

THE LANDSCAPE OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA, 1997–2023

Igor Kuvač, Malina Čvoro, Saša Čvoro, Zoran Uljarević, Milana Nedimović, Slobodan Peulić

University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Bulevar vojvode Petra Bojovića 1A, 78000 Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, igor.kuvac@aggf.unibl.org,
malina.cvoro@aggf.unibl.org, sasa.cvoro@aggf.unibl.org, zoran.uljarevic@aggf.unibl.org,
milana.nedimovic@aggf.unibl.org, slobodan.peulic@aggf.unibl.org, igor.kuvac@aggf.unibl.org

Corresponding author: Igor Kuvač, University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Bulevar vojvode Petra Bojovića 1A, 78000 Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, igor.kuvac@aggf.unibl.org

ABSTRACT

Understanding the development of contemporary architecture requires observation within a specific territory, time frame, and social context. In conditions marked by a lack of architectural culture and systematic documentation, this process becomes a challenge that calls for a dedicated research effort. This paper presents the landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska from 1997 to 2023, based on research conducted for the exhibition *25 Years of (the School of) Architecture in the Republic of Srpska*. Through the analysis of everyday architectural experiences, spatial perception shaped by movement through the territory, and a curatorial approach, this paper explores the complexity involved in researching and evaluating architectural production. It identifies and critically presents the most significant examples, highlighting their typological diversity, territorial distribution, and temporal dynamics, as a reflection of a society in post-transitional transformation. The research findings aim to contribute to the improvement of architectural education and the enhancement of spatial culture in the local, regional, and broader context.

Keywords: school of architecture, architectural scene, architectural exhibition, social role of architecture,

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary architecture represents a dynamic field of ideas, styles, and tendencies, yet it is always deeply rooted in the specific cultural, social, and material conditions of its context (Hays, 1998). As such, architecture possesses a transformative potential—it not only shapes physical space but also influences social relations, cultural identity, and urban development (Sassen, 2001). Therefore, any analysis must be framed within clearly defined temporal, territorial, and social coordinates. In 2023, the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy at the University of Banja Luka marked 25 years since the establishment of its Architecture program—an occasion to reflect on the development of contemporary architecture in Republika Srpska. The exhibition *A.25 – 25 Years of (the School of) Architecture in Republika Srpska* was conceived as a platform for documenting and critically engaging with architectural production during this period. The exhibition focused on local specificities and their influence on architectural design, as well as the role of architecture in reflecting and shaping spatial and societal transformations (Kester, 2002). By presenting a selection of the most significant built works, it provided insight into the complexity of architectural development—its discontinuities, continuities, and dilemmas—and served as a basis for defining quality criteria and positioning the local architectural scene within a broader European context (Nesbitt, 1996). In a time of increasingly complex challenges, rethinking the role of architecture in shaping society and spatial culture becomes crucial for understanding the future.

Exhibiting Architecture

“What frustrates in architectural exhibitions is the fact that they relate either to the past or to some hypothetical future—always in a mediated form: codified and irreversibly distant. From project to realization, the path is long and arduous, often unattainable. Space and its representation are conveyed through signs that are difficult to read” (Siza, 2006). In his essay *Projects in the Exhibition*, renowned Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza highlights the limitations of exhibitions in capturing the essence of architecture as a process of creation. While his criticism holds some truth, architectural exhibitions nonetheless fulfill an important role.

Exhibiting architectural works is vital for promoting and transferring knowledge in the field. Architecture should be seen as an active agent of culture and communication. From this perspective, it is not only the final physical form that matters, but also the dialogue between concept and culture, creator and audience. Architecture becomes a site of complex communication (Milić Aleksić, 2022), enabling architects to share their ideas, experiences, and interpretations with professionals and the wider public. Many theorists have explored the significance of exhibiting architecture. Le Corbusier, a pioneer of modernist architecture, played a key role in promoting his vision through exhibitions, notably the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris, later discussed in his book *Toward an Architecture* (1977). Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus school, also curated numerous exhibitions that disseminated the Bauhaus aesthetic globally. In *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (1971), he reflects on the exhibition as a medium for spreading architectural ideologies.

Bruno Zevi, perhaps the most comprehensive theorist on architectural interpretation, identified nine modes of understanding architecture—emphasizing that architecture should be interpreted not only through its physical attributes, but through all available direct and indirect information. In doing so, he also emphasized the political dimension of architecture, claiming that “architecture represents the visual dimension of history” (Zevi, 1966). Peter Zumthor’s reflections remain highly relevant in the contemporary context. In *Thinking Architecture* (2006), he insists that architecture must respond to its inherent questions—independent of societal distractions. It is not a symbol or vehicle for external values, but a discipline with its own language. This language is not tied to a particular style, but to specific uses, places, and communities. Although exhibitions, as Siza argues, cannot fully replicate the spatial and experiential essence of architecture, their value lies not in faithful representation, but in the potential for communication, interpretation, and dialogue. They act as a cultural and social medium, translating architecture into a broader discourse and revealing meanings formed between idea, form, and audience. Through drawings, models, texts, and interpretations, exhibitions offer a view of architecture as a dynamic process, a cultural act, and a space open to critical reflection. Their aim is not to replace the experience of space, but to initiate conversations that make that experience more comprehensible, significant, and visible within the wider cultural landscape.

Context of the Research

Almost thirty years after the end of the war (1992–1995), the cities, villages, and landscapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been largely rebuilt. Although scars and wounds are still present, the built environment reflects the ways in which life continues. Many architectural projects and construction processes were perceived as symbols of hope—an unmistakable sign of faith in the future. Ibelings (2010) argues that the attempt to return to a “starting point” after the war is a myth, since the opportunity for a new beginning is, in fact, an illusion. While it is clear that nothing will be the same as before, it is also impossible to completely forget the past, which will always be embedded in the new reality.

Considering the state of the architectural scene in line with the political, social, and cultural context of the Republic of Srpska, it is not difficult to understand the complexity of working on a project such as *A.25 – 25 Years of the School of Architecture in the Republic of Srpska*. What is defined as contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska developed under extremely difficult conditions of post-war recovery, followed by processes of transition and privatization, then global financial crisis, and later by a large-scale construction boom enabled by informal

Kuvač, I., et al. (2025). The landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska, 1997–2023. *STED Conference 14*(2), 477–486.

financial flows, an unregulated real estate market, and the absence of systematic spatial governance (Milojević & Kuvač, 2021).

Even if we limit our view to the professional context of architecture and urbanism, the situation is far from ideal. Despite sporadic initiatives and short-lived organizations—such as the Association of Architects of the Republic of Srpska (established in 2007, inactive after 2012), the Association of Architects of Banja Luka (formally registered in 2022), and others—there is no professional architectural association in the Republic of Srpska. The Construction Industry Association exists within the Chamber of Commerce, but only formally and without substantial activity.

Many other structural elements that would regularly support architectural production at a professional level and help build a local architectural scene are also lacking—for example, a relevant professional journal, an architecture and urbanism portal, or a recurring architecture salon. For a while, two journals were active: *Contemporary Construction* (2009–2013), initiated by the Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology of the Republic of Srpska, the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, the Institute for Construction, and the Chamber of Commerce; and *Prostor S* (2008–2013). The journal *SAG+* continues the tradition of the aforementioned *Contemporary Construction*, and is now published by the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy of the University of Banja Luka with two issues per year from 2022. The Association of Architects of the Republic of Srpska organized the first and only *Architecture and Urbanism Salon of the Republic of Srpska* for the 1997–2007 period, which was held in 2009 at the Youth Center in Banja Luka.

In the meantime, a small number of engaged authors, architects, and urbanists have become part of the regional architectural scene, participating in exhibitions such as *Collegium Artisticum* (Association of Architects of BiH), *Salon of Urbanism* (Association of Urbanists of Serbia), *Belgrade Salon of Architecture* (Museum of Applied Arts), *Novi Sad Salon of Architecture* (Association of Architects of Novi Sad), *Ranko Radović Award* (Novi Sad), *DA! Student Festival* (Zagreb), *Balkan Architectural Biennale* (Belgrade), *Piran Days of Architecture* (Slovenia), *BIG SEE Awards* (Ljubljana), *EU Mies Awards*, *Days of Architecture Sarajevo* (organized by LIFT – Spatial Initiatives), *Days of Architecture Banja Luka* (organized by the Center for Spatial Research, with five editions between 2014–2019), and various other networks, initiatives, and groups.

In this context, the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy—its Department of Architecture and Chair of Architectural Design—decided, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the study program of architecture (the school of architecture in Banja Luka and the Republic of Srpska), to take a retrospective look at the state of architectural production. With the support of the newly reestablished journal *SAG+* (published by the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, since 2022), and in collaboration with a wide alliance of partners—including regional universities, professional associations, architectural practices, public institutions, the construction industry, and others—the aim is to lay solid foundations for the next 5, 10, or 25 years.

MATERIAL AND METHODS OF WORK

The “A.25” exhibition is part of an ongoing research effort investigating post-war architectural production in Republika Srpska, serving as a preliminary, non-definitive snapshot of this field. It represents a pioneering attempt to systematically map, document, and present contemporary architecture and the formation of the architectural scene in the region. The study of architecture in Republika Srpska during 1997–2023 unfolds on several planes, employing various methods—primarily content analysis. Data were sourced from texts, photographs, drawings, plans, and other architectural records.

The primary source is direct experiential engagement with the built environment, assessing spatial quality in relation to historical, cultural, social, and aesthetic significance and its societal impact. This collection of firsthand observations, gathered by researcher-architects, was supplemented and validated through an open survey distributed among 23 faculty members across

Kuvač, I., et al. (2025). The landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska, 1997–2023. *STED Conference 14*(2), 477-486.

all five architecture-related departments at the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (architectural design, building technologies, urbanism, geometry & spatial visualization, heritage protection, architectural history & theory). Respondents included full-time and adjunct professors, researchers, and included representatives from professional associations, architectural practices, public institutions, the construction industry, and local government units.

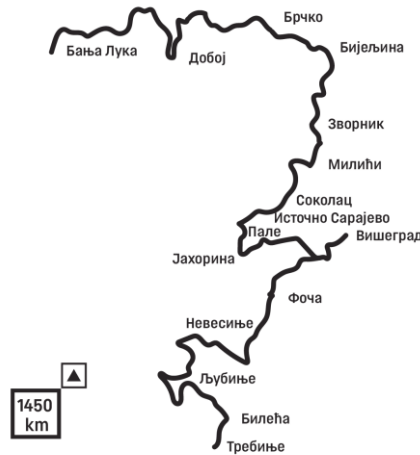


Figure 1. The map of the road trip - the journey which traced an intriguing cultural and landscape route through some of the most beautiful parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It followed a west–east axis — Banja Luka – Brčko – Bijeljina; a north–south axis — Bijeljina – Zvornik – Milići – Vlasenica – Han Pijesak – Sokolac – Pale – Jahorina – Rogatica – Višegrad – Foča – Gacko – Nevesinje – Bileća – Trebinje; and finally, a diagonal route from the southeast to the northwest — Trebinje – Ljubinje – East Sarajevo – Doboj – Banja Luka.

One challenge in our experiential approach was uneven territorial representation: architectural production beyond the Krajina region was under-researched. To address this, a fieldwork “road trip”—effectively a mobile research route—was organized (Karan et al., 2022). Traveling across Bosnia and Herzegovina became both a data-collection method and an analytical instrument (De Certeau, 1998), allowing us to experience aesthetics, observe transformations, conceive spatial imaginaries, and convert observed realities into hypothesized spatial narratives. The tour covered approximately 1,450 km across 20 cities and towns, mapping 66 buildings and producing around 900 professional-camera photos and 1,100 mobile shots. A post-tour photographic essay captured architecture in its immediate context. Although photography allows multiple readings, we deliberately minimized interpretive ambiguity between creator and viewer (Barthes, 1997; Hall, 1996).

A third data source was an open call addressed to architects, studios, bureaus, contractors, and other entities active within Republika Srpska to submit realized projects (up to four each) for the A.25 exhibition. The application form requested building name, function, location, author, contractor, design and completion dates, investment type (public/private), client information, site size, and condition. After three rounds, 30 respondents submitted posters for 120 projects. For missing data, curators formally contacted spatial planning departments across all 57 municipalities and 9 cities in Republika Srpska—receiving very low response rates and incomplete information.



Figure 2. Cover for the open call.

A systematic content analysis of all sources enabled identification and interpretation of architectural patterns, themes, and trends from 1997 to 2023, establishing selection criteria. However, the methodology has limitations. First, it reflects a narrow perspective on the “architectural scene,” often emerging from the networks of a few individuals (Strauss, 1990). Second, the field tour was constrained by time, budget, and technical resources, involving only two researchers over a few working days and limited to major travel routes—excluding other sites. Third, the poor culture of exhibition delivery hindered data completeness: few participants provided full project documentation, high-quality photographs, or detailed posters, which likely affected selection outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The selection criteria for the A.25 exhibition are grounded in both European and global theories and practices of contemporary architecture, while also acknowledging the specific context of post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina and the unique geopolitical position of Republika Srpska, shaped by its emergence, development during transition, and everyday challenges. The criteria are defined as follows:

- Contextual integration: The architectural response to urban or natural environments, with adaptation to local culture, climate, topography, and spatial surroundings.
- Respect for natural and cultural heritage: Including the preservation of traditional architecture and cultural heritage elements, alongside the subtle introduction and contemporary interpretation of traditional forms.
- Functionality and rational design: Modern design emphasizing clean lines, functional forms, and absence of unnecessary ornamentation, reinforcing both aesthetic refinement and practical use.
- Innovation and contemporaneity: Encouragement of experimentation with new materials, technologies, and concepts, including unconventional spatial forms, sustainable materials, energy efficiency, and digital tools for planning and design.
- Technical precision: Evident in detailed materialization, construction techniques, thoughtful use of colors, textures, and light.
- Sustainability and ecological awareness: Including the use of renewable energy sources, efficient resource use, and integration of green spaces in the urban fabric.
- Cultural and social sensitivity: Addressing the needs of communities and contributing to inclusive spaces that foster social cohesion and local identity.

Given the importance of the process, the specific values of each individual project, and the aim to offer a comprehensive overview of architectural practice in Republika Srpska, all mapped projects were included in the A.25 exhibition and catalogue. Particular emphasis, however, was placed on those selected by the curatorial board. From over 150 preliminary selections and open call submissions, a total of 110 projects were considered for evaluation.

The curatorial board was composed of three renowned architects from neighboring countries—professionals equally active in both practice and academia—able to assess the projects with temporal and spatial distance. Through two rounds of evaluation, the jury selected 49 projects

showcasing the highest architectural and urban qualities. Additionally, in nine thematic categories (public open spaces, social infrastructure, small-scale architecture, multifamily housing, single-family housing, tourism facilities, commercial buildings, commemorative architecture, and religious architecture), one exemplary project was highlighted in each. To quantify architectural quality, a coefficient was defined based on the ratio of submitted to selected projects, using the following formula: $Aq = (\text{number of submitted projects} / \text{number of selected projects}) \times 100/10$

Typological Landscape — The Dominance of Market-Oriented Investments

A review of the typological representation reveals a dominant presence of commercial buildings—20 projects nominated, but only 9 selected—resulting in an Aq: 4,5.

The quality of commercial architecture reflects the prevailing business standards and economic conditions in Republika Srpska.

Social infrastructure ranks second with 19 nominated projects, but only 7 selected (Aq: 3,7), revealing the systemic problems of the public sector—marked by high levels of corruption, nepotism, and bureaucratic inefficiency.

Tourism facilities rank third, with 15 nominations and 8 selected (Aq: 5,3), largely due to the successful reconstruction of Yugoslav-era structures (1945–1992) and high-quality hotel complexes in prominent tourist destinations such as Mount Jahorina, Kozara National Park, Trebinje, and spa resorts in Banja Luka, Laktaši, and Teslić.

Multifamily residential-commercial buildings follow with 14 nominations but only 4 selected (Aq: 2,8), indicating alarmingly low design standards in the most widespread typology of built space. This decline—compared to the pre-1990 Yugoslav period—suggests an urgent need to prioritize multifamily housing in architectural education.

In contrast, single-family residential architecture demonstrates much higher quality: 7 out of 11 nominated projects were selected (Aq: 6,3). However, this does not reflect the actual spatial reality, as authored architecture represents only a marginal portion of the single-family landscape, which is largely characterized by informal construction without architects (Kuvač, 2017).

A similar pattern is seen in religious architecture, with 9 nominated and 4 selected projects (Aq: 4,4)—mainly due to the restoration of historic buildings—while the vast majority of religious structures are constructed without any reference to contemporary architectural practice.

Even more concerning is the state of commemorative architecture: only 2 of 5 nominated projects were selected (Aq: 4,0), while a large number of monuments display little or no architectural, urban, landscape, or artistic value.

The typology with the lowest performance is that of open public spaces, with only 3 out of 8 selected (Aq: 3,7). This reflects the lack of design competitions, institutional mechanisms, and broader systemic issues in planning and spatial culture.

The only typology with a fully positive outcome is small-scale architecture, showing an Aq: 10,0. Although the sample includes just five nominated projects, the results confirm that small-scale architecture offers a fertile ground for experimentation—free from most constraints of daily practice, apart from financial limitations.

Territorial Landscape — A Development Imbalance

The territorial distribution of contemporary architecture in Republika Srpska reflects its socio-political and administrative structure, as well as its geographic position within Bosnia and Herzegovina and the broader post-Yugoslav context. Two main development axes are evident—one extending west to east in the north, and the other north to south in the east—with significant disparities. The northern axis exhibits a more advanced level of architectural development compared to the eastern one.

In northern Republika Srpska, 68 buildings were nominated, with 32 selected. In contrast, the eastern region had 44 nominations, with only 13 selected. These figures mirror the demographic and urban concentration in the north, particularly around Banja Luka—the largest city and administrative center—where 35 projects were nominated and 21 selected, yielding a success rate of 60%. Prijedor follows with 8 nominated and 5 selected projects (Aq: 6,2), reflecting the existence of a modest yet active architectural scene, supported by a cultural environment and the

Kuvač, I., et al. (2025). The landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska, 1997–2023. *STED Conference 14*(2), 477-486.

influence of engaged individuals whose work significantly shapes the local spatial culture. Brčko stands out with a large number of public and commercial buildings, owing to its special administrative status within Bosnia and Herzegovina (Milojević, 2015).

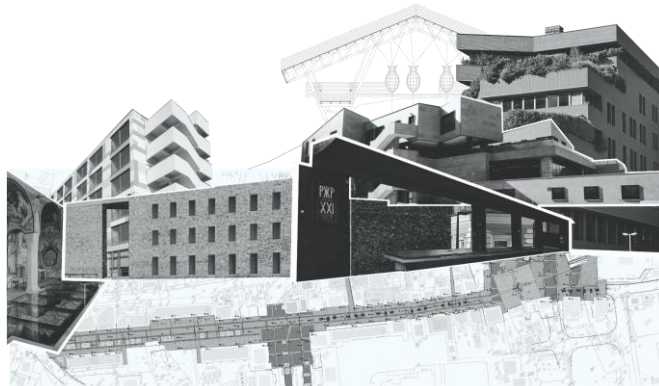


Figure 3. Collage of the architectural landscape of Republika Srpska: religious building – Cathedral Church in Ljubinje; public building – Student Dormitory, Banja Luka; commercial building – Administration Building of the Drina Hydropower Plant, Višegrad; small-scale architecture – Detlačke Granaries; tourist facility – Šeher Spa; memorial architecture – Monument to Fallen Miners, Prijedor; public space – King Petar I Street, Prijedor; mixed-use residential building – corner of First Krajina Corps and Olympic Champions streets, Banja Luka.

However, the architectural quality is low—only Aq: 2,8 success—indicating weak development policies and governance. The architectural landscape in the eastern part of Republika Srpska is similarly indicative of broader developmental imbalances. Bijeljina, though a city undergoing growth, yielded only 3 selected projects out of 6 (Aq: 5), suggesting missed opportunities to guide development through higher-quality urban and architectural design. East Sarajevo had the highest number of nominations in the east (11), and the second-highest in the entire entity, but with a dismal Aq: 1,8. Despite being a newly planned and constructed city (Kuvač, 2020), it failed to capitalize on the “blank slate” potential to deliver architectural excellence.

Two tourist centers somewhat improve the average quality in the eastern region. On Mount Jahorina, a now-urbanized Olympic mountain, only a few notable examples stand out—Hotel Alpin by A4 Studio (2019) and Hotel Termag by Amir Vuk Zec (2012)—yielding an Aq: 4. In Trebinje, the tourism capital and regional center, the Aq reaches 5, primarily due to a reconstruction of a historic building (Church of the Peter and Paul Monastery, arch. Milijana Okilj and Radoslav Beleslin, 2007) and a few outstanding single-family homes (House on the Trebišnjica River, arch. Miloš Milivojević, 2023). However, the bulk of new multifamily housing and tourist infrastructure reshaping Trebinje’s urban landscape fails to meet minimum architectural standards.

As with Prijedor, the relatively high number of nominations for a small city like Trebinje suggests a degree of spatial culture and architectural awareness. This is supported by periodic exhibitions and festivals such as *StartArt! Fest*, *KRŠ* (Trebinje 2023), guest exhibitions of *Collegium Artisticum* (2017–2018), the *Salon of Architecture and Urbanism of Republika Srpska* (2007), and the *Herzegovinian Salon of Architecture* (2017).

Landscape Over Time

The development of contemporary architectural production in Republika Srpska can be divided into three main periods, each reflecting key social and political events. The first spans from 1997 to 2008, but also includes the years immediately after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995–1997), as well as several exceptional buildings designed during the war years

Kuvač, I., et al. (2025). The landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska, 1997–2023. *STED Conference 14*(2), 477–486.

(1992–1995). Within this period, two subphases are evident, with 1999 marking a turning point due to the escalation of the Kosovo conflict and NATO's intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At this time, the architectural scene in Republika Srpska was enriched by a number of engineers and architects who relocated and began working, primarily in Banja Luka.

This period includes 32 nominated buildings, or 29.09% of the total sample. Most were built in Banja Luka (8), Brčko (6), and Prijedor and Trebinje (3 each). The dominant typologies are commercial (7), public (7), religious (5), and open public spaces (4). The most productive year was 2007, with seven realized projects. Among the highlights are: the Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ in Ljubinja (arch. Ljubiša Folić, 2004); the Memorial to Fallen Miners in Prijedor (arch. Vladimir Milić, 2005); and King Peter I Liberation Street in Prijedor (arch. Saša and Malina Čvoro, 2007). The global financial crisis of 2008 marked the end of this 11-year period, disrupting the postwar recovery of the construction industry.

The second period (2009–2020) also lasted 11 years and was defined by stability and continuity in architectural production. A total of 55 projects were nominated, representing 50% of the total corpus. Banja Luka remained the center of activity (19 projects), followed by East Sarajevo (6), with additional contributions from Jahorina (3), Pale (1), and Bijeljina (3). The most frequent typologies were commercial and tourist buildings (11 each), followed by multifamily housing (8), single-family homes (7), and public buildings (8), along with two small-scale architectural works.

Five standout examples from this period include:

- Mixed-use building at the corner of First Krajina Corps and Olympic Winners Streets, Banja Luka (arch. Nebojša Balić, 2011);
- Detlačke Ambarine archaeological site near Derventa (arch. Milan Aleksić, 2013);
- Administration building of the Drina Hydropower Plant in Višegrad (arch. Branislav Mitrović, Ognjen Krašina, Siniša Tatalović, 2013);
- Student Dormitory in Banja Luka (2015); and
- Čvoro Family House in Banja Luka (2017), both by Malina and Saša Čvoro.

The most productive year in this phase was 2020, with 8 realized projects, followed by 2013 (7) and 2018 (6). The third and most recent phase spans from 2020 to the present. With 25 nominated and 13 selected buildings (Aq: 5,2), this period shows the highest levels of production and architectural quality. The data reflect both a significant increase in output and quality, as well as a possible lack of historical distance for objective evaluation. Most projects were built in Banja Luka (9), followed by Trebinje (4), East Sarajevo (2), and Jahorina (2). The dominant typologies include multifamily (4) and single-family housing (4), tourist buildings (5), and both commercial and public buildings (4 each). The most productive year was 2023, with 11 projects, followed by 2022 (10) and 2021 (6). Only one building was singled out as exemplary in this period: the Šeher Bath in Banja Luka (arch. Miomirka Dragomirović Trbić and Bojana Grebenar, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

Average Evaluation

Ibelings (2010) noted that architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1995 to 2010 reflects the values of a postwar architectural culture—one that had to be rebuilt from the ground up, reconnect fragmented threads, and reoccupy physical and conceptual space, ultimately achieving this in an intriguing manner. Diversity and scope make this culture particularly compelling. Despite this diversity, a common image emerges—best described as a “mixture.”

A review of the development of contemporary architecture from 1997 to 2023 reveals an incidental narrative, offering insight into the social, cultural, and economic contexts that have shaped the built environment. One of the most prominent themes is the stark imbalance between private and public investments, with private, market-driven projects dominating the scene. Most architectural production is initiated by private clients, while few public investments are limited to administrative buildings, open spaces, or commemorative monuments. Public service architecture—schools, elderly care homes, and health facilities—is significantly underrepresented.

Kuvač, I., et al. (2025). The landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska, 1997–2023. *STED Conference 14*(2), 477–486.

Projects based on open architectural competitions remain rare but consistently represent the highest quality. This indicates a broader societal disregard for architecture as a cultural and social value—typical of post-transitional societies (Rot-Cherina in Kuvač & Čvoro, eds., 2024).

The lowest-rated typology is multifamily mixed-use housing (Aq: 2,8), suggesting an urgent need for intervention in this area. In contrast, the highest-rated is small-scale architecture (Aq: 10,0), which deserves continued support. The highest quality is found in the northern part of Republika Srpska, particularly in Banja Luka (as the political center) and Prijedor (as a place with an established culture of space). Bijeljina and Trebinje serve as poles of development in the eastern region, though with underused potential. Alarming low quality is observed in East Sarajevo and on Mount Jahorina—despite their volume of production and the expected high standards of living and tourism infrastructure.

A New Beginning

Precisely because of a fragmented architectural scene and the lack of institutional support, any effort to retroactively document, select, and evaluate architectural production becomes immensely valuable. Such efforts can lay the foundation for future retrospectives and professional associations. Symbolically and practically, the new building of the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy at the University of Banja Luka marks a new beginning. As a realization embodying the best ambitions of the reconstructed scene, it stands as a platform for its inauguration. From this physical space—now a new home of architecture—a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and systemic engagement can be envisioned. It may become a site for fostering initiatives such as professional associations, journals, exhibitions, awards, critical practice, cross-disciplinary networking, and potentially a center or laboratory for contemporary architecture (Rot-Cherina in Kuvač & Čvoro, eds., 2024).

This exhibition confirms the importance of continuous monitoring, documentation, and public presentation of architectural work, supported by research and publishing that strengthen the institutional and cultural infrastructure of the discipline. It is precisely through systematic retrospectives that the language of the scene is formed, a culture of mutual evaluation is cultivated, and ongoing production is encouraged. Retroactive reconstruction of architectural practice enables a shift from individualized task responses to the recognizable shaping of spatial culture—uncovering common threads, forgotten approaches, and deeper contextual meanings within the built environment.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to the research presented in this paper.

LITERATURE

- Barthes, R. (1997). Semiology and the Urban. In N. Leach (Ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (pp. 166–171). London and New York: Routledge.
- De Certeau, M., & Mayol, P. (1998). *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking* (Vol. 2). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Frampton, K. (1983). Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance. In H. Foster (Ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press.
- Gropius, W. (1971). *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*. New York, NY: MIT Press.
- Hall, P. (1996). *Cities of Tomorrow*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hays, K. M. (Ed.). (1998). *Architecture Theory Since 1968*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ibelings, H. (2010). *Restart: Arhitektura BiH 1995–2010*. Sarajevo: BuyBook.
- Karan, I., Ikalović, V., & Kuvač, I. (2022). Bosnian Borderland: The Production of Space in Border Cities. In A. González Milea & O. Niglio (Eds.), *On Surveillance and Control at Borders and Boundaries: Landscape, Infrastructures and Architecture*. Rome: Tab Edizioni.

- Kuvač, I., et al. (2025). The landscape of contemporary architecture in the Republic of Srpska, 1997–2023. *STED Conference 14*(2), 477-486.
- Kuvač, I. (2020). Is Sarajevo Where It Used to Be? In L. Odobašić Novo & C. Zini (Eds.), *Unfolding Sarajevo*. Sarajevo/Zagreb: KUMA International Center for Visual Arts from Post-Conflict Societies and Association of Architects in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Kuvač, I., & Čvoro, M. (Eds.). (2024). *A25. Katalog izložbe 25 godina (škole) arhitekture u Republici Srpskoj*. Banja Luka: Arhitektonsko-građevinsko-geodetski fakultet Univerziteta u Banjoj Luci.
- Le Corbusier. (1977). *Ka pravoj arhitekturi*. Beograd: Građevinska knjiga.
- Milić Aleksić, M. (2022). *Komunikacijska svojstva arhitekture*. Banja Luka: Arhitektonsko-građevinsko-geodetski fakultet Univerziteta u Banjoj Luci.
- Milojević, B. (2015). *Gradovi u promjenama. Urbane forme, transformacije, uticaji*. Banja Luka: Arhitektonsko-građevinsko-geodetski fakultet Univerziteta u Banjoj Luci.
- Milojević, B., & Kuvač, I. (2021). Recognizing Principles of Integrated Urban Planning in Historical Development of the City: A Case Study of Banja Luka. *Journal of Urban History*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00961442211030624>
- Nesbitt, K. (Ed.). (1996). *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995*. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Rattenbury, K. (Ed.). (2002). *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions*. London: Routledge.
- Sassen, S. (2001). *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Siza, A. (2006). *Zapisi o arhitekturi*. Zagreb: AGM.
- Štraus, I. (2013). *Arhitektura Jugoslavije 1945–1990*. Sarajevo: Fondacija za razvoj održivog dizajna.
- Zevi, B. (1966). *Kako gledati arhitekturu*. Beograd: Kultura Mašinskog Arhitekta (KMA).
- Zumthor, P. (2006). *Thinking Architecture* (pp. 27). Basel, Boston, Berlin: Birkhäuser.
- Univerzitet u Banjoj Luci. (2023). Позив за пријаву пројеката за изложбу А.25. Preuzeto 12.2.2025. sa <https://aggf.unibl.org/sr/vesti/2023/10/poziv-za-prijavu>