

**CENTRAL EUROPE – MODERNISM AND THE MODERN  
MOVEMENT AS VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS OF TOWN  
PLANNING AND BUILDING 1895 - 1939**

**A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis sets out to re-locate and redefine the historical arguments around the development of the Modern Movement in architecture. It investigates the development of architectural modernism in Central Europe from 1895-1939 in the towns and cities of the multinational Habsburg Empire, in a creative milieu in which opposition, contrast and difference were the norm. It argues that the evolution of the Modern Movement through the independent nations that arose from the Empire constituted an early and significant engagement with urbanisation, planning and architectural modernism that has been largely overlooked by western scholarship.

By reviewing the extant literature in discussion with Central European authorities and by drawing upon a little known range of sources, this thesis brings into focus the role of key individuals such as Plečnik, Fabiani and Kotěra and it explores the significance of developments in town planning in places like Zagreb and Ljubljana. In restoring some of this missing detail and revisiting some of the key sites, the thesis reveals how Central European individuals made early and significant contributions to the development of architectural modernism and the Modern Movement that have hitherto received little critical acknowledgement.

What this research reveals is how these figures developed what can be seen as local solutions, rooted in the context and culture of individual towns and cities and their unique histories. However more significantly, this thesis also demonstrates that these independent initiatives were formed with an understanding of - and in response to - wider national and international developments in the field of architectural modernism. In this connection, the thesis can be regarded as part of an emerging academic effort to redress the history of the Modern Movement and an attempt to set in motion a raft of suggestion for further research into this rich field of cultural endeavour.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

- 1 Brings into focus again the role of individuals in the development of modernism and the Modern Movement, such as Plečnik, Fabiani and Kotěra.
- 2 Consideration of the career lines of individuals in Central Europe and the relationship to events in Western Europe. Discernment of patterns of relationships and their significance. Otto Wagner and Maks Fabiani, where Fabiani is clearly established as contributor to the seminal volume.
- 3 Facilitates in English of a number of sources which otherwise might be inaccessible. Three of these are:

a. Regulacija deželnega stolnega mesta Ljubljane, (The Regulation and planning of Ljubljana, 1899.) facsimile reprint Arhitekturni muzej Ljubljana, zanj: Peter Krečič, Ljubljana 1989 (Architectural Museum Ljubljana, Director: Peter Krečič, 1989). Informally translated as, Regulation (Improvement) of Provincial Parts of the Town (City) of Ljubljana.

In addition to the reprints of text, diagrams and plans there is discussion between Peter Krečič, Breda Mihelič, Marko (sic) Pozzeto and Nace Sumi which illuminates further Fabiani's role as a city planner. The entire text was translated into English by Peter Krečič specifically for this work and as far as is known has not appeared in English translation previously.

b. Two unpublished papers, also translated into English, which helped in establishing events prior to the re-planning of Ljubljana, 1899:

Urban Planning and Architectural Development in Ljubljana after the Earthquake of 1895. Peter Krečič, Ljubljana, 1995.

Ljubljana - An example of Central European City Planning, undated. This work is a preparatory study which is the kernel for the study of street plans of Roman Emona as featured in Jože Plečnik and Ljubljana an Architect and His City, Plečnik's Ljubljana: Classical Urban Design Revisited, Peter Krečič and Robert Gilkey Dyck, Graz, 2003.

Finally a translated summary of Za obnovu zagrebacke Zelene Potkove (A Proposal for the Restoration of the 'Green Horseshoe' Zagreb), Izvorni znanstveni rad (Original scientific paper) Snješka Knežević, Zagreb, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1996, translated summary Peter Krečič, 2001.

- 4 A very clear steer in responding to the motivations that Norman Davies responded to in seeking to re-centre the locus of an historical study of the players at the time.

## **Conclusions**

The response to this question was more obscure than initially thought. The research undertaken has identified that these individuals developed local solutions rooted in the context and culture of the towns and cities. What is also shown, however, is that these initiatives were part of a wider response to national and international developments over time.

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### **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Buckinghamshire New University/Brunel University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the produce of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Signed.....Bernard Davies.....

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