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## ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN IN MARIBORSKO POHORJE: BETWEEN LEISURE PLANNING AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT DURING YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM (1948–1980)

**Keywords:** Slovenian  
postwar town planning,  
leisure time areas, winter  
tourism, Ljubo Humek,  
Branko Kocmut

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### Abstract

*After World War II, Maribor, Slovenia's second-largest city, was mainly set up as an industrial center. Besides the urban plan by Ljubo Humek and Jaroslav Černigoj (1949), social housing and the partial reconstruction of the Old Town, the local administration also paid attention to planning areas for leisure and tourism. This issue, however, has not been adequately studied until now. This paper is organised in three parts: the first part outlines the earliest ski infrastructures in Mariborsko Pohorje by studying the local press, and highlights the role of the architect Branko Kocmut in particular. The second part concentrates on the master plan for the Pohorje resort, developed by Ljubo Humek, together with the skier Franci Čop, which is available in Maribor Provincial Archive. The last section is focused on the subsequent efforts made by the State and the local communities to transform Maribor into a modern winter resort, particularly after Tito's visit in 1969.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The urban and architectural history of the ski resort Mariborsko Pohorje in Maribor from 1948 until the 1980s is one of the most interesting, albeit poorly investigated, cases of architecture for winter tourism in Slovenia, as well as all in socialist Yugoslavia generally. At the same time, it shows a high level of symbiosis between local architects – almost all of whom were exclusively educated in Ljubljana, and, in various ways, put into practice the lessons of their master, professor Edvard Ravnikar (1907–1993) – and the intervention of the State and local communities to promote the Pohorje mountains both as a leisure area for workers and as a winter resort for foreign tourists.<sup>1</sup> Although it has recently been argued that the planning of Slovenian tourist settlements

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<sup>1</sup> This research was made possible thanks to study activity carried out during trips to Ljubljana and Maribor, as part of the thesis project for a PhD in the program “Architecture. History and Project” at Turin Polytechnic University, which covered travel and research expenses. For the on-site research, special thanks go to Damjana Vovk and Eva Potisek from National and University Library in Ljubljana, who continued to provide me with necessary documents and texts remotely even after my visit; to Leopold Mikec Avberšek of Regional Archives in Maribor and to the staff of the University Library in Maribor. At different stages, I also had interviews on this topic with Aleš Vodopivec, professor at the Faculty of Architecture in Ljubljana, with architect Janez Lajovic, with Bogo Zupančič, architect and curator at the Museum of Architecture and Design in Ljubljana, and with Franci Lazarini, professor at the Faculty of Arts in Maribor.

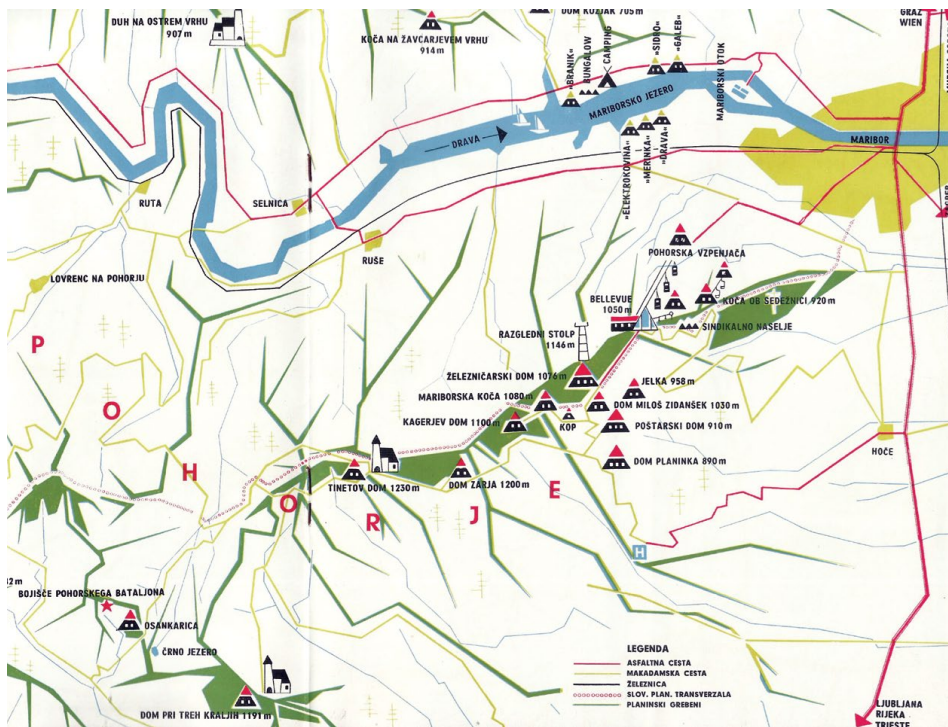


Fig. 1. Tourist map of the Mariborsko Pohorje showing lifts and huts, from a brochure published by Turistično društvo Maribor, 1963. Author's archive.

after World War II was not particularly affected by the influence of Socialism, it seems more appropriate to underline the adherence of actions in favour of tourism to the particular ideology of Yugoslav revisionist socialism, which was the ideological basis of the projects to transform Mariborsko Pohorje into a ski resort.<sup>2</sup>

Mariborsko Pohorje is the north-eastern offshoot of the Pohorje massif (fig. 1), whose highest peak is Žigartov vrh (1346 m), and extends east and north along the Dravska dolina and the Dravsko polje, ideally bordered by the ring road connecting the localities of Ruše-Limbuš-Betnava-Hoče and Arah.<sup>3</sup> As the definition attests, Mariborsko Pohorje is the part of the pre-Alpine massif stretching towards the city of Maribor, which in the history examined has had a very close relationship with the mountain. Furthermore, the geographical and tourist definition distinguishes it from Ribniško Pohorje and Lovrenško Pohorje.

The bourgeoisie of Maribor and, more generally, its residents began to show interest in the sport and recreational use of the prealpine plateau in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through the construction of several private chalets<sup>4</sup> and the

2 Živa Deu, "O urbanizmu in arhitekturi v času socialistične družbene ureditve" [Architecture and Urban Planning in Socialist Regime], *Arhitektov bilten*, no. 190/191 (2011): 52–56; Nebojša Antešević, "Arhitektura modernih turističkih objekata Jugoslavije (1930–1980)" [The Architecture of the Modern Tourist Infrastructures in Yugoslavia] (PhD diss., University of Beograd, 2021).

3 Jože Curk, *Mariborsko Pohorje* [Maribor's Pohorje] (Maribor: Obzorja, 1980), 3.

4 Jelka Pirkovič-Kocbek, *Izgradnja sodobnega Maribora: mariborska arhitektura in urbanizem med leti 1918 in 1976* [Building Contemporary Maribor: Architecture and Urbanism in Maribor between 1918 and 1976] (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1982), 50.

5 Marko Košir, *Zgodovina Pohorske vzpenjače* [The History of the Pohorje Cableway], in: Košir (ed.), *62. let Pohorske vzpenjače. Franci Čop in gondola* (Maribor: s. n., 2019).

first proposals for the construction of a rack railway or a cable car.<sup>5</sup> The most interesting developments, however, only occurred after World War II, due to the strong dynamism of the new Yugoslav State.

The city of Maribor, second in importance in Slovenia and the centre of the Styrian area of the northeast, is characterized by the landmarks of the Pohorje massif, the Drava, the Slovenske gorice and the Pannonian plain. It has been a key border town after the establishment of Austrian-Yugoslav border, with strong cultural ties both with Yugoslavia and Austria. The damage suffered during the war and the Allied bombing were heavy,<sup>6</sup> and after the Liberation, Maribor became a prominent industrial town.<sup>7</sup> In fact, consistent public efforts were directed at increasing its economic and productive potential: the hydroelectric plant of Mariborski otok was inaugurated in 1948, after which many industrial plants were developed, including the Tovarna avtomobilov Maribor – TAM (production of automobiles and trucks), Metalna (steel), Hidromontaža (engineering), Zlatorog (detergents and cosmetics), Swaty (artificial abrasives), Marles (wood), and Mariborska tekstilna tovarna (textiles).<sup>8</sup>

In this context, in 1946 – even before the Yugoslav law on town planning was approved – the People’s District Council (Okrajni ljudski odbor – OLO) of Maribor launched a consultation with the local Engineers’ Society, which culminated in the master plan being commissioned to Ljubo Humek and Jaroslav Černigoj. Humek (1913–1988) was a key figure who introduced the principles of Modern architecture and urbanism in Maribor, with a keen interest in Scandinavian trends.<sup>9</sup> Born in Krško, he graduated at the Prague Polytechnic in 1938, where he absorbed Czech functionalism, thus pursuing a different educational path compared to most local architects, who were mainly educated in Ljubljana with Jože Plečnik. His work in Maribor as an architect started as early as the second half of the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> His 1949 master plan tried to unify the uneven urban fabric by subdividing the town into the areas of Maribor-left bank, Maribor-Magdalena, the city centre, Maribor-Pobrežje and Tezno, Maribor-Studenci and Maribor-Razvanje. With his careful attention towards landscape issues, Humek planned to move the main railway station towards the right bank of the Drava, in Tabor, at the centre of the railway triangle and to shift the railway line towards Carinthia from Studenci and the areas along the Drava towards Pohorje, in order to beautify the areas along the river. He also projected green belts between the residential and industrial areas and traced a new main road connecting the two banks, joined by a new

6 Ivan Kocmut and Marko Šlajmer, “Ob dirigirane k organizirani stanovanjski gradnji” [Residential Housing from a Managerial Approach to an Organized One], *Arhitekt*, no. 14 (1954): 17.

7 Sergej Vrišer, *Maribor* (Motovun: Niro Motovun, 1984), 92.

8 Bruno Hartman, *Maribor. Mesto ob Dravi* [Maribor. Place on the Drava River] (Maribor: Obzorja, Ljubljana: Ljudska pravica, 1973), 8–10.

9 Borut Pečenko, “In Memoriam. Ljubo Humek”, *Večer*, March 10, 1988, 4.

10 Printworks “Mariborska tiskarna” (1935); mixed use urban building “Ve-Ma”, Jurčičeva ulica (1936–1938). “Plečnikova nagrada Ljubo Humek” [Plečnik Award to Ljubo Humek], *Arhitektov bilten*, no. 70/71 (1984): 7–8.

bridge and characterized by representative buildings, marked as an expression of Socialism. In addition, Humek left intact the layout of the historic centre, criticizing the options to massively demolish the heritage buildings, and also developed a circuit of parks and recreational areas in order to stimulate the contact of the inhabitants with nature.<sup>11</sup>

Such awareness of the need to integrate greenery in the new industrial city was one of the most modern points of his planning. The ideological aspect of Humek's design effort was already evident in a contribution written in 1945, on the steaming rubble of the town:

Mechanical means of transport are being perfected day by day. The development of industry goes hand in hand with the growth of traffic. This is the second fundamental factor that affects the formation of the city. It does not manifest itself only with a radically new motif in the urban image. It manifests itself (...) with a new social stratum. (...) Technological development has created a new material on the foundations of the city; this new material requires equipment that vivifies it; this new equipment requires – and will receive in the new Yugoslavia, I have no doubt – an adequate and harmonious artistic expression.<sup>12</sup>

## THE INTEREST OF SLOVENIAN ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS IN THE MOUNTAIN AND TOURIST DEVELOPMENT OF MARIBORSKO POHORJE

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Slovenian identity in the era of resistance was also expressed through the formulation of symbols linked to mountains, with specific reference to the Triglav, the summit of the Julian Alps: in the spring of 1942, it was adopted as a logo by Edvard Ravnikar, who, in the midst of the war, designed the layout for the bonds to finance the National Liberation Campaign on behalf of the Slovenian Communist Party.<sup>13</sup> The association of the summit of Mount Triglav with the Osvobodilne fronte already existed in the communications of partisan groups, but the association of Slovenian architects and planners with the mountain would prove profitable and lasting.

In 1948, Branko Kocmut, a pupil of Edvard Ravnikar who was to finish his studies in Ljubljana only in the following year, published the plan for the construction of the first ski resort in the Radvanje area in *Vestnik* (**fig. 2**).<sup>14</sup>

11 Ljubo Humek, "Urbanistična problematika in regulacijske osnove mesta Maribora" [Urban Planning Problems and the Principles of the Master Plan of the City of Maribor], *Nova obzorja*, no. 4 (1950): 281–290; Ljubo Humek, "Regulacijske zasnove Maribora" [The Maribor Master Plan], *Arhitekt*, no. 15 (1954): 6–8.

12 Ljubo Humek, "Še o regulaciji Maribora in o urbanizmi sploh" [Again on Maribor and Urbanism in General], *Vestnik*, November 24, 1945, 2. All translations are by the author.

13 Vlasto Kopač, "Edo Ravnikar, risar in grafik v vojni in obnovi" [Edo Ravnikar, Draftsman and Graphic Artist during World War II and in the Times of the Rebuilding], in *Hommage à Edvard Ravnikar: 1907–1993*, eds. Friedrich Achleitner and France Ivanšek (Ljubljana: France and Marta Ivanšek, 1995), 212–213.

14 Branko Kocmut and Franci Čop, "Projekt smučarskega turističnega centra in smučarske proge Bolfenk-Radvanje" [Project for a Ski Resort with One Slope in Bolfenk-Radvanje], *Vestnik*, November 26, 1948, 4.



the masses of workers in the popularization of skiing and winter sports, as well as for them to avoid the effort of reaching Bolfenk by feet on weekend holidays. The project also included the construction of premises for a stable ski school, a new shelter, a ski jump and competition slopes.<sup>16</sup>

Kocmut's proposal was partially accomplished with the construction of the Habakuk chairlift, inaugurated on February 11, 1951. The plant was designed by engineer Boris Pipan, but technical and sporting advice was again offered by Franci Čop and Marjan Kožuh, another promoter of sport in Maribor. It is interesting to note the "socialist" characterization of the construction of the plant, carried out with the provision of voluntary work by enthusiasts and with local recycled materials: "The whole structure was built exclusively with local materials. Among all the volunteers, the most deserving were our best skiers: Sevcnikar I and II, Cizelj, Šober and Sinkovičeva, who worked over 1000 hours."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in the statement released in *Vestnik*, Lojze Fajdiga, president of the sports society "Polet", characterized the plant as "open to all FLRJ workers." It was considered to be "the expression of the brotherhood and unity of our nations and a decisive response to all the detractors of our country."<sup>18</sup>

In an article published in 1953 *Arhitekt* (the magazine symbolizing the aspirations of the new circle of architects designers and planners that was emerging around the master and his closest collaborators, France Ivanšek and Danilo Fürst), Edvard Ravnikar, took the opportunity to comment on a new project for Pohorje, this time of greater scope, developed in the same draft by Branko Kocmut.<sup>19</sup> Ravnikar's proposals for Pohorje followed the same far-sighted approach adopted in his projects for new settlements for Slovenia conceived in the early 1950s, such as the one for the inhabited area of the Kidričevo industrial site, in collaboration with Stanko Kristl (1950), or the master plan of the city of Kranj, of the same year: a tree model, later characteristic of Slovenian town planning until the 1960s and freely drawn from Clarence Perry's theories and Scandinavian geometric schemes.<sup>20</sup> Ravnikar's urban planning proposals aimed at an organic settlement structure, with less waste of land and less pressure on vehicular traffic, obtaining a synergy between inhabited centres and communication lines, like the new neighbourhoods

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16 Kocmut and Čop, "Projekt smučarskega turističnega centra," 4.

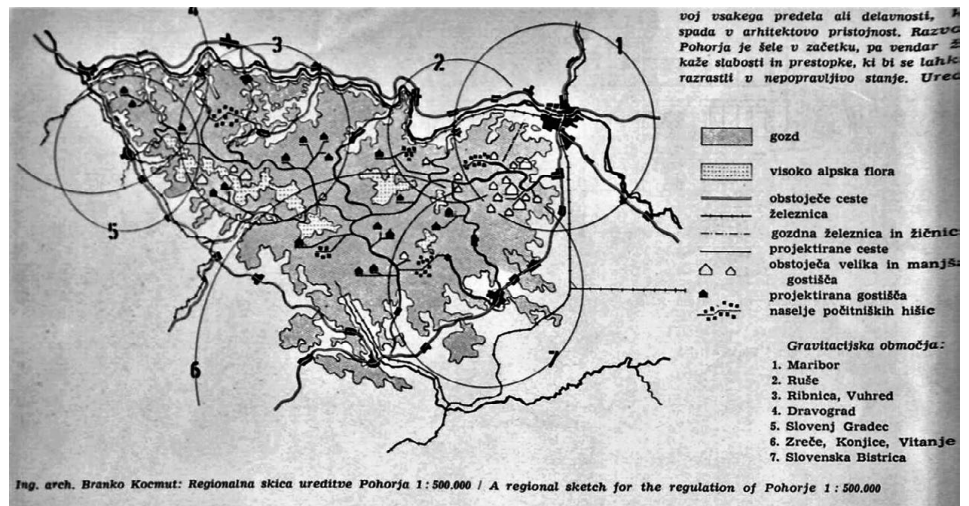
17 "Včeraj je na Pohorju stekla žičnica" [Yesterday a New Lift Ran in Pohorje], *Vestnik*, February 12, 1951, 2.

18 Ibid.

19 Edvard Ravnikar, "Pohorje, pomembno turistično področje" [Pohorje, a Vital Tourist Resort], *Arhitekt*, no. 8 (1953): 18–21.

20 Marjan Bohinec, "Problemi povojne urbanistične izgradnje v Sloveniji" [Some Issues in Postwar Town Planning in Slovenia], *Arhitekt*, no. 1 (1951): 2–5. See also: Raimondo Mercadante, "The Search for the Nordic Roots of Modernity in Slovenian Architecture of the 1950s. Edvard Ravnikar, France Ivanšek and the History of the Journal 'Arhitekt' (1951–1963)," *EDA. Esempi di architettura*, no. 1 (2023): 1–24. Clarence Perry (1872–1944) was an American sociologist and urban planner who developed the concept of the neighbourhood unit, one of the key models of Modernist architecture. Its core idea was an area requiring an elementary school with 1,000–1,200 students, which hosted a population between 5,000 and 6,000 people and offered the advantage of bringing within walking distance all the facilities needed by the families and the school. See: Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 499–503.

Fig. 3. Branko Kocmut, a regional sketch for the regulation of Pohorje, in: *Arhitekt*, no. 8 (1953).



he had proposed along the railway lines.<sup>21</sup> Ravnikar highlighted the need for careful state-oriented planning in order to remove spontaneous and chaotic interventions, potentially dangerous for the image of the Slovenian territory, which he considered to have strong potential for tourism. From this point of view, he deemed as a negative example the bad management of the Gorenjska region, whose development was already taking place in an uncoordinated way and without any precise planning criteria, in spite of the great development opportunities offered by the ski resorts Krvavec and Vogel. Mariborsko Pohorje undoubtedly had advantages from the point of view of ease of access, being close to a large city and serviced by good connections, but Ravnikar did not fail to observe how even in this context heterogeneous individual villas and chalets built in the 1930s still prevailed, without any rational approach towards the mountain area.

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For this reason, Ravnikar supported the landscape plan by Branko Kocmut (fig. 3). The project allowed access to the mountain massif through six access points orthogonal to the transversal route, aligned on the way from Hočka cesta to Dravograd. In this way, Kocmut's plan would have integrated Pohorje with the entire regional hinterland of Maribor – Ruše, Ribnica, Dravograd, Zreče and Slovenska Bistrica – making it possible to enhance even lesser-known locations.<sup>22</sup>

In another section of the same article, the architect-engineer Dušan Černič presented a selection of accommodation facilities, mountain huts and private houses built not only on the Maribor side but also on Ribniško Pohorje. Already in the period of monarchical Yugoslavia, architectural interventions of considerable interest had occurred, such as the Engineers' Hut (Herbert Drogenik, 1939 and the Kovačecova vila (Saša Dev, 1936). Several structures were lost in the fires during the Liberation War, including the Senjorjev dom

21 Urša Marn, "Aleš Vodopivec: arhitekt" [Interview with Aleš Vodopivec], *Mladina*, July 1, 2018, 130.

22 Ravnikar, "Pohorje, pomembno turistično področje," 18; Pirkovič-Kocbek, *Izgradnja sodobnega Maribora*, 50.

refuge, while others had been reconfigured from private homes to shelters for the use of the Alpine Club (Planinsko društvo), such as the Engineers' Hut and Ribniška koča, built at an altitude of 1,530 m in the area of Ribniško Pohorje, as the villa of the textile industry magnate, Josip Hutter. It was renovated starting in 1947 with the firm commitment of volunteers from the association, who put their skills to good use under the guidance of the architect Herbert Drogenik: more than 30,000 working hours were needed for the members of the Alpine Club, as well as for specialized craftsmen. The inauguration was held on Republic Day, November 29, 1949, in the presence of Marijan Breclj, an important Slovenian politician and then vice president of the LRS (Ljudska Republika Slovenija, People's Republic of Slovenia) government.<sup>23</sup>

The real turning point in the history of Mariborsko Pohorje, however, came from the construction of the Radavnje-Bolfenk cable car, the first lift of this capacity in Yugoslavia – the cable car of the Medvednica massif near Zagreb and the first cable car in Kopaonik were not built until 1963.<sup>24</sup> In January 1957, the newspaper *Večer* reported on the state of funding provided by state and territorial bodies. The construction of the entire structure cost 149 million dinars. Of this sum, the companies of the district of Maribor paid about 50 million, while the cable car received 27 million from the investment fund of the Maribor OLO (Okrajni ljudski odbor, People's District Council). On the basis of the 14<sup>th</sup> competition, the cable car received another fund of 55 million from the Zvezna investicijska banka (Federal Investment Bank), guaranteed by OLO Maribor.<sup>25</sup> 19 million dinars were still missing from the project, but they were acquired quickly, since the cable car completed its first test ride already on September 5<sup>th</sup> – amid the fears of the participants, who were still not used to this type of transport<sup>26</sup> – and started operating in the autumn. It was officially inaugurated on November 24, 1957, again in the presence of Marijan Breclj, at the time Secretary of State for Commercial Mobility, and Ljubo Babić, Secretary General of the Yugoslav Tourist League, as well as more than 150 guests from all over Yugoslavia.<sup>27</sup>

Although the motors and steel ropes came from Austria, much of the structure was built by the industries of Maribor: the structures of the stations

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23 [Uti], "Ribniška koča, sijajen uspeh dela mariborskih planincev" [Ribniška Koča, an Astonishing Success for Maribor Alpinists], *Vestnik*, December 14, 1949, 4.

24 Mirjana Popović, "Zelene površine u Zagrebu" [Green Areas in Zagreb], *Arhitektura*, no. 107/108 (1970): 27–29; "Početci skijanja na Kopaoniku" [The Beginnings of Skiing in Kopaonik], accessed January 25, 2021, <https://www.skijanje.rs/istorija/istorija-skijanja-u-srbiji/pocetci-skijanja-na-kopaoniku/>.

25 "Letos pa zares! Kakor vse kaže, bo Pohorska vzpenjača letos stekla – dolžina vzpenjače 2450 metrov – s kabinami 60 metrov nad zemljo – zmogljivost 400 oseb" [This Year, Really! Everything Shows that Pohorje Cableway Will Run This Year – The Length of the Lift Will Be 2450 m – The Cabins Will Be 60 m above the Ground – People Transported per Hour: 400], *Večer*, January 26 (1957), 2.

26 "Z vpenjačo na Pohorje" [In the Pohorje Cableway], *Večer*, September 6, 1957, 2.

27 "Jutri ob desetih dopoldne, Slavostna otvoritev Pohorske vzpenjače. Nad 150 povabljenih gostov. Avtobus bo jutri dalje redno vozil do spodnje postaje vzpenjač" [Tomorrow Morning at Ten. Solemn Inauguration of the Pohorje Cable Car. Over 150 Invited Guests. Beginning Tomorrow, a Bus Will Run Regularly to the Bottom Station], *Večer*, November 23, 1957, 2.



**Fig. 4.** Picture taken at the sixth meeting of the Turistična zveza Slovenije (the Slovenian Tourist Board), in: *Turistični Vestnik*, no. 4 (1960). Author's archive.



were built by the firm Metalna and the aluminium cabins were from Impol of Slovenska Bistrica.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the work represented an affirmation of the production capacity of the city and of the republic within Yugoslavia. Beyond the technical aspects of undoubted interest, the cable car was a key element in an effective campaign of tourism promotion in Slovenia, implemented with a precise political strategy, as testified by the Turistična zveza Slovenije (the Slovenian Tourist League) (**fig. 4**) and by specific publications, such as the *Turistični vestnik* (Tourist Journal).

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Marjan Breclj had an important role in the plan, and in his writings he accounted for the wider political and diplomatic framework, typical of the Yugoslav non-aligned orientation, within which tourism promotion was inserted: participation in the International Tourism Union, an organization of United Nations and Alpska komisija (the Alpine Commission), and agreements with European countries such as Italy, Austria, Greece, as well as the diplomatic activities of Yugoslavia in relation to the United States and states in Africa and Asia.<sup>29</sup> At the Slovenian level, around 1960 an important role was also played by Danilo Dougan, president of the Slovenian Tourist League but also of the Smučarska zveza (the Ski Consortium). Skiing was central to tourist exploitation projects in Slovenia: in Krvavec the first cable car went into service as early as 1958,<sup>30</sup> while other ski lifts were planned in Velika planina, near Kamnik, where the architect Vlasto Kopač had designed an original village of houses for weekends echoing the architecture of the mountain pastures.<sup>31</sup> Dougan, on

28 Košir, *Zgodovina Pohorske vzpenjače*, 8.

29 Marjan Breclj, "Jugoslavija v mednarodnem turizmu" [Yugoslavia through International Tourism], *Turistični vestnik*, no. 1 (1960): 1–2.

30 "Vzpenjača na Krvavec" [Cableway in Krvavec], *Večer*, December 31, 1958, 9.

31 Fran Vatovec, "Že poje svoj spev Velika Planina – naše največje gorsko rekreacijsko jedro" [Velika Planina Already Sings its Poem – Our Best Mountain Resort], *Turistični vestnik*, no. 1 (1960): 5–10.

the other hand, expressed the idea that investments were also needed in roads and infrastructures if the tourist economy was to be improved.<sup>32</sup> This idea was widely shared by Slovenian planners in Ljubljana and Maribor. In 1960, Boris Gaberščik, an urban planner with the Urbanistični inštitut LRS (the Town Planning Institute of the People's Republic of Slovenia) considered the Pohorje cable car as an example of an extended concept of mobility, which included not only the main roads but also infrastructures plugged into the landscape to promote tourism development.<sup>33</sup>

In his role as head of the Komuna projekt studio, Ljubo Humek worked together with Franci Čop to create a plan for the urban regulation of Mariborsko Pohorje, which was officially presented in January 1961.<sup>34</sup> The director of the Maribor Museum, Sergej Vrišer, had collaborated in the historical part of the plan, while Stanko Pahič contributed archaeological studies; Borut Belec focused on geographical issues; Marjan Kožuh addresses touristic matters; and the engineer Bogomir Ranc was the collaborator for infrastructure.

The clarity of Humek's study was based on the development of the ideas already announced by Ravnikar and Branko Kocmut about the importance of viability and the development of a relationship between the mountain massif and the surrounding region. Humek also went so far as to foresee the tourist development of the Areh sector, at a higher altitude (1250 m) and with better snow cover, as well as of other areas fitted for a different kind of tourism, such as Sedovec, which was suitable for those in search of alpine tranquillity. For tourist accommodations, Humek did not particularly focus on hotels, but rather on colonies for workers, camping and a greater availability of small accommodation facilities along the Hoče-Ruše road. In this way, he intended to safeguard the landscape from speculation – his condemnation of both pre-war bourgeois building interventions and more recent abuses was exemplary in this sense<sup>35</sup> – but at the same time he wanted to maintain the social destination of Pohorje as a recreational place for workers: “In this area a compromise should be made between forest use, so far the only known economic branch, and a new economic management of this site, i.e. an economy and trade based on air, sun and mountains as sources of health and rest and their indirect effects: the ‘RECREATION OF WORKERS.’”<sup>36</sup>

The only hotel foreseen in the Humek plan – which was to receive the prize of the “Prešeren Foundation” together with Franci Čop in 1962<sup>37</sup> – was in the

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32 Danilo Dougan, “Razvijanje turističnega gospodarstva v Sloveniji” [The Development of the Tourist Economy in Slovenia], *Turistični vestnik*, no. 4 (1960): 109–110.

33 Boris Gaberščik, “K urbanizaciji prostora glavnih cest Slovenije” [Towards the Planning of Slovenian Main Roads], *Arhitekt*, no. 4 (1960): 59–63.

34 Ljubo Humek, Hočko Pohorje, Okrajni ljudski odbor Maribor, urbanistična ureditev mariborskega Pohorja [Hočko Pohorje, District Popular Council of Maribor, Urban Planning of the Mariborsko Pohorje] January 1961, Fond Ljubo Humek, SI\_PAM/0074/033/00017, box OK/224, Pokrajinski arhiv Maribor (PAM).

35 Ibid., 64.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 17.

Fig. 5. Leaflet printed in 1970 showing the easy access from the Hotel Bellevue to the ski lifts. Author's archive.

**HOTEL BELLEVUE**  
MARIBORSKO POHORJE  
1050 m  
**MARIBOR**  
TEL. 318-05  
SLOVENIJA  
JUGOSLAVIJA

**ŠPORTNE NAPRAVE NA MARIBORSKEM POHORJU**  
**WINTERSPORTANLAGEN AM MARIBORSKO POHORJE**  
**INSTALLATIONS DE SPORT D'HIVER SUR LA MONTAGNE DE POHORJE**  
**INSTALLAZIONI SPORTIVE INVERNALI SULLE MONTAGNE DEL POHORJE**

Pohorska vzpenjača  
Pohorje Gondelbahn  
Télépherique  
Funivia

Sedežnica • Habakuk •  
Sessellift • Habakuk •  
Télésiège • Habakuk •  
Seggiovia • Habakuk •

1  
Vlečnica • Bellevue •  
Schlepplift • Bellevue •  
Monte-pente • Bellevue •  
Sciovia • Bellevue •

2  
Vlečnica • Bolfenk •  
Schlepplift • Bolfenk •  
Monte-pente • Bolfenk •  
Sciovia • Bolfenk •

Turistična smučarska proga  
Touristische (Familien)  
Abfahrten  
Pistes touristiques  
Pista turistica

Tekmovalna proga  
Alfahrtspiste  
Piste de descente  
Pista di discesa

Sankaška proga  
Rodelbahn  
Piste de luge  
Slittovia

Slalomišče  
Slalomhang  
Piste de slalom  
Pista per slalom

Cesta  
Strasse  
Route  
Strada

Parkirni prostor  
Parkplatz  
Parking  
Parceggio

area near the top station of the cable car, and provisionally called “Bolfenk”. It later became the Bellevue Hotel, one of the masterpieces of Slovenian architecture of the 1960s, designed by the great architect Ivan Kocmut. Inaugurated on December 28, 1960, it was defined by the press as “the most contemporary hotel in Slovenia.”<sup>38</sup> The modern design of the project showed a close integration between the accommodation facility and the cable car station (fig. 5), conceived as a unit from the beginning, as can be seen from the project and the maquette.<sup>39</sup> Born as a simple restaurant, its accommodation capacity was originally limited to ten rooms with 24 beds, but it was immediately necessary to build an annex to meet the needs of tourists not only from northeastern Slovenia but also from neighbouring Austria. The company “Majolika”, which managed the structure, received credit from the Economic Bank of the Republic for the granting of federal funds for an investment of 175 million dinars.<sup>40</sup> The annex, designed by Ivan Kocmut and Vlado Emeršič,

38 “Včeraj so na Pohorju odprli najsodobnejši hotel v Sloveniji” [Yesterday the Most Contemporary Hotel in Slovenia Opened in Pohorje], *Večer*, December 29, 1960, 1.

39 The model was published in *Večer*, September 6, 1957, 2.

40 “Kredit za depandanso Bellevue. Z gradnjo bodo začeli že ta mesec – Depandansa bo imela 90 ležišč in 80 restavracijskih sedežev – Investicija velja 175 milijonov dinarjev” [Credits for the Construction of the Bellevue Annex. Work Will Begin This Month – The Annex Will Have 90 Beds and 80 Restaurant Seats – The Investment is Worth 175 million Dinars], *Večer*, November 6, 1963, 4.

**Fig. 6.** Jože Brumen and Lidija Osterc, *The Legend of the Drava*, mural painting in the dining room of the hotel Bellevue, 1960, Mariborsko Pohorje. Photograph by Raimondo Mercadante, 2020.



displayed 90 beds and space 80 more guests in the restaurant. The furnishings were by Mirko Zdovc, a designer who participated in several important works of modern architecture in Maribor, such as the Higher School of Economics and Commerce (Branko Kocmut, 1962). Inside, there was a chandelier by the sculptor Slavko Tihec, author of notable monuments such as that for the Pohorje Battalion fighters (with Branko Kocmut, 1959) near Oplotnica, and a mural painting by Jože Brumen and Lidija Osterc, *The Legend of Drava*, still visible today although severely damaged (**fig. 6**). In the Bellevue hotel, Ivan Kocmut articulated a precise vision of contemporary architecture for the mountains, which also took inspiration from the Scandinavian architects whose works were popularized in Maribor by Humek (in 1952, as a collaborator of *Arhitekt*, Humek had travelled to Switzerland, Sweden and Finland, where he even met Alvar Aalto).<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, Ivan Kocmut maintained his interest in infrastructures for winter sports, and proposed an imposing cable car for Triglav, where he planned another ski resort.<sup>42</sup>

In 1969, the Bellevue Hotel was also the destination for President Josip Broz Tito's visit to Maribor. The Marshal arrived in the city after a tour with a stop in Velenje and at the new power plant in Zlatoličje. He visited the industrial complexes and the city authorities in Maribor but also had time for a grouse hunt in the woods, and stayed in the hotel at the top of the cable car, where he offered words of appreciation for both the ski lift and the hotel.<sup>43</sup> He also met

41 Ljubo Humek, "Po Švici, Švedski in Finski" [Architecture in Switzerland, Sweden and Finland], *Arhitekt*, no. 6, (1952): 36–38.

42 Sergej Vrišer, "50 let Ivana Kocmuta" [The 50 Years of Ivan Kocmut], *Večer*, April 2, 1976, 6.

43 Gabrijel Jesenšek, "Tito pripoveduje o lovu na petelina. Danes dopoldne ob desetih se je začela v Zlatoličju svečanost, ko je predsednik Tito izročil v obratovanje največjo slovensko hidroelektrano Zlatoličje – Kako je predsednik preživel včerajšnji dan na Pohorju" [Tito Tells of Grouse Hunting. This Morning at Ten a Ceremony Begins in Zlatoličje during which President Tito Will Put the Largest Hydroelectric Plant in Slovenia into Action. The Experience of the President, Yesterday in Pohorje], *Večer*, April 26, 1969, 1.

Franci Čop.<sup>44</sup> This official visit served to anoint Mariborsko Pohorje as a top mountain resort, known throughout Yugoslavia.

## THE 1970s: MASS SKIING AND THE OPENING OF NEW SLOPES AND ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

The 1970s witnessed the evolution of Slovenian skiing as a tourist attraction, specifically on Mariborsko Pohorje. Increasing enthusiasm for winter sports, which was strengthened by the establishment of the international slalom race Zlata lisica in 1964, as well as by the increased spending capacity of the Yugoslav population and the influx of tourists from abroad, entailed new challenges. Foreign guests mainly came from West Germany; this put local tour operators at the forefront of the effort to keep the resort attractive for a more demanding public, which also required offers for *après-ski*, attention to half-board packages at the buffet, and a richer breakfast.<sup>45</sup> They responded with packages that included accommodation, board and a ski pass, but tourism trends increasingly emphasized fun and socialization besides skiing.<sup>46</sup> For example, the dilemmas of snowless winters and of crowds on the slopes first arose in 1975;<sup>47</sup> to solve this last obstacle, new slopes were built in the Areh sector that year. This project was administered by Certus TOZD, the Maribor public transport company which had taken over administration of the cable car since 1973, as well as running the ski lifts and the main hotels in Maribor such as the Slavija, the Orel and the Zamorc. In the 1975–1976 season, the Ruška ski lift was opened and the Cojzarica was planned, which would have relieved the pressure on the Bolfenk sector.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the stylization of hotel facilities became more and more a key point of concern for the architects. Ivan Kocmut, Branko Završnik (architect of the Turist and of the Orel hotels in Maribor) and the designer Mirko Zdovc took part to a round table on the subject for *Večer*. For Ivan Kocmut, it was essential to achieve harmony between natural beauty, definitive architecture and urban layouts, but also to create an environment with attention to the smallest details, such as the graphics of the menu, in order to capture the attention of tourists and leave them with good memories.<sup>49</sup>

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44 “Franci Čop pripoveduje kako se je peljal s Titom s vzpenjačo. K divjemu petelinu še zlata lisica” [Franci Čop Tells How He Went with Tito on the Cable Car. Another Golden Fox for the Capercaillie], *Večer*, April 28, 1969, 4.

45 “Ustna propaganda odloča. Kakšna bo turistična sezona 1977? Neustrezni polpenzioni in nekakovostne storitve” [Word of Mouth was Decisive. What Will the 1977 Tourist Season Be Like? Inadequate Half Board and Poor-Quality Services], *Večer*, December 31, 1976, 10.

46 Manfred Meršnik, “Pred zima. Komentar” [Before Winter. Some Considerations], *Večer*, November 14, 1975, 11.

47 “Zimske skrbi. Pomanikanje snega povzroča potovalnim agencijam hude skrbi” [Winter Anxieties. The Absence of Snow Causes Serious Concerns to Travel Agencies], *Večer*, January 24, 1975, 11.

48 “Na Arehu novi žičnici” [New Lifts at Areh], *Večer*, December 12, 1975, 3.

49 Manfred Meršnik, “Arhitektura in turistična politika” [Architecture and Tourist Politics], *Večer*, May 7, 1970, 9.



Fig. 7. Postcard (1987) showing the new developments of winter tourism in Mariborsko Pohorje in the 1970s: the new cable-car, Hotel Habakuk, Hotel Areh. Author's archive.

Two important achievements may be referred to in relation to this approach (fig. 7): the Sport Hotel Areh and the Habakuk Hotel. The Sport Hotel Areh completed the development of tourism in Areh and was a good example of the aesthetic and functional research of the 1970s: it was designed by a student of Ravnikar, Tomaž Medvešček, later a brilliant exponent of postmodern architecture. Built by the Gradis firm,<sup>50</sup> the building was raised on pillars, and included a basement with a shop, equipment rental services, a cloakroom and a garage for sleds, which opened directly onto the slopes. The original shape of the roof was obtained in wooden ribs and pursued the disposition toward organic architecture of that era (see, for instance, Janez Bizjak, Marko Cotič and Dušan Engelsberger, "Joža Ažman" Cultural Center, Bohinjska Bistrica, 1978–1979). The work also enjoyed influence outside Slovenia.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, today it is in a state of neglect. The Habakuk Hotel, inaugurated on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1974, was designed by Ivan and Magda Kocmut and was supposed to offer a luxury hotel experience. Originally equipped with 75 beds for 40 rooms, it boasted a sauna and a bowling facility; the interiors were the work of designer Tone Šegula.<sup>52</sup> From an architectural point of view, it was the Styrian declination of the brilliant regionalism expressed by architects such as Janez Lajovic in Kranjska gora and Bovec. While Hotel Prisank in Kranjska gora harmonized, albeit on a different scale, with the Gorenjska huts, and Hotel Kanin in Bovec took up the motif of the alpine landscape in an architectural structure, the

50 "Kaj in kako gradimo?" [What and How Do We Build?], *Stavbar, glasilo delovneve kolektiva Gp Stavbar*, no. 2 (1975): 8.

51 Ivica Mladenović, *11 istaknutih arhitekata Jugoslavije 4* [11 Prominent Yugoslav Architects] (Beograd: Studio linija A), 1989, 33–36.

52 "Habakuk je odprla vrata" [Habakuk is Now Open], *Večer*, December 6, 1974, 8.

Habakuk recalled the sloping roofs of Old Maribor. Unfortunately, the hotel was completely altered between 1993 and 1995.<sup>53</sup>

The final act of the renovation work undertaken for the Pohorje massif was the replacement of the cable car cabins, in 1978. In this instance, too, the date chosen for the reopening was the day of the Republic, November 28<sup>th</sup> and occurred in the presence of important guests and institutions, such as the vice president of the executive council of the Republic.<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Urban and regional planning and the architecture of mountain resorts were seriously addressed in Slovenia after World War II. This can be further attested by several works in the field by Ravninar's students, such as France Ivanšek's ambitious degree project (1955), a regional plan for the Upper Sava valley, including Kranjska gora.<sup>55</sup> Retracing the history of regulatory plans and accommodation facilities for Slovenian winter resorts shows an intersection between the architecture of the "Ljubljanska šola" and the role of local and Yugoslav political-institutional actors. Further research could further embed this study within the planning of mountain resorts throughout the other Yugoslav republics and investigate the influence of neoliberal trends after 1980, and beyond.

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53 Zora Kužet, "Ali ima arhitekt Kocmut prav?" [Is the Architect Kocmut Right?], *Večer*, August 3, 1993, 8.

54 "Praznik v belem" [National Holiday in White], *Večer*, December 1, 1978, 1.

55 France Ivanšek, "Regionalni načrt Gornjesavske doline" [Regional Plan for the Higher Sava Valley], *Arhitekt*, no. 16 (1955): 4–11.

