

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS

« SOCIALIST MODERNISM IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE »

Brief report on the workshop on the occasion of the International Day for Monuments and Sites 2023

On the occasion of the International Day for Monuments and Sites on 18 April 2023, the Max Lingner Foundation and ICOMOS Germany organised a workshop on Socialist Modernism in Central and Eastern Europe on 18, 19 and 20 April 2023 with the kind support of the Landesdenkmalamt Berlin, the Chair of Monument Preservation at the BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, "Helle Panke" e.V., Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Berlin and the Hermann Henselmann Foundation.



The starting point of the reflections was:

"Internationally, a new interest in the 'Second Socialist Modernism' (since 1955) in architecture and urban planning can be observed. Above all, the reappraisal of the Cold War in the Anglo-Saxon region has contributed to this. Recently, Łukasz Stanek published his book Architecture in Global Socialism (2020). In Europe, the exhibition at the Vienna Architecture Centre Sowjetmoderne 1955–1991 (2012–13) and the catalogue accompanying it were undoubtedly a major milestone for this new discovery. In the Eastern European countries, too, there is a growing understanding that beyond the reception of interwar modernism, there partly understood as a resource for the re-emergence of nation states, it is also important to address the socialist phase as part of one's own building culture.

In Eastern Europe, the contributions of Dumitru Rusu and the B.A.C.U. Association have found remarkable resonance. With his photo volumes, architectural guides and the website Socialist Modernism, the Romanian architect and his team have greatly promoted knowledge about the architectures of the former socialist countries in recent years. In parallel, the SocHeritage [Platform](#) has been established within the framework of the International Scientific Committee of ICOMOS for the 20th Century, founded in Moscow in 2006.

The return of military conflicts in Europe and finally Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the spring of 2022, the advent of a new bloc thinking and the strengthening of nationalist currents are endangering this exchange and the enlightenment about the common recent history that has thus been set in motion. On the occasion of ICOMOS' International Day for Monuments and Sites on 18 April, Dumitru Rusu and proven experts from Central and Eastern Europe accepted the invitation to discuss this shared cultural heritage in a workshop and to promote cross-border dialogue beyond the war."

The programme can be found [here](#).

On the assessment and results of the workshop

Given the international situation, it is a remarkable event and success of the workshop to have brought together experts from Central and Eastern European countries (online and in presence), including experts from Ukraine and Russia (with temporary residence in Germany).

It proved to be highly stimulating to use the "Socialist Modernism" [platform](#) (website, photo volumes, maps, etc.) initiated by Dumitru Rusu (Bucharest/Chisinau) with its visual material as a starting point for international comparisons and discussions. This photo inventory, which focuses on the period between 1955 and 1991, is intended as a cross-border participatory project and opens up initial access to an unexpectedly diverse and nationally and regionally differentiated architectural heritage of Eastern Modernism in the post-socialist countries of Europe.

In contrast, the discussion of the questions raised for International Day for Monuments and Sites 2023 under the motto "Heritage Changes" about the energy and climate balance of "Socialist Modernism" and its potential as an ecological resource remained in its infancy.



The alternation of the programme between online evening events with lectures, impulse contributions and discussions in the Max Lingner House and excursions to post-war heritage buildings and art works in Berlin and Brandenburg (World Heritage potentials of post-war modernism in East and West Berlin; government district Berlin-Pankow; architecture and building-related art of Eastern Modernism in Cottbus) proved to be a successful mix, providing concrete visual material on the workshop topic, but also an occasion for in-depth discussions on site. Especially for the foreign guests, the site visits under expert guidance offered a special opportunity to get to know the debate on heritage policy and the cultural practice of heritage conservation in a concrete way. Last but not least, the workshop strengthened the international exchange at ICOMOS level between the post-socialist countries.



The phenomenon of Socialist Modernism in Central and Eastern Europe can and must be established as a European research topic and project. ICOMOS, DOCOMOMO, EUROPA NOSTRA and others are called upon to become a driving force in this. The National Scientific Committees for the Conservation of 20th Century Heritage (NSC 20C) and other expert groups offer particularly suitable organisational forms for this.

The presentations of the three-day workshop – which unfortunately were only attended by a small group of interested people – are accessible online:

https://youtu.be/7_thetd1vk8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arFxEfxY10w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGgBi0n5rDQ>

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