

“The Sun Never Sets on Energoprojekt ... until It Does”: The Yugoslav Construction Industry in the Non-Aligned World

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Introduction

“Zambians all over the republic feel tremendous honour for their country to play host to such a gathering of so distinguished leaders. Lusaka citizens are particularly proud to be among the first in the world to have in their midst such a large number of world leaders under the same roof.”¹ With these words, the first president of independent Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, opened the third summit of non-aligned countries in Lusaka in September 1970. However, in order to greet sixty-two presidents and heads of state who gathered in Lusaka under one roof, the roof had to be constructed, and a great deal of other infrastructure was needed to host a meeting on such scale. Kaunda’s speech points to the connection between political independence and the infrastructure necessary for its realization. Symbolically, the most important project was the Mulungushi Hall, or the “Miracle in Lusaka,” as it was known and advertised by Energoprojekt, the Belgrade-based construction company who designed and built the complex. A *New York Times* feature in 1983 entitled “How a Yugoslav Company Built an International Market” places Mulungushi Hall at the centre of the story: “In 1972, Kenneth D. Kaunda, the President of Zambia, faced a crisis. He had called a conference of non-aligned nations for Lusaka, Zambia’s capital, and with just four months to go, there was no place for the delegates to meet. It could have been most

embarrassing. But Mr. Kaunda telephoned officials of Energoprojekt, Yugoslavia's biggest construction concern, and told them he needed a 4,000-seat convention hall – fast – with price no obstacle. And they came to the rescue” (Tagliabue 1983, 49).

Apart from getting the year wrong, it communicated well how the construction of the hall had become an integral part of the myth the enterprise was building about itself and its “Golden Africa” phase. An earlier *New York Times* story on the eve of the conference in 1970 reported that “Zambia, which has a gross national product of about \$1 billion and is hard-pressed for funds, is spending more than \$14 million to build a hall and other facilities for a five day conference of the members of the so called Third world bloc” (*New York Times* 1970, 2). The text states that “contractors were given 17 weeks to build the hall, the houses for the heads of the delegations and a lot else – from scratch,” work that was “shouldered by” ZECCO (Zambia Engineering and Construction Company) and twenty subcontractors, including the Dutch electric company Philips,² and “in return for substantial payments, some of them have accepted heavy penalty clauses on the completion date” (ibid.). The framing questions the necessity of the Non-Aligned Movement and the capacity of Zambia, or any developing country for that matter, to organize something on this scale. The construction of the hall was contracted in April 1970 (Petković 1970, 2) when the third summit of the non-aligned countries had already been scheduled to take place in Lusaka in early September of the same year. Zambia, who became a member in 1964 at the second summit in Cairo, the year it gained independence, was the perfect choice for the meeting that aimed to resolve “a crisis of continuity” for the Movement (Jakovina 2011; Dinkel 2019). Kaunda demonstrated that a new generation of African leaders still believed in the capacity and power of non-alignment.

By 1970, Energoprojekt was no stranger to either the Non-Aligned Movement or Zambia. Founded in 1951, the construction enterprise considered itself synonymous with the Yugoslav economy abroad; most of its projects from the mid-1960s until the late-1980s were international, operating in over forty countries. Utilizing the knowledge and skills developed in the (re)construction of Yugoslavia after the Second World War, Energoprojekt offers a lens for understanding how exposure to markets abroad enhanced already existing affinities within the enterprise. Working mostly in non-aligned countries, Energoprojekt employed both the position of Yugoslavia and its ability

to work across different systems and networks as well as its autonomy to negotiate credit independently, even from Western commercial banks.

In May 1970, after the Mulungushi Conference Centre had already been contracted, during an official visit to Belgrade, Kaunda visited Energoprojekt's modernist, international-style aspiring tower, built in 1960, together with Tito. This was followed by a visit to the hydropower plant Đerdap on the Danube, under construction by Energoprojekt. In 1968, the two presidents had visited the Kafue Gorge dam, one of the most important energy infrastructure projects undertaken in the early days of Zambia's independence, being built with Yugoslav support after the World Bank had declined to invest in it (Scotto 2018).

Energoprojekt was shaping the relationship between the two countries, over and above the personal relationship between Kaunda and Tito. Indeed, Yugoslavia created legislative frameworks for collaboration, such as joint ventures, only after the company had already implemented them in practice. Energoprojekt founded ZECCO in 1965, with the Zambian Government holding a 51 per cent stake. Energoprojekt founded several other joint ventures, notably UNICO, specializing in architectural design, as well as several subsidiaries, creating flexibility to wear different hats in front of different bodies while still maintaining high levels of control of the whole process of design and construction (Sekulić 2017).

Reading the spatiality of conference centres in a sequence that starts in 1970 and ends in 1986 affords an insight into the transformation of the capacity of the politics of non-alignment to influence and change international economic relations. Energoprojekt, describing itself as "a factor of the implementation of the Yugoslav non-aligned foreign policy," built conference centres in Kampala (1972) and Libreville (1977) to host meetings of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the conference centre for the NAM summit in Harare (1986). The foreign policies of newly independent postcolonial states could be performed in such settings. Conference centres were a practical materialization of the necessity of South-South cooperation. Optically, the organization of these centres shows how the anticolonial, anti-imperial, antiracist vision of non-alignment could not resist the pressures of economic dependency and global imaginaries, with Energoprojekt a friendly proxy for processes of neocolonial capture envisioning progress and democracy only in the image of the West.

Infrastructure for the Global Public Sphere

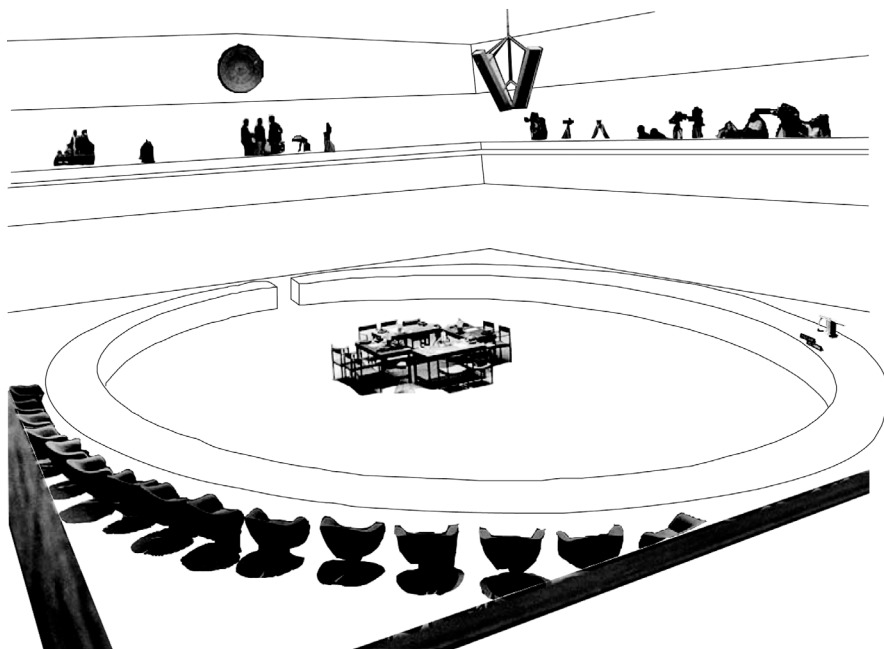
Choosing Lusaka for the crucial third summit of the Non-Aligned Movement was based on Kaunda's political leadership, but Lusaka lacked the necessary infrastructure for an event of such scale, slated to be almost three times larger than the Belgrade summit of 1961. In addition to the conference hall, Energoprojekt's task was also to design and construct the Mulungushi Village, a residential complex of villas to accommodate the sixty-two heads of delegations that had confirmed their participation. The village was situated in an enclosed space of thirty-five acres, one kilometre from the conference hall to which it was connected by one of many newly constructed roads. Each villa, occupying a total surface area of 350 square metres, was designed in what the architect Milenković described as "a combination of the laws of functionality with the laws of aesthetics, combining elements of *the local African exoticism* with those of the *standard European culture*" (Milenković 1970, 2, emphasis in original). A decade after the poet Oskar Davičo (1962) had searched for commonalities in West Africa, such references to "exoticism" were becoming increasingly common among engineers, architects, and other Yugoslav "experts." Energoprojekt was embroiled in a contradictory position, seeking to maintain socialist solidarity in an increasingly capitalist context, creating a techno-managerial class. Those working abroad were moving in professional circles in the host countries in many of which, after initial attempts at building a more equitable postindependence society, a new class of "African accomplices inside the imperialist system" (Rodney 2018, 34) was appearing.

The whiteness of Yugoslavs, while not the same whiteness of the colonizers, never ceased to be whiteness as long as they were operating according to capitalist relations and modes of production, increasingly dominating both their business operations and construction sites across the non-aligned world. Even after decolonization, the problem of the twentieth century continued to be the problem of the global colour line (Du Bois 2019, 3), especially after the sabotage of the New Economic International Order and the hegemony of the IMF and the World Bank (Prashad 2007, 207–75). Milenković saw the conference centre as a "seed of future urbanity," and his capacity, even with the tight deadline, to provide a permanent and not a temporary solution was what ultimately enabled them to win the contract and beat "the English." Alongside the conference hall there was also a post office and four restaurants, along

with the comprehensive technical support needed for the conference to become a media event. The complex also contained four smaller meeting rooms as well as three salons for heads of states and delegations. Evoking images of the Belgrade conference nine years earlier, the main hall is dominated by a huge roundtable, projecting equality and a horizontal dialogue.

Energoprojekt signed the contract with the Zambian Government at the end of April 1970 and immediately dispatched a team to Lusaka. Led by Dušan Milenković, a senior architect and director of UNICO, Energoprojekt's design office in Zambia, the team consisted of two architects and six architectural technicians who surveyed the site and drew up a preliminary concept in "seven days and seven nights" (Milenković 1970, 2). The pressure on all involved was immense since what was at stake was "not only the politics of Non-alignment at a particular historical moment, not only Energoprojekt, but Yugoslavia in general" (*ibid.*). While the works on Mulungushi Hall were progressing in three shifts, seven days a week, in order to meet deadlines, Yugoslav diplomats used the close relations between Tito and Kaunda at the time to take charge of all the preparatory work including drafting, in advance, the preliminary version of the concluding summit declaration. Hence, many of the discussions taking place in Lusaka were more perfunctory than aimed at aligning ideas, approaches, and decisions among the delegates. With such a limited input in the meeting itself, Tvrtko Jakovina (2017, 498) stressed that "the host country could always organize the auditorium." In Lusaka, the organization of the auditorium became the key element around which the whole conference hall was designed, namely the large circular table enabling each of the sixty-two heads of delegation to have a space for themselves, with the delegates sitting in circles behind them. The table, inspired by that used in Belgrade, was meant to symbolize the horizontality that the Movement was trying to achieve and also ensure, in practical terms, that everyone could see everyone else throughout the conference. Tito sitting next to Kaunda, the chairperson, throughout the conference had been alphabetically, and not politically, determined.

The historian Jürgen Dinkel (2019, 171) emphasized that non-aligned conferences "served not just as a forum for the discussion of global problems but also as an arena for the negotiation and symbolic (re)production of power relations within the non-aligned world." While Yugoslavia ultimately won the competition against Cuba and Egypt to organize the first summit, when the second summit was organized in Cairo three years later, the main argument



10.1 *Lusaka 1970*, collage by Dubravka Sekulić, 2021.

for choosing Cairo over Havana, beside the physical proximity of Cairo to the African countries, was its better developed hotel and meetings infrastructure (Jakovina 2017, 481). Cairo was the “safe” choice that would not upset either of the superpowers and, symbolically, giving preference to it over Cuba meant supporting the existing infrastructure instead of taking a leap into the revolutionary unknown. Tito and Nehru won over Castro, and Cairo’s hotel infrastructure was a convenient excuse.

Infrastructure for Non-Aligned Cooperation

Energoprojekt went on to build more conference centres in other non-aligned African countries including Uganda, Gabon, and Zimbabwe. The urban myth in Belgrade goes that some of the countries that attended the conference in Belgrade approached Yugoslavia wishing for a replica of the federal govern-

ment building in New Belgrade where some of the meetings had been held (Kulić 2015, xxi). This never happened, but one can say that New Belgrade, which was the largest construction site in Yugoslavia in 1961, as well as Energoprojekt's own office tower, served as perfect advertisements for the capabilities of Yugoslav architects, engineers, and construction enterprises. Perhaps, the Non-Aligned Movement was at its most visible in the optimistic projects for conference centres built across the African continent, not only for NAM meetings but also for meetings of the OAU and other large international meetings. From today's perspective, it is easy to read these projects as a form of misplaced optimism, as "white elephants" or expensive, vanity projects that wasted limited resources that could have been better spent on supporting processes of decolonization, but that would be an oversimplification. These projects are the most tangible materialization of the words and ideas that were often expressed and discussed during the summits, such as modernization, industrialization, and infrastructure and the belief that, with their existence, progress will surely follow. However, it is important to understand these requests from a different perspective: as a response to the lack of spatial infrastructure for the type of self-governance and diplomacy most of these countries had been denied while being ruled by colonial metropolises, and an awareness of the necessity for independent means of communication. This was best expressed by S. Rajaratnam, then minister of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, during the fourth Non-Aligned Movement summit in Algiers in 1973:

Yesterday, Mr Chairman, for some reason, we had a technical breakdown. All the equipment that we are using – threatening the big powers, is provided by them. It broke down, and we could not communicate. We were all sitting here in this place, made and built by the great powers. Without that, we cannot hold this conference. We sent telegrams to our home countries. We had to send one to Singapore. It had to go to Paris, London, Singapore. They turn it off, we are lost.³

During his speech at the Lusaka conference, Tito stressed the importance of economic cooperation between developing countries, emphasizing that "it is certainly necessary to focus on our own strengths and maximize the development and utilization of all human and material potential. Further, it is necessary to further intensify the cooperation between the developing countries

and to take full advantage of the economic integration and cooperation they provide” (quoted in Butorac and Petković 1979, 47). New diplomatic relations needed new physical spaces in which to unfold, and economic connections could be materialized in concrete, steel, and aluminum.

For Energoprojekt, and the Yugoslav banks, the rationale for these projects was simple – they saw them as seeds that would allow them to enter new markets (Unkovski-Korica 2016). Socialist Yugoslavia, though existing for less than five decades, experienced a very dynamic internal development and established international relations such that one must be precise about the time-frame when drawing conclusions about Yugoslavia’s global role. In particular, the economic motivations behind some of the decisions and alliances Yugoslavia made were very different in the late 1950s, the mid-1960s, or the late 1970s. By 1986, when the eighth NAM summit opened, Energoprojekt had just completed work in Harare and, though the rhetoric stayed the same, the motivation had changed. However, in the first half of the 1970s, it was still possible to see the projects of the conference centres and the initial involvement of Energoprojekt in Non-Aligned Movement countries as the practical implementation of one of the principles of NAM, declared in point twelve of the Lusaka Declaration as “the struggle for economic independence and mutual cooperation on a basis of equality and mutual benefit” (Jankowitsch and Sauvart 1978, 83). Point eight of the same declaration accused “the forces of racism, apartheid, colonialism and imperialism,” of jeopardizing “the independence and territorial integrity of many countries, especially those of the Non-aligned and developing countries, thereby hampering their advancement, intensifying tension and giving rise to conflicts” (ibid., 82).

After the Lusaka summit, Uganda’s President Milton Obote approached Energoprojekt to build a conference centre in Kampala. The centre was used as a successful “seed” project to enter the Ugandan market and, by 1975, Energoprojekt had also designed and built the Hotel Nile in conjunction with the centre, a terminal building at the airport in Entebbe, a few office buildings in Kampala, and a water treatment and supply system in Lira, as well as having prepared proposals for two more hotels and several office buildings.⁴ The project was supported by Energoprojekt’s entire operation and its joint ventures ZECCO and UNICO in Zambia. In January 1971, Idi Amin overthrew the government of Milton Obote in a military coup. Nevertheless, the project was

successfully completed, and an opening celebration took place in June 1971 (Radenović 1971). However, due to the situation in Uganda, the meeting of the OAU for which the conference centre had been designed took place in Addis Ababa, but the conference centre did host the OAU meeting in 1975.

The project description in Energoprojekt's documentation reveals how the conference roundtable is still present as the key element in the design: "The main hall is designed so that 50 heads of state with their delegations (each 5 members) can sit at the roundtable."⁵ The conference centre, whose investment value was \$15 million, was larger than that in Lusaka, and designed for two thousand participants. Structurally, it adhered to the same organizational principle of a large main hall and three more smaller halls for two hundred people, a series of offices, and representative salons. The conference centre was fully equipped for broadcast and translation and air conditioned. Instead of villas, the complex in Kampala included a hotel that was connected to the conference centre by an enclosed walkway.

The next summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Algiers in 1973, again provided Energoprojekt with an opening to enter a new market. According to the documentation of the Yugoslav Federal Executive Government, Omar Bongo, the Gabonese president, approached Tito during the summit with a suggestion that the two countries should establish diplomatic relations. Part of their conversation included suggestions by Bongo that some Yugoslav enterprises build an international conference centre in Libreville.⁶ Following this first contact, Energoprojekt entered into negotiations with the Ministry of Public Works whose proxy was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Gabon. Additionally, Energoprojekt agreed to provide credit for 50 per cent of the project, the estimated cost of which was \$15–17 million, in advance. After the arrangement was made between Gabon and Energoprojekt, Bongo addressed Tito with a further request that Yugoslavia also fund part of the project as a form of public assistance. Jakša Petrić, a deputy of the federal secretary in the Secretariat for International Affairs of SFRY, recommended that the Yugoslav Federal Government should accept Bongo's proposal even though "as far as they know, until now, our country has never supported the construction of such projects as a form of public assistance" because "these are the initial actions in a cooperation between the two countries and successful implementation of this project could open up further perspectives for our enterprises

in this country” (Archives of Yugoslavia [AJ], Belgrade, Serbia, Fund F-455). They were proved right, as the conference hall, completed in July 1976, six months ahead of schedule (*Energoprojekt* 1976), led to Energoprojekt being directly commissioned to design and build two further buildings, the Banquet and Performance Halls, in the complex that later became known as *la Cité de la Démocratie* (City of Democracy). Furthermore, in June 1975, the Energoprojekt newspaper reported that an agreement had been reached between Energoprojekt and Gabon for the design and construction of a hydropower dam, thus confirming the mantra its architects would often repeat to highlight their relevance in the domain of bringing new commissions to the whole enterprise: “where designers come, contractors will come.”⁷ The first major event in the finished complex was the fifteenth conference of the OAU in July 1977. The total value of the three projects was almost \$50 million when completed.⁸ The same year, Energoprojekt founded УФК, an enterprise for forest exploitation, after winning a state concession for exploitation of some 350,000 hectares.⁹

In the 1980s, Energoprojekt was involved with two more projects for non-aligned summits: a conference centre and a hotel in Harare, Zimbabwe, where the eighth summit took place, and the Hyatt hotel in Belgrade, which housed some of the participants of the ninth summit three years later in 1989. By this time, all of the founders of the Movement were dead and democracy as one of the key principles of the Non-Aligned Movement had withered away as a possibility in many member countries no longer united in the struggle for independence but in the pressures of crippling debt and their international creditors. The debt was also haunting Yugoslavia (Woodward 1986, 1995).

The long-running negotiations for the commission of the first project in Zimbabwe, a conference centre and a hotel, started in April 1981 after Energoprojekt first took the initiative and contacted the deputy minister of Information and Tourism of the Government of Zimbabwe to offer him an alternative project to that which had, in 1980, been prepared by the British design office Palmer and Brussow. After overthrowing the apartheid regime of Ian Smith in 1980 and renaming the country Zimbabwe, and the main city Harare, the Zimbabwean government, led by Robert Mugabe organized, in March 1981, the Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD), where thirty-one national and twenty-six international agencies pledged \$1.45 billion in international aid, with the US pledging \$225 million

to be distributed by USAID. The funding pledged was for a period of three years to support the transition from a white- to a Black-led government in Zimbabwe (Dougherty 1981).

Energoprojekt, which at that time had a long-established presence and joint companies in Zambia and Botswana, sent its delegation to follow the conference, including an architect Dragoljub Bakić. During the conference, Bakić found out about the plans of the Zimbabwean government for a conference centre and a hotel and managed to negotiate with Victoria Chitepo, the minister of Information and Education and later the minister of National Resources and Tourism, a two-month window during which Energoprojekt would draw up a competing architectural proposal (Bakić 2012, 166–8). Furthermore, Bakić used the commemoration of the death of the chairman of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Stevan Doronjski, at the Yugoslav embassy in Harare, as an opportunity to showcase the model of the project to the minister of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe who had come to the embassy to pay his respects (Dragoljub Bakić and Ljiljana Bakić, interview with author, 17 January 2015). The conference centre and hotel were completed in July 1985 and officially opened in November 1985 by Robert Mugabe. When the complex opened, Tihomir Nenadić, director of Energoprojekt's construction department saw the project as the perfect example of how "the politics of aggressive acquisition" had to be adopted by the company, especially in new markets such as Zimbabwe (Jakovljević 1985).

In January 1982, Energoprojekt won the construction contract based on the Bakićs' design in a bidding competition with two other international construction companies, French Sofitel with a local design office Clinton and an Italian company De La Vera. The contract was signed on 22 November 1982, with an initial deadline of twenty-four months as Harare was hoping to host one of the annual summits of the OAU. Coordination between design and construction was achieved by forming a team of designers in Harare where both Bakićs relocated, setting up a design office that remained active until the end of the 1980s.¹⁰ What most determined the approach to design and construction was the tight deadline and fear of inflation (in the Yugoslav, Zimbabwean, and other markets) and its potential impact on Energoprojekt's narrow profit margin, since the contract did not have a sliding scale clause. A reduced Yugoslav workforce was planned for the construction site to reduce

costs. This was possible because the country had a relatively advanced local construction industry with a labour force skilled in more complex work, developed out of necessity during the seventeen years of international isolation when the country had been independent from the UK but ruled by the apartheid racist regime of white former colonists, mostly of English descent.¹¹ However, it was crucial that the team of architects was there to coordinate the whole process. The Workers Council of the Construction Department had to accept all the proposals for how the construction work was to be organized – this included authorizing the opening of a new work unit, deciding on the way the salaries for those working abroad would be calculated, approving working in two nine-hour shifts, as well as issuing a permit to invest in the acquisition of additional machinery on top of that which Energoprojekt already owned and which had been pulled in from construction sites in Belgrade, Peru, Kuwait, Botswana, and Iraq (*Energoprojekt* 1982, 3).

According to Lazo Žakula, the president of Energoprojekt's Advisory Board, there were two main reasons why this project received an extraordinary amount of attention from the board. The primary reason was the tight deadline given to finalize a complex project, something that had been characteristic of Energoprojekt in the 1970s but, when this project was starting, the enterprise was already plagued by a two-year delay in the construction of its own building in Belgrade and doubted if it still had the capacity to pull off “miracles” like those from the previous decade. However, the more important reason was the crisis, the contraction of profits, and the increasingly difficult position of Energoprojekt, and especially its design divisions, in the international market. This was made more complex when the Yugoslav dinar was devalued in the early 1980s within the IMF Structural Adjustment Program to curb the Yugoslav debt. Energoprojekt and the other Yugoslav companies that were sub-contractors were hoping that the hotel and conference centre in Harare would open new markets and mark the beginning of the second “golden African decade,” despite the fact that the scheduling and profitability of the project were “borderline.”¹² In 1982, the year the project was contracted, chief architect Dragoljub Bakić stressed the importance of Zimbabwe for the whole enterprise and especially for the Architecture and Urbanism Department, which had been singled out, at the end of 1981, as the most potentially problematic segment of Energoprojekt. In an interview for the Energoprojekt newspaper, after the contract for the project was finally signed and the project

started, in late 1982, Bakić was frank about the importance of the project, especially for the Architecture and Urbanism division:

In a moment when we have already seriously started to feel the consequences of a drastic restriction of investments in the domestic market, this project in Zimbabwe opens the possibility for us to get through the approaching period and even procure new commissions. Our plans for Zimbabwe's market don't stop with this job. We are already in advanced discussions about several other projects, which are opening prospects for founding a permanent design subsidiary in Harare. That is both our wish and goal. (Bakić 1982)

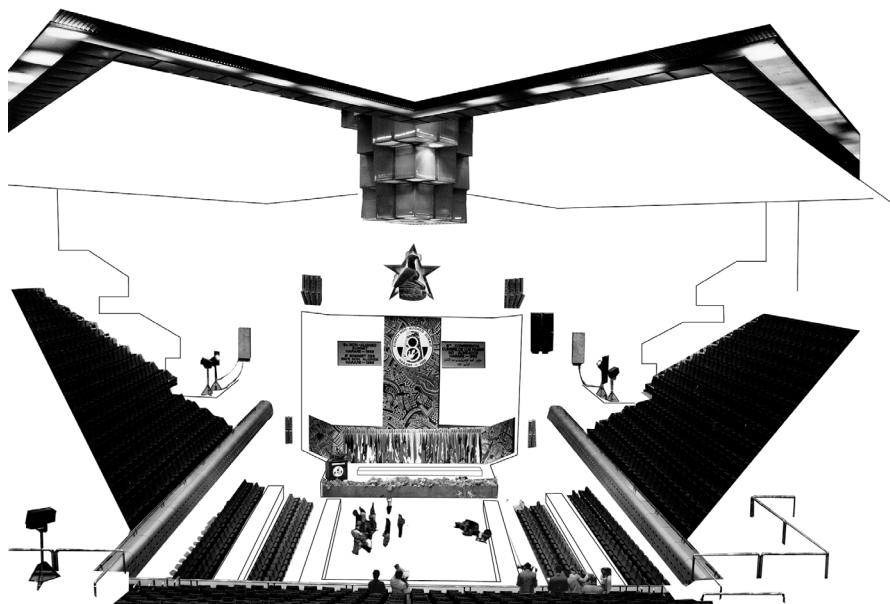
This goal was reached; Energoprojekt did open a subsidiary and worked actively in the country until the mid-1990s, designing and constructing a wide range of public buildings and infrastructural objects. In January 1989, Robert Mugabe visited the Belgrade offices of Energoprojekt during an official visit to Yugoslavia and described the position of the enterprise in his country in terms that resonated with those used by the president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, when he had visited the company almost twenty years earlier (Jakovljević 1989). At the time, Energoprojekt was completing the headquarters for the main political party in the country, Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), a fifteen-storey post-modern tower designed by local architects Peter Martin and Tony Wales-Smith and influenced by Philip Johnson's 1984 AT&T building on Madison Avenue in New York.

Infrastructures and the Quest for Non-Aligned Architectures

The 2017 three-channel digital video installation *Two Meetings and a Funeral* by artist Naeem Mohaiemen, in which he links the politics of independent Bangladesh with its participation in non-aligned summits, brings Indian historian Vijay Prashad to the *Salle omnisports la Coupole d'Alger*, designed by Oscar Niemeyer (Oddy 2019), in which the 1973 summit took place. Prashad comments while walking around the empty space searching for anticolonialism in the building's architecture:

You know, they produced these giant buildings. They are so hard to maintain. They look shabby perhaps days after they finished constructing it. How are you supposed to maintain something so enormous? ... it is ok to build it, it gives you a sense of pride, but it is not maintainable. You have populations in poverty, and then there is this huge thing. It is impossible to clean the glass, it is impossible to maintain it from leaks. I am optimistic about the project, but I am not optimistic about this kind of artistic expression in the middle of the project. Somehow it doesn't seem correct. Huge amounts of scarce resources are put into this and then, as I say, it's hard to maintain it ... Although to tell you the truth, I can't see many motifs of anticolonialism here. Where is the anticolonial motif, where are the people?¹³

If we look at the conference centres Energoprojekt built in Africa, is it possible to see in them anticolonialism or, at least, non-alignment? If we focus only on the one in Harare, its design and the spatial disposition of the interior reveals more about the ideological shifts between the 1970s and 1980s and the changing approach to various projects abroad than its golden clad exterior. This conference hall represents a radical break with the approach developed by Energoprojekt in the previous decade. The roundtable as the key organizing design element for the main conference hall, and the principle of horizontality, were abandoned. The hall, rectangular in its base, was organized vertically, with two steep juxtaposed seating galleries on the longer sides, modelled as an arena. The architects used the UK Parliament as a reference, as it, for them, represented the spirit of democracy they wanted to capture. The irony of using such a reference in a former British colony escaped the authors who, at that moment, had already developed a critique of the Yugoslav system and, most importantly, self-management, which they saw as a burdensome process that allowed nonexperts to interfere and slow down their projects and, most significantly, hindered them from playing a role in a society they thought was theirs by right – that of the bourgeois architect they saw in the capitalist West.¹⁴ The two strongest factors in shaping the auditorium as a new arena for democracy in Zimbabwe were a fascination with Western capitalist democracy and a belief in competition. What was at play was a colonization of the imagination by a Western imaginary translated into architecture. In practice, the auditorium was too large, and most of the participants were reduced to being passive



10.2 *Harare 1986*, collage by Dubravka Sekulić, 1986.

observers. While, in the moment of initial design, Zimbabwe wanted to host an OAU meeting and not a non-aligned summit, it seems that for Energoprojekt's architects, both non-alignment and anticolonialism became pure rhetorical devices, forgotten as principles.

Both summits in Lusaka and Harare were important in the history of the Movement because they were concerned with the future of the Third World and tried to articulate demands for a more equitable world. At the same time, the World Bank and other development banks were quick to start supporting various infrastructural projects in African countries that were in the process of liberating themselves. Many loans came with conditions requiring the selection of projects or construction companies from specific countries, but for a while, there was enough work for construction companies from all parts of the world, who would compete against each other but also work side by side on the same construction sites (Stanek 2020a, 2020b). And even when both the political and economic power of Yugoslavia was slowly diminishing during the 1970s, Energoprojekt was among the most successful enterprises, especially when one considers the size of the Yugoslav economy, and in the 1980 annual

survey of the Engineering News Record it was ranked as sixth in the field of consulting and twentieth in that of turnkey contracts.¹⁵

As Paul Stubbs (2019) notes, there was “no singular, stable, socio-economic imaginary within Non-aligned Movement,” but there was a broad consensus that Non-Aligned Movement countries individually and through mutual collaboration and support can achieve “rapid economic and social development” (Kardelj 1975, 12). The Non-Aligned Movement followed the UN and the zeitgeist development approach in which industrialization was the cornerstone of development and growth, “a kind of monological project of modernity” (Escobar 1994 quoted in Stubbs 2019). This is the context in which all projects, not only conference centres, need to be read, including the role of Energoprojekt. In this quest for development, infrastructure, in an expanded sense, played an important role. By the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s, it became obvious that the postindependence infrastructure boom of the 1960s and 1970s did not bring to many non-aligned countries the bright and prosperous future of more developed societies, but a future that was arrested by debt.

According to Prashad (2007, 224–44), the Third World as a project, and with it the emancipatory potential of the Non-Aligned Movement, was assassinated in Kingston by IMF-led globalization. The summit in Zimbabwe was not a funeral but the night of the living debt, packaged in a hypertrophied UK Parliament. The main achievement of the 1986 Non-Aligned Movement summit was the creation of the South Commission following the initiative of Mahathir Mohamed, prime minister of Malaysia. The commission, chaired by the former president of Tanzania Julius Nyerere, was to develop a “serious study of the political and economic problems of the NAM states and some pointers for action” (ibid., 276). The report, released in 1990, “argued that the adjustment strategies of IMF-led globalization weakened the Third World as a political force” (ibid., 277).

The tentative answer to the question if there were non-aligned architectures is “no,” but a new non-alignment is needed more than ever. Both the Movement and modern architecture as an extension of industrialist modernization were obstacles and not vehicles for non-aligned architectures to emerge, as they led to integration into the hegemonic global system and not its transformation. However, an architecture of non-alignment as an architecture of coliberation must be possible and is needed more than ever. Based not on the

concepts of modernization and bracketing of difference but derived from working with and across difference, it is possible to rethink development, but this time as “small d’ development” (Bhandar, Ziadah, and Wilson Gilmore 2020, 167), which Ruth Wilson Gilmore builds through the concept of “blues epistemologies” (Woods and Gilmore 2017).

Conclusions: Spectres of Debt

The Non-Aligned Movement, together with similar initiatives such as the G-77 and UNCTAD, ceased to be a political force and the demise of all three left no one to “champion a debt abolition of relief strategy for the planet” (Prashad 2007, 277). Yugoslavia shared the faith with its non-aligned peers of the debt-arrested future, and the 1980s in the country were also marked by Structural Adjustment Programs and IMF-imposed austerity measures, which Johanna Bockman (2019) has termed “capitalist counterrevolution.” Timothy Mitchell (2020) stressed how “infrastructures work on time, but not only in the ways we commonly assume. While they may increase the speed at which goods are transported, people travel, or energy flows, this acceleration of time is not their most important attribute. Their physical scale, technical durability, and political strength give them another purpose. They introduce an interruption, a gap, out of which the present extracts wealth from the future.” In other words, infrastructures produce debt. For decades, it was unthinkable that the focus on infrastructure investment was what was bringing all the countries into a neocolonial position of servitude because of debt.

As a tentative conclusion, and an invitation for new scholarship, perhaps it is possible to think about debt¹⁶ not as foreclosure, but as an opening for the future. Denise Ferreira da Silva (2017, 87) reminds us that “global capital lives off the total value expropriated from slave labour and native lands.” She articulates the concept of “unpayable debt” as “an obligation that one owns but is not one’s to pay” and an operative figure that “recalls expropriation, the mode of extraction of profit characteristic of the modern colony, which is the moment of the juridical-economic matrix of capital that performs the appropriation of total value required for capital creation through the deployment of total violence” (88). Harney and Moten (2013, 61) insist that, unlike credit, debt is social and mutual. According to them, “debt can be abandoned

for bad debt. It can be forgotten for bad debt, but it cannot be forgiven” (63). Their concept of bad debt is close to Ferreira da Silva’s unpayable debt – it is a conceptualization of debt that refuses to be reintegrated into the circuits of global capital flows. The bad and unpayable debt acknowledges that its origin lies in colonial dispossession and refuses to be forgiven. For Harney and Moten “there will be a [debt] jubilee when the Global South does not get credit for discounted contributions to the world civilization and commerce but keeps its debts, changes them only for the debts of others, a swap among those who never intend to pay, who will never be allowed to pay, in a bar in Penang, in Port of Spain, in Bandung, where your credit is no good” (63). Infrastructures produced in non-alignment can offer some guidance on how the oppressed, the underdogs, the damned, can come together and articulate their position in the world, across difference, in resistance to both local and global ruling elites, in which debt forgetting and not forgiving can be one of the triggers for anti(neo)colonial solidarity.

The Non-Aligned Movement can be seen as the conservative side of the anticolonial struggle, providing solidarity for decolonizing nations to gain sovereignty but taming and integrating them into capitalist globalization. Ultimately, the vehicle of liberation also became the vehicle of integration into an indefensible system (Césaire 2001, 32) precisely because of a belief in the possibility of an international public sphere to be constituted on principles of equality by bracketing off differences (Fraser 1990) rather than insisting on coliberation based on thinking in terms of difference. The Non-Aligned Movement and its materialization through the work of Energoprojekt point to both the possibility and the necessity to think about internationalism and solidarity and about parameters not set by capitalist or socialist developmental agendas of progress predicated upon continuous growth.

If the Non-Aligned Movement teaches us anything, it is that while its existence together with other progressive ideas such as Pan Africanism, the Tri-continental, or the Third World did not prevent neocolonial enclosure, this does not mean that recolonization as such was inevitable. Ultimately, anti-colonialism serves as a constant reminder that “there is nothing undoable, as hard as undoing it would be” (Bhandar, Ziadah, and Wilson Gilmore 2020, 176). Studying Energoprojekt enables us to understand that it matters how things are done. The experience of South-South collaboration was not enough to raise a different type of consciousness and, with it, a different type of imag-

inary. “What the world will become already exists in fragments and pieces, experiments and possibilities” (Lambert and Wilson Gilmore 2019, 14), and while flawed, there are many lessons to be learned from Energoprojekt and its being in the non-aligned world.¹⁷

NOTES

- 1 Transcript from archival recording Synd 10-9-70 Non-Aligned Summit Opened by Kenneth Kaunda, 1970, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOwHnCdN4ws>, accessed 20 April 2021.
- 2 The *NYT* article stresses how “Philips is said to have given priority to the Zambian contract over all others” and that it even recalled workers from holidays to meet the deadlines. Philips continued to be ZECCO’s subcontractor on the project for the FINDECO tower.
- 3 Quoted in *Two Meetings and a Funeral*, a three-channel video installation by Naeem Mohaiemen 2017.
- 4 Information sourced from various Energoprojekt documents.
- 5 *Energoprojekt* (Published as a Special Insert for the Architectural Journal *Arhitektura Urbanizam*), unpaginated.
- 6 During the visit to the offices of Energoprojekt in 1975, Bongo stressed that it was Tito who recommended Energoprojekt to him in Algiers. See Radenović (1975).
- 7 Quoted here from an interview with Dušan Milenković but formulated first by Milica Šterić, the head of the Architecture and Urbanism Department of Energoprojekt from its founding in 1951 until 1976, and often repeated by architects I interviewed during my research. Jakovljević and Milenković (1979).
- 8 Conference Hall was roughly twenty-five million, Banquet 10.5 million, and Performance Hall 10.7 million USD (see Jakovljević 1977).
- 9 *Energoprojekt* 1951–81 publication, unpaginated.
- 10 Both Bakićs returned to Harare in 1993 to further develop the office of Energoprojekt there, which had fewer and fewer commissions. By that time, the world seemed completely different from the one of ten years before. What remained under the name of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) was under UN economic sanctions because of the wars they were waging against other parts of the former country, which had been expelled from the NAM. For Energoprojekt, the projects in Zimbabwe offered potential relief from the pressure

on the business caused by the sanctions. To be able to bid for both design and construction projects and not to appear twice as the same company, Bakić, with the initial support from Energoprojekt, registered Bakić Architects in 1993. They would stay and work in Zimbabwe until 1999 and design a series of large projects, including the complex for the UN's blue helmets division, which they completed (see Bakić and Maskareli 2004; Bakić 2012).

- 11 In her text about the project, Ljiljana Bakić (2012, 60) states that "the ruling white elite, responsible for the majority of architectural and construction projects, designed its life like in a film *Gone with the Wind*."
- 12 Lazo Žakula, member of the Business Committee on Energoprojekt's Work Division for Construction and a president of its Workers Council (Jakovljević 1983).
- 13 Quoted from the *Two Meetings and a Funeral*, three-channel digital video installation by Naeem Mohaiemen, 2017.
- 14 In an interview with an author DAY April 2016; see also Bakić and Maskareli (2004).
- 15 *Engineering News Record*. 17 July 1980, 45–8.
- 16 I am grateful to Johanna Bockman for pushing me to think beyond debt as foreclosure and to think of it as an opportunity.
- 17 I am indebted to Rina Priyani and Kanishka Prasad for conversations we had while I was writing this chapter and to Paul Stubbs without whose patience and editorial support this chapter would have stayed a draft.

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