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THE ERECTION OF A ROYAL MONUMENT AS A CITY PLANNING OPPORTUNITY: THE MONUMENT TO KING ALEXANDER I AND PLEČNIK'S SOUTH SQUARE*

Abstract

Shortly after the assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia (1934), a campaign was initiated in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana to erect a monument to the King, which, for various reasons, lasted six years. The most daring of the proposals was undoubtedly the 1937 project by the architect Jože Plečnik, who envisaged the construction of the so-called Alexander's Propylaea on the northern side of Kongresni trg (Congress Square). Behind them, a new public space – Južni trg (South Square) – would be developed to solve a number of contemporaneous urban planning problems. The architect's idea remained unrealised due to the opposition from a part of the public. The present contribution discusses Plečnik's plans for South Square, the circumstances of their creation and their fate, as well as their influence on the subsequent urban planning of Ljubljana's city centre.

INTRODUCTION

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, when a significant part of today's Slovenia was incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (after 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), represented a crucial turning point in the history of the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, which, with the establishment of the new state, finally acquired the role of the Slovenian political, cultural, and economic centre. The following two decades also had a major impact on the fields of architecture and urban planning, as the period was marked, among other things, by the work of the architect Jože Plečnik (1872–1957), who became a professor at the newly established University of Ljubljana in 1921, after several decades of living in Vienna and Prague. Over the next twenty years, until World War II, he gradually transformed Ljubljana from an Austrian provincial city into the Slovenian capital through a multitude of architectural and urban planning interventions.¹

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¹ About Jože Plečnik, see Damjan Prelovšek, *Josef Plečnik 1872–1957. Architectura perennis* (Salzburg, Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1992) (revised Slovenian edition: Damjan Prelovšek, *Jože Plečnik. Arhitektura večnosti. Teme, metamorfoze, ideje* [Jože Plečnik. Architecture of Eternity. Themes, Metamorphoses, Ideas] (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2017); Peter Krečič, *Jože Plečnik* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1992); Jörg Stabenow, *Jože Plečnik. Städtebau im Schatten der Moderne* [Jože Plečnik. Town Planning in the Shadow of Modernity] (Braunschweig, Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1996); Tomáš Valena, *O Plečniku. Príspevki k preučevanju, interpretaciji in popularizaciji njegovega dela* [On Plečnik. Contributions on the Research, Interpretation, and Popularisation of his Oeuvre] (Celje: Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2013).

ALEXANDER'S PROPYLAEA AND SOUTH SQUARE

During the first Yugoslav state, headed by the former Serbian royal family of Karađorđević, two monuments to the rulers were erected in Ljubljana. It is not insignificant that both of them were erected after 1929, when dictatorship was imposed in Yugoslavia and unitarism became the official ideology, emphasising the idea of a single Yugoslav nation and persecuting national movements.² In 1931, an equestrian monument to King Peter I (King of Serbia 1903–1918, King of Yugoslavia 1918–1921) – the work of the Belgrade-based Slovenian sculptor Lojze Dolinar and architect Jože Plečnik – was unveiled in front of Ljubljana's City Hall.³ However, the developments related to the erection of the monument to King Alexander I (King 1921–1934), which significantly influenced the cultural life of the second half of the 1930s and to which Plečnik also contributed his own ideas, are far more interesting in view of (re)designing the public space.

Shortly after the King's assassination by the members of Croatian and Macedonian nationalist organisations in Marseille on October 9, 1934, the Ljubljana city authorities, like those of other Yugoslav cities, decided to erect a monument to the late King. The initial discussions mainly focused on whether the monument should be an artistic installation or whether a social institution (e.g. a hospital) named after the King should be constructed. Consequently, the "monument campaign", which was presented to the public on December 1, 1934, on the anniversary of the establishment of Yugoslavia, and which attained an "all-Slovenian" character, envisaged the erection of royal monuments in Ljubljana and Maribor and the construction of a hospital named after the King.⁴ The Committee for the erection of the monument to Knight-King Alexander I the Unifier, which first gathered on October 29, 1934, under the chairmanship of Ivan Hribar, the elder statesman of Slovenian politics, faced various dilemmas from the very beginning. In addition to selecting a suitable location and the difficulty of raising funds, the question of the monument's form soon arose. It was generally agreed that it had to be sculptural and preferably equestrian, although opposing views were also expressed. The debate was often heated, and the daily press often got involved.⁵ In the first

410

2 See Peter Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države. Slovenska zgodovina od konca 18. do konca 20. stoletja* [From Pohlin's Grammar to the Independent State. Slovenian History from the End of the 18th to the End of the 20th Century] (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2010), 192–209.

3 About the monument to King Peter I, see Špelca Čopič, *Javni spomeniki v slovenskem kiparstvu prve polovice 20. stoletja* [Public Monuments in Slovenian Sculpture of the First Half of the 20th Century] (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2000), 131–133, 316–319; Renata Komić Marn, "Men on Horseback. Role and Reception of the Equestrian Monument in Slovenia," *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, no. 18/2 (2013): 76–81.

4 France Stele, "Spomenik kralja Aleksandra I. Zedinitelja v Ljubljani" [Monument to King Alexander I the Unifier in Ljubljana], *Kronika slovenskih mest*, no. 7/3 (1940): 129. Only the Ljubljana monument was eventually realised: the Maribor monument was the subject of a competition, but World War II prevented its erection, while the idea of building a hospital was soon abandoned. About the Maribor monument, see Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 147–148, 358–361; Komić Marn, "Men on Horseback," 87.

5 Stele, "Spomenik kralja," 133–135; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 372–373; Komić Marn, "Men on Horseback," 82–83.

year of its activities, the Monument Committee proposed Zvezda park (Star Park) next to Kongresni trg (Congress Square) as a suitable location. To this end, the architect Herman Hus prepared a redevelopment plan that would have radically changed the appearance of the popular park, but the Committee nevertheless left the matter open and decided it would be subject to a public competition.⁶ At the initiative of the Committee, the Architects' Club organised a consultation on the erection of the royal monument, which did not bear fruit. Therefore, the first public competition was launched between December 13, 1935, and February 23, 1936, though the monument's location had not yet been determined.⁷ As far as can be seen from the extant sources, the competition focused more on the monument's location than the monument itself. From several proposals, the Monument Committee finally selected Congress Square, with the precise location to be determined later.⁸

The further course of events was considerably altered by Hribar's unexpected move when, ignoring the competition, he invited Plečnik to design the royal monument. On September 6, 1937, Plečnik submitted his plans for the monument, named Alexander's Propylaea, to the Committee free of charge.⁹ The architect envisioned the monument on the northern edge of Congress Square. In his urban planning and architectural redesign of Ljubljana, Plečnik adhered to the idea of a land axis starting at his house in what was at the time still the suburb of Trnovo, crossing the river Gradaščica and continuing along Emonska cesta Street, past Križanke (the monastery of the Teutonic Order), along Vegova Street and, via Congress Square and Star Park, concluding at the newly planned square to the north of the park.¹⁰ By creating a new square, which Plečnik had already considered before Hribar's invitation, the architect would have solved the pressing problem of the city's untidy courtyards, which, in his opinion, were hidden behind the façades. Simultaneously, Ljubljana would have gained a new traffic-free zone where citizens could gather, while the buildings that would have enclosed it could have been used as city offices.¹¹ The invitation to design the monument to Alexander I was thus a welcome opportunity for Plečnik to intervene in the development of that part of the city.

The architect envisioned Alexander's Propylaea to the east of the Kazina building (unknown architect, 1836–1837) in what was then the Kazina garden, located directly on the axis of the Vegova Street, which would conclude, through Star Park, in the square behind the Propylaea. The Propylaea would be built in the form of a portico with double columns. Twelve columns and

6 Stele, "Spomenik kralja," 135; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 372–373.

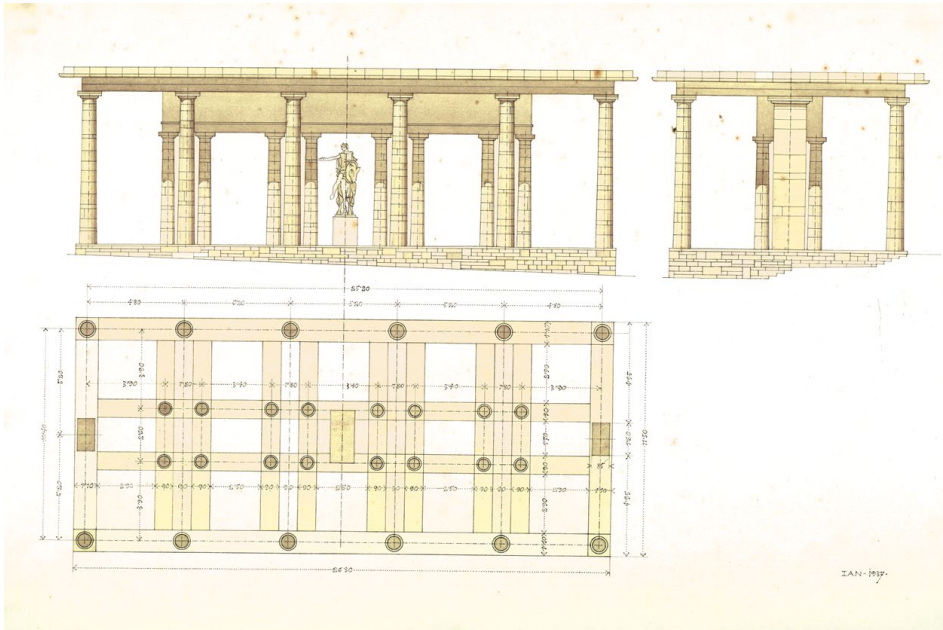
7 Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 374.

8 Stele, "Spomenik kralja," 135–137.

9 Ibid., 137; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 373. Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 238, states that Plečnik drew up the plans for Alexander's Propylaea between May 1936 and January 1937.

10 Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 205; see Breda Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj Ljubljane* [Urban Development of Ljubljana] (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, Partizanska knjiga, 1983), 13–14.

Fig. 1. Jože Plečnik, Design for the Alexander's Propylaea in Ljubljana, 1937, Plečnik Collection, Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana.



two piers – 7.5-metre-high, with a finely finished surface – would stand on the outside. The inside would consist of sixteen 5.5-metre-high columns, polished to the highest gloss (**fig. 1**). The outer columns would support a concrete, stone-clad architrave with a bronze inscription, while the inner columns would support a brick frieze set on the concrete architrave, bearing a fresco with the iconography of Yugoslav statehood, the work of the painter Slavko Pengov.¹² The interior ceiling would be coffered, with light fittings placed in individual coffers. According to the initial versions of the plan, Alexander's equestrian monument, the work of the sculptor Božo Pengov, would be located inside the propylaea.¹³ However, according to the version that Plečnik submitted to the Committee, it would stand in front of them. The bronze monument was to have colossal dimensions: five metres high, with the horse standing on its hind legs and the King holding a sword.¹⁴

On both sides of the propylaea, visitors could climb a flight of stairs to reach the newly created public space, which the architect called Južni trg (South Square) because of the access from the south.¹⁵ South Square would be a rectangular space measuring 45 x 107 metres, surrounded on the western, northern, and eastern sides by monumental buildings of a similar appearance, with ground floors opened by arcades. The western building would be constructed as an extension of the Kazina building, and its classicist façade would be retained. Meanwhile, the façade of the building constructed instead of the house at Congress Square 3 would share an almost identical look. On the northern side, the square would be connected via passageways to the nearby

11 Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 237–238; Prelovšek, *Josef Plečnik*, 285–286; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 376–377.

12 Anton Stupica, "Aleksandrove propileje v Ljubljani" [Alexander's Propylaea in Ljubljana], *Slovenec*, September 26, 1937, 7; Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 238, 469, n. 352; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 377–378.

13 Stupica, "Aleksandrove propileje," 7; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 137.

14 Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 378.

Fig. 2. Jože Plečnik, Layout of the South Square in Ljubljana, 1937, Plečnik Collection, Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana.

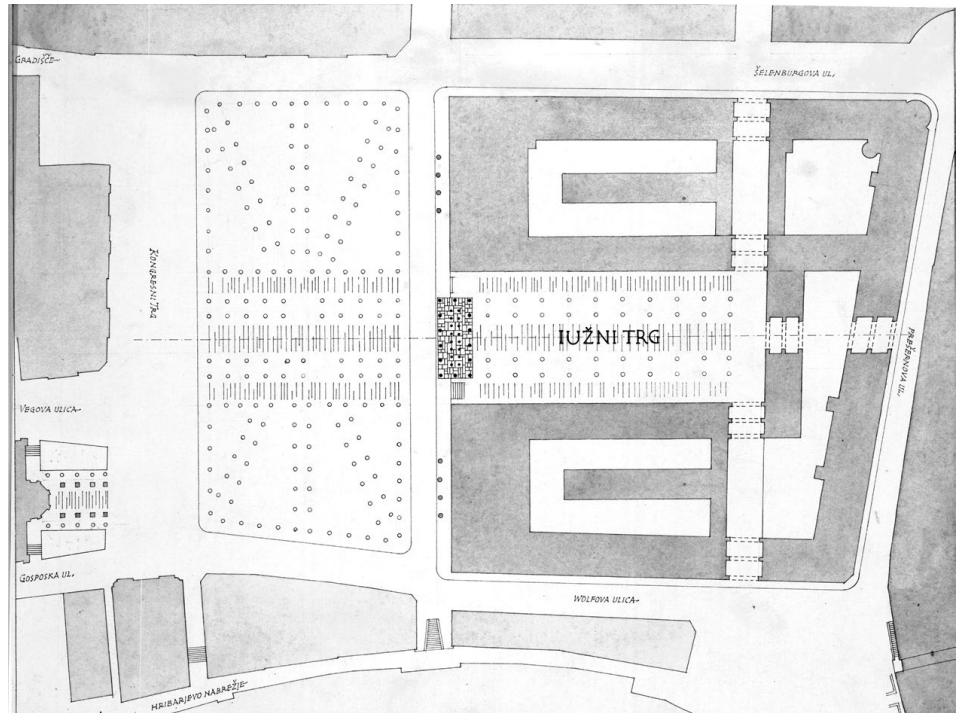
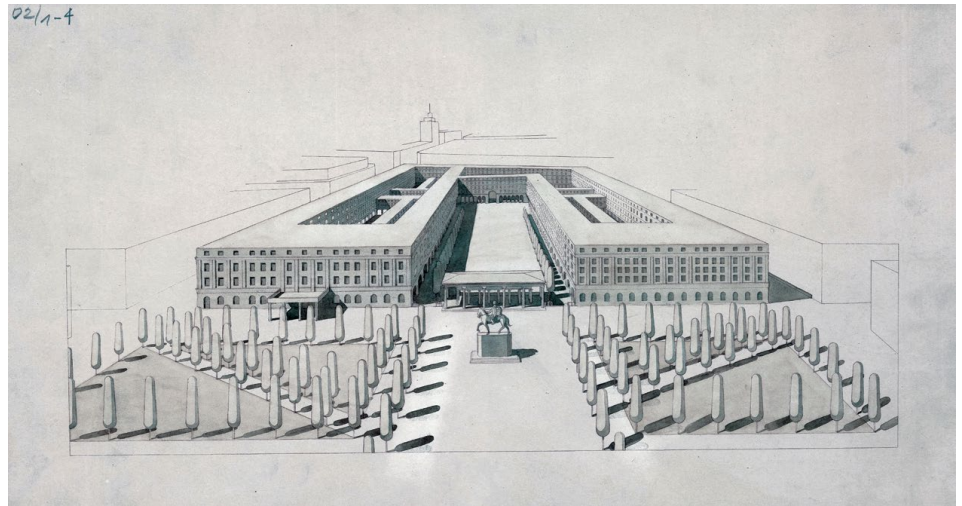


Fig. 3. Jože Plečnik, Design for the South Square in Ljubljana, 1937, Historical Archives of Ljubljana.



Prešernova Street (now Čopova Street), Mary's Square (now Prešeren Square), Šelenburgova Street (now Slovenska cesta Street) and the planned extension of Knafljeva Street (now Tomšičeva Street) (fig. 2, fig. 3).¹⁶ As mentioned above, the square itself would be closed to traffic and dedicated to the gathering of the citizens, further encouraged by commercial establishments and cafés under the arcades.¹⁷

¹⁵ The architect had already been thinking about the layout of South Square at the end of the 1920s, when he drew up the general urban plan; see Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 237; Damjan Prelovšek, "Plečnikova vizija slovenske prestolnice" [Plečnik's Vision of the Slovenian Capital], in *Da ne pride v pogin in pozabljenje. Plečnikova vizija Ljubljane – slovenskih Aten. Arhitektov dar knjižnici*, ed. Veselin Mišković (Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, 2007), 25.

¹⁶ Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 376–377.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 377. Plečnik's associate in designing Alexander's Propylaea and South Square was his graduate Marjan Tepina; see Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 237.

The shape of the square with buildings on three sides and arcades on the ground floor makes it somewhat reminiscent of the Uffizi complex in Florence (Giorgio Vasari, begun in 1560). Although extant sources do not contain any explicit references to Plečnik finding inspiration for his design there, it is known that he visited the Uffizi several times while he resided in Florence between December 1898 and January 1899 as part of his study tour of Italy and France.¹⁸ When redesigning Ljubljana, Plečnik would also often draw on the ideas and urban planning principles of Max Fabiani, an architect from the earlier generation who played an essential role in the restoration of Ljubljana after the 1895 earthquake. In this sense, the unrealised South Square can be seen as a dialogue with Fabiani's Slovenski trg (Slovenian Square, nowadays Miklošič Park), designed in 1899, which is also distinguished by its stylistically unified buildings.¹⁹

The project of South Square with Alexander's Propylaea was therefore distinctly multifaceted. Due to its predominantly architectural rather than sculptural design, the monument to the King represented a distinct innovation compared to the rest of Ljubljana's public monuments.²⁰ However, at the same time, it had the most pronounced Yugoslav (rather than Slovenian) connotation of all Plečnik's creations. The envisioned South Square would enrich Ljubljana with an effective architectural and urban planning solution, providing citizens with an important meeting place. New connections would be established between Congress Square and the adjacent streets and the Municipality would gain premises for its offices, while the project in its entirety would represent a meaningful enhancement and completion of the architect's land axis.

Plečnik's project provoked both positive and negative reactions. Its advocates, who stressed the originality of the plan and its contribution to the city's image, included mainly architects²¹ and art historians,²² but it also had

18 About Plečnik's study stay in Florence, see France Stele, *Arhitekt Jože Plečnik v Italiji 1898–1899* [Architect Jože Plečnik in Italy 1898–1899] (Ljubljana: Slovenska Matica, 1967), 44–89, 95–99.

19 Fabiani's idea for Slovenian Square was only partially realised. On Slovenian Square, see Marco Pozzetto, *Max Fabiani. Ein Architekt der Monarchie* [Max Fabiani. The Architect of the Monarchy] (Wien: Edition Tusch, 1983), 39; Marko Pozzetto, *Maks Fabiani. Vizije prostora* [Max Fabiani. Visions of Space] (Kranj: L. I. B. R. A., 1997), 123; Jelka Pirkovič and Breda Mihelič, *Secesijska arhitektura v Sloveniji* [Art Nouveau Architecture in Slovenia] (Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za kulturo, Uprava Republike Slovenije za kulturno dediščino, 1997), 47–48; Andrej Hrausky, Janez Koželj, and Miran Kambič, *Maks Fabiani. Dunaj, Ljubljana, Trst* [Max Fabiani. Vienna, Ljubljana, Trieste] (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2010), 108–111.

20 To a lesser extent, Plečnik realised the idea of an architectural monument in the so-called Zois Pyramid, which was erected in 1927 in the eponymous street in memory of the enlightened entrepreneur and patron of the arts Žiga Zois; see Prelovšek, *Josef Plečnik*, 281; Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 208–209.

21 Dušan Grabrijan, "Spomenik kralju Aleksandru v Ljubljani" [Monument to King Alexander I in Ljubljana], *Slovenec*, August 19, 1938, 3, reprinted in: Dušan Grabrijan, *Plečnik in njegova šola* [Plečnik and His School] (Maribor: Obzorja, 1968), 147–153; Marjan Tepina, "Ljubljana in kraljev spomenik" [Ljubljana and the King's Monument], *Slovenec*, October 13, 1938, 5; Božo Gvardjančič, "Vprašanje spomenika kralja Aleksandra" [The Question of the Monument to King Alexander], *Slovenec*, November 29, 1938, 3; Marjan Mušič, "Še h kraljevemu spomeniku v Ljubljani" [More on King's Monument in Ljubljana], *Slovenec*, November 13, 1938, 9.

22 Stele, "Spomenik kralja," 138; Stane Mikuž, "Po razstavi osnutkov za kraljevi spomenik" [After the Exhibition of the King's Monument Designs], *Slovenec*, February 12, 1939, 9.

23 Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 373.

supporters in the municipal leadership. Its critics, however, mainly subscribed to the idea that only a sculptural monument – especially an equestrian one – was suitable for the King, while many also found the South Square idea problematic from the financial point of view, despite the assurances of Mayor Juro Adlešič that the Square’s construction would be completed within three years.²³ The atmosphere was further inflamed by the opposition of the sculptors who, fearing for their own profits, sent two protest notes to the Committee for the erection of the monument on September 28 and October 25, 1937, which were also published in the newspapers.²⁴ Based on these objections, on October 1, 1937, the Committee rejected Plečnik’s plans for Alexander’s Propylaea by a roll-call vote, thus burying the South Square idea. After a series of complications and disputes between the City and the Monument Committee, in which even the Royal Ban’s Administration had to intervene by appointing a new Committee, a second public competition was held between October 16, 1938, and January 16, 1939. This time, first place was awarded to a project by the sculptor Tine Kos and the architect Miro Kos, but the Monument Committee eventually selected the project by Lojze Dolinar and Herman Hus, which had received second place.²⁵ The traditionally designed equestrian monument erected on the northern side of Star Park, the largest in Slovenian history,²⁶ was unveiled on 6 September 1940 in the presence of King Peter II and Prince Paul. It adorned Ljubljana for only ten months, as it was removed by the Italian occupiers on 25 July 1941.²⁷

THE FAR-REACHING NATURE OF THE SOUTH SQUARE IDEA

Despite the failure of Plečnik’s project, the idea of a square north of Star Park, surrounded by buildings on three sides, was much more far-reaching than it first appeared. The architect’s students expressed their regret about the outcome of the events in several newspaper articles and advocated for the realisation of the project,²⁸ while the idea of South Square – at least in the plans of the leading Slovenian architects – remained relevant for decades after the end of the First Yugoslavia.

In the years leading up to World War II, new tendencies emerged in Ljubljana’s urban planning. In 1940, the City of Ljubljana launched a competition for the city’s regulation plan.²⁹ Several younger architects with rather daring solutions

24 Ibid.

25 For more details about these events, see Stele, “Spomenik kralja,” 138–141; Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 373–374. For the presentation of the proposals, submitted for the competition, see Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 138–140.

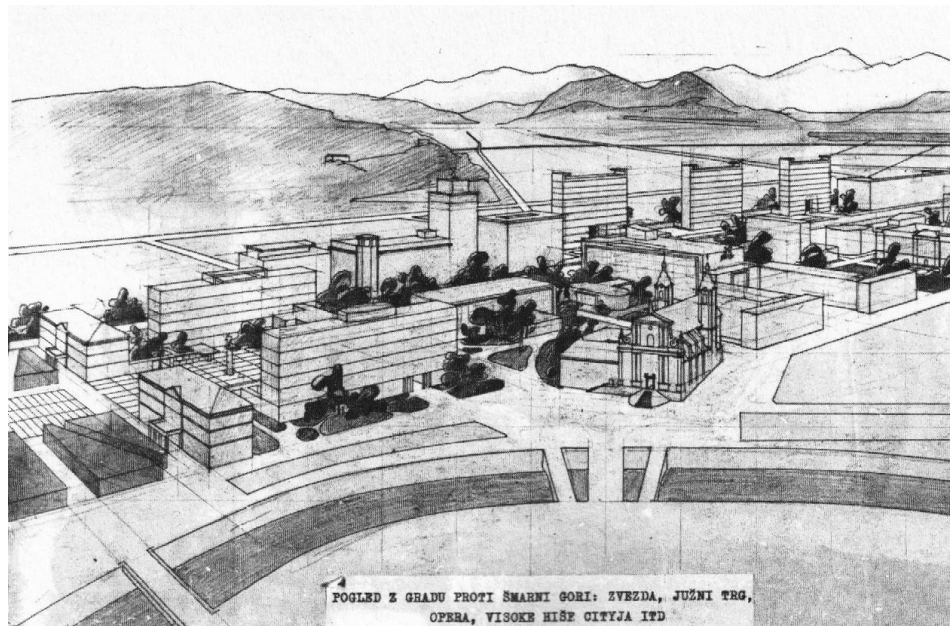
26 The monument was 10.8 metres high and stood on a four-metre-high pedestal. See Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 370; Komič Marn, “Men on Horseback,” 84.

27 Čopič, *Javni spomeniki*, 370; Komič Marn, “Men on Horseback,” 84, 86, n. 84.

28 See note 22 above.

29 About the competition, see Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj*, 18–21; Stabenow, *Jože Plečnik*, 90–93. The competition was based on the Yugoslav Building Act, adopted in 1931, which required that a regulatory plan should be drawn up for each city.

Fig. 4. Edvard Ravnikar, Design for the City Centre of Ljubljana, 1940, from Karl Friedrich Gollmann, *Edvard Ravnikar. Bauten und Projekte. Die Fortsetzung einer mitteleuropäischen Architekturtradition* (Wien, Graz: Neuer Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2005), 54.



also entered the competition, including Edvard Ravnikar (1907–1993), Plečnik’s student who had worked in Le Corbusier’s office for three and a half months in 1939.³⁰ Ravnikar, who became one of the leading Slovenian architects after the war, submitted an urban plan for the city centre, designed in accordance with the principles of the CIAM *Charter of Athens*. His plan would have radically changed the image of the city centre by removing most of the older structures and replacing them with functionalist buildings, without regard to the existing street network. In the broader area of Congress Square, the architect intended to preserve Star Park and the Kazina building, which, as Plečnik had already envisaged, would receive its counterpart with the same architectural design on the eastern side (on the site of the building at Congress Square 3). Between them, South Square would occupy the width of a section in Star Park but would not be “closed” by the propylaea. Like Plečnik’s square, Ravnikar’s square would have extended to today’s Čopova Street, where, according to the architect’s plans, most of the buildings were to be demolished. However, he conceived the enclosing of the square in a completely different way from his teacher, with the eastern and western sides almost entirely occupied by two longitudinally designed six-storey buildings (i. e. taller than the Kazina building), which would form a spatial accent and would be – in the spirit of Le Corbusier’s principles – placed on pilotis (**fig. 4**).³¹ Despite Ravnikar’s deliberate denial of the previous

30 About Edvard Ravnikar, see France Ivanšek and Marta Ivanšek, “Fragmenti za življenjepis Edvarda Ravnikarja / Fragments for Edvard Ravnikar’s Curriculum Vitae,” in *Hommage à Edvard Ravnikar 1907–1993*, ed. France Ivanšek (Ljubljana: self-published, 1995), 14–30. On the issue related to specifying when Ravnikar resided in Paris, see Bogo Zupančič, *Plečnikovi študenti in drugi jugoslovanski arhitekti v Le Corbusierjevem ateljeju* [Plečnik’s Students and Other Yugoslav Architects in Le Corbusier’s Atelier] (Ljubljana: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, KUD Polis, 2017), 44–45.

31 About the plan, see Karl Friedrich Gollmann, *Edvard Ravnikar. Bauten und Projekte. Die Fortsetzung einer mitteleuropäischen Architekturtradition* [Edvard Ravnikar. Buildings and Projects. The Continuation of the Central European Architectural Tradition] (Wien, Graz: Neuer Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2005), 54–55; Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj*, 19–20; see Zupančič, *Plečnikovi študenti*, 104.

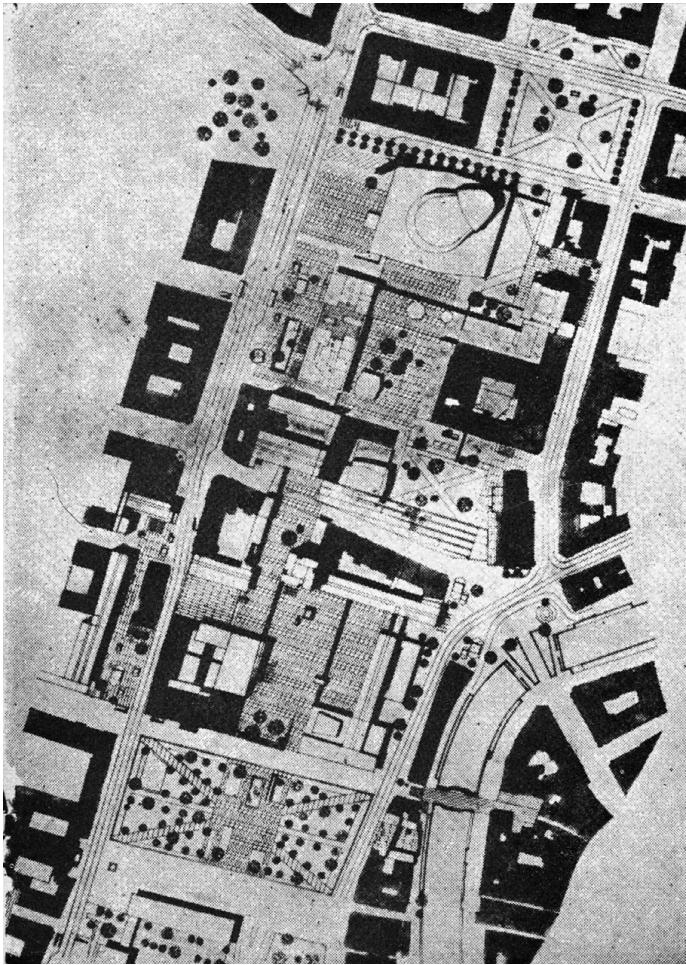


Fig. 5. Edvard Ravnikar, Regulation Plan for the Northern Part of the City Centre of Ljubljana, 1957, from Breda Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj Ljubljane* (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, Partizanska knjiga, 1983), 56.

urban design of Ljubljana, his thoroughly modernist plan nevertheless retained some of his teacher's elements, including South Square, which shows the far-reaching nature, sensibility, and quality of Plečnik's idea. The proposed plan was never adopted or implemented, but it did get Ravnikar a job at the city's building office.³²

Despite the failure of the idea of Alexander's Propylaea and the new, more functionalist views of the municipal leadership, Plečnik did not stop making plans for this part of the city. In 1939, i.e. even before the erection of Dolinar's monument, he planned a lower triumphal arch, enlarged with two side wings, on the site of Alexander's Propylaea, which shows that he had not yet given up on the idea of South Square.³³ During World War II, in 1944, he began to design the Odeon building, a "music house" with several concert halls. It would occupy the entire eastern side of Congress Square, extending to Dvorni trg (Court Square) and the river Ljubljanica. However, since it would cut off the connection between Wolfova Street, which was the main traffic route at the time, and Gosposka Street, Plečnik intended to extend the existing Vegova Street through Star Park to South Square, where it would break off at the north-east corner and conclude at today's Prešeren Square. To

417

this end, the architect sacrificed the envisioned eastern side of South Square, and while the space would retain its rectangular shape, it would nevertheless lose its completeness and, above all, become congested with traffic.³⁴

At the turn of the decade from the 1950s to the 1960s, the tendency towards a thorough "architectural modernisation" of a part of Ljubljana's city centre became more prominent than ever. In this regard, we should mention the 1957 public competition for the layout of the northern part of the city centre, in which Edvard Ravnikar also participated. His plan, which also remained unrealised, considered this area of the city as a sequence of squares (without additional streets) intended for pedestrians only, and in this sense yet again envisaged the creation of South Square as an extension of Congress Square (fig. 5).³⁵

32 Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj*, 20; Ivanšek and Ivanšek, "Fragmenti," 16; Gollmann, *Edvard Ravnikar*, 54.

33 The plan published in: France Stelè, Josip Plečnik, *Napori* [Efforts] (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1955), CXXXVI. Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 238, 360, states, without citing a source, that after the war, Plečnik wanted to offer the abovementioned triumphal arch as a monument to the heroic Ljubljana and that the post-war authorities supposedly envisioned it in Congress Square.

34 About Odeon, see Stelè and Plečnik, *Napori*, XXVI–XXIX; Krečič, *Jože Plečnik*, 342–343; Prelovšek, "Plečnikova vizija," 24–25. About Plečnik's interwar traffic regulation plans, see Stabenow, *Jože Plečnik*, 93–95.

35 Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj*, 43–44.

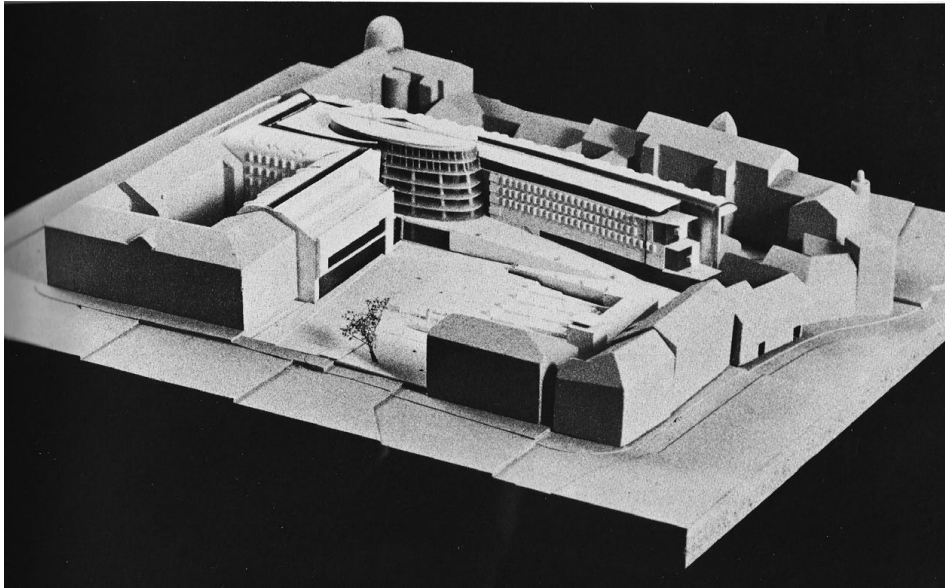


Fig. 6. Boris Podrecca, Model of the South Square with a Hotel, 1989, in: *Sinteza*, no. 87–90 (1991): 27.

418 Most recently, the development of South Square was considered in 1989, when what was then the Municipality of Ljubljana-Centre launched a competition for the development of South Square where a hotel of the highest category was foreseen. This was one of the last high-profile public competitions in Ljubljana during the Yugoslav era. The planning of the hotel and simultaneous development of South Square undoubtedly posed a particular challenge, as it was clear that the creation of the square according to Plečnik's ideas and on such a large scale would call for extensive demolition works and would therefore not be feasible.³⁶ The winner of the competition, the Vienna-based Slovenian architect Boris Podrecca, managed to combine the two requirements thoughtfully and innovatively (fig. 6), while some other contestants also contributed interesting solutions. However, as ambitious as they were, the plans once again remained unrealised.

The area that Plečnik envisaged for South Square remained undeveloped until 2017, when the *Monument to the Victims of All Wars*, designed by architect Rok Žnidaršič and his colleagues, was erected in its southern part, next to the Kazina building. From the artistic point of view, the monument is of inferior quality and consists of two vertical concrete slabs, different in shape but identical in height and volume, connected by a shared ground-bearing slab. Both the professional and general public opposed it already at the time of its construction. Above all, it represented a blow to Plečnik's urban planning idea, which could, at least in its basic points, still be realised in the future (e.g. in the sense of the 1989 competition), thus giving Ljubljana a new and exciting public space of superior architectural and urbanistic quality.³⁷

36 Gojko Zupan, "Štirje natečaji za Ljubljano" [Four Competitions for Ljubljana], *Sinteza*, no. 87–90 (1991): 25–35.

37 "Spomenik žrtvam vseh vojn" [Monument to the Victims of All Wars], *LC Team*, no. 9 (2017–2018): 50–53.

CONCLUSION

Jože Plečnik saw the invitation to design a monument to King Alexander I as an opportunity for the urban redevelopment of the area north of Congress Square, which would have provided the city with a new public space and made a considerable contribution to the quality of life in the city. Although individual interests and the opposition of a part of the public prevented its realisation, the South Square idea continued to appear in the plans for the city centre until the end of the 1980s. This alone demonstrates its exceptional rationality and timelessness, as the “metamorphoses” of Plečnik’s plan prove that South Square would have retained their architectural quality even if the ruler’s monument had been removed.

