

Invitation to the ICOMOS National Committees of Europe to Participate in ISC 20C Project for Conserving Socialist Heritage

ICOMOS



International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

Presidents of ICOMOS National Committees of Europe and Representatives of the Annual Meeting of ICOMOS National Committees of Europe in Trondheim May 2013

Invitation to Participate in ISC20C Project for conserving Socialist Heritage

Dear National Committee Presidents and Representatives of ICOMOS Europe,

On the occasion of your meeting in Trondheim, the International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC20C) wishes to invite contributions to a new initiative to identify and conserve the socialist heritage of the post-war period. The work of the ISC20C is based on the consideration that the obligation to conserve the heritage of the Twentieth century is no less important as our duty to protect monuments and sites of previous eras.

Responding to the lack of heritage recognition of the places representing socialist realism, over recent years the European members of the ISC20C have initiated a series of conferences and research into post-war 20th Century heritage in post-socialist European Countries (please refer to the attached list of references).

At a meeting of European members of ISC20C on 20 May, 2013 in Dubrovnik, it was resolved to invite all presidents of European national committees to assist in the project through local and national identification, evaluation, promotion and protection of the heritage of the Post-Socialist world in Central and Eastern Europe.

The project will be developed and co-ordinated by an ISC20C Socialist Heritage sub-committee led by Jorg Haspel (Germany) with Vidas Petrulius (Lithuania), Nune Chilingaryan (Armenia) and Natalia Dushkina (Russia).

The history and the heritage of the Twentieth Century is part of shared European cultural identity. This includes the 20th century heritage in post-socialist European countries including the heritage of the former Soviet republics, as well as the post-war heritage in most of countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Professor Haspel writes *"The political symbolism of "Socialist realism" and the diversity, multinational variety and richness of "Socialist Modernism" of all these monuments and sites bears witness to the life and experiences on former Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. For most of countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the Post-War period was a climax point for introducing Socialist ideology, a political regime and economy alien to the historical nature of their regions. However despite the "colonial" character of this phenomenon, there are significant creative and social achievements in its buildings and structures, often prefabricated, which need to be carefully studied, evaluated and protected.*

Under the rapid changes of material and functional demands and general neglect, these buildings and places are experiencing irreversible process of degradation and many of them are already or will be lost in the near future. Additionally, the architectural and urban heritage

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of the socialist period is subject to fast political, social and economic changes and receives little recognition as valuable heritage by authorities, the public and even among experts. It raises questions about heritage values and possible strategies for conservation and it offers an opportunity for future generations to meet the recent past embodied by authentic historic substance and structures of that period".

Recognizing that different forms of tangible and intangible legacy of socialism also represent internationally outstanding values and important testimony of twentieth century, and remembering that Twentieth Century heritage is underrepresented on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the ISC20C European members meeting in Dubrovnik propose to continue discussion and debate and to consider the potential significance of the socialist legacy in Europe. This may include updating national tentative lists for World Heritage nominations by assessing and listing significant places representing the "Socialist Heritage" or by cooperating through multinational networks of post-socialist countries to consider the potential of a transnational serial nomination to the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS members generally and especially the national committees in Central and Eastern Europe in post socialist countries are invited to initiate local and national identification, conservation, interpretation, listing and protection activities for significant landmarks of socialism as an important heritage layer which testifies the social, political and cultural milieu of the Cold War in a divided Europe and represents the achievements and conditions of life of the post-war generation for future generations.

The ISC20C Socialist Heritage sub-committee will co-ordinate a report to ICOMOS on this issue and potential initiatives and seek inter-institutional input and cooperation (For example DOCOMOMO, TICCIH, UIA, Europa Nostra, European Heritage Heads Forum, universities, etc.) for the project.

We would appreciate receiving your reports, comments and suggestions by 30 August, 2013. Following analysis of the information received, the ISC20C hopes to bring a resolution to the 2014 ICOMOS General Assembly in Florence on the issue of identifying and conserving endangered socialist heritage and its potential as World Heritage.

We look forward to your active involvement in this initiative. Please address your comments and any enquiries to Professor Haspel (jhaspel@gmx.de).

Best regards

Sheridan Burke,
President ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for Twentieth-Century Heritage
28 May 2013

Copies to: Mr. Gustavo Araoz, President, ICOMOS
Ms Kirsti Kovanen, Secretary General, ICOMOS
Ms Gaia Jungleblodt, ICOMOS Secretariat
Mr Kyle Normandin, Secretary General ISC20C

ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage



References

Numerous international conferences and expert meetings have been organised, documented and published in connection with ICOMOS National Committees or ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ICOMOS ISC 20C) on the topic of Socialist Heritage, including:

City and Identity. Modernism and Anti-Modernism.

The architectural legacy of Socialist Realism in Central and Eastern Europe, Berlin 2009 (<http://icomos-isc20c.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/isc20cagendaareportsnov272011c.pdf>);

Architecture of the second half of the 20th Century - studies and protection, Leipzig 2010 (*Architecture of the Second Half of the 20th Century - Studies and Protection / Das Erbe des Nachkriegszeit erhalten und erschließen - Denkmale der Moderne und Gegenmordene / Zabytki Drugiej Polowy XX Wieku - Waloryzacja, Ochrona, Konserwacja. Warszawa/Berlin 2010*);

Socialist-Realist Urban Planning as the Object of Heritage Protection, Cracow-Warsaw 2011; Socialist Realism and National Tradition. Recording, evaluating and listing of key monuments and memorials in Warsaw and Berlin, Berlin 2011 (Landesdenkmalamt Berlin (Ed.): *Von Moskau lernen? Architektur und Städtebau des Sozialistischen Realismus / Uczyć się od Moskwy? Architektura i Urbanistyka Socrealizmu / Learning from Moscow? Architecture and Urban Design of Socialist Realism Berlin 2012*);MDM - KMA.

The architectural legacy of Socialist Realism in Warsaw and Berlin: Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa - Karl-Marx-Allee, exhibition Berlin and Warsaw 2011 (catalogue: MDM - KMA. *The architectural legacy of Socialist Realism in Warsaw and Berlin: Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa - Karl-Marx-Allee, Dom Spotkan z Historią (DSH) Warsaw 2011*;

Between Rejection and Appropriation. The Architectural Heritage of Socialist Realism in Central and Eastern Europe, Leipzig 2012;

Transnational Serial Nomination of the Architectural Heritage of Socialist Realism in Central and Eastern Europe to the UNESCO World Heritage List, Warsaw 2013.