

Zagreb, June 26th, 2019

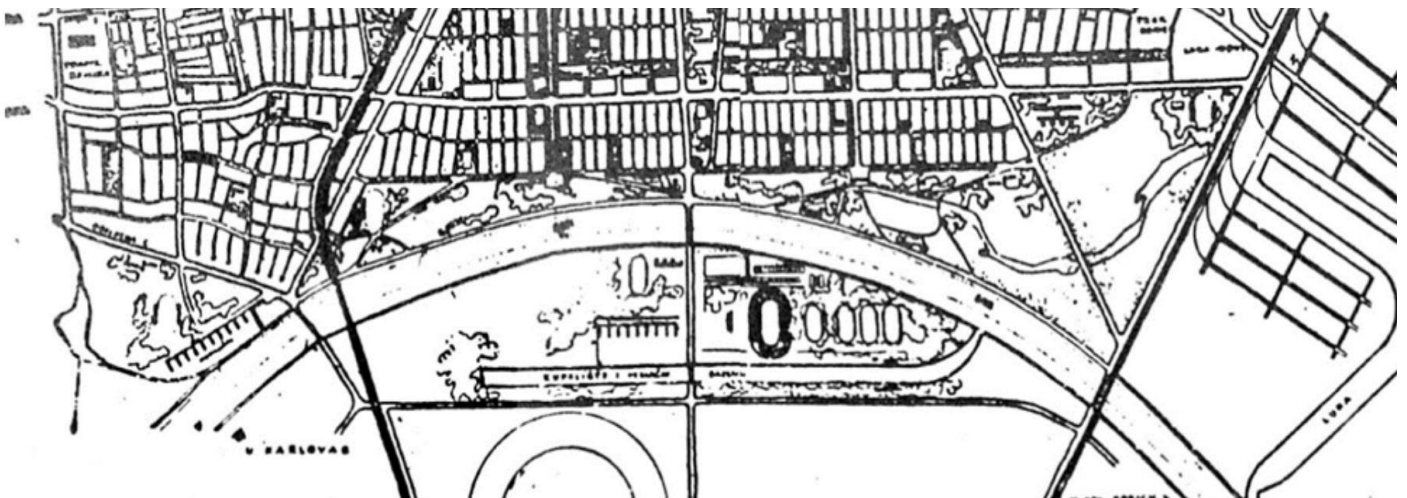
Dear colleagues from ArchDaily,

The initiative to call upon this matter has been the recent article on ArchDaily website showcasing the finalist work from Superspace for the Zagreb Observation tower competition. We would very much appreciate it if you would publish this letter as a whole document since it is an explicit portrait of a topic we are addressing.

In light of recent local realities which our city of Zagreb is facing, we as local and national professional bodies: Zagreb Society of Architects, Association of Croatian Urban Planners, Croatian Chamber of Architects, University of Zagreb Faculty of Architecture and Croatian Association of Landscape Architects, would like to open up a general discussion regarding the possible negative scenarios that might be reoccurring in other places as well, so please take this as a valuable insight. The initiative to call upon this matter has been the recent article on ArchDaily website showcasing the finalist work from Superspace for the **Zagreb Observation tower competition**.

First, we would like to compliment the effort of all the competitors, who took the time and the effort to provide the ideas and give the fresh view on the topic. But, unfortunately, what the competitors have not been initiated into, are the **severe irregularities** emerging from the local settings and the competition organizer who has initiated the competition and the call for the entries.

We would like to **appeal to the professional communities on local and international levels to try to be more careful in professionally evaluating the quality of the calls for competitions, the suspectable project briefs as well as the background of competition organizers, even the suspectable short deadlines which are disputing the maturity of the approach to getting acquainted with the complexity of the site specifics and delivering a quality proposal. To elaborate this specific situation and make things more comprehensible, the call for entries as well as the competition brief have been put to motion severely disregarding Croatian laws** regulating the built environment and city planning regulative plans, deliberately disengaging and avoiding the representatives of local and national professional bodies (Zagreb Society of Architects, Association of Croatian Urban Planners, Croatian Chamber of Architects, University of Zagreb Faculty of Architecture, Croatian Association of Landscape Architects), as well as general public opinion.



Sava park (Savski perivoj): Master regulation plan for the City of Zagreb, 1937. (from: Radović Mahečić; Štok, 1997:26; Study of PPGZ, AF ZGB 2019)

Since it is a location of a very **specific value** for the city of Zagreb, specific protocols are required by law and professional procedures which both should serve the general public in ensuring the **most professional and democratic solution** to which they, as the citizens and as such the owners of the public spaces, are constitutionally entitled to.

Unfortunately, the specific value and potential of the location has made both the location and the regulative protocols as well as the public opinion, the victims of ambition to merchandise the public space into shady deals and trades.

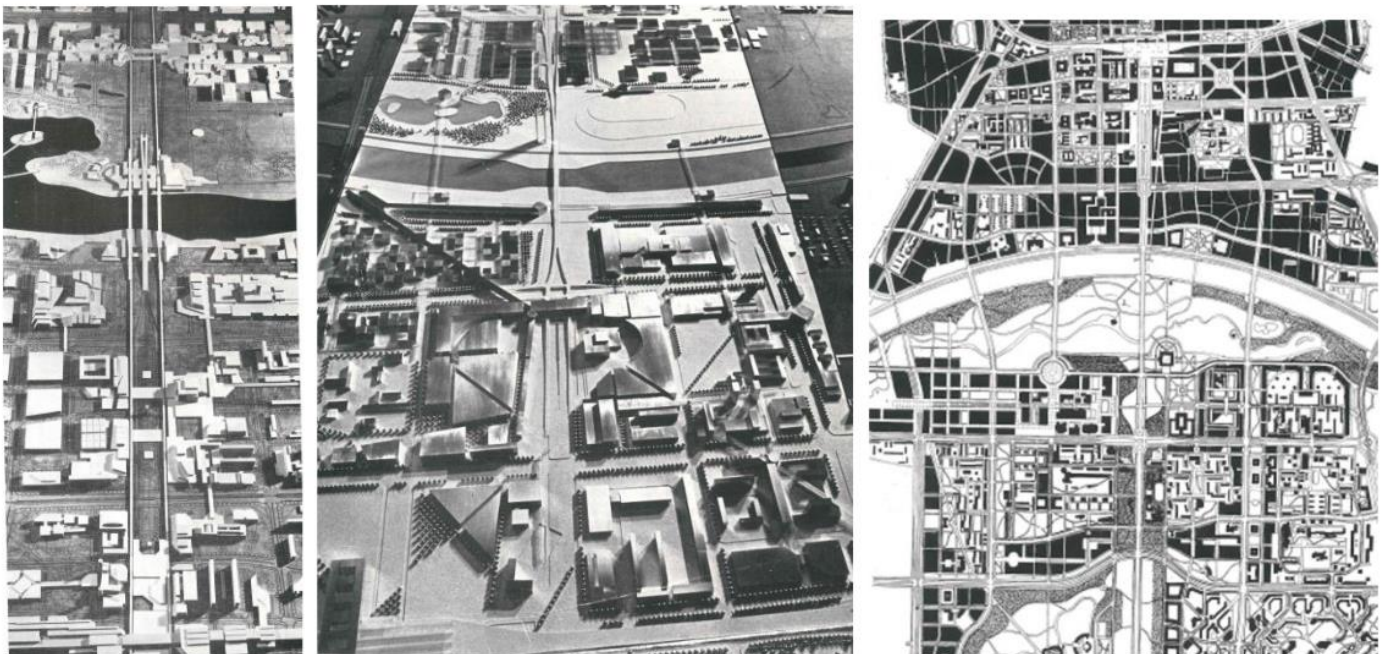
Just a few of the facts, among many that are in motion, that are breaching the regulations are:

1. The competition site is owned by a City municipality, and is categorised as a **valuable green belt** by the Sava river, allowing only a very specifically defined developing program, mainly as an outdoor recreational area, a public green space area, all under propositions of a local general urban plan, which definitely does not have an option to build a building or an infrastructure that the competition brief was calling for.
2. Competition was organized, put into motion and published by a foreign private developers company (EX-development, UAE – Dubai based) **without any** mention of an involvement of a **local partner or the legal land owner** of the competition site location.

When being brought to dispute by the City General Assembly to make a clear statement on whether there has been any initiative by the city authorities for putting such a competition into motion, **the Mayor of Zagreb has issued a written statement saying that the City authorities did not initiate the competition.**

In City of Zagreb all major public architectural competitions are obliged to meet the regulatory standards which require the **competition organizers to have the valid licence** and each competition brief must be approved and allocated with a registration number by the Croatian Chamber of Architects. The **EX-development has neither** the above-mentioned licence nor have they obtained the approval and the registration number for the competition brief from the competent authority.

3. The competition has **not been visible on the local level** for the local professional community to engage in evaluation, or the general public to be informed about what is being proposed for their community development.



Study of the central urban area of Trnje, Novi Zagreb and Sava banks, 1981. (foto: Mohorovičić 1984, ČIP370(1):5-24; I. Vokal dissertation 2017)

Team 1: Boltar, Jukić, Jurković, Kollenz, Landau Boltar, Lipovac, Maretić, Milić, Obad-Ščitaroci; Team 2: Miščević, Miščević, Petani, Turnšek, Ančić; Team 3: Delalle, Doklestić, Gamulin, Tepeš, Budisavljević, Miličević, Jamnicki; Team 4: Čidić, Šojat, Uhlik, Vrcan; Team 5: Kincl, Šegvić; Team 6: Hrzić, Krznarić, Mance, Neidhardt

4. The project brief is harshly **disregarding the urban development postulates** of more than 150 years of evaluation and implementation of development strategies regarding the City of Zagreb as an urban body, the brief is practically non-existent in evaluating the site and its immediate urban context and development strategies **for crucial urban axes** which are planned to connect as a vital vascular network between downtown Zagreb and New Zagreb, thus only **focusing on selling an architectural cliché** and not a real and potent community based, thoroughly thought about and regulations abiding development.
5. It has not been clear who have been the members of the **competition jury**, what are their specific competences and if they had the relevant inputs regarding the micro and macro location as well as an expertise to evaluate the local site-specific task and thus choose the best possible competition entry.

6. Although the City authorities have been distancing themselves from this suspectable competition there is a reasonable doubt that **this competition** is serving another purpose as well, to **act as a Trojan horse**, or a “small door” entry for an adjacent plot of Zagreb Fair grounds redevelopment, which is even a bigger issue than the topic we are here discussing, and thus opening a passage for pushing the further development proposals by various developers which are not aligned with regulations and professional as well as political ethics towards the citizens and the community in general.

The proposed macro site urban matrix has no valid grounds in any regulatory urban plans and acts, professional evaluation, as well as in public consensus and furthermore currently being the hot and highly disputed topic in the City Assembly and in the public opinion realm.

*In conclusion, we are unfortunately **living in an era** where, although nominally presented as guaranteed, **democracies are still brought to question** by avoiding the very protocols that ensure the transparent transfer of intention **how the public spaces and public realm are governed** in general, where valuable public spaces are still remaining a vulnerable tissue of societies.*

*We as architects, ones that professionally pledged to serve the quality of space development, must act now, more than ever in a socially responsible way, both locally and globally, to **cultivate, nurture and heal the communities in their ever evolving and developing journey into the future**. We will be able to do that once we engage **more than only the technical or esthetical skills**, but as well the deep understanding of how communities worldwide live and dwell in the moment when we encounter them with our visions. Let's not lose the critical thinking skills in **evaluating bigger pictures**, aside from the mere site and the boundary of the single building plot.*



The Sava river in Zagreb competition 2002, one of tree equal first prizes (R. Delalle, J.-S. Delalle)

Zagreb Society of Architects
Tihomil Matković, president



Association of Croatian Urban Planners
Sandra Jakopac, president



Croatian Chamber of Architects
Željka Jurković, president



Croatian Association of Landscape Architects
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