

## Kiosk K67: Restoring Communities

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Socialist Yugoslavia emerged after World War II from the ruins of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It was founded on the ideals of self-governed socialism and headed by Josip Broz Tito, who maintained its unity and sovereignty against both Soviet and Western influences but also faced criticism for his authoritarianism and favoritism. Yugoslavia's postwar political and social changes were regarded as an "experiment," as they sparked a modernization process that supported industrialization and mass production while also allowing for new methods of building and design.<sup>1</sup>

The architecture of this era, across scales from object to the city, was a powerful force whose role was to convey collective pride and solidarity. Between the 1950s and 1980s, in addition

to buildings like convention centers, department stores, and cultural centers, thousands of spomeniks (monuments) were commissioned in Yugoslavia. These spomeniks characterized the region, state, and society as a unified entity, and commemorated the victories and sacrifices of wartime liberation, with the aim of bringing together the different ethnic groups in the area.<sup>2</sup>

### EMERGENCE OF KIOSK K67

As socialism and privatization began to intersect, Slovenian architect Saša Mächtig understood the impact that objects have on everyday life in the city and envisioned the Kiosk K67 as a link to human scale that could activate public space. Mächtig's interest in both industrial design and urban planning, as well as the understanding that function, expression, economy, and technology needed to work symbiotically, contributed to his success in the design of objects and spaces that to this day play a significant role in society.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. Collection of Kiosk K67 in an urban setting [1970s]. Image courtesy of "Saša J. Mächtig, Kiosk K67", Museum of Architecture and Design, Ljubljana



Figure 2. Kiosk as a traffic crossing observatory, Ljubljana, [1970s].

Image courtesy of "Saša J. Mächtig, Kiosk K67", Museum of Architecture and Design, Ljubljana

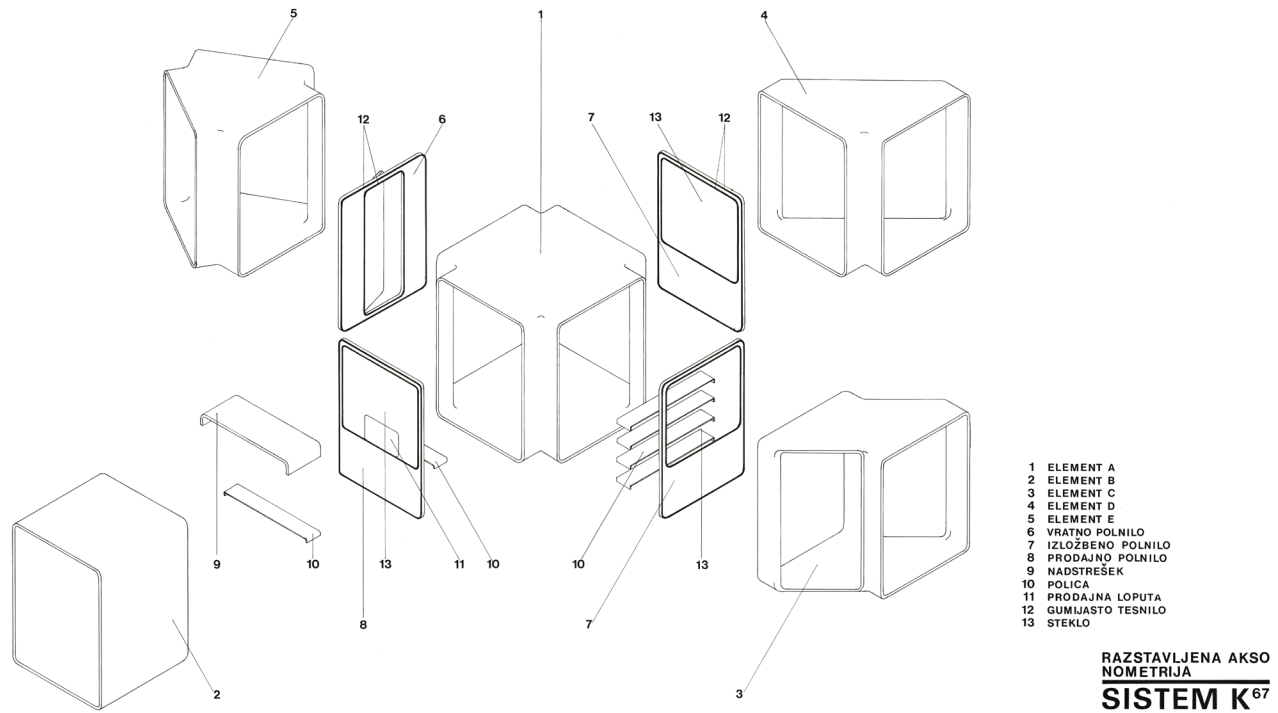


Figure 3. Exploded axonometric drawing of system K67, second generation, 1972. Image courtesy of “Saša J. Mächtig, Kiosk K67”, Museum of Architecture and Design, Ljubljana

In 1966, using two intersecting plastic pipes, Mächtig constructed physical study models that helped him test his idea to marry structural integrity and function. Using physical models as a primary study method, Mächtig conceptualized the first version of the Kiosk K67 system as a kit of parts with five primary structural components into which secondary components - doors, walls, windows - were inserted.<sup>4</sup>

The first full-scale reinforced polyfiber, bright red kiosk was presented to the public in 1969 in Ljutomer, Slovenia, and produced by the Slovenian industrial enterprise Imgrad.<sup>5</sup> As a product of urban design, architecture, and industrial design in the political and socio-economic context of socialist Yugoslavia, Kiosk K67 embarked on a path of further development, ultimately becoming an undeniable part of the cityscape in the former Yugoslavia. While some units were exported to Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, the domestic market was the most profitable.<sup>5</sup>

Kiosk K67 could stand alone as an individual unit or be combined to create larger aggregations. The versatile individual parts allowed for endless configurations that responded to the existing urban landscape, its users, and various programs. It formalized the sensibility of community through the forms that can host a wide range of microbusinesses, such as newspaper stands, flower shops, ticket booths, coffee shops, food stalls, and more. In

Yugoslavia’s fast-evolving towns and cities, the kiosk provided a common pattern yet a unique identity. In contrast to the ‘heavy’ concrete brutalist architecture that characterized Yugoslavia, the kiosk was light, bright, flexible, and nomadic.



Figure 4. Newspaper kiosk, [1970s]. Image courtesy of “Saša J. Mächtig, Kiosk K67”, Museum of Architecture and Design, Ljubljana

### KIOSK K67 AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA

The kiosk's production began to fade in the 1980s, when Yugoslavia's economy entered a state of rapid decline. As a result, Imgrad dissolved, and so did Yugoslavia itself, leaving behind traces of ethnic division. Yugoslavia, in many ways, was shaped by its architecture, and during its bloody dissolution, contradictions, and political disagreements manifested, and architecture became a target.<sup>6</sup> The destruction of commercial and residential architecture was more than a military strategy; it was a concerted effort to destroy collective identity. The dissolution prompted a period of differences between the newly established independent states, a period of unknown, and the re-appropriation of the remaining architecture. Through re-appropriation, neglect, and destruction, the formal, brutalist, ideological architecture is seen by many as a failure in its task. However, in contrast to the socialist monuments, the few remaining Kiosk K67s, out of the 7,500 produced, continue to embody the collective identity of the community in which it was created.



Figure 5. [Kiosk K67 during the Sarajevo Siege between 1992-1996].(n.d.)

### PRESERVING THE KIOSK K67

To study the kiosk's modularity and technicality while also investigating how the restoration of Kiosk K67 could serve as a precedent for preserving Yugoslav heritage after the diaspora, in 2020, I undertook the task of finding and restoring a Kiosk K67 unit. I acquired my first kiosk from a family who purchased it in the early 1980s to start their bakery business but, over time, had outgrown it. With the help of friends and family, the kiosk was carefully disassembled into its parts, revealing a state of disrepair with cracks, holes, decayed floors, and a leaking roof. To replace parts, we had to acquire multiple units, locating them and their owners by driving around various cities and towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina and piecing them together. We discovered that most of the doors and windows had been altered, replacing the original ones with wooden ones. Finding an authentic door was a rarity. After acquiring all the necessary parts, we partnered with a body shop repair team that helped us restore the kiosk to its original state. We sanded each piece, repaired the polyfiber where necessary, and applied primer and paint in the original

primary color. After six months of locating missing parts, sanding, repairing, and painting we assembled the first kiosk.

On October 18, 2022, a restored Kiosk K67 embarked on a transatlantic journey from Bosnia and Herzegovina and made its grand debut in Texas at the Blaffer Art Museum on January 26, 2023, as part of the exhibit "Kiosk K67: System for Urban Imagination." Installed in the University of Houston School of Art courtyard, the kiosk once again served as a place where communities were created, collaborations were started, dialogues were exchanged, and friendships were made. The significance of Kiosk K67 extends beyond its artistic and architectural appeal; it holds a special place in the hearts of the displaced Yugoslav diaspora. On the exhibit's opening night, Yugoslavians from the area were drawn to the kiosk, sharing stories of fond memories and connections to their heritage, reaffirming the kiosk's role as a symbol that resonates deeply with the displaced community.

What started as a one-time restoration has grown into an ongoing project of acquiring and restoring Kiosk K67s with the goal of reintroducing them into the urban landscape of both the former Yugoslavia and the rest of the world. Currently, four Kiosk K67 units have been fully restored using only original parts and colors. A refurbished yellow Kiosk K67 was reintroduced into the urban fabric of Kljuc, Bosnia Herzegovina, acknowledging the kiosk as a place of neutrality and collective identity. The kiosk became a gathering point for locals, evoking a sense of nostalgia and fostering a renewed sense of unity. The Kiosk K67 continues to transcend its physical form, becoming a catalyst for



Figure 6. Kiosk K67 before restoration, 2021. Courtesy of Author.

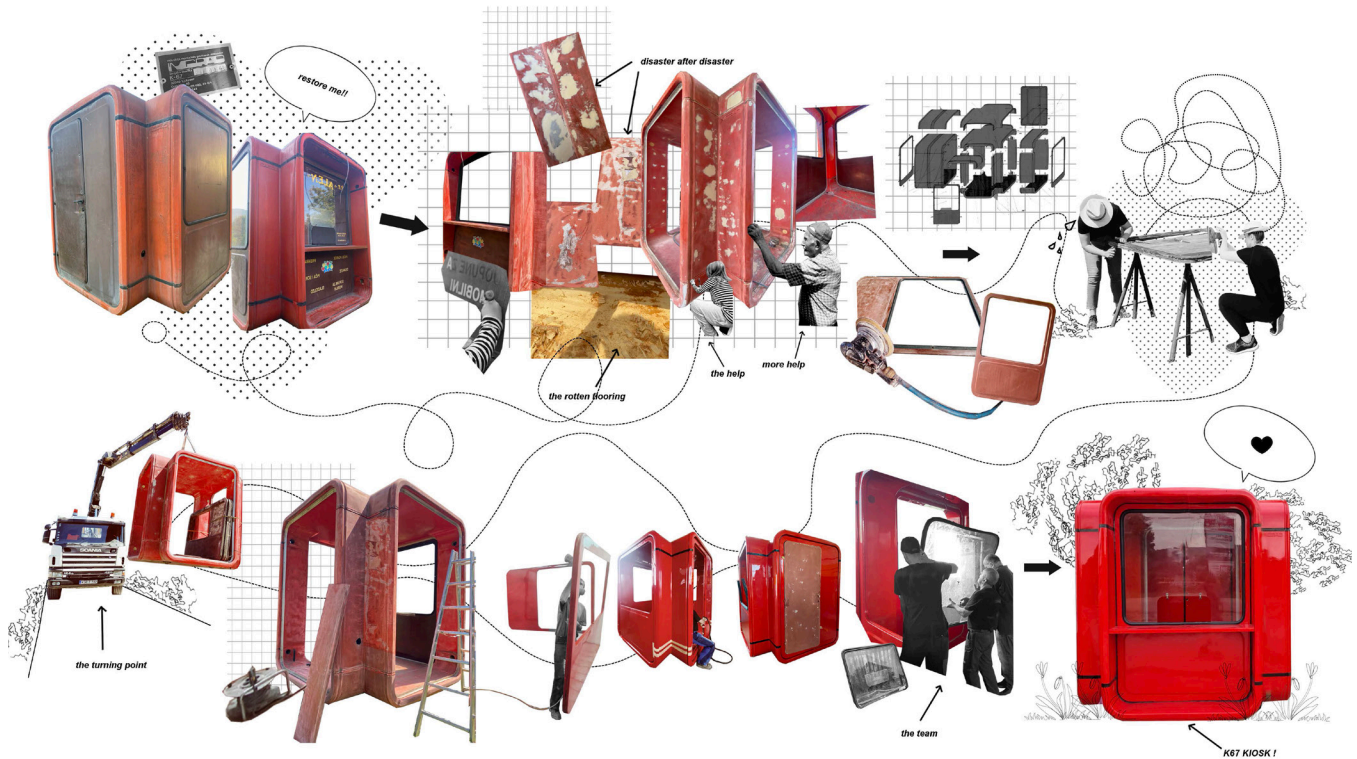


Figure 7. Kiosk K67 Restoration process. Courtesy of Author.



Figure 8. Installation of Kiosk K67 at the Blaffer Art Museum, 2023. Image courtesy of University of Houston.



Figure 9. Opening of Kiosk K67: “System for Urban Imagination” exhibit at the Blaffer Art Museum, 2023. Image courtesy of University of Houston.



Figure 10. Kiosk K67 Installation, Kljuc, BiH, 2023. Courtesy of Author.

connection and a symbol of resilience for the displaced Yugoslav diaspora and the local community.

## CONCLUSION

While the Kiosk K67 continues its legacy as a design icon around the world, in the ethnically diverse region of former Yugoslavia, it is more than just a kiosk, more than a newspaper stand and flower shop; it is a beacon of hope and a reminder of a better collective time. This restoration project not only preserves a historical design object but also sets a precedent on how the restoration of such architectural elements can help recover a forgotten legacy. As an undeniable keeper of history, a physical solvent of the invisible boundary between people and the power of coexistence, the kiosk does not belong to architecture, urban design, nor industrial design but to the communities that it fosters.

## ENDNOTES

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