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Discourse of Modernist Heritage and New Ways of Thinking about Socialist Urban Areas in Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT

Dealing with the socialist urban legacy proved to become one of main challenges for the cities of Eastern Europe in the last decades. The fall of socialism found most of the socialist urban areas either as “rejected” heritage or as a sort of “devastated” spaces which had lost their functional meaning, symbolic significance, and any clear narratives. In such conditions, it is particularly important to watch out for those processes, which enable socialist urban legacy to acquire new languages and symbols in order to be included into the current social dynamics. This article explores the potential of the world modernist heritage discourse in giving a new approach to interpreting urban legacy of socialist era. Over the past decade, the sharp increase in the activities around re-thinking and revitalization of modernist heritage turned into a global trend. For Eastern Europe modernist legacy appeared to become a certain lens, through which it is possible to explore various visions of the Eastern European urban past within different contexts. The article seeks to reveal how the global discourse of modernist heritage influences current perceptions and attitudes towards the socialist urban legacy in the Eastern European countries, and aims to find out to what extent it facilitates integration of this legacy into changing symbolic contexts.

KEYWORDS

socialist city, post-socialist city, modernist heritage, urban narratives, urban identity, discourse of world heritage, Eastern Europe

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Introduction

Mastering the Socialist urban heritage has become one of the key challenges to many Eastern European cities in the last twenty years. The main concern is not caused by its current functionality such as the questions of how to efficiently adjust these buildings to the new conditions or how to integrate them into the modern urban space. Rather, it is the public attitude to this heritage, and the problem of how this socialist legacy should be treated and spoken of in the present. After the demise of socialism, enormous housing and residential districts, which defined the visual distinctiveness and spatial structure of many cities for decades, lost their purpose and hardly any new meanings were attached to them in subsequent development. Unsurprisingly, many authors have recently turned to exploring the ways of describing post-socialist spaces and focused on the diverse urban narratives and city texts (Young & Kaczmarek, 2008; Czepczyński, 2010; Center for Urban History of East Central Europe, 2017; Sigma, 2016).

The emotional and symbolical rejection of socialist urban heritage was evidently a natural reaction to the social transformations of the 1990s. But it was a temporary stage in public discussion about this legacy (Czepczyński, 2008). For many cities, socialist buildings remained essential elements of their urban space and, therefore, required new interpretations and new significations.

In this context, the new approaches to interpreting modernist urban heritage in Eastern European countries gained currency in diverse fields of study and cultural activism. Once socialist architecture is regarded as a part of global cultural heritage of modernism, buildings and districts of socialist construction could be inscribed into new global contexts and endowed with new meanings.

In Eastern Europe, one has to remember, modernist architecture of different parts of the region is associated with different historical periods. For countries such as Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Lithuania, pre-war modernism symbolizes their newly acquired independence and, is, therefore, in stark contrast with the period of postwar socialism (Szczerski, 2010; Galusek, 2018). For other post-Soviet states (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus), however, this architecture ushered in an epoch of utopian socialism, which in the following decades would engender new cultural forms (Cohen, 2011; Kosenkova, 2009).

It is, therefore, crucial to understand how modernist socialist heritage is adopted and appropriated by new urban narratives in various local contexts, and how different are the ways of interpreting it. The aim of this article is to reveal how the discourse of

world modernist heritage influences current perceptions and public representations of the socialist urban legacy in the countries of Eastern Europe, and, thus, to find out to what extent it facilitates integration of this legacy into changing symbolic contexts.

Modernist Heritage in Eastern Europe: Global Trends and Local Contexts

Since the early 2000s, increased scholarly interest in urban modernist heritage has turned into a global trend (Voss & Molitor, 2018; Ritter & Vienna Center of Architecture, 2013; Kulić, Parker & Penick 2015; Beil & Schmitz, 2002). Soviet modernist districts first of the interwar and then of the post-war period gradually garnered the attention of urban activists, scholars, architects, artists, and intellectuals from different countries all over the world.

The processes around the Soviet modernist heritage in Eastern Europe followed the global trends. Every step in the symbolic “discovery” of modernist East European architecture reproduced the stages elsewhere in the world. At first, modernist districts were seen by the public as objects of special cultural significance and world “heritage” (Haspel, Petzet, & Schmückle-Mollard, 2008; ICOMOS Germany, 2013; Belyakova, Dushkina, & Mikeska 2006), then they were turned into objects of aesthetic interest and artistic practices (Prents, 2014; Hoppe, 2014; Pare, 2007), and later they became attractive to tourists (Czepczyński, 2008, pp. 132–137; Hlaváčková, 2012; Gdynia City Hall, 2016).

One distinguishing feature shared by Eastern European countries is the way of looking at modernist architecture as an embodiment of critical historical periods – periods of social experimentation and radical cultural change, which still largely determine the appearance and identity of post-socialist cities. In these conditions, managing the modernist heritage is instrumental in representing the past, its atmosphere and historical symbols. Modernist districts of Eastern European cities can be aestheticized or used for creating new architectural forms (Bartetzky, Dietz, & Haspel, 2014, pp. 195–273; Ershov & Savitskii, 2008). They might be perceived from nostalgic and romanticized perspective (Czepczyński, 2008, pp. 143–147; Young & Kaczmarek, 2008). They can engender the search for new cultural meanings or historical reflection (Galusek, 2018; Kladnik, 2009). But, one way or another, these urban districts are inevitably involved into the symbolic dialogue with the past.

Images of the past of Eastern European cities are incorporated into the new discourses for describing modernist housing, which, in their turn, become integral to new urban narratives. It should be noted that, on the one hand, in each local context, modernist architecture refers to specific historical symbols and periods such as the formation of the Soviet state, development of the new nation states in Eastern Europe, and strengthening of socialist regimes in the post-war period. On the other hand, this architecture also pertains to the narrative of global cultural heritage, which incorporates all these countries, cities, periods and epochs into unified symbolic space, blurring the national and historical boundaries. This double implication is particularly relevant to the architecture of socialist modernism, which thus acquires new opportunities for representation outside specific ideological interpretations.

The article sets out to examine the cases of several countries, in particular the means and ways of inscribing socialist urban districts into the narrative of global modernist heritage. The second part of the article explores contemporary public representations of the districts in former socialist cities in Russia and Ukraine; these districts were an example of interwar modernist urban architecture in the Soviet Union. The third part focuses on the cases of two Polish cities: Katowice, which became a site of intensive modernist construction in the interwar and postwar periods, and Krakow with its industrial district of Nowa Huta, a symbol of socialist urban construction in post-war Eastern Europe.

The analysis mostly deals with policy documents, presentation materials and strategies of urban development, materials of multiple art projects, as well as expert interviews with urban and social activists, representatives of the active urban community who take part in the preservation of the modernist heritage in post-socialist cities. In a word, the material analyzed here comprises all the sources, which could shed light on the dominant ways of representing the Eastern European modernist urban heritage in the public discourse that is defined and shaped by the “expert community” (Lefebvre, 1991). Consequently, this paper follows the tradition that analyzes urban space as a “social product” (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996), in particular, its dominant perceptions and representations established in the public discourse (Lefebvre, 1991; Fraser, 2015; Stanek, 2011).

Soviet City in the World Heritage Discourse

Interest in Soviet architecture and urban heritage has recently become one of the major cultural trends (Neville & Wilson, 2013; Pare, 2007; Ritter & Vienna Center of Architecture, 2013; Ershov & Savitskii, 2008). Soviet urban spaces attract more and more not only scholarly but also public attention – of artists, social activists, journalists, and other members of urban community. This interest was spurred by a variety of factors, most importantly, the view of Soviet architecture as a part of the world cultural heritage. Such perspective reinforced and to a great extent legitimized the new perception of Soviet urban spaces, engendering new interpretations. This trend was particularly pronounced in the case of inter-war modernist architecture – constructivist and avant-garde structures represented as a part of the huge global urban-planning project of the 1920s and 1930s.

A good example in this respect are socialist cities (“*sotsgorod*”). Construction of *sotsgorod* micro-districts was one of the most ambitious large-scale town-planning projects aimed at creating experimental territories with communal housing clustered around industrial factories in the 1920s and 1930s (Miliutin, 1930; Kotkin, 1997; Flierl, 2012; Meerovich, 2011). After the collapse of the USSR, *sotsgorod* districts lost their former meanings and turned into typical urban outskirts and low-income, often disadvantaged areas of megapolises. The public perceived them as spaces “from the past” and associated them with the grey Soviet daily life.

It, therefore, seems remarkable that since the mid-2000s, it was this architecture that has started to attract public attention to *sotsgorod* districts. Both

expert communities and wider public came to the view that many buildings located in these areas (for example, *Avtozavod* [Automobile plant] district of Nizhny Novgorod, *sotsgorod* in Magnitogorsk and *Uralmash* [Ural Heavy Machine Building Plant] in Yekaterinburg) are of particular architectural and historical value, and the areas themselves are in fact full-fledged historical sites and monuments of Socialist town-planning (Belova & Savitskaia, 2011, pp. 7–32; Starikov, 1998; Bauhaus na Urals, 2008). In the perception of the mass public, this situation led to a clash between two completely irreconcilable realities – the unremarkable, dreary reality of everyday life, on the one hand, and that of universal value and significance, commonly identified as “cultural heritage”, on the other.

The key factor, which enhanced this effect was the tendency to see spaces of *sotsgorod* in the context of global trends in town-planning and art. The districts, which were routinely perceived by the majority as “Soviet” started to be represented as a part of the world cultural legacy. This change in the public attitude largely originated in a series of research, art, and education projects devoted to the work of foreign specialists who participated in designing and constructing *sotsgorod* districts in different corners of the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, primarily the graduates of the renowned “Bauhaus” school (see, for example, Bauhaus na Urals, 2008; Tokmeninova, 2010; Obshchee, 2010). What mattered most was not the specific historical evidence or the real significance of their work, but the very fact of the symbolical involvement of “Bauhaus” brand into creating what seemed to be absolutely ordinary Soviet districts.

The case of *Uralmash* is particularly illustrative in this respect. *Uralmash* is one of the largest *sotsgorod* built in the 1930s next to the Ural Heavy Machine Building Plant in the city of Sverdlovsk (now – Yekaterinburg). In the early 2000s, *Uralmash* became a platform for the collaborative Russian-German project “Das Bauhaus im Ural”, which searched for traces of the work of those Bauhaus graduates who moved to the USSR and worked at industrial sites of Ural towns and cities in the 1930s.

In the case of *Uralmash*, this project was mostly associated with the name of German architect Bela Scheffler. The archival investigation has shown that not only was Scheffler specially invited to work in the design department of *Uralmashstroï* (a trust that was in charge of construction at the plant) in 1932 but he also participated in the construction of the key objects of the *sotsgorod* and was involved in the discussion of the key questions of its development. In later periods, his real role and extent of participation in the planning of *Uralmash* was a question much discussed by architects. These matters, however, were secondary in comparison with the fact of the symbolical involvement of “Bauhaus” brand into the creation of *Uralmash sotsgorod*. In the early 2000s, the very awareness of this fact produced a powerful emotional effect: “In our Uralmash – a Bauhaus architect?” “A graduate of the celebrated art school worked in Uralmash... Incredible!” was a typical reaction of local inhabitants to the newly discovered historical evidence (see Rastorguev, 2011, p. 206; Dzhapakov, 2002).

Such emotional reaction was important because it allowed people to see the *sotsgorod* district in a new light, outside the usual context: while previously it was mostly associated with “Soviet” and “industrial” and at later stages came to be known

as a dangerous, crime-ridden neighborhood, now familiar buildings, which used to be nothing more than a background for everyday city life, were presented to the public as exemplars of unique aesthetic and historical value. A half-abandoned marginal space was turned into a “sanctuary of Constructivism”.

In much the similar way *sotsgorod* districts of Kharkiv and Zaporizhia (Ukraine) are now considered on a par with world famous monuments of modernist architecture in Dessau and Frankfurt am Main (Obshchee, 2010). In its turn, the *sotsgorod* in Nizhny Novgorod is now represented as one of the “world’s major utopias” due to the fact that foreign specialists were involved in the construction of the Gorky Automobile Plant (Austin, 2004). Another site, which used to be all but forgotten but is now featured in the spotlight of public attention, ready to be included into the UNESCO World Heritage List, is the *sotsgorod* in Novokuznetsk. What made it popular is the fact that it was designed by the team of celebrated German architect and town planner Ernst May (Bendichenko, 2013).

Thus, Soviet urban spaces have suddenly been refashioned into a “heritage” of paramount global importance (Kiaer, 2005, pp. 264–265). It was the discourse of “heritage” that first allowed public positive representation of Soviet architecture and brought it beyond the dispute about ideology or politics. New symbolical interpretations start to be applied not only to specific architectural structures but also to whole Soviet-era districts, which have now turned into the “Soviet urban legacy”.

For example, the modernist housing complexes of the 1920s and 1930s often attract scholarly and public attention not only because of their stylistic, aesthetic or town-planning characteristics but also because of the epoch they represent and stand for. This leads to the formation of the discourse of “unrealized utopia”, which offers a new way of talking about the Soviet interwar architecture.

The “utopian” discourse changes the angle of looking at modernist districts in the post-Soviet context. They capture our attention because they contain signs and specific markers of the period. A good illustration is the art project “Communal Avant-Garde”, which sought to turn *Uralmash* in Yekaterinburg and *Avtozavod* in Nizhny Novgorod into a space for promenades, contemplation and research (Belova & Savitskaia, 2011). In the introduction devoted to *Uralmash*, the authors emphasized that

Uralmash is a fascinating ruin, in which it is hard to tell the traces of the real from the traces of the utopian. This article is aimed at helping you, dear reader, to find the main objects of a *sotsgorod* [...] but in doing so, you have to follow one basic rule: please add the word “probably” to all our recommendations. For example, on the right side of the street you [probably!] will see this or that and you [probably!] will have to turn into this or that side-street. You are probably setting off to walk across a non-existent place but along the way, you will probably be able to find its shadows and echoes (Belova & Savitskaia, 2011, p. 35).

This text, which has a strong emotional appeal and employs a creative play of images, reveals an important characteristic in the representation of the past of *sotsgorod* districts: on the one hand, this past appears as a real historical period,

tangible and ready to be experienced immediately through specific artefacts, buildings, and structures. On the other hand, the same artefacts and the special atmosphere of the experimental town-planning sites construct the image of the interwar period as a remote epoch of high hopes and expectations, which has its own historical characteristics but also produces the impression of being situated outside specific time frames. “Sometimes you get the feeling that a *sotsgorod* district is a thing in itself. That this utopian city wasn’t built in the Soviet Union. As if not during the famine of 1932–1933. As if its construction time is beyond our grasp”, says Pyotr Boyko, an urbanist and researcher, describing his impressions from the district of the sixth settlement in Zaporizhia (Expert interview with Pyotr Boyko, 2017).

The process, which initially involved only narrow circles of enthusiasts, eventually became a massive trend. *Sotsgorod* districts were increasingly regarded by the mass media and the public as places that were interesting to visit in order to get the authentic feel of the Soviet era, see the unique architecture and marvel at the innovative town-planning solutions.

Information on *sotsgorod* districts was included into travel guides and the contours of these areas were highlighted in tourist maps, while the need for conservation of these districts as objects of particular “historical and cultural significance” was mentioned in various strategies and projects of urban development (Asriian, 2014; Kamenskii, 2017; Zaporizhzhia City Council, 2018).

Public discussions of *sotsgorod* districts as unique objects of world legacy at numerous conferences, exhibitions, festivals, presentations, and round tables put them in the spotlight and filled these spaces with new meanings and new significance.

Such discussions often contributed to the creation of this – to a great extent mythologized – image. For example, the *sotsgorod* in Zaporizhia, now often marked on tourist maps and featured in guidebooks, was not just “rediscovered” but to a certain extent became an intellectually constructed urban space with boundaries replicating the contours of the unrealized town-planning projects of the Soviet era (see, for example, Mordovskii, 2011). Most importantly, all these myths, symbols, real and fictional stories endowed these territories with a new public image and new language, and thus made them visible to the public eye on the maps of modern cities.

It is noteworthy that this treatment of interwar Soviet modernism as world heritage gradually began to embrace other periods and styles of Soviet town-planning. *Sotsgorod* is a telling case in this respect. The fundamental modernist idea underpinning the concept of *sotsgorod* continued to develop after the Second World War. Buildings of the new era and of the new appearance were in one way or another embedded into the previously built modernist urban construction and therefore were perceived as an integral part of the urban landscape. It turned out that *sotsgorod* as a “world heritage” is not only the city of the 1930s but also the city of the post-war decade, the city of mass housing construction of the 1960s and the city of the late Soviet epoch (Kosenkova, 2009; Brade & Neugebauer, 2017; Uralmash..., 2018).

The narrative of modernist architecture did not seek to reveal the style or unique features of urban districts but contributed to the symbolical discovery of the Soviet city as such. The upsurge of interest of urbanists and urban activists in the architecture

of the 1970s and 1980s is, therefore, symptomatic. The art and research projects exploring this theme have prompted new angles of perception of late Soviet urban spaces (see, for example, Meuser & Zadorin, 2015; Snopek, 2015).

New Representations of the “Unwanted” Heritage: the Experience of Working with Socialist Architectural Legacy in Poland

In Poland, in the 1990s, the socialist urban heritage was the primary target of absolute symbolic rejection. Unlike in other post-Soviet countries, in Poland it was not merely destined to oblivion, it was rather subjected to open rejection and labeled as “undesired” (see, for example, Ciarkowski, 2017). The experience of recodification and “liberation” of urban territories from the symbols of the socialist past in Eastern Europe in the 2010s shows that “purging” the urban landscape from the signs of the past (Czepczyński, 2008, pp. 109–147) does not necessarily lead to their disappearance from the symbolical representations of the city, just turns them into a figure of silence. This rejected and “repressed” past remains an important element of urban identity, acting as a source of new discourses to describe and new approaches to study the historical symbols and narratives.

These tendencies come to the fore in contemporary Poland. The socialist urban heritage has recently become a part of the new local narrative in the city of Katowice, a centre of Polish modernist architecture. Katowice, a major hub in the industrial region of Silesia, became a site of active construction in the interwar period, associated by the city inhabitants with the establishment of the new Polish government (Odorowski, 2013; Syska & Kiełkowski, 2015). This was followed by the socialist period, when the government of the Polish People’s Republic sought to turn Katowice into a model industrial city (see, for example, Crowley, 2009). Katowice may now serve as one of the most successful examples of revitalization of industrial heritage in Eastern Europe, and the regional authorities actively use this rhetoric to promote the new image of the city (Lamparska, 2013; Sobala-Gwosdz & Gwosdz, 2017).

The socialist urban heritage in this context acquires completely new meanings and significance: it is no longer rejected or deprived of its history but, on the contrary, is represented as an important symbolic stage in the development of the city and region. Katowice is represented as a city whose history, regardless of the political regime, is inextricably connected with industry and modernism, the latter two in fact constituting the core of the city’s identity. This message is conveyed, among other things, through various exhibition projects, which seek to tell the story of the city and the region from a new perspective (The Light of History..., 2017), but also through diverse tourism initiatives, which turn the modernist heritage into one of the city’s brands – *Szlak Moderny*¹. As a result of the renovation and active promotion campaign, the multi-purpose arena complex *Spodek*, and one of the largest apartment buildings in Poland *Superjednostka*, considered as the key symbols and brands of socialist Katowice, have acquired a new symbolic status of the city’s landmarks in the recent years (see Chojecka, 2004; Balsa & Szmatoch, 2018, pp. 124–126). In this sense, the ideological

¹ <http://moderna.katowice.eu>

component of the socialist modernist architecture plays a secondary role since it is just one of the multiple manifestations of the internal logic of urban development:

Modernity and modernism could be said to determine Katowice's identity. Not as a style, however, but as a way of thinking. This can be seen in workers' settlements of the early nineteenth century, which were not only town-planning but also social experiments. The same happened after World War I, when modernism became the government's official program. Even after World War II, socialist realism had its own distinctive face here, different from that of Warsaw or Moscow, but with a local touch, bearing the traces of the inter-war period. After 1956, active experimentation with structures started says Anna Syska, an architect and urban scholar, about the new city history narrative (Expert interview with Anna Syska, 2019).

Under the brand "Katowice the modern city", the socialist heritage of Katowice acquires new symbols and meanings, and thus actually reinvents itself.

Similar trends in the representation of the socialist heritage is demonstrated by Nowa Huta, a district of Kraków. The case of Nowa Huta is particularly interesting because it was built in the first post-war decade as an exemplary "socialist town" of the Polish People's Republic. Even though in its layout, the logic behind its planning, and specific elements of the design this district featured a distinctly modernist look, it had no pre-socialist past (Jurewicz, 2012; Lebow, 2013). It gradually transformed from a marginal industrial district of the 1990s, associated exclusively with the socialist past, into a popular spot for young people, intellectuals and tourists, thus providing a case of successful "rebranding" in the management of the "unwanted" urban heritage (Pozniak, 2013; Matoga, 2015; Czepczyński, 2008, p. 133). A former industrial outskirts area, Nowa Huta is now a creativity space filled with cultural activities. Its socialist symbols were replaced by the museum of the socialist past and tourist attractions. It took just a few years for the district, which used to look bleak and dreary and was largely seen as a remnant of the socialist era, to turn into one of the most visited places in Krakow.

Seen as a "unique town-planning and social experiment", Nowa Huta was freed from the ideological contexts and fitted ideally within the new trend – the interest in town-planning experimentation, architectural aesthetics, and exploration of new urban spaces. It does not mean, however, that Nowa Huta has become a trivial tourist attraction and a space devoid of any past.

Socialist symbols still remain among the key markers of the district, distinguishing it from its counterparts in the public space. Renaming of streets, museumification, ironic interpretation of socialist symbols, and what is referred to as the "special atmosphere of the district" still point to the socialist past. The past as a symbolic figure is inherent in each of these phenomena but it is now viewed from a new angle, thus unlocking opportunities for fresh interpretations. For the young generation, which is the main actor in the cultural revitalization of the district, this past is not an abstract notion but is experienced through personal involvement or through the memory of their parents (Pozniak, 2014, pp. 156–179).

On the one hand, it seems that no room has been left for the socialist past in the conversation about Nowa Huta. It is all but absent from the conversation about the development of the district [...] On the other hand, one of the main reasons behind the young generation's interest in Nowa Huta is undoubtedly its past and nostalgia for the past. It is the time of our childhood. At the same time this past seems quite remote and no longer constitutes a threat. This is something we associate with our childhood years,

says historian Alicja Maslak-Maciejewska from Jagiellonian University (Expert interview with Alicja Maslak-Maciejewska, 2018). The socialist past is deideologized, reconsidered, and reconstructed. Nevertheless, it still plays an important role in the generation of diverse new narratives representing the history and symbolic significance of Nowa Huta, including romanticization of its architecture or the attempt to position it as a centre of resistance to the socialist regime (Sibila, 2006; Pozniak, 2013, pp. 122–126). In this sense, Nowa Huta is a striking example of how the historical and architectural heritage of socialism can be handled in order to bring about new symbolic interpretations of this heritage and create opportunities for placing it anew in the contemporary urban space.

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It is widely assumed that recognizing specific architectural structures or districts as objects of cultural heritage is a local process of aesthetic and cultural significance. This process, however, goes beyond the local boundaries and encompasses the whole of Eastern Europe as it has to do with the way these countries handle their urban socialist legacy. In the majority of these countries, the public perception of the socialist period is still riddled with contradictions, and, therefore, dealing with socialist architecture inevitably means having to deal with the historical past and its symbols. In this respect, the public representation of socialist buildings as the world modernist heritage is an important example of how this “unwanted” architecture is symbolically transformed into “objects of world culture”, “vestiges of modernity” and popular tourist attractions. Spaces and buildings, which used to be rejected or just invisible, become imbued with new meanings and show themselves in a new light to the public.

Actually, by offering renewed vision for socialist urban legacy, the discourse of modernist heritage stimulates symbolic re-discovering of the socialist urban areas in public mind and allows them to acquire new ways of representation, as well as the new possible functional roles in the urban space. At the moment, the ways of speaking about socialist urban heritage seem to be no less important than the practical mechanisms of its implementation. And it is quite likely that just this new symbolical view will provide a basis for the development of a coherent urban planning strategy, and, probably, will help to shape a new attitude towards these spaces in the current social, economic, and cultural context

It should be noted that this process encompasses countries with different historical past and different interpretations of the past. For example, in the former Soviet Union states, socialist urban districts often tend to be forgotten rather than

rejected and the initiatives and projects based on treating them as “objects of cultural heritage” are often driven by the feelings of nostalgia and sentimentalism. As for post-socialist Eastern European countries, after the period of emphatic rejection of the socialist past, the relation to the socialist urban heritage took more familiar and reticent form of cultural revitalization. Nevertheless, in both cases, the global process of appropriation of the modernist heritage produces a similar effect as it contributes to the symbolic inclusion of these districts into the new local narratives of post-socialist cities. This process is likely to become an important step towards the development and strengthening of their new identity.

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