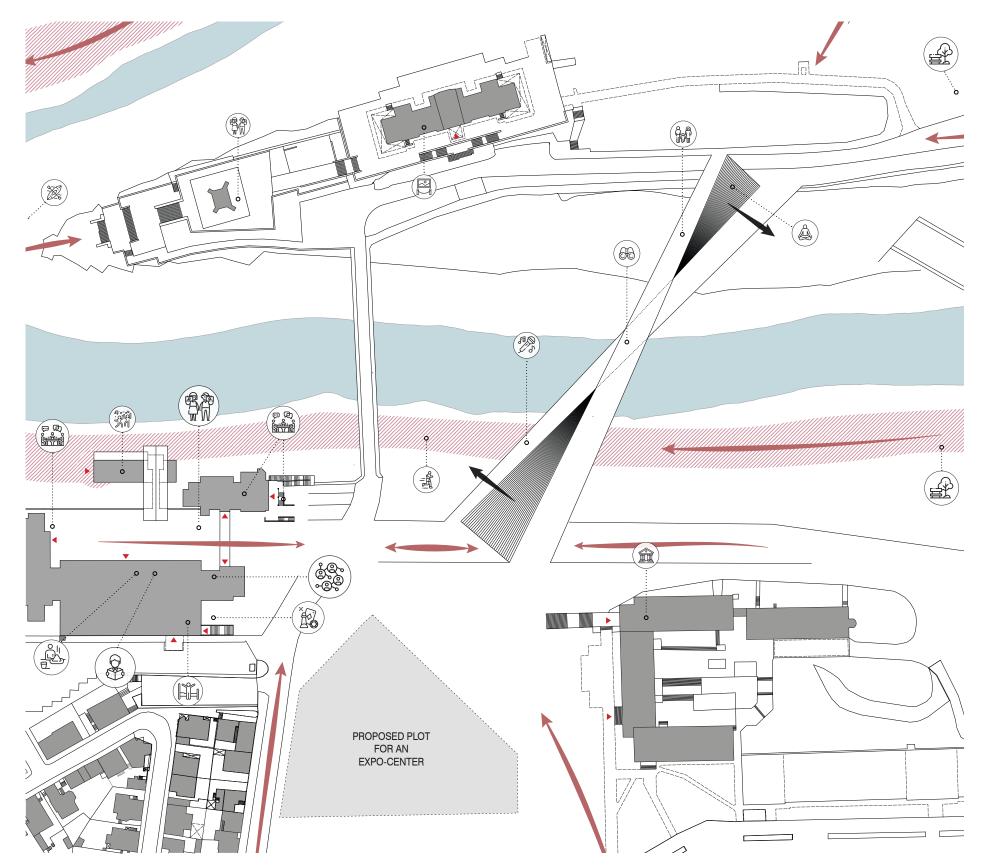
Murinsel, on the other hand, is planned primarily as a recreational space while the connection of the riverbanks is an additional feature. Because of its proximity to the existing bridge it is also not often used for this purpose. It has, however, become a landmark, an eye catcher.

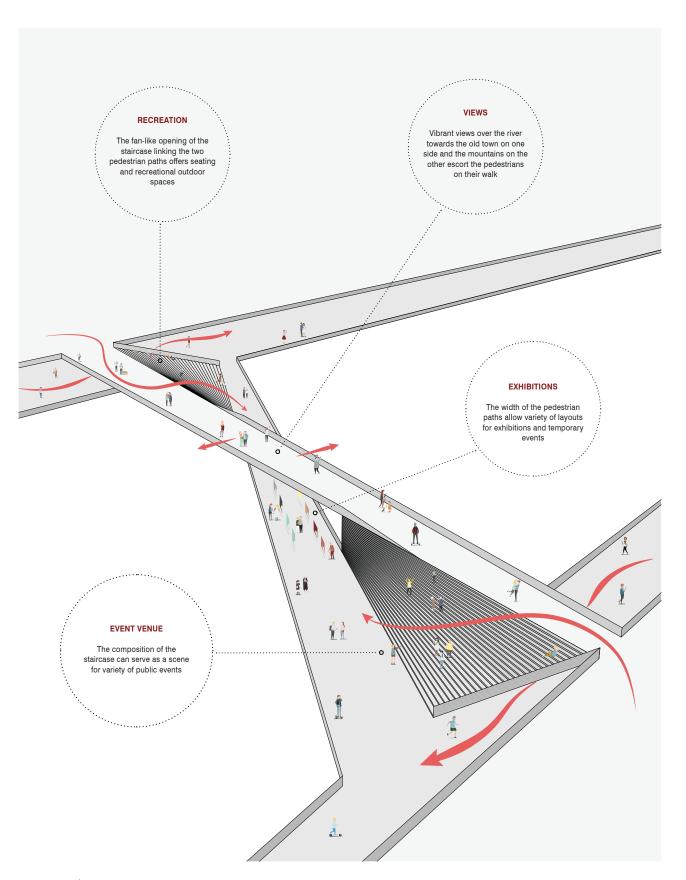
Tourist cities like Graz and Tarnovo feed from bold architectural gestures.

The Link aims to connect different levels by combining two promenades, one connecting the level of the terrace of the Student Hotel with the expo-center and the second - the new urban core of Tarnovo. On the other side they meet on the gallery's elevation as well as the park's beginning. The promenades cross in an elegant manner, opening a fan of stairs, which on one side face the old town and on the other - the south part of Tarnovo followed by a vibrant view towards the mountains.

The structure is intentionally situated higher than the Stambolov bridge in order for it not to block the view from there. The visual connection between the pedestrian bridges over Yantra and the nodes on the riverbanks creates a thrilling dynamic.

The stairs partially cover the paths on each riverbank between the two levels of the structure.





- ◄ Fig.94 Situation in urban conext
- ◀ Fig.95 Perspective
- ▶ Fig.96 Reflections
- ►► Fig.97 Promenade programme
- ▶ Fig.98 Public space activation

The Link is planned as a center of the urban life. The variety of spaces can serve as a scene for diverse experiences.

The fan-like staircase ensures a fluent transition between motion zones and leisure areas. As tourism is a private activity and the public space is the extension of the private sphere not the end of it ¹³, the staircase offers sufficient space for reading and exercise, as well as entertainment and exchange.

"Wherever there is action in a place, the spots which are the most inviting, are those high enough to give people a vantage point, and low enough to put them in action." ¹⁴

The almost amphitheatrical composition of the staircase can also serve as an event venue. Small-scaled concerts and shows can take place simultaneously on both sides of the Link.

The width of the structure allows for variety of temporary events and exhibitions and outdoor activities to take place on the Link.

" Outdoors, people always try to find a spot where they can have their backs protected, looking out toward some larger opening, beyond the space immediately in front of them." ¹⁵

The composition of the stairs not only offers a pleasant space for leisure, but also compliments it with an astonishing view. The Old town is not the only spectacular site in the area. The arrangement of the different elements makes the view so interesting - on one side the former Interhotel, the gallery, the monument, the Stambolov bridge closed in a scene all together with the Old town as a background. On the opposite side the view towards the southern edge of the city with its industrial areas is complimented by the dynamics of the motorway alongside the strong contrast of the endless breathtaking landscape filled with mountains in the distance.

¹³ Vgl. de Graaf 2017, 120.

¹⁴ Alexander 1977, 604.

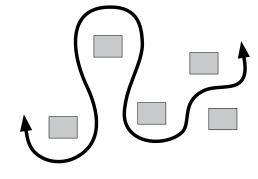
¹⁵ Ebda., 558.

¹⁶ Ebda., 323.

¹⁷ Vgl. de Graaf 2017, 120.

¹⁸ OMA 1995, 604.





THE PROMENADE

THE PROMENADE

The most attractive spaces in an urban environment are without any doubt those around water basins - rivers, lakes, oceans. For example in Paris, Chicago or New York, the waterfronts are usually the center of the public life. Yantra's shores, however, are among the most neglected zones in Tarnovo.

"We came from the water, our bodies are largely water, and water plays fundamental role in our psychology. We need constant access to water, all around us, and we cannot have it without reverence for water in all forms.

But everywhere in cities water is out of reach." 16

The suggestion for a promenade on the waterfront builds on the initial idea for a motor vehicles and pedestrians path on the riverbank around the former Interhotel. In this scenario, however, the path follows Yantra throughout the whole city center. It foresees a bike lane and a pedestrian path, thus enhancing the community cohesion and promoting health and happiness. ¹⁷ Furthermore, the plan suggests a variety of outdoor activities for the promenade - tables for chess, playgrounds and barbecue areas, as well as spaces for exercise and rest. The length of the promenade and its passing through different zones allow for different situations and spaces with different qualities to form. The terrain allows for vertical recreation on several spaces, making it suitable for climbing.

The promenade will not only make use of the most attractive urban zones, but will activate neglected and unused areas, like the industrial buildings in the northern part of the city. The existing paintball hall, for example, could be complemented by a trampoline park.

Being the barrier that the river currently is, gives the city a large opportunity to turn it into a connector - a sign for the healthy development of Tarnovo.



146 PROJECT | THE PROMENADE



EPILOGUE

The goal of this master's thesis is to inform, to raise questions and to provoke discussions, about the way we deal with our heritage, about the subjectivity of our perceptions, about the use of public spaces. The project in this sense is not an ultimate solution of a problem, but a trigger, that uses the Interhotel and the city of Veliko Tarnovo as an example to shine light on issues that many cities face.

The impulse for this project was the Interhotel - one of the gems of the modernist architecture in Bulgaria, that shares the sad destiny of many structures from the same period. The work tries to explain the reasons for this contradiction and to change the perception of this architectural masterpiece by including it into the urban fabric and turning it from a place of separation to a place for togetherness and exchange.

By using this occasion these pages take the visitor on a journey through *the city of the tsars*, gives an overview of the many layers of its rich history, and points out its potentials and its weaknesses. They are taken as a base for the comprehensive deliberations for the establishing of the city as an active cultural and communication hub.

The end result of this work is nothing more than a concept, a sketch, an idea. The project suggests that the accessibility to the green spaces and regaining the unused areas of the city could be a key to turning the urban core of Veliko Tarnovo into a well-connected, pulsing public space.

I would be glad if the text and picture material on these pages have tickled one's senses and aroused one's interest and held the reader until the end. To those who got to this final page: Thank you!

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LEGEND

(🐴) Workout

(M) Playground

(👸) Rest

Walk

Bike lane

Pier

(616) Panoramic view

(🐴) Trampoline park

Fishing zone

Tourist attractions

Co-working

Fitness

Restaurant

🌉 Swimming pool

(Common space

(2) Learning area

Games room

Seating

Hotel reception

(Night club / Bar

(

Training station

Dog-friendly zone

(🖺) Chess boards

🏚 🗎 BBQ area

(Paintball

Railway station

Tourist attraction

Gallery

Public authority

University building

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Fig.44: own drawings LIST OF FIGURES Fig.45: Armin Zepic Fig.46-47: Georgi Petev Fig.1: Sketches of Sofia Fig.48: own diagram Fig.2: own diagram Fig.3: own diagram Fig.49: https://www.claudionardi.it/ Fig.50: Marin Kafedjiiski Fig.4-7: own diagrams Fig.51: own diagram Fig.8: https://velikotarnovocentre.com Fig.9 -12: own diagrams Fig.52: https://www.archdaily. Fig.13: Georgi Petev com/11153/wellness-sky-4of7 Fig.53: Veliko Balabanov Fig.14: own diagram Fig.15: Sketches of Sofia Fig.54: own diagram Fig.55: Georgi Petev Fig.16-20: own diagrams Fig.21-22: Georgi Petev Fig.56-64: https://www. Fig.23: Sketches of Sofia thestudenthotel.com Fig.65:own diagram Fig.24:https://viajarabulgaria.com/ wp-content/uploads/samovodska-Fig.66-81: https://www. charshia-veliko-tarnovo.jpg thestudenthotel.com Fig.82: Georgi Petev Fig.25: Sketches of Sofia Fig.83: own diagram Fig.26: Georgi Petev Fig.27-30: Plamena/Lyuba Fig.84: own diagram Fig.31: Georgi Petev Fig.85-89: http://www. feichtingerarchitectes.com/display Fig.32: https://velikotarnovocentre.com Fig.33: Kiril Borisov Arial Video project.php/1/462

Photography

Fig.34: own diagram Fig.35: Georgi Petev

Fig.37-41: Chris Osborne

Fig.42: Dimo Zhelyazkov

Fig.36: magazine Architecture 6, 1982

Fig.43: magazine Architecture 6, 1982 own graphic

Fig.90-92: https://big.dk/#projects-sbr

Fig.98: photo - Marin Kafedjiiski /

Fig.93: Harry Schiffer

Fig.96: Georgi Petev Fig.97: own diagram

Fig.94-95: own diagrams