THE OLD TOWN OF ELBLAG IN NORTHERN POLAND: DESTROYED IN 1945, REBUILT FROM 1979 ONWARDS IN A NEO-HISTORICAL STYLE. VIEW FROM THE TOWER OF THE CATHEDRAL, LOOKING NORTHEAST. THE STREET RUNNING DIAGONALLY FROM TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT IS *STARY RYNEK* (OLD MARKET), WITH THE *BRAMA TARGOWA* (MARKET GATE) ON THE TOP LEFT.

HISTORICKÉ CENTRUM MESTA ELBLAG V SEVERNOM POĽSKU, ZNIČENÉ V ROKU 1945, OD ROKU 1979 PRESTAVANÉ V NEOHISTORICKOM ŠTÝLE. POHĽAD Z VEŽE KATEDRÁLY NA SEVEROVÝCHOD. ULICA VEDÚCA ŠIKMO ZĽAVA HORE DOPRAVA DOLE JE *STARY RYNEK* (STARÝ TRH), S BRÁNOU *BRAMA TARGOWA* (TRHOVÁ BRÁNA) VĽAVO HORE.

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

Does Postmodern Mean Capitalist? On Postmodernism and the Planned Economy in Poland and the German Democratic Republic

Znamená postmoderný kapitalistický? O postmodernizme a plánovanej ekonomike v Poľsku a Nemeckej demokratickej republike

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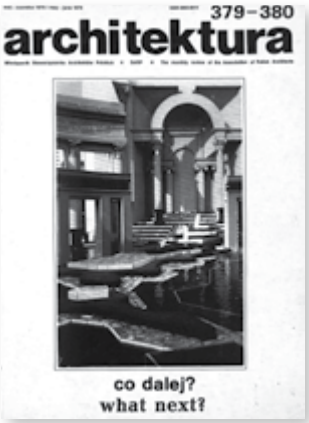
Cieľom tohto článku je poskytnúť odpoveď na túto otázku porovnaním postmodernizmu v dvoch socialistických kontextoch: v Poľskej ľudovej republike, kde v osemdesiatych rokoch postupne erodovalo plánované hospodárstvo a postmodernú architektúru väčšinou sponzorovali neštátni klienti (súkromné osoby, malé bytové družstvá a katolícka cirkev), a v Nemeckej demokratickej republike, kde počas osemdesiatych rokov zostali pri moci inštitúcie štátneho plánovaného hospodárstva a zároveň zadávali významné postmoderné projekty. Štúdia zastáva názor, že hoci rozdiely v ekonomických režimoch neviedli k výrazným štylistickým rozdielom, značne ovplyvnili význam a vnímanie týchto projektov v ich špecifických národných kontextoch.

Postmodernizmus bol v komunistickom svete, kde došlo v osemdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia k úpadku plánovaného hospodárstva a vlnám politických protestov, ktoré vyvrcholili v rokoch 1988/1989 s následným nastolením trhového kapitalizmu, najvýznamnejšou architektonickou inováciou. Napriek domnelému predpokladu, že jeho vzostup súvisel so súkromným kapitálom a trhovými operáciami, mnohé dôkazy naznačujú, že postmodernizmus bol viac než len dôsledkom trhového hospodárstva západného typu a vo východnom bloku bola postmoderná architektúra spojená s úplne inými cieľmi a hodnotami ako na kapitalistickom Západe.

Prejavy postmodernej architektúry v Poľsku a východnom Nemecku sa líšili nielen od tých na Západe, ale aj od seba navzájom. Obe krajiny fungovali v sovietskom štýle plánovaného hospodárstva pod represívnym socialistickým režimom, no napriek tomu čelili výzvam, ktoré priniesol hospodársky úpadok a nespokojnosť obyvateľstva po konci sedemdesiatych rokov 20. storočia, veľmi odlišným spôsobom. Porovnanie týchto dvoch krajín prináša dôležité poznatky o vzťahu medzi postmodernizmom a socialistickým plánovaným hospodárstvom, a zároveň postmoderná architektúra do istej miery odrážala rozdiely v ich architektonickej praxi vo všeobecnosti. V Poľsku sa väčšina veľkých, štátom podporovaných stavebných projektov zastavila v ekonomicky postihnutých osemdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia a zostali len malé iniciatívy zdola. Vo východnom Nemecku, kde politická a hospodárska kríza nebola tak silno citeľná ako v Poľsku, štátna kontrola stavebníctva neponechávala priestor pre iniciatívy zdola nahor a naďalej sa plánovali a stavali oficiálne projekty.

Na rozdiel od východného Nemecka si postmodernú architektúru v Poľsku objednávali v prvom rade klienti čo neboli spojení s inštitúciami centrálne plánovaného hospodárstva, na ktoré dohliadalo varšavské ministerstvo výstavby. Najdôležitejším klientom bola katolícka cirkev, druhou skupinou boli malé, kvázi súkromné bytové družstvá, ktoré vznikli ako súčasť zúfalého pokusu vládnucej strany mobilizovať zdroje proti nedostatku bytov. Vo východnom Nemecku boli takmer všetky veľké postmoderné projekty iniciované a financované štátnymi inštitúciami. Postmodernizmus v tomto prípade nebol spájaný s opozíciou, a len zriedka bol vnímaný ako niečo, čo prekračuje obmedzenia socialistickej ideológie. Zjednodušene by sa dal postmodernizmus v Poľsku označiť za hnutie zdola nahor, podporované tými, ktorí neboli straníckymi funkcionármi alebo štátnymi úradníkmi vrátane návštevníkov kostolov a členov bytových družstiev, zatiaľ čo vo východnom Nemecku išlo o postup zhora nadol, ktoré usmerňovali a podporovali niektorí vysokopostavení členovia strany. V dôsledku toho sa postmodernizmus NDR spájal so socialistickým režimom a jeho nenápaditou estetikou, zatiaľ čo poľský postmodernizmus bol nositeľom myšlienok spojených s alternatívami voči socializmu vrátane katolíckej religiozity a národno-konzervatívnej vízie.



THE COVER OF THE POLISH JOURNAL ARCHITEKTURA, MAY 1979, FEATURING CHARLES MOORE'S PIAZZA D'ITALIA IN NEW ORLEANS

OBÁLKA POĽSKÉHO ČASOPISU ARCHITEKTURA, MÁJ 1979, NA KTOREJ JE ZOBRAZENÝ PROJEKT CHARLESA MOORA PIAZZA D'ITALIA V NEW ORLEANSE

Source Zdroj: Architektura, 36(2), July–August 1982

Postmodernism, per the common assumption, grew out of advanced capitalism. To be sure, the inception of postmodernism in the early 1980s did happen to coincide with the rise of neo-liberalism under Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and others, and many iconic postmodern buildings, including Philip Johnson's AT&T tower in New York (1984) and Robert Stern's Disney's Beach Club Resort in Florida (1990), celebrate private capital, entrepreneurialism, and a hedonistic, consumerist lifestyle. Along similar lines, theorists at the time pointed to postmodernism as the architecture of a neo-liberal turn, which in Western Europe and North America brought about the end of the welfare state, the progressive privatization of housing and public assets, and an increasing polarization between rich and poor.[1]

Yet what about postmodern architecture in non-capitalist contexts? As recent scholarship has shown, postmodern architecture was just as influential in some Eastern bloc countries as it was in the West.[2] The communist world, during the 1980s, saw the decline of the planned economy and waves of political protest, which culminated in the end of the "real existing socialism" in 1988/1989 and the subsequent establishment of market capitalism. Postmodernism was the most significant architectural innovation at the time; hence it would be obvious to assume that its rise was tied to private capital and market operations. However, much evidence suggests that the reality was more complex: postmodernism was more than a corollary of a Western-style market economy, and in the Eastern bloc postmodern architecture was connected to very different goals and values than in the capitalist West.[3]

Postmodernism, in this context, is defined so as to comprise diverse architectural currents which, starting in the late 1970s, took a stance against modern architecture and were inspired by historical precedents and long-standing typologies, including neo-traditional, neo-historical and neo-vernacular approaches. This characterisation does not necessarily align with the architects' self-definition at the time, since in the West as much as the East, they often perceived the word postmodernism as derogatory and a synonym for kitsch and superficiality. Nor was the term equally pervasive throughout the Eastern bloc. In the People's Republic of Poland, *postmodernizm* was widely discussed in professional journals starting in 1979, most prominently *Architektura*, and soon applied to both international and domestic architecture.[4] In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), by contrast, *Postmoderne* was used only in a handful of publications, where it was misinterpreted as an exclusively Western phenomenon connected to an advanced stage of capitalism.[5]

With several decades of historical distance, both the Polish and East German approaches appear more closely aligned than they seemed at the time, and both fit the definition of postmodern: they were rooted in a criticism of modern architecture, made use of quotations, historical references, and typological precedents, and drew upon vernacular models that were framed as local/regional or national—the latter term being particularly complex in the East German context.[6]

In neither country was postmodernism a conscious and often ironic and playful critique of the architectural discipline along the lines of Charles Moore or Robert Venturi. Instead, the chief traits are the postmodern concerns with architectural precedent, historic quotations, pre-modernist typologies and often outright neo-historicism, currents that were on the rise since the late 1970s and continued to grow until the end of the socialist regime and beyond.

Postmodernism across the Iron Curtain

The expressions of postmodern architecture in Poland and East Germany differed not only from those in the West, but also from each other. Both countries operated on a Soviet-style planned economy under a repressive socialist regime, yet nonetheless fared very differently under the challenges posed by economic decline and popular discontent after the late 1970s. Against this background, the comparison provides important insights on the relation between postmodernism and the socialist planned economy.

The People's Republic of Poland at the time found itself in a state of progressive disintegration. Repeated waves of protest opposed the rule of the once omnipotent *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (PZPR, Polish Unified Workers' Party). Upon his ascent to power in 1970, Party leader Edward Gierek (in office until 1980), was able to provide his subjects a moderate rise in living standards through foreign credits, but soon experienced economic difficulties and shortages of the most basic products. A period of relative political freedom in the late 1970s, connected with the emergence of the Workers' Defence Committee (founded in 1976) and the Solidarity Trade Union (founded in 1980), was crushed with the proclamation of martial law by General Wojciech Jaruzelski in 1981,

OUR LADY QUEEN OF POLAND IN GŁOGÓW (1985–1989, MARIAN FIKUS, JERZY GURAWSKI)

PANNA MÁRIA KRÁĽOVNÁ POĽSKA V GŁOGOWE (1985 – 1989, MARIAN FIKUS, JERZY GURAWSKI)

Source Zdroj: Wikimedia Commons, 2005, photo by Paweł Dembowski. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Glogow_Kopernik_2005.JPG

who would rule Poland until 1989, once again restricting civil liberties,but at the same time allowing for a certain degree of cultural and economic freedom as well as professional debates. Postmodern architecture, in this situation, continued to flourish and, within the limitations of an ailing economy, was largely unrestricted by the authorities.

The German Democratic Republic at the time was more stable both economically and politically. Like in Poland, a decade of economic upswing ended in the late 1970s. Popular discontent was on the rise, but not to the extent that it threatened the rule of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) and its leader Erich Honecker (in office since 1971). The Party leaders attempted to assume tight control over all aspects of cultural expression, and architecture was easier to monitor than painting or poetry. While not actively opposing postmodern currents, they hampered professional debates by continuously restricting publication, freedom of speech, and freedom of movement. This situation only ended in 1989, when a peaceful revolution led to the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, the subsequent resignation of the socialist Party leaders, and the unification with the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1990.

East Germany's comparative political stability meant that the centrally planned economy remained firmly in place, and the number of construction projects by non-state clients was negligible. The rigid system of state-directed construction was inherently inflexible and reluctant to experiment; hence comparatively few postmodern projects were realised. Control by the central authorities only ended in 1990, when the former state firms suddenly collapsed as a result of both West German competition and slapdash privatization, and nearly the entire construction industry was taken over by West Germans.

In Poland, in contrast, quasi-capitalist structures were implemented earlier, more gradually and at a slower pace. Since the mid-1970s, the rulers increasingly admitted construction projects by non-state clients, first by small cooperatives or the Catholic Church, later by private individuals. In this situation, a generation of young architects could test new design ideas, including postmodern ones, free of ideological constraints and limited only by the slumping economy. And, in the absence of a subsequent takeover by capitalist compatriots, these individuals continued to determine architectural practice well beyond the end of socialism.

INFILL ON UL. LEGIONÓW JÓZEFA PIŁSUDSKIEGO 2 IN KRAKÓW-PODGÓRZE (1985–1989, WOJCIECH OBTUŁOWICZ AND DANUTA OLĘDZKA-BARAN)

VÝPLŇ NA ULICI LEGIONÓW JÓZEFA PIŁSUDSKÉHO 2 V KRAKOVE-PODGÓRZE (1985 – 1989, WOJCIECH OBTUŁOWICZ A DANUTA OLĘDZKA-BARAN)

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

INFILL ON UL. PRZESTRZENNA 19–19A/ŁÓDZKA 33A IN WROCŁAW (1986, ANNA BOŻEK-NOWICKA)

ZÁSTAVBA NA PRZESTRZENNA 19–19A/ŁÓDZKA 33A VO VROCLAVE (1986, ANNA BOŻEK-NOWICKA)

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

To a certain extent, therefore, postmodern architecture reflected the differences of architectural practice in both countries in general. In Poland, most large state-sponsored construction projects ground to a halt in the economically stricken 1980s, leaving only small-scale, bottom-up initiatives. In East Germany, where the political and economic crisis was not as strongly felt as in Poland, the ongoing state control of the construction industry left no space for bottom-up initiatives, the official projects continued to be planned and built.

Architecture Inside and Outside the Plan

In contrast to East Germany, postmodern architecture in Poland was first and foremost commissioned by clients "outside the plan," in other words not affiliated with the institutions of the centrally planned economy overseen by the Warsaw Ministry of Construction.[7]

The most important client was the Catholic Church. Around 1975, Edward Gierek eased restrictions against church construction. This move was an attempt to appease the religious opposition in a country which, in contrast to the increasingly secular German Democratic Republic, had remained staunchly religious despite several decades of officially proclaimed atheism, and grew even more so after the 1978 election of John Paul II as the first Polish pope in history.[8] Also in contrast to East Germany, the Catholic Church itself had remained an influential and comparatively wealthy institution. Some expropriations in the post-war period notwithstanding, the Church continued to be an important landowner and received income from land and buildings, including most cemeteries, from tax-free (and often untransparent) christening and wedding fees, from the parishioners' expected donations on Sundays and during the priest's annual house visits, as well as from the state-operated *Fundusz Kościelny* (Church Fund).[9]

Estimates about the number of churches built in Poland between 1975 and 1989 vary between 1,500 and 8,000, many created in a postmodern style.[10] Among them were iconic structures such as the Ascension Church in Warsaw-Ursynów (1980–1985, Marek Budzyński, Zbigniew Badowski, Piotr Wicha), St Jadwiga in Kraków (1983–1989, Romuald Loegler, Jacek Czekaj), or Our Lady Queen of Poland in Głogów (1985–1989, Marian Fikus, Jerzy Gurawski). Some of them, such as Our Lady Revealing the Miraculous Medal in Zakopane (1980–1988, Tadeusz Gawłowski and Teresa Lisowska-Gawłowska), were financed by Polish émigrés, while others owed their construction to parishioners' donations and volunteer work.[11]

HALLE OLD TOWN, NEO-HISTORICAL PANEL BLOCKS ON GROSSE KLAUSSTRASSE (1984–1989, DESIGN BY OSWALD ARLT AND OTHERS)

HISTORICKÉ CENTRUM HALLE, NEOHISTORICKÉ PANELOVÉ BLOKY NA GROSSE KLAUSSTRASSE (1984 – 1989, NÁVRH OSWALDA ARLTA A ĎALŠÍCH)

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2005

The second group of non-state postmodern clients were small, quasi-private housing cooperatives, established as part of the Party rulers' desperate attempt to mobilise resources against the housing shortage.[12] Their legalization in 1981 factually abolished the large cooperatives' monopoly for housing construction and was a further step away from large tower-block estates on the periphery to small, contextually planned construction projects in the inner cities, many of them using postmodern forms. In the last decade of the Polish People's Republic, the amount of housing providers thus tripled to over 3000 (large and small) cooperatives.[13] In the long run, Polish cooperatives pre-empted the privatization of the housing market, as owner-occupiers came to enjoy rights to a flat similar to ownership and were eventually allowed to sell them at a profit, cashing in on value increases for land often acquired for free by the municipalities. Most urban buildings with postmodern features were built by such small cooperatives, including the infills in the inner cities of Kraków, Łódź, Wrocław or Warsaw-Praga, which often exemplify the return to historical typologies in the sense of Aldo Rossi or Colin Rowe, as well as the use of ornamentation and historic quotations. Examples included the infills on Legionów Józefa Piłsudskiego 2 in Kraków (1985–1989, Wojciech Obtułowicz, Danuta Oledzka-Baran) or Przestrzenna 19-19A in Wrocław (1986, Anna Bożek-Nowicka). The latter was part of the 1982 plan for gap closures in the city centre of Wrocław, prepared by chief planner Andrzej Gretschel and his team.

The third group were private individuals taking advantage of the options for private business that the Polish authorities had gradually allowed over the course of the 1980s, which could include a small import-export firm, a kiosk or grocery shop, or even temporary employment in the West, where the daily wage for an unskilled job was often equivalent to the average monthly salary in Poland. Such private initiatives occasionally yielded significant postmodern structures, such as the villa in Stężyca near Lublin for flower producer Józef Ptaszek (Czesław Bielecki, Maria Twardowska, et al. 1987–1997), or the flamboyant neo-historical buildings in the old town of Elblag discussed below.

In East Germany, opportunities for architectural commissions "outside the plan" were minimal, and nearly all sizeable postmodern projects were initiated and financed by state institutions. Oversight was assigned to the East Berlin Ministry of Construction or the East-Berlin-based *Abteilung für Sondervorhaben* (Department of Special Projects), which organised the most significant prestige projects. Accordingly, they aligned with the Party leaders' goals, which included the provision of housing and leisure and prestige projects to improve their image vis-à-vis their own citizens and the West German neighbours. Postmodernism, in this context, was not connected to the opposition and hence rarely perceived as exceeding the limitations of socialist ideology.

POSTMODERN PANEL BLOCKS IN ŁÓDŹ-RADOGOSZCZ-EAST ON UL. WIANKOWA 5 (1983–1984, JAKUB WUJEK, ZDZISŁAW LIPSKI, ANDRZEJ OWCZAREK)

POSTMODERNÉ PANELOVÉ BLOKY V LODŽI-RADOGOSZCZ-VÝCHOD NA WIANKOWEJ 5 (1983 – 1984 JAKUB WUJEK, ZDZISŁAW LIPSKI, ANDRZEJ OWCZAREK)

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

THE MUSICAL THEATRE FRIEDRICHSTADT PALACE IN EAST BERLIN (1983–1985, MANFRED PRASSER AND OTHERS)

HUDOBNÉ DIVADLO FRIEDRICHSTADT PALACE VO VÝCHODNOM BERLÍNE (1983 – 1985 MANFRED PRASSER A INÍ)

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2013

East Germany's best-known postmodern projects were the outcome of image-marketing events, most importantly the 750th anniversary of Berlin in 1987. For this occasion, the Party leaders pushed the construction of the reinvented old town, Nikolaiviertel (Nikolai Quarter, 1979–1987, Günter Stahn and others), and the historically themed shopping and entertainment district on Friedrichstraße (1979–1991), which included two historically inspired hotels for foreign tourists—the Grand Hotel, now Westin Grand, and the Dom Hotel, now Hilton (both built 1985–1987), a number of residential and commercial buildings, and the famous musical theatre Friedrichstadt Palace (1981–1984, Manfred Prasser, Walter Schwarz, and Dieter Bankert).

Other postmodern projects were carried out by state-operated combines: multifamily residences in inner-city locations, such as the "pomo panel blocks" in Halle, Rostock or East Berlin. In the old town of Halle, which had largely been spared wartime destruction, historically conceived panel-built residences were erected between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century buildings, often following the demolition of authentic historic structures. Such buildings arose on the streets surrounding the Marktplatz (1984–1989, Oswald Arlt and others). In the centre of Rostock, a similar historically inspired prefab development evolved near Kröpeliner Straße, taking inspiration from historic Hanseatic merchant houses; here, the most famous structure was the residential and commercial building Five-Gable House (1984-1986, Peter Baumbach and Erich Kaufmann). In the central districts of East Berlin, four-to-six-storey walk-up blocks along the block perimeter imitated the neighbouring tenements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the buildings on Große Hamburger Straße and Sophienstraße (ca. 1985).

The only Polish equivalents for such state-sponsored "prefab pomo" were the ornamented panel blocks in Łódź-Radogoszcz East (1979–1989, Jakub Wujek, Zdzisław Lipski, Andrzej Owczarek) and the Na Skarpie scheme in Kraków-Nowa Huta (1987-95, Romuald Loegler, Wojciech Dobrzański, Ewa Fitzke, Michał Szymanowski). This discrepancy was not because the East German panel industry was more prone to experimentation than its Polish counterpart, but rather because, in the 1980s, the overall output of state-sponsored construction was larger in the GDR than in the economically weaker People's Republic of Poland, and therefore the sheer number of projects taking up postmodern design was higher. Panel-built postmodernism also included some prestigious buildings for commerce and culture, such as the post office and shopping centre Zentrum Marzahn in East Berlin (begun 1978, Wolf Eisentraut, Dieter Bankert and others, later comprehensively redesigned) or the musical theatre Friedrichstadt Palace (1983–1985, Manfred Prasser and others) in East Berlin.

ELBLĄG, BUILDINGS ON STARY RYNEK 35–40 AND ŚWIĘTEGO DUCHA (C. 1985, SZCZEPAN BAUM, RYSZARD SEMKA) WITH THE CATHEDRAL IN THE BACKGROUND

ELBLĄG, BUDOVY NA ULICIACH STARY RYNEK 35 – 40 A ŚWIĘTEGO DUCHA (CCA 1985, SZCZEPAN BAUM, RYSZARD SEMKA) S KATEDRÁLOU V POZADÍ

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

Slightly simplified, postmodernism in Poland could be termed as largely a bottom-up movement supported by those who were not party officials or public servants, including churchgoers and housing cooperative members, while in East Germany it was a top-down measure channelled and promoted by certain high-ranking Party members, even if most projects eventually became popular among regular citizens.

Accordingly, Polish postmodernism tended to be well-received by the architectural community and productively discussed in the largely uncensored professional journals. In East Germany, in contrast, the most prominent architectural voices retained a critical distance towards postmodern architecture, yet at the same time encountered more difficulties in voicing critical opinions in newspapers and journals still subject to tight ideological control. Pragmatically, critical architects accepted neo-historical panel blocks and celebrated them for greater sensitivity to historical neighbourhoods than the previous tabula-rasa schemes, but at the same time they denounced prestige projects such as the Nikolaiviertel or the Friedrichstadtpalast as Party-imposed kitsch. This divergence set the stage for different connotations of postmodernism in both countries: symbolically laden and potentially oppositional in Poland, as opposed to commonplace, meretricious, or pandering to popular taste in East Germany.

Alternatives to Mass-Produced Panel Blocks

In both countries, postmodern architecture took a great part of its momentum from its promise of an alternative to monotonous panel block estates, which for average citizens were the most visible manifestation of the socialist planned economy and its principles of large scale and mass production. Against this background, postmodernism derived its impetus from the most significant architectural debate of the time: whether panel block construction was to be continued, modified, or stopped.

In the mid 1950s, Party leaders in both countries had decided in favour of the "industrialisation of the construction industry," following similar policies in in the Soviet Union. High levels of standardization and prefabrication, grounded in austere modernist design, subsequently led to massive output and by extension a mitigation of the sharp housing shortage, yet no less to a one-size-fits-all aesthetic of shoddily built blocks emerging as ubiquitous over the following decades. By the 1980s, the panel block paradigm had run its course and criticism was on the rise. In contrast to the West, the blocks continued to be inhabited by citizens of all classes and not increasingly by the poor and

NIKOLAIVIERTEL, EAST BERLIN (1979–1987, GÜNTER STAHN AND OTHERS). IN THE BACKGROUND IS THE REBUILT ST NICHOLAS CHURCH FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, IN THE FOREGROUND, NEO-HISTORICAL FAÇADES FROM PREFABRICATED ELEMENTS.

NIKOLAIVIERTEL, VÝCHODNÝ BERLÍN (1979 – 1987, GÜNTER STAHN A INÍ). V POZADÍ PRESTAVANÝ KOSTOL SVÄTÉHO MIKULÁŠA Z 13. STOROČIA, V POPREDÍ NEOHISTORICKÉ FASÁDY Z PREFABRIKOVANÝCH PRVKOV.

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

"POMO PANEL" BUILDINGS IN THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL, BUILT CA. 1987

POSTMODERNÁ PANELOVÁ ZÁSTAVBA NIKOLAIVIERTEL, POSTAVENÁ CCA 1987

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2005

marginalised. Consequently, criticism never amounted to a wholesale demonization of modernist housing, but mostly centred on its poor technical qualities and uninspiring design.[14]

A more important line of criticism addressed the link between the panel block paradigm and the neglect or often large-scale demolition of historic buildings. Postmodern architects, in contrast, believed in the value of historic precedents and, by extension, of historical buildings in general. In this context, the traditionalist aspects of postmodernism became particularly significant in both East Germany and Poland. Unlike panel developments, which in most cases required wholesale clearance, postmodern small-scale typologies could be built on gap sites between existing buildings in the city centres, and therefore matched the calls for conservation and renovation of historic neighbourhoods.

In both countries, these goals tended to be stronger in theory than in practice, yet in the few cases in which they were implemented they were well received. In Poland the largest example was the previously mentioned 1982 gap closure plan for Wrocław, in East Germany the "pomo panel blocks" in Rostock, Halle and East Berlin. All were designed in the municipal planning and design offices, and thus evolved in the context of centralised planning. All the same, the principles on which they were built—small scale, individualised design and customization of prefabricated parts—implicitly transcended the principles of the planned economy.

Nikolaiviertel and Elbląg: Two Reinvented Old Towns

The differences in the economic underpinnings of postmodern construction under socialism are clearly visible in the comparison of two prestigious projects aimed at rebuilding historic old towns destroyed in the Second World War. Both grounded in postmodern approaches, they managed to combine historical typologies and quotations with imaginative new design.

The town of Elbląg, situated sixty kilometres east of Gdańsk, was reduced to rubble in 1945 and left largely ruined for more than three decades.[15] In the 1980s, its famous Old Town, which before the war had boasted about 600 houses from the 15th-18th centuries, re-emerged through what was referred to as *retrowersja* ("retroversion"): a house-by-house reconstruction on the historical

block plan, featuring historically inspired ornamented façades. The 1979 master plan by Wiesław Anders, Szczepan Baum and Ryszard Semka, was modified in the 1980s under the influence of head conservationist Maria Lubocka-Hoffmann to allow for individual reconstruction of each structure.[16] The new buildings were mostly financed by private individuals, some of them small-scale entrepreneurs.

The Nikolaiviertel (Nikolai Quarter, 1979–1987, Günter Stahn and others) was East Berlin's reinvented old town, constructed between 1983 and 1987 on a largely empty site south of Alexanderplatz. Before the Second World War, the vicinity had boasted the Nikolai Church, Berlin's oldest church from the 13th century, a few 18th-century buildings, and a number of unspectacular late-nineteenth-century structures. In its rebuilt state, the neighbourhood re-emerged as a prefabricated concrete-panel version of a historic old town. A mixed-use development, it was composed of a few reconstructed historic buildings and various newly created commercial and residential structures with neo-historical façades, including 800 dwelling units, 1,900 square meters of retail space, several museums, and East Germany's largest concentration of bars and restaurants, 22 establishments in total.[17] All were designed and executed by state institutions, catering to both locals and tourists.

Both old towns have strikingly unusual parallel histories: both founded around a thirteenth-century church dedicated to St Nicholas, both first mentioned in 1237, both destroyed in 1945, and both rebuilt for the 750th anniversary in 1987. Similarly, reconstruction was initiated by state planning institutions, but not by the top leaders, respectively Erich Honecker and Edward Gierek, instead by the less powerful civic administrations. In Elbląg, it was the municipal and historic conservation authorities (supported by the Polish architects' association SARP), and in East Berlin, the municipal *Bezirksbaudirektion* (District Direction of Construction). In both cases the Party leaders' support was reactive rather than proactive.[18]

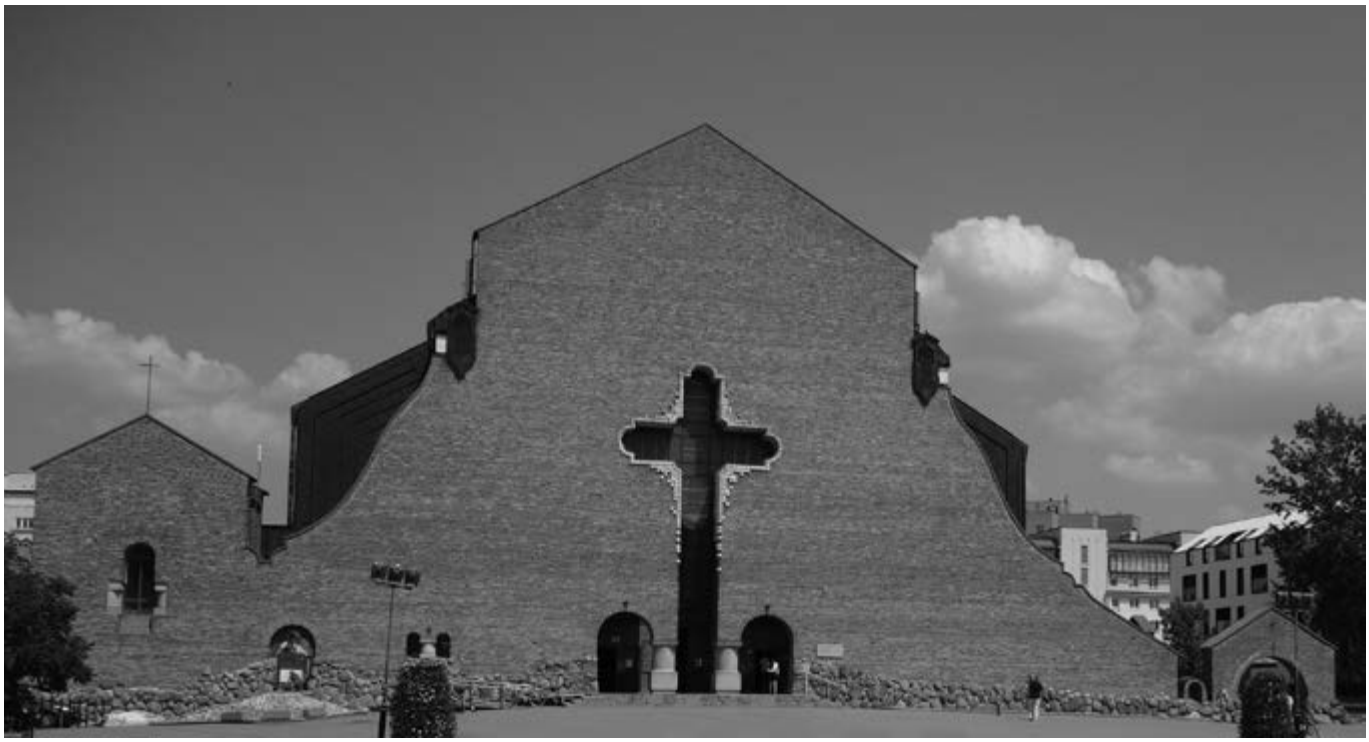
More important in the context of this article is how the courses of both projects diverged around 1980, matching the weakening of state planning authorities in Poland and their ongoing power in East Germany. The Nikolaiviertel was eventually built according to a "neo-historical panel plan" similar to one proposed but unrealised in Elbląg: a few historically reconstructed structures used traditional construction methods while the majority of the ensemble employed steel frame technology with prefabricated concrete panels. Given its location near the centre of power, the Nikolaiviertel became an important image-marketing project and featured prominently as a backdrop for political celebrations aimed at both East German citizens and visitors from the West.[19] After German reunification, the association with the GDR regime soon waned, and the Nikolaiviertel remained what it was from the beginning: a project dismissed by architects and critics, but continuously popular among visitors.

The Old Town of Elbląg, in contrast, only assumed national prominence slowly and, given the weaker economy, was only completed in the 2020s, long after the end of the socialist regime. The latter circumstance proved particularly advantageous in the end, as it prevented the buildings from being rendered with system-built panels as originally planned (and realised in the Nikolaiviertel) in place of their more appealing construction from brick and timber. The project thus resulted from specific economic circumstances: on the one hand a fledgling market economy and on the other hand ongoing regulation by still-powerful municipal authorities. The combination of factors led to an ensemble that in the eyes of both architectural professionals and the general public is widely seen as exemplary.

In Search of Spiritual Truth and National Identity

The differences in economic underpinnings—integral to the plan in East Germany and outside the plan in Poland—also led to a very different symbolism of postmodern architecture in both countries. Like the Nikolaiviertel, many East German projects were related to socialist state representation, while some of the most prominent postmodern buildings in Poland carried a strong anti-socialist meaning, even if nonetheless not necessarily aligned with capitalism. For example, many postmodern churches in Poland were connected to conservative ideas about Polish national identity, and at the same time to a longing for spiritual truth in contrast to a socialist ideology perceived as superficial and false.

A good example is the Kościół Wniebowstąpienia Pańskiego (Ascension Church) in Warsaw-Ursynów (1980–1985, Marek Budzyński, Piotr Wicha). It boasts a curved, quasi-baroque façade with a huge, lavishly ornamented cross, flanked by two stubby Romanesque columns, that at the



THE CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION IN WARSAW-URSYNÓW (1980–1985, MAREK BUDZYŃSKI AND PIOTR WICHA)

KOSTOL NANEBOVSTÚPENIA PÁNA VO VARŠAVE-URSYNOVE (1980 – 1985, MAREK BUDZYŃSKI A PIOTR WICHA)

Photo Foto: Florian Urban, 2018

same time serves as the main entrance. The church is part of a greater ensemble that includes a church hall, a presbytery and other adjacent buildings with similar, historically inspired details: a belltower looking like a medieval city gate, a side entrance with a flamboyant flight of steps, and columns with natural stone plinths.

Like other postmodern churches in Poland, the building soon acquired a meaning connected to nostalgic ideas about a Polish national culture based on Catholicism, with the premodern quotations interpreted in national terms. Journalists commended the similarities to national monuments, including the Counter-Reformation churches of the Małopolska region, or the sixteenth-century Baranów Palace in southeast Poland.[20] Another client of Budzyński and Wicha client, the local parish priest Tadeusz Wojdat, saw "Polishness" as one of the foremost design qualities and praised the references to "values particular to Polish history."[21] The unspecificity of such these supposedly national references, one may assume, was part of their persuasiveness.

Deploying postmodern historical quotations as national signifiers was characteristic for a country where the nation and national references retained unambiguously positive connotations throughout the twentieth century, and where for many a vision of national unity under the leadership of the Catholic Church was an attractive counterproposal to the economic insecurity and ideological uncertainty. It was no accident that the Church of the Assumption featured in the final scene of Krzysztof Kieślowski's famous 1988 film *Dekalog I*, where it provided the background to the protagonist's turn to faith and rejection of scientific knowledge – including, implicitly, the claims of communist ideologues that their worldview was "scientifically true." Along these lines, Polish postmodern historicism was connected to revival of the nation and a longing for a "spiritual truth" to transcend the emptiness of everyday life under socialism.

Such connotations were absent in the East German context. Here, the (mostly Protestant) religious opposition was more political than spiritual, concerned with peace initiatives rather than national awakening—and in any case declared no alignment with neo-historical architecture. Likewise, there was no unambiguously positively idea of the nation, as any national references inevitably conjured the ghosts of Nazism, or at least the shifting stances of socialist Party officials, who, until the early 1970s, claimed to represent a "German nation" soon to be reunified under a socialist regime, then a "GDR nation" in need of defence against West German imperialists. Hence neo-historical forms mostly catered to a non-specific nostalgic longing, consciously striving to avoid references to a specific past haunted by memories of Nazi crimes or working-class misery.[22]

THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AS DISNEYLAND – CARICATURE BY ANDREAS PRÜSTEL, EAST BERLIN, 1987

NIKOLAIVIERTEL AKO DISNEYLAND – KARIKATÚRA ANDREASA PRÜSTELA, VÝCHODNÝ BERLÍN, 1987

Source Zdroj: IRS Erkner

Likewise, given the complexity of the idea of an "East German nation," GDR officials were more inclined to regional rather than national references. The neo-historical panel buildings in Rostock employed "Hanseatic" forms taken from sixteenth and seventeenth-century townhouses, while the Berlin projects referred to the historic architecture of the Brandenburg region.

As such, East Germany's postmodern architecture possessed less symbolic capital. A project such as the post office and shopping centre Zentrum Marzahn on East Berlin's periphery (1978, Wolf Eisentraut, Dietmar Bankert and others) was well received as a functional building with a more imaginative design than many of its predecessors, but rarely discussed in terms of architectural innovation. The garishly ornamented musical theatre Friedrichstadt Palace (1983 Manfred Prasser and others) in East Berlin, was popular as an entertainment hub, but mostly dismissed by architectural critics, who also tended to reject the Nikolaiviertel as kitsch or Disneyland. None of these projects were discussed as expressions of a new architectural current, instead as the sometimes more and sometimes less successful attempts of the socialist regime to improve their citizens' lives and present the state in a positive light.

Conclusion

Postmodernism was not merely an expression of advanced capitalism and a freewheeling market economy – evidenced not merely through the many postmodern icons in the West sponsored by welfare states rather than private capital, from the 1980 Venice Biennale to the 1987 West Berlin International Building Exhibit, but just as much by the pervasiveness of postmodern architecture in the socialist countries.

All the same, postmodernism in the Eastern bloc was different from Western Europe and North America in terms of its origins and its focus, symbolism and significance. The disillusion with modern architecture and planning was not felt as strongly in the socialist countries as it was in the West, as monotonous tower blocks were criticized but at the same time pragmatically accepted, and fewer inner cities were ravaged by motorways. Postmodern historical continuity

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and respect for the past found was thus expressed differently, not so much as a sudden break with modernist principles but instead an addition and gradual revision.

Neither in the GDR nor in Poland was postmodernism merely an import from the West, but instead took influences from domestic discourses and traditions. In Poland, these were century-old debates over a nationally inspired vernacularism and the legitimacy of neo-historical reconstruction, and in East Germany the value of historic neighbourhoods and small-scale typologies, including Hanseatic merchant houses and Berlin tenements.

In economic terms, postmodern architecture differed significantly in both countries. East German postmodern projects arose almost exclusively from the centrally organised socialist planning institutions and were implemented in a top-down manner. In Poland, such state-sponsored projects were only a small part of the overall postmodern output, and the majority of postmodernist design evolved "outside the plan." As a result, GDR postmodernism was associated with the unloved socialist regime and its unimaginative aesthetics, whereas Polish postmodernism carried ideas connected with alternatives to socialism, including Catholic religiosity and national-conservative vision.

Postmodernism was also connected to the fledgling civil society in both countries during the 1980s. In tightly controlled East Germany, where non-state-organised groups met with harsh repression, civil activities had little influence in the realm of architecture. In Poland, on the other hand, where Party control was rapidly decaying, such activities were able to generate or influence architectural design, including of postmodern churches or private or cooperative homes. The "capitalist values" of pluralism and entrepreneurialism thus increased along with a more active civil society.

In fact, most Polish postmodern architecture resulted from the capitalist value of pluralism, as projects such as Old Town Elblag or the Warsaw Church of the Assumption were financed by different non-state clients, including capitalist entrepreneurs and the Catholic Church. Contrastingly, in East Germany the most significant postmodern projects merely aimed at the image of capitalist values such as individualised consumptionprof.. A key example is the gift stores, shops and entertainment venues in Nikolaiviertel and the Friedrichstraße that promoted a state-controlled consumer culture, designed and managed by the planned economy, and providing quasi-capitalist aesthetic experience and individualised consumption—goals that necessarily fell victim to their own contradictions. In both countries, therefore, postmodern architecture was not an outcome of capitalism, but rather of capitalist ideas and values absorbed by non-capitalist regimes.

1 HARVEY, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 392 p.; JAMESON, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 438 p.; ELLIN, Nan. 1996. *Postmodern Urbanism*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 348 p.

2 URBAN, Florian. 2021. *Postmodern Architecture in Socialist Poland. Transformation, Symbolic Form and National Identity*. Abingdon: Routledge, 238 p.; URBAN, Florian. 2009. *Neo-Historical East Berlin. Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970–1990*. Farnham: Ashgate, 296 p.; KULIĆ, Vladimir (ed.). 2018. *Second World Postmodernisms*. London: Bloomsbury, 272 p.; KLEIN, Lidia and GZOWSKA, Alicja (eds.). 2013. *Postmodernizm Polski. Architektura i urbanistyka*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo 40000 Malarzy, 448 p.

3 Postmodernism was connected to an advanced stage of the capitalist economy in many early theoretical writings, for example JENCKS, Charles. 1977. *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, and subsequent editions; STERN, Robert A.M. 2009. At the Edge of Postmodernism [1977]. In: Stern, R.A.M. *Architecture on the Edge of Postmodernism. Collected essays 1964–1988*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 216 p.; PORTOGHESI, Paolo.1982. *Postmodern. L'architettura nella societá post-industriale*. Milan: Electa, 154 p.; KLOTZ, Heinrich. 1984. *Die Revision der Moderne. Postmoderne Architektur 1960–1980*. Munich: Prestel.

4 See theme issue "Co dalej?" [What next?] with Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia on the cover, *Architektura* 33(3), May 1979 and "Architektura na rozdrożu" [Architecture at the crossroads]. Architektura, 36(2), July–August 1982.

5 Possibly, only three East German publications mention the term: SCHÄDLICH, Christian. 1982. Der Postmodernismus—eine alternative Architektur?. *Architektur der DDR*, (6), pp. 340–346; SCHNAIDT, Claude. 1982. Einige Feststellungen zum "Postmodernismus" und seiner sozalökonomischen Ursachen in Frankreich. *Architektur der DDR*, (6), pp. 361–362; FLIERL, Bruno. 1985. Die Postmoderne in der Architektur. In: Flierl, B. and Hirdina, H. (eds.). *Postmoderne und Funktionalismus. Sechs Vorträge*. East Berlin: Verein Bildender Künstler.

6 On postmodern discourses in East Germany from a historical perspective see for example ANGERMANN, Kirsten. 2016. (P)Ostmoderne. Die Architektur der 1980er Jahre in der DDR. *Die Denkmalpflege* 74(2), pp. 158–165 or ANGERMANN, Kirsten. 2021. The making of the 'city as a whole.' Postmodern discourse on urbanity in the GDR. *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land-International Journal of Architectural Theory* 25(41), pp. 39–53 [online]. Available at: https://cloud-cuckoo.net/fileadmin/hefte_de/heft_41/artikel_angermann.pdf (Accessed September 2023).

7 For the organisation of architecture in socialist Poland see BASISTA, Andrzej. 2001. *Betonowe Dziedzictwo – Architektura w Polsce czasów komunizmu*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 16–17.

8 DUDEK, Antoni and GRYZ, Ryszard. *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945–1989)*. Kraków: Znak, pp. 13–14, 311.

9 The Church Fund was a state institution incorporated in 1950 as a compensation for expropriated church property, paying for example for priests' pension schemes and church maintenance. Dudek, A and Gryz, R., 2006, particularly pp. 13–14.

10 For the lower number see KUCZA-KUCZYŃSKI, Konrad. 1991. *Nowe kościoły w Polsce*. Warsaw: PAX, p. 11; for the higher number CICHOŃSKA, Izabela, POPERA, Karolina and SNOPEK, Kuba. 2019. *Day-VII Architecture: A Catalogue of Polish Churches post 1945*. Berlin: Dom Publishers, pp. 23–29 (research by Tomasz Świetlik based on parish documents and church statistics).

11 Urban, F., 2021, pp. 68–71.

12 Urban, F., 2021, pp. 11–12.

13 MEDEKSZA, Łukasz. 2017. Wrocławskie plomby jako strategia polityczna. *Pamięć i przyszłość*, 10(37–38), pp. 29–30.

14 FLIERL, Bruno. 1998. *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht*. Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, p. 67.

15 LUBOCKA-HOFFMANN, Maria. 1998. *Elbląg Stare Miasto*. Elbląg: Państwowa Służba Ochrony Zabytków w Elblągu, simultaneously published in German by the same publisher under the title *Die Altstadt von Elbing*.

16 URBAN, Florian. 2020. Postmodern Reconciliation – Reinventing the Old Town of Elbląg. *Architectural Histories*, October 2020 [online]. Available at: https://journal.eahn.org/article/10.5334/ah.405/ (Accessed: September 2023).

17 Urban, F., 2009.

18 Urban, F., 2021, pp. 139–75; Urban, F., 2009, pp. 99–142.

19 Urban, F., 2009, pp. 129–132.

20 KŁOS, Kazimierz. 1981. Kościół na Ursynowie. *WTK Tygodnik Katolicki* (Warsaw), (3), 18 January 1981, pp. 1–3; Architektura. 1982. Kościół na Ursynowie Północnym w Warszawie. *Architektura*, 36(1), May 1982, pp. 61–69.

21 Tadeusz Wojdat, conversation with the author, Warsaw, 16 August 2018.

22 Urban, F., 2009, pp. 237–239.