

submitted: 08.02.2024.

UDC : 711.4(497.6)

corrected: 02.04.2024.

Research scientific paper

<https://doi.org/10.62683/ZRGAF39.1-12>

accepted: 07.04.2024.

BANJA LUKA URBAN AXIS AS THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper reviews the connection of the historical timeline and principal stages of development, on the one hand, and the urban axis – the main street in Banja Luka, on the other, as a very accurate historical record of urban development. The urban development axis in Banja Luka is a vast resource in terms of architectural layers that chronicle architectural evolution in general and live history of historical chronology with extraordinarily distinct and recognisable expressions reflected in the built environment. Present-day architectural heritage is the most solid evidence of that development. It is linked to ruling regimes, bringing up in focus the relation of each stage to their benefactors, examining their influence on the image of the urban cityscape in Banja Luka as it exists today.

The architecture along the analysed urban backbone is studied using historical research methods to examine the relationship between historical growth and its impact on urban development, focusing on the geographical shift of main activities on the same street.

The paper begins with a brief overview of key historical events that shaped Banja Luka's development to properly assess its impact on this single road, which was transformed from an ancient communication route to a modern four-lane street. Beginning with the Ottoman era, with the first documented and some remaining traces of architecture, each successive historical period is shown through the overview of the built heritage, linked to its functional and social role in the city. The architecture and cityscape properties heavily influenced by this urban backbone are evaluated and presented, along with stylistic adherence, key facts, development, and current status.

The primary goal of this paper is to address the architectural heritage of Banja Luka's urban backbone – the central axis that has remained the focal point of all authorities and a rich source of inspiration for notable achievements, decisively influencing the image of modern-day Banja Luka. It is intended to demonstrate that all major construction activities, regardless of their benefactors, historical era, or function, occurred along the same route, historically and still widely regarded as Banja Luka's urban axis.

Key words: Banja Luka, Urban Axis, Historical Development, Architectural Heritage

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1. INTRODUCTION

Present-day Banja Luka is the second largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, resting on four rivers with evidence of human settlements since the Eneolithic. Its historical and contemporary development axis is aligned with a street stretching through the heart of the city in the direction south-north. During the Roman period, it was the stretch of the vital route connecting the towns of Servitium and Salona, located in the provinces of *Pannonia* and *Dalmatia*, respectively. So-called *Salts Road*, unfolding through present-day Banja Luka, was adjacent to the Roman fortifications along the Vrbas River. During the Ottoman period, when Banja Luka started to receive its present shape, it connected *Gornji Šeher* and *Donji Šeher* (tur. *şehir* – town, city). Besides the Medieval fortifications, the Ottoman period holds the first preserved urban fabric traces witnessing the importance of the axis – featuring two large waqfs with mosques as main buildings. The axis was named *Kaiserstraße* during the Austro-Hungarian period when it received the look and condition of a European street. It was lined with tree alleys and expanded significantly with buildings for several newly established institutions – public, military and sacred, as well as private constructions that were all built northern from the old Ottoman, Donji Šeher. After World War I, the street was renamed Kralja Aleksandra, and quickly after 1929, it was further expanded with palaces for the new administrative bodies. Even after World War II, the practice of significant construction activities along the axis continued with another renaming – *Titov drum*. First, in the Yugoslavian era, among others were built the main city shopping centre, main square, and new military headquarters, followed by post-1995 development stages featuring new national headquarters and government buildings, slipped into free construction lots along the same street, currently named *Kralja Petra I Karađorđevića*.

The study explores the architectural character that shapes the urban environment along the analysed urban backbone. It delves into the relationship between historical development and its impact on urban growth using historical research methods, a published bibliography, and national and international archival sources, followed by on-site analysis and explanatory patterns. At the same time, it focuses on how vital social activities have shifted geographically within the same street over time.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Banja Luka's growth is similar to any other middle-sized town in Southeastern Europe, with a moderate climate and appealing topography supplemented with various natural resources, primarily rivers and farming land. The initial emergence of habitation on the site of current-day Banja Luka dates back to the prehistorical age. Historically documented traces of urban development on the site of modern Banja Luka date as early as the Roman era. A station, possibly a military camp with a small settlement named *Castra*, can be identified at a location corresponding to modern-day Banja Luka on the banks of the Vrbas River. Its position can be seen in *Tabula Peutingeriana* on the so-called *Salts Road*, connecting the Roman settlement of Servitium (modern-day Gradiška) and Salona (near the modern-day Split). Following the demise of the Roman Empire, Slavic tribes quickly acquired control of the western Balkans, establishing the first Medieval nations, forerunners of current states on the Dinarides' slopes. [1]

Following the fall of the great Serbian empire in 959, the settlement that would eventually become modern-day Banja Luka was discovered in one of the newly created states – Bosnia. Later, during the decades, it changed borders, sovereignty, independence, and crown monarchs – indigenous from local dynasties and outsiders, mostly Hungarians. After the defeat of Bosnia under Ottoman raids in 1463, Banja Luka was included in Banate Jajce, which the Hungarian Empire administered. Soon, in 1494, the name Banja Luka was mentioned for the first time in written sources. It was the charter of King Vladislaus II of Bohemia and Hungary, in which he sought to help protect the country against the Ottoman Turks and named all fortresses, among which was Banja Luka. [2] That Banate lasted in this vassal status until 1528, when the Ottomans took over the remaining areas of the Banate. [1]

The Ottomans initially settled in *Gornji Šeher*, presently Banja Luka's suburban district of *Srpske Toplice*, possibly the site of a Medieval fortification, and then in *Donji Šeher*, later to become modern-day downtown with surviving fortification Kastel. The affluent time lasted until 1638, when Banja Luka was demoted to the level of *kadiluk*, bringing its development chart to a very flat, almost downstream line.

The Treaty of Berlin (June 13th- July 13th 1878) made crucial choices for Bosnian Vilayet's future growth. According to the Treaty, Vilayet of Bosnia and Sanjak of Novi Pazar remained in the Ottoman territory and under its formal sovereignty. Still, the Austro-Hungarian Empire got permission to exercise military control and administer the area. [3, 4] Banja Luka was a small provincial town in Eyalet of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austro-Hungarian occupation. It was later transformed in social, religious, economic, and educational contexts, moving one step closer to the image of a Central European town of similar size and recognition.

Establishing banates, newly introduced administrative regions, was the most rewarding growth throughout the Kingdom Period (1918-1941). Its first governor was Svetislav Tisa Milosavljević. During his reign (1929-1934), he built a large number of public buildings that were placed over the urban fabric laid out by the Austro-Hungarian authorities, particularly along the central axis of *Bulevar kralja Aleksandra* – King Alexander's Boulevard, a former Austro-Hungarian Kaiserstraße. Significantly, Milosavljević's goals left enough open – unbuilt space, which proved crucial for post-World War II urban growth.

Bulevar kralja Aleksandra, later renamed *Titov drum* – *Tito's Road*, was recognised as a solid urban axis after World War II. However, new politics performed by The Federal Urban Planning Department, seated in Sarajevo, plotted the axis dissolution in 1952, with new focal points of development along the Vrbas River. [5] A natural hazard in 1969, caused by a large earthquake, halted such initiatives. The following planning activities brought back the historical longitudinal layout along the central axis and foresaw new residential neighbourhoods around the downtown.

Civil war and its aftermath did not benefit the cityscape in the late XX century. On the other hand, the isles of greenery along *Kralja Petra I Karađorđevića*, which is the most recent and current name of the axis, and unused public spaces have been converted into construction sites, continuously harming not only historical layers of architecture but also the atmosphere, the luxury of green zones, the parks, and the climate, with constantly arising traffic contributing to overheating in the downtown.

3. THE URBAN AXIS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The Ottoman era (1528-1878)

The architectural layers predating the Ottoman era do not exist along the length of the axis, except the Kastel stronghold, which is a fusion of the Medieval core and Ottoman add-ons. The only beneficial time for the development of Banja Luka in terms of urban, social, and economic environment during the Ottoman rule was from 1553 until 1638. In 1553, the seat of Sanjak bey was moved from Sarajevo to Banja Luka, resulting in new construction activities and settlement expansion along the route of Gornji Šeher – Donji Šeher and further to the northern suburbs – creating *Carski drum* – Tsar's Road, a recreation of the *Salts Road*. The following significant year was 1574, when Sokollu Ferhad Pasha rose to power. This is the first period in the city's history that records extensive works, the construction of significant sacred, public, and private buildings, and infrastructure development.

That resulted in the Vrbas River's meadows becoming the development's southern axis. Some traces of the Ottoman era are still visible in the urban fabric in the city's southern suburbs – dominant mosques with belonging graveyards that marked the positions of tur. *mahalle* – residential settlements, groups of small single-family houses in an irregular urban pattern, with narrow streets and walls outlining the borders between neighbours. Non-Muslim settlements, predominantly Serbian, Croatian, and Jewish, were located in the northern part of the town, Latinska Varoš, which started to develop more after the *tanzimat* reforms in 1839. [6]

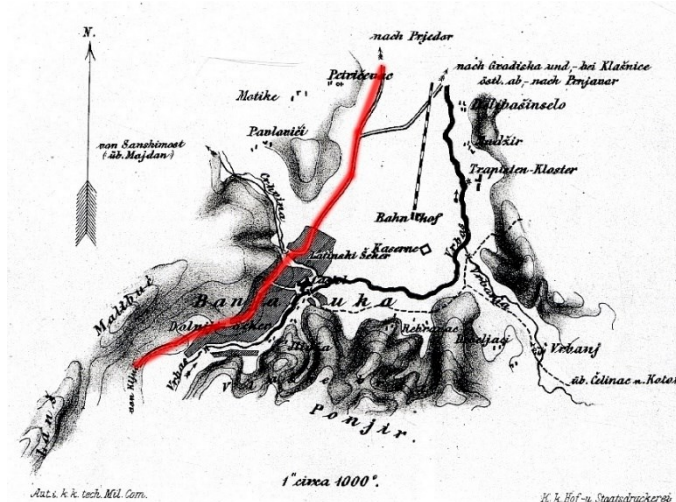


Figure 1. Banja Luka and its surroundings are on one of the Austrian maps dating from 1863. This map edition was issued in 1863 on a "Wiener Zoll" scale, 24x20cm. The axis route, *Carski drum*, is highlighted, stretching from northern to southern suburbs through Donji Šeher and Latinska varoš (Archive collection of Austrian National Library (K I 112916,1 Kar), Map Department, Vienna)

The old Roman road, however, which was identified and utilised as the primary road along the fortress Kastel and upstream of the Vrbas River, was recognised as a viable backbone, which was subsequently confirmed to be correct. By the end of the Ottoman rule, the road became known as the *Tsar's Road* – *Carski Drum*. The Ferhadija mosque and the Clock tower – *Sahat kula*, were erected at the intersection

of Carski drum and the Kastel's western entrance road. Sokollu Ferhad Pasha sponsored the mosque's construction and commissioned one of Mimar Sinan's disciples to design and construct it. With its aesthetic authenticity to sixteenth-century traditional Ottoman architecture, it is considered one of the finest achievements in the Vilayet and beyond. [7] It was recognised as a UNESCO-protected heritage site and a National Monument in Yugoslavia. In 1993, during the Civil War, it was destroyed. It was reopened in 2016 after being fully repaired and furnished by its historical predecessor. Bojića Han was another Ottoman structure on the northernmost section of the axis. Han is a typical Ottoman building typology that often includes a multifunctional market, trade areas, and accommodations. Bojića han is one of six complexes retained in Bosnia until the end of the Ottoman administration, and it is considered one of the most well-equipped. During the Austro-Hungarian era, it was demolished. [8] Between 1858 and 1860, almost towards the conclusion of Ottoman rule, the Tsar's Road was widened, critical for the subsequent growth phases. [5]

3.2. The Austro-Hungarian era (1878-1918)

Unlike other occupied cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the urban fabric established during the Ottoman occupation was left intact, with the shift of the centre of the new European *varoš* (town) away from the Ottoman *čaršija* (downtown) and the Vrbas River towards Latinska varoš, already inhabited by non-Muslims. The flow of the Crkvena River, very close to the Ferhadija mosque, was set as a natural barrier between the old – Ottoman and the new – Austro-Hungarian Banja Luka by newly-arrived engineers, who were sensitive to the Oriental expression in the construction of traditional Ottoman mahalas, thus preserving the historical legacy of previous rulers. Construction of several public buildings began in that environment as early as 1879. In most cases, new authorities constructed buildings for newly established organisations and amenities such as railway stations, banks, hospitals, courts, schools, and industrial and military facilities, which did not exist in the preceding system. Kaiserstraße was home to the majority of these structures. The joint Imperial and Royal Army troops played a vital part in construction activities, primarily through the construction of railway infrastructure and stations, as well as an enormous number of military facilities and whole cityscapes enclosed for their activities.

Apart from a few exceptions, like Franz von Mihanovich's Elementarschule in Gornji Šeher, completed in the Orientalizing style in 1896 [9], growth was concentrated in the northern, at the time, suburbs, with predominantly non-Muslim communities and poor infrastructure. The newly widened main road, Kaiserstraße, was wisely used to support the future modern city, opposing southern, old Ottoman mahalas between Gornji and Donji Šeher.

Closest to the Ottoman urban fabric were built the Prison or the "Black house" (1889) and the Tsar's School, also known as *Volksschule* (built 1885, reconstructed 1907). Its architecture strangely combined the traditional Dinara house with Classic Revival. It was demolished in 1969, and the Faculty of Electrical Engineering was later built on its site. [10]

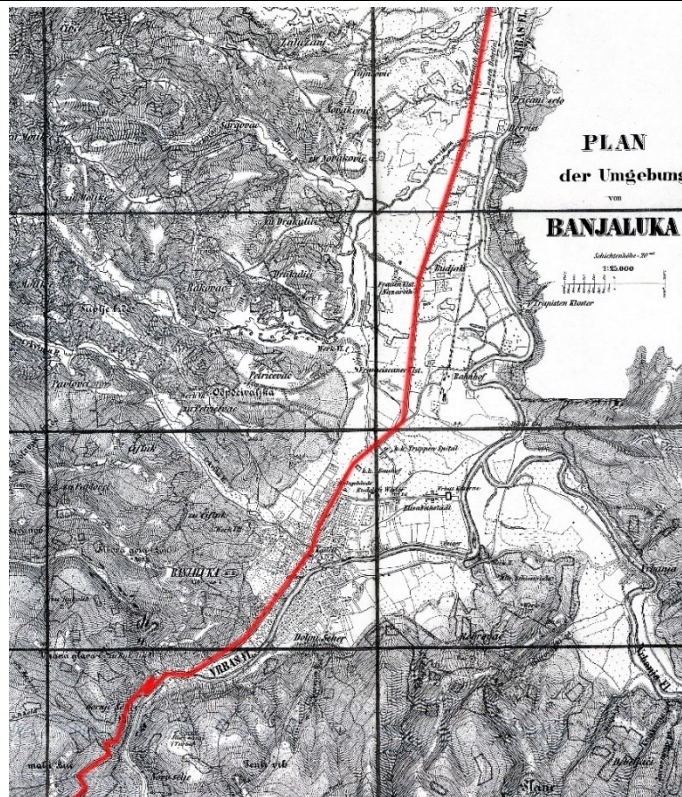


Figure 2. Banja Luka and its surroundings between 1880 and 1884, also known as the “Austrian map” with Kaiserstraße highlighted. This map edition was issued in 1890 in scale 1:25.000, dimensions 41x48cm (Archive collection of Austrian National Library (KB 111072 Kar), Map Department, Vienna)

A Muslim library or tur. *kiraethana* was built in 1890 on the mosque's northern flank. It was designed by Croatian architect Ćiril Metod Iveković [11], who is most known for his work on the city halls of Sarajevo and Brčko. [8, 9] Between WWII and the 1969 earthquake, it was utterly demolished in favour of Kaiserstraße widening. It was designed in the Orientalizing style, often indicated as Moorish Revival or pseudo-Moorish in older research findings. It had a square foundation with the ground and one level above, with a simple cornice tracing its outline. The façade was done with horizontal banding, probably dark yellow, red, or orange. Windows were arched, with a wooden segmented layout in a glass pattern. The northern corner oriented towards Kaiserstraße was accented with a wooden oriel bay, often seen as a *divanhana* element in traditional houses.

Along the Kaiserstraße, north of Kiraethana, were erected the Renaissance Revival *Banja Luka Stadt Bahnhof* – Main Railway station, in 1891, the *Herrengasse* – the city's main pedestrian and retail zone, and *Militär-amtsgebäude* – Military Headquarters – in 1879. [12]

Many sites were constructed for the Roman Catholic Church, a significant player in many elements of Banja Luka's life, not only religious. The Serbian Orthodox Church had substantial assets in the city, although their actions throughout the Austro-Hungarian period did not result in many notable architectural works.

The Church's most significant site was the Cathedral Church with the Diocesan headquarters, located next to *Militär-amtsgebäude* on the eastern side of

Kaiserstraße. The cathedral was constructed between 1884 and 1885, following the design of the Trappist monk Eberhart Wegnant, the architect of several other sacred buildings in Banja Luka. [12] The original church was destroyed after being damaged during the earthquake in 1969. The School of Adorers of the Blood of Christ was another significant structure built by the Roman Catholic establishment. The school was located across the *Militärämtesgebäude*, on the western side of Kaiserstraße. It was constructed in 1903 and was undoubtedly one of Banja Luka's most famous secession structures. Simple corpus geometry, shallow Avant-corps with highlighted gable walls, and mighty structural ornamentation with floral motifs were levelled up from the ground zone to the peak in the roof above. The school was in operation until 1943, when it was confiscated and turned into a public Gymnasium for girls on September 18, 1946, as part of the nationalisation process. That school was operating until 1969, when it suffered earthquake destruction and was torn down [10], later to be replaced by yet another military facility.

On the site of former Bojića han, on the northern part of the axis, just after the occupation, an army recovery hospital was established. Featuring vast greenery and a park, it was eventually revealed to be the city's central park, which is now known as *Park Mladen Stojanović*. The Evangelical church and parish house, jointly in one building, designed by architect Ludwig Huber in 1895 in Classic Revival Style, was erected next to the park on its southern boundary. It lost its original use after WWI but is still used as an office building, with most of its architectural characteristics intact. [13]

Along the Kaiserstraße, industrial facilities were also constructed. On the ground between the Cathedral and the Kaiserstraße railway station, the *Tabakfabrik* - Tobacco factory complex was built. Even though it was designed without original architectural features, its contribution to the landscape and intact building condition make it unique for industrial archaeology in Banjaluka, where the Tobacco plant is located. [1] Another railway station, *Kaiserstraße Bahnhof* – Kaiserstraße Railway station, was erected in 1891 between the Evangelical church and the Tobacco plant. A tiny station building with oriental characteristics was utilised until 1969, when it lost its original role and is currently being used as a restaurant.

The western side of Kaiserstraße is occupied by a line of luxury urban villas – *Kaiserstraße Villagegend*- erected for highly placed army or diocesan officials. They are all built according to authentic residential architecture, as seen in the XVIII and early XIX centuries in high hills in Austria and Switzerland, which makes them very unique and odd at the same time for the local setting. They are still considered the most valuable residential houses in Banja Luka. [1]

Beginning with the *Militärämtesgebäude* and ending with Mladen Stojanović Park, the whole cityscape is recognised as the National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina. [14]

3.3. The Kingdom (1918-1941/45)

Even very modest, later results were decisive infrastructural projects and constructions undertaken during the occupation and annexation period (1878-1908 and 1908-1918), which were not perceived as such at the time. Only later growth phases revealed how accurate the decisions were between 1878 and 1914. During the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, primarily during the Vrbaska Banovina 1929-1941, all major planning activities

occurred among focal points established during the Austro-Hungarian period. New constructions were occurring adjacent to the buildings mentioned above, along Bulevar kralja Aleksandra, the newly established name of the axis.

Near the Ferhadija mosque, another mosque with a graveyard was located. Both the mosque, located on the eastern side of the axis, and the cemetery on the western were demolished in the early 1930s. A modern hotel, Palace, replaced the mosque in 1933 [15] according to a design by Dionis Sunko, and on the western side of the street, the park devoted to writer Petar Kočić, which will receive a famous sculpture by Antun Augustinčić and Vanja Radauš in 1932. [5]

The complex of *Banski Dvor* and *Banska Uprava – the regional governor's palace and the town hall* – is undoubtedly the most prominent complex constructed during the Kingdom. The buildings were built in 1930 and 1931, respectively, in academised Byzantine Revival style with Classic Revival components, according to designs by Belgrade architects Jovan Ranković, Anđelija Pavlović, and Jovanka Katerinčić-Bončić. According to a design by Belgrade architect Duan Živanović, the Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity was erected between the structures of Ban's Dvor and Banska Uprava between 1925 and 1930. It is regarded as one of the pinnacles of Byzantine Revival sacred structures constructed in Yugoslavia before World War II. It was demolished in 1941, just at the start of WWII. [15]

Another essential building constructed during the Kingdom was the first multi-family residential building in Banja Luka, built for newly arrived administration staff, next to the Park Petar Kočić. It was designed by Edgar Kobenzl and constructed in 1929, with distinctive elements of late classic revival architecture combined with modern housing systems incorporated. [16]



Figure 4. Highlighted Bulevar kralja Aleksandra in the central section on the tourist city map, original map issued in 1936 in scale 1:4200, dimensions 54x25cm (Archive collection of Austrian National Library (K I 102678 Kar), Map Department, Vienna)

In 1934, the National Theatre, then known as the House of King Peter the Great, was constructed on the western side of the Kaiserstraße, between the Ban's Palace and the *Militär-amtsgebäude*, designed by Josif Goldner. Its aesthetic adherence, sometimes seen as a reflection of the Bauhaus, mixes Modern and Classic Revival architecture. It remains primarily kept in its original state and function [15] and is recognised as the National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina. [14]

3.4. Yugoslavia (1945-1991/5)

Until the catastrophic earthquake that struck the city in the fall of 1969, the growth of *Titov drum* (Tito's Road), the new name of the axis after being named after Ante Pavelić (1941-1945), was not as intensive as it had been in earlier times.

First, in 1955, a headquarters of the Post Office was built by Bogdan Stojkov on the eastern side of Tito's drum, next to the residential building for civil servants. [17] It was designed with International Style components and a striking white-grey Bauhaus colour scheme, similar to the business Čajavec high-rise administrative structure erected across the road in 1965-1967. An administrative building of the significant industrial conglomerate, Čajavec, was built on the site where the previous Kaiserstraße was split into a pedestrian-only zone, Herrengasse. It was the highest building in Banja Luka at the time, with 13 floors, and it overlooked the whole landscape of low-rise structures. A local architect, Josip Vidaković, designed it with clear reflections of the International Style. Both structures are used according to their original functions. [1, 18]

The city was severely damaged during the earthquake, resulting in several immediate and later demolitions. After a large residential building next to the Palace Hotel, the so-called Titanik, was demolished, a big open area in the heart of the town opened up for new designs. An idea for a massive retail mall and public square was chosen for development in 1974 as the outcome of a significant international competition. *Boska* was the most important centre of its sort in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time, designed by Velimir Neidhart, Ljerka Lulić, and Jasna Nosso as a highly meticulous blend of Socialist Modern and Brutalist architecture. [5] It still marks the Krajina Square; however, its purpose has been modified.

Following the destruction of a small section of Herrengasse, market house Triglav, today known as Kastel, was built in 1982, according to the design of Nebojša Balić. [19] It perfectly encapsulates the 1980s architectural approach, which was "trapped" between Western European tendencies and locally based Socialist Modernism.

Some transformations and new constructions took place on the northern stretch of the axis. Militäramtsgebäude was transformed into a regional building and later became the national archives building. Next to it, the Cathedral, also demolished in the earthquake, was replaced in 1972-1973 by the church designed by Veya Gazibara and Ljuboslav Matasović (façade design by Danilo Fürst, 1987), inspired by the shape of the Old Testament's tent. Boštjan Fürst designed the tower, which was added in 1991. Across the axis, the authorities appointed the Yugoslav Army to confiscate the land on the site of the demolished School of Adorers of the Blood of Christ post-earthquake period. Army's Cultural Centre was erected on the site of the demolished school in 1974-1975, according to a design by Kasim Osmančević. [18] Currently, it serves as a National Assembly.

3.5. Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-)

In some ways, the healing process following years of war devastation is still ongoing. With several still unresolved destructions of religious buildings across the town and without active warfare operations in Banja Luka during 1991-1995, economic expansion and social image left little imprint on the urban fabric, which had been frozen for a long time in the post-war era.

The rebuilding of the destroyed Orthodox cathedral church began during the war, and it was fully restored in the early 2000s, restoring the secular and religious core of modern-day Banja Luka to its former glory. Except for one development at the turn of the century, the southern section of the Kralja Petra I Karađorevića, the current name of the urban backbone, did not alter significantly. Budimir Sudimac and

Milan Vujović designed the business centre *Ekvator* in the late Postmodern style. The seat of national institutions on the opposite, northern side of the urban axis is yet another example of the late International style, anyhow not genuinely linked to the early XXI century. Located next to the *Kaiserstraße Bahnhof* building, between the Tobacco Factory and the Mladen Stojanović Park, this complex features two high-rise buildings housing the national Government. Besides being the biggest administrative complex in Banja Luka, the latest addition of a larger scale shows how the post-war development works very well: largely questionable treatment of heritage and cityscape preservation, unclear architectural aesthetics and misuse of early XX-century principles in the early XXI century.

The period from 2020 remains highly disputed in the local community, with several ongoing constructions and announcements of new sites speaking in favour of questionable architectural values introduced along the axis. With the rise of public activism, unresolved questions in the planning process appear to open further discussions examining the responsibility of the critical stakeholders in the process.

First is the case of a private hotel located in the line of urban villas – *Kaiserstraße Villageend*, on the site of a previously demolished building that had earlier replaced one of the villas damaged in the earthquake, yet featuring arguable proportion, size, and volume. In that case, applying fake wooden façade decorations, violet light shows, and inappropriate free-standing bronze sculptures are handy to demonstrate present-day aesthetics. Still, again, they truly reflect the image of society. The second questionable design is located across the Banski Dvor. Likewise, it is another case of demolition of 1960s architecture with intended design falsely attributed to Classic revival, according to the owners – very similar to what is seen in present-day Skopje downtown.

The most recent projects are located along the southern part of the axis. Last year, the extension of the Palace Hotel was announced and is currently under construction according to the project done by Hani Rashid. The project announcement has disturbed the spirits in the local community, polarising the groups supporting contemporary development and those arguing for preserving the cityscape, disregarding the actual needs of the growth. A similar case occurs across the axis, next to the Park Petar Kočić, where one of the historical buildings from the 1930s is entirely demolished and meant to be replaced by highrise development. Even though the methodology used to review and understand the architecture from a historical perspective requires additional time and distance, such cases speak for themselves and with certainty will permanently pollute the urban cityscape, but again, very honestly reflect the present era – deeply stuck in the mud of globalisation, self-identity loss, and controlled media.

4. DISCUSSION

As a reflection of general principles of the town establishment process, the occupancy of particular streets or limited urban zones for crucial governmental, public, religious, and other notable roles was a natural process before the constitution of the discipline of urban planning. What distinguishes the situation of Banja Luka is the succession of historical reversals that were always followed by new political regimes, all of which stayed inside the same, elongated geographical zone of interest – a single street or the urban axis, as addressed in this paper. That

contradicts the fact that the reversals provided opportunities for significant changes in planning and downtown growth, hence not directed to other city areas. Moreover, even in far-distant historical discourse, it is proven that the same street remained the scope of the most potent landowners, both with private and public backgrounds.

It is merely a guess as to how the city might have evolved if all of the constructions occurred in different neighbourhoods and how it would represent urban development in general. One must accept that the XXI century presents yet another shift in social patterns and acts, finally reflecting the urban fabric and the city's image in the future. The most recent constructions along the axis testify in that favour. Those are standard post-war practices in transitional countries, where rules are purposefully evaded, as are consequences for offenders, resulting in irreversible blunders and damage to aesthetics, legacy and perception of a specific cityscape.

5. CONCLUSION

Even though the modern development of Banja Luka was initiated only during the Ottoman era, a series of settlements around the rivers of Vrbas, Crkvena, and Suturlija are recorded as early as the pre-Roman era, leading to their later expansion along the main route connecting Roman provinces of Slavonia and Dalmatia. All subsequent development eras, distinguished by various political ruling regimes, focused on building erections along the same street, which was later modernised and widened. Its contemporary image is a stylistic combination of single-family houses and administrative high-rise buildings, ranging from the traditional Ottoman to glass structures. Authorities used it to solidify their image of power and present social, economic, and religious aspirations by constructing religious, public, cultural and military architecture, open public, and green zones. Such an approach resulted in a precise image of a single street as a historical record of urban development, witnessing its ups and downs. Present-day architectural heritage is the most solid evidence of the development mentioned and reviewed. It is linked to ruling regimes, bringing up in focus the relation of each stage to their benefactors, examining their influence on the image of the urban cityscape in Banja Luka as it exists today.

In this regard, the paper re-evaluated the role of architectural development in Banja Luka, not in a specific period or precise time, but rather along a historical timeline and along the exact route that has proven to be the significant street – the urban axis of today's second largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even though the image of Banjaluka is based on very colourful, separated, and secluded stories, such as its greenery planted by the Austrians, vast public and sacred constructions undertaken during the Kingdom, and intense development activities taking place in the post-Earthquake period, few people consider the present-day Banjaluka in the context of a mutual relationship between each of those layers, as seen in the urban backbone, subject in this paper.

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