

## Editorial of ICOMOS Germany

With this publication the editors wish to take stock of a multi-national cooperation and publication project initiated by the Polish and German National Committees of ICOMOS in 2010, which have coordinated them since. Due to the ongoing threats to the architectural and horticultural heritage of the post-war decades everywhere in Europe, especially however to the architectural monuments and ensembles in the post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, ICOMOS Poland and ICOMOS Germany used the opportunity of the *denkmal* monument fair in Leipzig for an international exchange of experience on how to preserve the architectural heritage of the post-war period. Architectural monuments of the so-called Socialist Realism of the 1940s and 1950s, in Germany often called “the national tradition”, were meant to be in the focus of these contributions.

The announcement was met with positive response and the circle of speakers and people interested soon not only covered the entire territory of the former GDR and the Republic of Poland with their capitals Berlin and Warsaw, but also the neighbouring territories of the former Eastern Bloc. Moreover, the first meeting in Leipzig broadened the perspective and also included the architectural heritage of the post-Stalinist period, sometimes also called “Socialist Modernism” or “Eastern Modernism”, in its approach.

In a declaration of intent and a work plan signed by ICOMOS Poland and ICOMOS Germany as well as by the conservation departments of Berlin and Warsaw during the Leipzig *denkmal* fair in 2010 the four partners agreed upon a three-year cooperation project for the preservation, research and renewal of post-war testimonies in post-socialist countries, which are worth preserving but nonetheless often disputed. For this purpose they invited conservationists, historians, art historians, architects and town planners as well as professional institutions to participate. Experts from Armenia, Bulgaria, Germany, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, the Ukraine, and Belarus took part in the conferences, seminars and workshops in Leipzig (2010, 2012), Berlin (2011), Krakow (2011), and Warsaw (2011, 2013) and made important contributions to the conference proceedings and catalogues.<sup>1</sup>

The press coverage of conflicts of the recent past concerning the heritage and stock of monuments of the socialist period in Europe resulting in headlines in various countries proves that this topic is still newsworthy, sometimes highly sensitive and often leads to controversial discussions. Even 20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the German reunification, the independence of former Soviet and Yugoslav constituent republics, and the hopeful democratisation process in Central Eastern Europe public monuments of Social-

ism spark off violent conflicts. In Tallinn in April 2007, the Bronze Soldier, a monument by the Estonian artists Arnold Alas and Enn Roos installed in 1947 on Tõnismägi Hill on the occasion of the third anniversary of the invasion of the Red Army in Tallinn, was transferred to the war victim cemetery in Tallinn. The killed soldiers of the Red Army buried nearby were also moved to another resting-place. By then, the tensions between the Estonian population and the Russian minority had considerably increased and the transfer of the monument was accompanied by outbreaks of violence.

In early December 2013 demonstrators in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev destroyed a bronze statue of Lenin to show their opposition against the pro-Russian direction of their government. Within a few hours, pictures of the demolition of the monument were shown worldwide, proving the high symbolic significance and explosive force of socialist monumental art, especially if it concerns statues of Socialist Realism. In the post-socialist countries these are no longer seen as symbols of the victory over Hitler Fascism, but rather as symbols of suppression by the following occupying forces. Even in Germany, the heritage of this culture of commemoration of the post-war period is by no means safe – in spite of the distance in time and the considerable extent of academic research on this topic in the meantime.<sup>2</sup> In Stralsund, as part of the urban redevelopment of the Neuer Markt there are ongoing discussions about transferring the Soviet cemetery of honour, which was laid out in 1945 at the site of then northern St Mary’s churchyard and later enlarged to become a memorial.

The present volume is the result of a workshop and expert meeting of Central and Eastern European National Committees of ICOMOS that took place in the Polish capital on the occasion of the International Monuments Day (18 April 2013) on invitation by the Warsaw conservation department. The contributions compiled in this publication offer a variety of proposals from the multi-faceted heritage of Socialist Realism and Socialist Modernism which could be considered for a World Heritage nomination. With this publication the German National Committee of ICOMOS ties in with earlier conferences and publications about the sculptural and architectural heritage of Socialism at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> This volume is also the result of the close cooperation initiated and developed by ICOMOS Poland and ICOMOS Germany in 2002 under the presidencies of Krzysztof Pawlowski und Michael Petzet.

The International Scientific Committee of ICOMOS on 20th Century Heritage (ISC 20C) participating in the working meetings with its Vice Presidents Natalia Dushkina (Russia) and Nune Chilingaryan (Armenia) and with ad-

ditional experts considers the bi-national initiative of the two neighbouring national committees of ICOMOS as an important contribution to the discussion about a geographically and thematically balanced World Heritage List and to closing regional and historical gaps on the UNESCO list. Buildings from the socialist period characterise the architectural heritage of the 20th century in those regions of Eastern Central Europe and Eurasia dominated by the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> They also represent an important facet of Modernism and of the European cultural identity.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, with this new publication the International Scientific Committee of ICOMOS on 20th Century Heritage continues its mission to convey international criteria and standards for the conservation of 20th-century heritage, as laid down in the Madrid Document of 2011.<sup>6</sup>

The publication combines contributions from countries of the former “Eastern Bloc” and opens up – by means of an international dialogue on the joint heritage of Socialist Realism – an additional option so far given little consideration: the options of transnational serial initiatives for the World Heritage nomination of 20th century heritage considered to be controversial and underrepresented on the UNESCO List.<sup>7</sup> The intention of the initiators of this workshop was to present the variety of socialist heritage – its trends linked to realism, certain regions or to tradition just as much as its avant-garde, modern or rationalistic facets – as an independent and important contribution to the European architectural history of the 20th century. Not least, the final panel discussion in Warsaw led to the insight that the architectural and urbanistic heritage of Socialist Realism in Russia and the former Soviet Republics cannot merely be defined as post-war heritage as in the other countries of the Warsaw Pact. Instead, it was also a pre-stage of and model for the architectural doctrine of the Stalin era enforced in the Soviet hemisphere after 1945.

The changes in building policy and in urbanistic and architectural concepts, which started and then continued after Stalin’s coming into power (1922) as well as after his death (1953), are intrinsic aspects of socialist heritage. As much as the urbanistic and architectural achievements since the late 1940s in the countries discussed here can be summed up under the precondition of the political and economic dominance of the USSR, the evidence is in fact very diversified and rich. It illustrates the particular relevance of these decades: the search for new life and dwelling forms,

the social demands and promises, the technical innovations. The monuments and sites from Poland, Germany, Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Romania and the Ukraine presented in this publication include urban ensembles, individual buildings, green areas, memorials as well as technological and industrial monuments. There are different options for combining them for transboundary and transnational serial nominations, which might also help advance the fundamental idea of the World Heritage Convention of 1972, namely to improve the understanding between peoples and countries. Moreover, the essays show the types of reception and the difficulties in handling, preserving, protecting and conveying socialist heritage. As can be expected, against the background of the history of these countries in the 20th century and their relation to the Nazi regime and to the USSR these types of reception differ considerably. A respectful and, if necessary, distant position of the experts and the public aiming initially merely at safeguarding the historic evidence, depends substantially on today’s self-concept of those contemporaries who are confronted with this heritage every day.

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