

ARCHITECTURE OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES. CREATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL ACTIVITY

UDC 72.036

*Izhevsk State Technical University named after Mikhail Kalashnikov
Ph.D. student of Dept. of industrial and civil construction Amira S. R. Ahmad
Russia, Izhevsk, e-mail: dr.arch.amira@hotmail.com*

Amira S. R. Ahmad

APPROACHES OF HANDLING ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN HERITAGE OF SOVIET ERA IN RUSSIA

Statement of the problem. Russian Soviet Architecture and Urban planning heritage have significant place in Russian history, however it is subject to critical situation of physical degradation, denial of its Aesthetic and cultural value. Many voices calling for the demolition of Soviet heritage, advocating that architectural and urban planning Soviet solutions are outdated morally and physically.

Results and conclusions. Inspecting the history of soviet architectural heritage in Russia reveals innovative styles and solutions created by Master architects of this era. The study presents the remarkable characteristics and spatial organization potentials in Soviet urban planning heritage. Using Comparative analysis of historical conflicts in dealing with heritage, the research uncovered the real incentives behind forces calling for Soviet heritage demolition. Then study explains reasons, why demolition is not the right solution. Finally the research suggests number of approaches for dealing with Soviet Russian Architectural and urban planning heritage.

The significance of the study results are: 1 — Drawing attention to Cultural, Scientific, Artistic, economic and social values of Soviet heritage.

2 — Presenting Possible solutions for investing and benefiting these values.

3 — Recognizing the real incentives behind demolition.

4 — Proving that demolition is not the right decision and presenting other practices used all over the world.

Research concluded that: —The conservation and restoration of Soviet architecture and urban planning heritage have not only cultural and moral aspects but also economic and social gains and it enhances international image and identity of Russian cities. — Restoration, upgrading and reuse or reconstruction approaches are more effective and profitable than demolition. — As for urban

planning heritage the decision of urban upgrading or redevelopment depends on thorough study and analysis of situating and evaluation of values and potentials.

The research used a group of scientific methods: — Historical architectural and urban planning analysis of soviet era in Russia. The study of scientific publications ,archival material ,catalogs and photo documentation of masterworks of this era. — Comparative historical analysis of reaction towards heritage. — Comparative analysis of contemporary approaches of dealing with architectural and urban planning heritage in different countries.

Keywords: architecture, approach, heritage, soviet era.

Introduction

Heritage is a living witness on how our ancestors lived, which mistakes did they commit and which areas of creativity they mastered. Studying, experiencing and living architectural and urban heritage develop our awareness of what design tradition and planning decision should we keep and what should we never repeat. The city is the center of human culture, is a genetic map in it written history, present and future, living together, affecting and forming each other. The Past will form our future perspectives either by refusing history and contradicting with it or by keeping and living with it. Human architectural and urban heritage is A global concern, preserving it, restoring or even more modifying it to adapt to contemporary needs. The period of 1930s — 1980s represents the prosperity and superiority of Soviet nation in several fields. Soviet Architectural and urban heritage of Russia is a great product of this period. In present time this heritage is subject to many forces. In our hands the crucial decision; whether to preserve or demolish significant part of a great nation's identity.

The significance of the Russian Soviet era. Russian Architectural and urban planning heritage 1930s — 1980s is associated with some of the most important 20th century movements.

— Russian constructivism. Speaking about this rich architectural and city planning period of Russian history we cannot ignore the particularity of Constructivism (Also called Russian constructivism), found in Soviet Union in the 1920s — 1930s. Technology and engineering were both central to this style. Constructivism grew out of both Cubism and Futurist architecture geometric, dynamic and kinetic styles. The former Academy of planning building (by Dimitri Razov, 1937) [6, p. 285] (Fig. 1), and The Narkomfin Building in Moscow (by Moisei Ginzburg, 1928—1932), are two of the few remaining buildings representing Russian constructivism style. The Narkomfin Building in Moscow is described as “An excellent example of how apartments were designed for communal living”.

Also The Golosov Zuev workers club in Moscow (by Ilya Golsov, 1926—1928) is a remarkable structure which not only reveals the Russian Constructivism style but also represents the new building type of the Soviet era “Workers Club”. This new function provided a social outlet for workers to encourage their political and physical activities [1, p 82—83].



Fig. 1. Iconic Russian Soviet heritage. Dimitri Razov. The Academy of planning. Moscow, 1937 [6, p. 499]

— The Stalinist Empire Style. This era in Russia is also associated to the Stalinist Empire Style which represents a nostalgic socialist realism to classism [11, p. 160—163]. Stalinist Empire Style is an opulent, classical architectural style that reflected the relative economic stability of Stalin's rule period [2, p. 27]. Stalinist architecture harked back to the exemplars of folk art. This is particularly evident in the All — union Agricultural Exhibition (1939) which was described as a work of art who brought realized socialism together with beauty. Stalinist Empire Style architecture heritage represents artistic significance and uniqueness of Russian architecture of that time [11, p. 160—163].

— The Avant — Garde. An umbrella term which is can be used to describe different artistic and architectural styles, the common element between them is the radical rejection of the past and a strong appeal for an aesthetic renewal of art and life. This was used first of all to the construction and extension of a new technical infrastructure for media, transport and industrial production. Creative engineering structures of steel and concrete were created to serve new building functions. Two of the most remarkable examples of Avant-Garde movement is the tower buildings and wide-span roof structures of Vladimir G. Shukhov (1853—1939), Gostorg Ministry of Trade (1925—27, B. M. Velikovsky) [4, p. 59].

— Russian Soviet urban planning. After the Russian revolution the Soviet government decided that only mass housing was needed [3, p. 59]. The Communist policies of planning until the end of 20th century aimed at fostering the country's industrial development through build-

ing new urban areas [4, p. 38]. However we should note that the reconstruction of Moscow 1930s — 1940s according to the Moscow general plan 1935 [11, p. 81—103], and the redevelopment movement of major soviet cities had witnessed the conservation of these cities' heritage and restoration of their historical city centers [10, p. 187], planning of parks and public spaces, intensification of greening inside cities and the establishment of a huge green belt around Moscow [12, p. 81—103], which in fact was Consistent with the European movement of cities' environmental and urban upgrading at that time. The building of new Soviet urban settlements reflected rigid planning principles, especially with regard to spatial repartition of houses utilities and services. These new urban settlements were designed as laboratories, Their common feature is the lack of identity, the dominating concrete apartment blocks and the dispersed substandard services accompanying them the fail to make for attractive urban environment. The decline of industry severely affected the development of these urban settlements [4, p. 38—40]. Since the 1990s these areas are in middle of a vicious circle of urban decay, and loss of image and self esteem among the residents [8, p. 317]. Nevertheless we cannot ignore the positive characteristics and spatial opportunities inherited from the socialist urban settlements, — Vast open space accessible to urban residents, — Well defined urban boundaries, — High residential density, — Compactness of urban envelop, — High degree of social coherence in most urban neighborhoods, — Well developed public transit system used by the majority of the population [9, p. 424].

Incentives behind heritage demolition decisions — Pragmatic criteria. Through history, attitude to heritage was influenced by pragmatic criteria, first and foremost, the criteria of taste, expressing both artistic and ideological social attitudes. It is the selfishness of contemporaries who are prone to appreciate in the past only what is consonant with their views, even in the early historical stages of restoration activities revealed the contradictions inherent in the general process of continuity in the development of culture [1]. As Modernism rejected historical heritage, Postmodernism with nostalgic tendency to historical values calls for the same actions towards the heritage of Modernism which comprises significant part of Russian Soviet heritage.

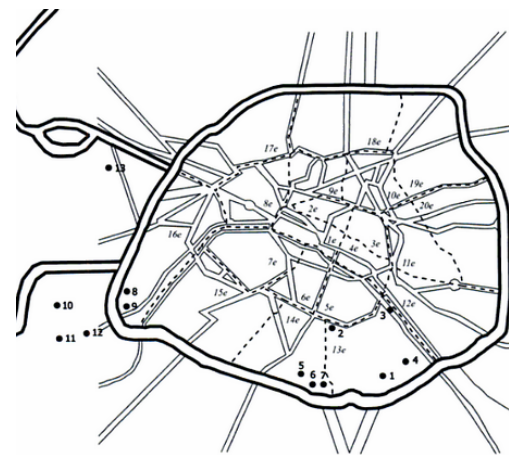
— Contradictions with political, religious or purely pragmatic forces. The selective nature of inheritance always led to the denial of some, and sometimes many, values and, consequently, their material carriers inherited from the past. Denial, as a radical adaptation and rethinking are forces governing the process for change of epochs. It has long been that the action for the

conservation and restoration of monuments of the past was directed not only by a sense of respect for their historical value or understanding of their artistic significance, Most often by non-artistic interests of a political, religious or purely pragmatic forces. Moreover, these same interests can become a cause of action and reverse — the destruction of "extraneous" [1]. — The current political disclaiming of communism principles and replacing it with capitalism, — the public reaction of rejecting the anti religious communist ideology, — the renaissance of national identities which were forcibly denied by the Soviet regime, are counter powers, refusing the Conservation and preservation efforts of Russian Soviet heritage (1930s — 1980s). History gives us many examples of how ideological intransigence and, as a consequence, cultural nihilism pose attitude towards the monuments of the past according to the political interests. It is interesting to note that Recurrence of this type of public relations was the repressive policies towards a substantial part of the cultural heritage in the era of Stalinism in Russia [1].

Why not Demolition? — Crucial identity element.

The Russian heritage of Soviet Iconic masterworks, is a representation of Significant creative Soviet architects, its demolition is a destruction of their memory Conserving them and people living in them reinforces Russian identity and retrieves lost self estimation because of economic crises, as they are a prove and wetness of Russian intellect, Greatness, and the living glory reminding of an Era full of glorious achievements.

— Important cultural and touristic capital. Architecture fans and tourists visiting Moscow are often puzzled to find that most of the city's Soviet buildings have either fallen into ruin or have been disfigured by inappropriate use and insensitive rehabilitations. In comparison visitors to Paris who want to see Le Corbusier's work can visit the Foundation where they will get information about his buildings, which they will find preserved and well maintained. Significant Soviet architects such as Konstantin Melnikov, or Moisei Ginzburg, have no such representation in Moscow (Fig. 2). Indeed, visitors and tourists will be depressed to even find their buildings, so crowded and disfigured by new developments of the last 15 years, and in bad conditions, which are anything but their intended pristine appearance [2, p. 26].



PARIS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Villa Planeix (Planex) | 10. Villas Lipchitz-Miestchaninoff |
| 2. Annexe du Palais du Peuple | 11. Villa Cook |
| 3. Asile Flottant | 12. Villa Ternesien |
| 4. Cité de Refuge
(L'armée du Salut) | 13. Maisons Jaoul |
| 5. Atelier Ozenfant | 14. Villa Besnus (Ker-ka-ré) |
| 6. Pavillon Suisse | 15. Villa Stein (de Monzie) |
| 7. Pavillon du Brésil | 16. La Petite Maison de Weekend
(Villa Henfel, Villa Félix) |
| 8. Villas La Roche-Jeanneret | 17. Villa Savoye
(Savoie, les Heures Claires) |
| 9. Immeuble et Appartement de
Le Corbusier | |

Fig. 2. Map of The Le Corbusier works in Paris. The Le Corbusier Guide. [5, p. 37]

— An International concern. The conservation of heritage presents an immediate challenge all over the world. Soviet Era's master-works are lost due to inherent design problems and changes in the economic and political contexts in which they now exist. Despite some excellent works in the field of restoration and preservation practice, increasing numbers of architects, owners



Fig. 3. Architectural Contrast and diversity. Preservation of architectural heritage and redevelopment of contemporary architecture of outstanding quality. Willis HQ, 2001—2007, Norman Foster, Lime Street, London, UK, 2001 — 2007. Source: <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/willis-hq-lime-street/>

and communities are struggling to conserve architectural heritage [4, p. 22]. Examples of Conservation initiatives: The Conserving Modern Architecture Initiative (CMAI)¹. Heritage challenges and the mobilization of knowledge: Preserving modern architecture Conference in Québec², The ICOMOS³ International Scientific Committee for Twentieth Century Heritage, etc.

— Dialogue of eras. Every historical city is an example of architectural diversity due to the different styles of the various historical periods. The old parts of the city need the new in order to be recognizable and the new developments need the old to engage in an intellectual and philosophical dialog with it.

— Lost of urban and economic assets. During the 1930s — 1980s were produced immense urban assets and housing stock in Russia. They



Fig. 4. Restoration of Modernist heritage and function conversion. Former Manufacturers Hanover Trust Branch Bank, 1954. Current high-end retail space, 2010-2012, Gordon Bunshaft: New York. Source: <http://www.wmf.org/journal/510-fifth-avenue-revisited>

¹ Is a comprehensive, long-term, and international program of the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/cmair/

² Québec, Canada, October 14-17, 2010 http://canada.icomos.org/documents/CallForPapers_EN.pdf

³ (ISC 20C) <http://icomos-isc20c.org/>

represent enormous economic capital, As were funded with Huge financial investments for infrastructure, Facilities, Energy provision [4, p. 38]. Although faced by many problems and deemed by unattractive urban environment they contain many positive urban aspects [10, p. 424]. These urban assets are worthy preserving, maintaining and upgrading to fit with current urban planning tendencies and requirements.

Approaches of dealing with heritage. It is clear that the entire built environment of a historical ensemble will not be safeguarded and protected, as the philosophy of conservation rational is clear, Focusing on the surviving physical fabric as the subject of primary value and interest [13, p. 23]. The preservation of heritage of high value whether it is an architecture monument or urban ensemble should include the restoration and reuse or function conversion of the old building and redevelopment of contemporary architecture and urban planning of outstanding quality.

— Structural modifications and function conversion. Several approaches can be used in one project. Such as: *Restoration* of important and primary elements of building's architecture and style. *Conversion of function* to fit with contemporary activities (Retail stores, Restaurants, Hotels, Museum... etc.). Of course taking into consideration the architectural style and structure of the building, and whether the new function suitable for it. *Modification* which neither detracts from the architectural value of the building nor redeems its significant characteristics, Such as modifying internal spaces to fit the new function, Structural modifications... etc. *Relocating* or reorienting some elements such as escalators. *Upgrading* structural capacity. *Installing* contemporary technological systems such as elevators, lighting systems... etc.

— Urban upgrading. There are certain techniques that can be employed successfully to face urban decay, save and upgrade Russian Soviet urban assets: *Transportation Plans*. It connects City centers and intended regeneration plans and projects on isolated and degenerated neighborhoods or abandoned industrial areas. Usually, they comprise the amelioration and reuse of abandoned networks (railroad, rivers...) and their incorporation to the public transport system. This decision lies both on the attempt of developing a less unsustainable urban model and to the understanding that access to services and working places by public transport will enhance social cohesion. *Industrial Culture and Working Memory Recuperation Programs* Linked to the restoration and reuse of major elements of industrial heritage. Usually, most significant industrial sites and buildings are recuperated for tourism, cultural uses and recreational areas but, in most cases, renovation is tied to new community services and parks.

Housing Development Plans. They comprise two kinds of projects: redevelopment projects for working-class or deteriorated industrial neighborhoods (through the restoration and maintenance of working-class housing schemes linked to industrial sites, the revitalization of traditional districts or the redevelopment of degenerated social housing neighborhoods) and new mixed — use district projects planned on former industrial sites, integrating a great amount of services and recreational areas for the residents as a way of encouraging new population to live and stay in the district [9, p. 318—319]. *Street art work projects.*

Where some point of view can pessimistically describe a situation of plain concrete apartment blocks, other point of view might regard it as full of chances. To imagine how much creativity work can be produced on these facades, a person can take an enormous plain paper and freely let go his imagination. A regional street art campaign for renovating facades can be led to retrieve beauty, uniqueness and identity these districts lacking, and create original attractive urban environment. The Russian society is rich of diverse nationalities, each of them has wealthy historical and cultural artistic and architectural heritage. Traditional art of every region can be painted on facades giving them the identity of the regional context of their city and society. Sculptures can be used to bring back life to public spaces and children's play grounds. Some districts may decide to lead contemporary art program gaining special identity (Fig. 3—5).

Conclusion

The Soviet era in Russia (1930s — 1980s) represents a prosper period of architectural innovation, creativity, and intensive active urban planning. It is an important part of Russian history and crucial component of identity. The Soviet era in Russia produced huge architectural and city planning assets. The Soviet heritage of Russia is full of investment potentials, esthetic values and positive characteristics. Demolition is the easiest decision yet the most wasteful and damaging. Approaches such as restoration, upgrading, reuse... etc. are more effective. They give a chance to invest in Russian Soviet heritage hence preserving the majority of it. In comparison with European countries the Master Architect's works of Soviet era in Russia



Fig. 5. Street art giving life to plain facades. New Mural In Frankfurt, Germany, By Brazilian street artist Walter Nomura aka Tinho: Frankfurt, Germany. Source: <http://www.streetartnews.net/2013/09/tinho-new-mural-in-frankfurt-germany.html>

does not get the suitable respectful celebration. This is not only a moral aspect but also economic aspect in the field of touristic investment, cultural aspect, and remarkable part of Russia's image in the eyes of its visitors. Many famous cities around the world are rich of diverse urban contexts of several historical period's heritage, many Russian cities also have this potential, it is only needs to be restored, reused and brought back to life. Part of the Soviet urban planning asset in Russia is in a stage of urban decay. Urban decay of some parts of the city is a stage in the urban evolution process. Where in some cases urban upgrading can be the suitable strategy in other cases redevelopment may be the ideal solution. The Decision should always be based on thorough knowledgeable analysis and assessments of current situation, existing values and potentials and chances for investment.

References

1. Bobrov Iu. G. *Teoriia restavratsii pamiatnikov iskusstva: zakonomernosti i protivorechiia* [The theory of restoration of monuments of art: regularities and contradictions]. Available at: <http://art-con.ru/node/847> (accessed: 25.11.2014).
2. Cecil Clementine. *The Bell Tolls for Moscow's Modernist Masterworks*. Available at: http://www.wmf.org/sites/default/files/wmf_article/pg_26-29_russia_d.pdf (accessed: 1.11.2014).
3. Denslagen Wim. *Romantic Modernism: Nostalgia in the World of Conservation*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam university press, 2009.
4. Gaborit Pascaline. *European new towns: Image, Identity, Future perspectives*. Brusselsm Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2010.
5. Gans Deborah. *The Le Corbusier Guide*. New York, Princeton Architectural press, 2006
6. Khmel'nitskii D. S. *Arkhitektura Stalina. Psikhologiiia i stil'* [The Architecture of Stalin. Psychology and Style]. Moscow, Progress-Traditsiia Publ., 2006.
7. Palmer Allison Lee. *Historical Dictionary of Architecture*. Lanham, Maryland, Scarecrow Press, 2008.
8. Ramadan Amira Saeed. Sustainable development of industrial city :the case of western countries. *All Russian students academic conference with international participation*. Izhevsk, Publishing house of Izhevsk state technical university, 2013. pp. 316—319.

9. Stanilov Kiril .*The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism*. Dordrecht, Netherland, Springer, 2007.
10. Therborn Göran. *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945—2000*. London, SAGE publication Ltd, 1996.
11. Arrington Lauren, Leinhardt Zoe, Dawid Philip. *Beauty*. New York, Cambridge university press, 2013.
12. Bylinkin N., Kalmykova V., Riabushin A. *Istoriia sovetskoi arkhitektury* [The history of Soviet architecture]. Moscow, Stroiizdat Publ., 1985.
13. Haspel Jörg, Petzet Michael, Zalivako Anke and Ziesemer John. *The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism*. Berlin, International Council on Monuments and Sites, Heritage at Risk Special Edition edited by ICOMOS, 2006.