

Exporting Socialism, Making Business? (Erkner, 21-22 Jun 18)

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) Erkner, Jun 21–22, 2018
Deadline: Dec 20, 2017

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Exporting Socialism, Making Business? Intercultural Transfer, Circulation and Appropriations of Architecture in the Cold War Period

After WW II, architecture was used and misused as an ideological signifier for competing systems and for new national identities. Diverse actors and networks took part in architectural exchange within the blocks and beyond the Iron Curtain. Different aid projects posed an attempt to overcome political and economic divides, but at the same time they were often considered as foreign imposition or neo-colonial practice. Tensions between commercial interests and solidarity arose. Against this background and referring to the growing scholarly interest for the multi-layered and multi-centred exchanges between the Global South and socialist as well as capitalist countries, we would like to investigate this issue in relation to architecture and constructing industry from an interdisciplinary perspective of architectural, urban and economic history as well as postcolonial studies and heritage preservation.

The conference focuses around five aspects:

I. Designing

- What actors, institutions and networks worked on international architectural and urban planning projects on micro-, meso- and macro-scale? Which motives can be outlined? How was the challenge of designing in the abstract handled?
- Which means and languages of architectural representation were chosen for international projects? How was this issue perceived from different perspectives (socialist, non-aligned, western)?
- What role did 'tropical architecture' as a concept and subject in architectural teaching play?

II. Circulating

- What were the geographies, temporalities and typologies of international architectural and urban planning projects?
- How were ideas, knowledge and actors (such as experts and construction workers) circulated?
- Which dynamics of bilateral and multilateral investments can be identified?

III. Appropriating

- How were international projects adapted to different local circumstances (e.g. on climatic, cultural or economic level)?
- Which local tensions arose due to the international projects? Where and how were the foreign investments contested? By whom?

- How has been the international architectural heritage from the post-war era handled over the last decades?

IV. Feed-back mechanisms

- What were the repercussions of international involvement on the architecture and urban planning in home countries?
- How did the actors reflect upon the international involvement?
- How were abroad projects presented in the experts' discourse and in the media?

V. Framing

- How were architectural projects influenced by the Cold War politics and economy (e.g. intra-block cooperation, power imbalance)? What was the ideological context of the architectural exchange (e.g. between different socialist countries around the world)?
- Which role(s) assumed the CMEA and other international organisations in the construction industry?
- Which concepts are relevant to the investigation of architectural projects (e.g. 'multiple modernities')? How can they be challenged?

Both case studies and cross-cutting analyses are welcome. We strongly encourage submitting papers shifting the perspective to the non-European actors and their involvement in architectural projects.

Paper proposals (abstract of max. 450 words + short CV) should be addressed to both Dr. Andreas Butter (Andreas.Butter@leibniz-irs.de) and Dr. Monika Motylinska (Monika.Motylinska@leibniz-irs.de) until December 20, 2017.

Reference:

CFP: Exporting Socialism, Making Business? (Erkner, 21-22 Jun 18). In: Arthist.net, Nov 20, 2017 (accessed Jan 23, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/16783>>.