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Postmodernism or Socialist Realism?
The Architecture of Housing Estates in Late Socialist Czechoslovakia

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When architects in late socialist Czechoslovakia grew disaffected with the state of architectural industrialization, housing estates were the cornerstone of their critique. In vehemently opposing *zeilenbau* urbanism and the barren façades of the estates, architects turned to historic typologies and embraced the ideals of expressiveness and meaning. While the pedestrian street, urban block, and communicative façade became central to housing estate designs in the 1970s–80s, accompanying debates credited historicity with social, psychological, and ideological importance.[1]

In this article, I maintain that the historico-phenomenological turn in late socialist architecture drew on two intellectual sources: contemporaneous Western postmodernism and postwar domestic socialist realism. Rather than characterizing socialist realism and postmodernism in terms of the dual concepts of "official" and "unofficial" culture, I will argue that they represent two parallel strategies of legitimating a turn to history and meaning in late socialist architecture.[2] For postmodernists this turn represented *freedom from* the apparent strictures of housing estates and of the institutional and technological context of the practice of their design, whereas for the advocates of neo–socialist realism it was an instrument for reviving socialism and *freedom to* enjoy a better-quality living environment.[3] In terms of design, however, housing estate projects undertaken by architects attentive to postmodern design and debates in the West passed muster with neo–socialist realists. In other words, the late socialist revival of early 1950s socialist realist architecture and the simultaneous reawakening of socialist realism as a creative method converged with the historico-phenomenological turn of postmodernism.

Postmodernism and Socialist Realism

Contemporary art historiography has challenged the conventional postsocialist view of socialist realism as absurd kitsch by analyzing it in its historical and political contexts. Boris Groys, in particular, has traced the genealogy of socialist realism to the historical avant-gardes and their desire to merge art and life.[4] In his reading, Stalinist-Zhdanovist cultural policies did not interrupt the avant-garde project but fulfilled, in an oblique way, the latter's own ambition to elevate artistic practice from the domain of representation to one of social transformation.[5]

If socialist realism depended on the avant-garde project, however, it also made a step toward postmodernism. Groys interpreted socialist realism as a postmodern style *avant la lettre* and noted: "Beginning with the Stalin years … Soviet culture, Soviet art, and Soviet ideology become eclectic, citational, 'postmodern.' Official Soviet art has … claimed the right to dispose freely of the heritage of the past regardless of its internal logic."[6] While Western architectural postmodernism discarded the utopian impulse of socialist realism, the "critical assimilation of the … heritage of all epochs"—as Zhdanov defined socialist realist method at the Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934—could also be an apt characterization of postmodernism.[7] Charles Jencks, Robert Venturi, and Christian Norberg-Schulz interpret history in a similar way: as a plurality of historic styles that is to be reworked in a radically eclectic fashion, as a reservoir of

Figure 1 Petržalka housing estate, Bratislava, during construction, early 1980s (photo courtesy of L'ubo Stacho).

complex and contradictory forms synthesized into an ambiguous unity, as a force that suffuses places with meaning and genius loci.[8] The proximity of socialist realism and postmodernism can also be demonstrated the other way around: in postsocialist Moscow, for example, mayor Yury Luzhkov's entrepreneurial development was inspired by Stalinist architecture to the degree that commentators talk about a specific "Luzhkov style," and socialist realist apartments have become attractive places of residence.[9]

Accounts of the overlap of socialist realism and postmodernism have concentrated on the early socialist and postsocialist periods, respectively, and have sought to answer particular questions: Did socialist realism prefigure Western postmodernism? Did Soviet or East European postsocialist postmodernism repeat socialist realism? By contrast, in this article I aim to analyze the *late socialist* version of their intertwinement. My inquiry focuses on architectural debate and practice in Czechoslovakia in the late 1970s and the 1980s, which unfolded in a triple confrontation with the construction industry and the methods of architectural industrialization, with the (neo)functionalist principles that had underlain practice since the late 1950s, and with the everyday reality of *sídliště* (housing estates), in which an assumed failure of these principles was embodied most vividly (Figure 1). The confrontation was launched from two institutional and discursive fields and assumed two forms simultaneously: postmodernism and neo–socialist realism (that is, the critical revival of socialist realism).

Although state-sanctioned architecture unions framed the problem in terms of reappraising socialist realism, and many younger architects and historians embraced the language of

Western postmodernism, identical strategies for improving the design of *sídliště* were favored from both positions. They shared efforts to increase the communicativeness of façades by applying color and ornamental patterns; make the *sídliště* environment hierarchical by reviving the urban block, the pedestrian street, and other semiprivate and semipublic spaces; and rehabilitate the significance of historical typologies in design practice. While neo–socialist realism and postmodernism used distinct discursive strategies to legitimate their respective critiques of *sídliště*, they advocated similar design principles.

Thus younger architects who subscribed to postmodernism found themselves in formal, if not conceptual, proximity to the neo–socialist realism of the architectural *nomenklatura*. If the latter rejected the commercial element of postmodernism (which it believed was incompatible with socialism), it did not reject the historico-phenomenological element of postmodernism, its revaluation of place and its return to traditional architectural but primarily urbanistic typologies. From the perspective of 1970s–80s neo–socialist realists, a new sense of historic continuity and its architectural translation into housing estates' living environments were fundamental for socialism to survive.

In the story of late socialist *sídliště* design and its relation to the discourses of postmodernism and neo–socialist realism, a number of individuals stand out. Among them were active exponents of postmodernism (Jiří Ševčík and Zdeněk Hölzel) and vigorous neo–socialist realists (Vladimír Meduna). They were concerned less with stylistic questions and more with the deeper metaphysical and methodological premises of their respective worldviews. Others skillfully

blurred the boundaries between these worldviews and narrated stories of their architectural and urbanistic juxtaposition (Matúš Dulla and Radomíra Sedláková)—their position could be interpreted as either a postmodern apology for socialist realism or a neo–socialist realist apology for postmodernism. Among those whose ideas and influence shaped the story from the outside were contemporaneous but geographically distant authors (Charles Jencks and Christian Norberg-Schulz) and historical but local figures (Jiří Kroha). Still others were on the margins of these debates (Ivo Oberstein and Peter Bauer), but their late socialist architecture is a clear manifestation of the premises and contradictions of postmodernism and neo–socialist realism.

Socialist Realism in Czechoslovakia

The socialist realist method, which was formulated in the 1930s in the Soviet Union, legitimated cultural inspiration through diverse traditions and historical influences, provided that these were critically assimilated into a positive view of the Soviet future.[10] How was this method imported into and translated in Czechoslovakia? The questions around socialist realist culture intensified in the country when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) rose to power. The party won the national elections of 1946 and consolidated its grip with the coup d'état of 1948 and the dissolution of the non-Communist opposition.[11] In the early years of the Cold War, Czechoslovakia came into the sphere of Soviet influence.[12] Czechoslovakia's road to socialism consisted of a domestic program drawing on progressive national traditions and a program intended to replicate the Soviet model. These two programs were reflected in two visions of socialist culture: while Czechoslovak cultural unions initially embraced the domestic legacy of the interwar leftist avant-garde, the Soviet model of socialist realism came to dominate the party's cultural policy at the Ninth Assembly of the KSČ (1949).[13]

As Kimberly Zarecor has demonstrated, the ideological role of architecture, as postulated by socialist realism, came into tension with the prewar thrust toward industrialization and standardization.[14] Unlike in the Soviet Union, in Czechoslovakia architectural industrialization dated back to capitalism in the 1920s. Institutionally, there was a continuity between the architectural research conducted by the Baťa Shoe Company, the country's largest interwar enterprise, and the strategies taken up by the Czechoslovak Building Works, the state organization that centralized the country's construction and architectural industry in 1948. Former Baťa employees and members of interwar avant-garde groups assumed leading positions in Stavoprojekt, the architecture department of the Czechoslovak Building Works, continuing the vigorous tradition of interwar functionalism.

Stavoprojekt was a central point of struggle over the future of architecture. In the early 1950s, Jiří Kroha, an architect who traded avant-garde credentials for socialist realism, questioned Stavoprojekt's unreformed functionalism. While serving as the head of the department's council, Kroha challenged the "vulgar economism" of architecture and conceived it as a superstructural expression of the new socialist reality.[15] In contrast to the functionalist reduction of architecture to "commonplace [and] biological needs," he argued, socialist realism would express the "cultural significance and ethical virtue … of the workingman's labor."[16] Kroha enjoined architects to embrace artistic and popular-humanist aspects of architecture and to "imbue national and classic forms with revolutionary … socialist content."[17] His vision redefined the architectural politics of Stavoprojekt.

The geographic distribution of *sídliště* closely followed Czechoslovakia's industrialization policies. Housing estates were located in proximity to nationalized and newly established sites of production. They complemented the spatial distribution of labor and were conceived as antidotes to spaces of manual work. Nová Ostrava (New Ostrava; head architect Vladimír Meduna, 1951–ca. 1958) was planned for almost 200,000 inhabitants and initially was modeled exclusively on Soviet precedents (Figure 2). It was eventually scaled down to one-fourth of the original size and drew inspiration from imperial Russian, European, and Czech Renaissance examples. Aside from a gigantic semicircular residential building, unprecedented in Czechoslovakia, Nová Ostrava's urban composition was defined by carefully composed superblocks and a monumental boulevard.[18]

Streets and perimeter blocks defined the site plans of most socialist realist *sídliště*, but they were of a limited scale in contrast to Ostrava; monumentality was achieved through composition. Kroha's Nová Dubnica (New Dubnica; 1951–57) project for 25,000 inhabitants consisted of buildings from four to six floors in height (Figure 3). Urban space was conceived as an all-embracing living environment with a hierarchical and symmetrically graduated distribution of private and public functions. Smaller ensembles were composed either as streets (recalling traditional Central European village morphology) or as urban blocks that were detached from the surrounding urban fabric.

While Meduna's Nová Ostrava represented a Soviet-oriented conception of socialist realist architecture, most other projects of the period embraced national traditions.[19] Kroha, Meduna's teacher, stressed that popular architecture was as relevant as outstanding masterpieces and singled out the nineteenth-century Czech National Revival neo-Renaissance in particular.[20] In Nová Dubnica, situated in the Slovak region of the Váh river, however, colorful façades finished with sgraffito and murals drew on local architectural

Figure 2 Vladimír Meduna (chief architect), Nová Ostrava, aerial view, 1951–58 (photo ca. 1970; Josef Pechar, *Československá architektura, 1945–1977* [Prague: Odeon, 1979], 27).

traditions. Regional folk motifs were used on cornices and blind walls in housing estates throughout the country (Figure 4). Vernacular and national architectural traditions were intensely researched within state architectural institutions and design studios in the early 1950s.[21]

Czechoslovak socialist realism was only relatively incompatible with architectural industrialization. Buildings were assembled following a limited number of typical methods, and construction elements, including decorative ones, were standardized and prefabricated. Socialist realism challenged functionalism as a particular form of industrialization that discarded the value of ideological communication and historical meaning. Kroha objected to structural panel technology and saw the future of industrialization in a combination of panel and concrete skeleton.[22] While ideological expressiveness gained the upper hand in early 1950s architectural practice, research into industrialization was never interrupted. In the late 1950s, the balance tilted in favor of industrialization.

From the Industrialization of Architecture to the Design of the Living Environment

As in other East European countries, two speeches made by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev—one in 1954 criticizing

socialist realism for architectural superfluity and one in 1956 denouncing Stalinism—spelled the end of socialist realism in Czechoslovakia. In 1956, the founding assembly of the Czechoslovak Union of Architects resolved to "dispose of formalistic extremes of historicism," and Kroha lost his standing in Stavoprojekt.[23] *Sídliště* design practice consequently adopted full-scale industrialization of architecture and the method of building with structural panels. Within less than a decade, the socialist realist approach to industrialization, which favored standardization of construction elements and allowed relatively flexible *typizace* (building typification), was replaced by quantity-driven industrialization based on the principle of typifying entire building volumes.[24]

The first prototypes of *paneláky*, or prefabs, as the apartment buildings constructed using this method came to be known colloquially, were built in the waning period of socialist realism and had minor ornamental details. By the late 1950s, however, these elements were discarded in favor of the pure expression of the panel grid pattern. Art was no longer superimposed on technology; it seeped in through the unadorned joints of the *panelák*. Similarly, streets, perimeter blocks, and L-shaped building plans such as those used in the mid-1950s were soon abandoned and replaced by *zeilenbau* urbanism, partly as an answer to the neofunctionalist program and partly to satisfy the technical requirements of the

Figure 3 Jiří Kroha, Nová Dubnica, model, 1951 (Museum of the City of Brno).

rail-mounted cranes used in construction. The number of completed dwelling units in apartment buildings developed by the state, by municipalities, and by state corporations or cooperatives rose from about 370,000 in the period 1946–60 to 610,000 in the 1960s, and then to 890,000 in the 1970s.[25] Construction intensity peaked in Czechoslovakia in the second half of the 1970s after the latest generation of large-scale *sídliště* was initiated. The beginnings of the construction of Jižní Město in Prague (for 80,000 inhabitants) in 1971 and of Petržalka in Bratislava (for 100,000 inhabitants) in 1973 coincided with waning belief in technological progress and its role in building socialism (see Figure 1).

Critiques of *sídliště* intensified while techno-utopianism dwindled during the 1970s. A new notion took a sociopsychological direction: the idea of the living environment.[26] This concept highlighted the aspiration to conceive and design housing estates as complex wholes integrating private and public spaces.[27] The ideal of a well-designed living environment, considered central to the meaningful development of a socialist person, was consistent with the depoliticizing

thrust of the decades after the Soviet-led invasion in 1968. The historian Paulina Bren has argued that in the 1970s, following the realization that Czechoslovakia lagged behind the West economically, the *nomenklatura* championed the concepts of quality of life and self-realization.[28] In this discourse, which was embraced by the Communist Party, state leaders, architects, intellectuals, and the public at large, the housing estate featured as a major component.

In 1978, in a letter to a friend, the Slovak art historian Tomáš Štrauss complained about architects "who have been infesting the country with concrete, with the rapacity of barbarians."[29] In an unpublished text from the same period, Štrauss charged architects with "destroying valuable monuments of the past … and turning the once beautiful country into a desert of concrete monoliths."[30] His criticism had a harsh tone in private communication, and its essence went unchanged in his public statements. In a contribution to the Slovak architectural journal *Projekt* Štrauss made a comparison regarding "dismantling local and national borders (once: a programmatic demand of the avant-gardes in 1920;

Figure 4 Aladár Búzik, housing estate with sgraffito based on Martin Benka's folk paintings, Martin, ca. 1954 (Martin Kusý, *Architektúra na Slovensku, 1945–1975* [Bratislava: Pallas, 1975], 87).

today: a reality, which is negatively experienced in its uniformity and homogeneity, in a schematic and spiritless creation or an imitation thereof)."[31]

Also in 1978, architects Bořislav Babáček, Jiří Kučera, and Jaroslav Ouřecký translated and published excerpts from Charles Jencks's *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* in *Architektura ČSR*, the official journal of the Union of Czech Architects (UCA). Commenting on Jencks's reading of Antoni Gaudí's Casa Batlló, they laconically noted that "there is no need to point out the sheer difference between this building and anonymous panel buildings."[32] Before the UCA's annual meeting in 1982, the same journal ran an extended editorial and lamented that "towering panel buildings have a [negative] impact on the image of diverse … cities and deprive them of the distinctiveness that evolves throughout history."[33] The authorship and institutional allegiance of these two texts could hardly be more divergent. The three authors worked in a small regional town. Ouřecký was a postmodernist who translated *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* in its entirety and, with the help of young architect

Zdeněk Hölzel, circulated it in a samizdat translation.[34] Ouřecký and Hölzel welcomed Jencks during his furtive visit to Prague in 1979. In contrast, the editorial reflected the union's official opinion, as is suggested by the fact that it was published with no author's name attached. Yet the two arguments were unanimous in their critique of the panel architecture of housing estates.

By the 1980s few believed that *paneláky* were works of art, and many thought they were not even architecture. It was common to talk about the need for "architectonization," indicating that architects embraced the ideal of architectural quality.[35] In 1980, the Slovak government adopted a vision statement on architecture in the year 2000, which was rooted in the conviction that architectural and urbanistic quality had fallen short because of quantitative demands in housing construction. Deploring the loss of character and expression in architecture, Ján Lichner, one of the vision statement's authors, noted that "we have underrated the cultural, social, and ideological relevance of architecture in the formation of the socialist consciousness of residents."[36]

The Reappraisal of Socialist Realism

This critique rested on two principles of dialectical materialism that had been fundamental to socialist realist architecture of the 1950s but had, in the opinion of many commentators, been forgotten. According to these principles, architecture should, first, express the unity of material and spiritual culture and, second, ground the development of a well-rounded socialist personality.[37] The societal and psychological function of architecture and the attendant function of the design of the living environment were central to the concerns of the KSČ. In his speech to the Second Assembly of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects (UCSA) in 1982, Miloš Jakeš, the chairman of the Central Committee of the KSČ, enjoined architects to

> give better architectural form to houses and streets, to differentiate the number of floors, to use different materials and a variety of colors, to apply the demands of socialist urbanism rigorously. We cannot repeat the mistake of erecting housing estates without appropriate services; our objective must be … to create a living environment … where people would feel at home … but that would also facilitate people's coming together, healthy collectivism, and the creation of the real socialist way of life.[38]

At the same conference, Vladimír Meduna was elected director of the UCSA. In his speech he criticized the shortcomings of industrialized architecture and framed future architectural policy in terms of critically reviving socialist realism. Meduna described the late 1950s criticism of socialist realism as one-sided. Although he accepted the argument that it was excessively decorative, he lamented that architecture had given up on ideological questions at the same time: "Artistic attitude in architectural and urbanistic practice faded away or disappeared entirely."[39] Meduna stated that the artistic element should not conceal the flaws of architectural industrialization, and he sought to revive socialist realism as a method of integrating these two aspects of architectural practice. In light of his 1950s work on Nová Ostrava, Meduna's case for socialist realism in the 1980s could be seen as an effort toward personal rehabilitation.[40] However, his election to a high-ranking position suggests that he was not the only champion of neo–socialist realism.

The *Architektura ČSR* editorial published in advance of the 1982 meeting of the UCA, referred to above, decried the lack of progress in architectural design during the preceding five-year plan (1976–80).[41] Looking toward the future, the journal's editors deemed it essential to clarify the relationships among urbanism, architecture, and design. At the UCA's assembly, outgoing director Zdeněk Strnadel urged architects to overcome the theoretical heritage of functionalism, the Athens Charter, and the Bauhaus. He expressed the opinion that the criticism of socialist realism in the late 1950s

was legitimate but not well thought out. Strnadel distanced himself from the formalism and ornamentalism of 1950s socialist realism yet declared the importance of reviving it as a creative design method that would encompass both architecture and urbanism.[42]

In an article published before the Fifth Assembly of the Union of Slovak Architects in 1982, the prominent urban planner Rudolf Šteis heavily criticized the then-current system of *typizace*. He deplored its inflexibility and argued for typification of elements that would allow greater variability of architectural composition.[43] In a speech to the assembly, Šteis stated: "It is … time to correctly assess the era of socialist realism. … We threw out the baby with the bathwater. … We are looking for human scale and humanity of environment. … We struggle to rehabilitate the street … and multifunctional buildings. … We are missing corner segments. All this was already here … but the continuity was lost, interrupted. … But let's clarify that I am not reviving formal aspects of socialist realism, but its creative method."[44] Note that Šteis, like Meduna and Strnadel, distanced himself from the ornamental exuberance of socialist realist architecture but dissociated neo–socialist realism from formalist revival. Yet he invoked the formal qualities of this architecture—the street, the block, and the courtyard; human scale and multifunctionality—at the same time.[45]

Reappraisal of socialist realism in such ambiguous terms was not limited to party bureaucrats and high architectural officials. In 1985, Stanislav Talaš, the architect of the Petržalka housing estate in Bratislava, lamented that valuable composition and creative principles were abandoned along with pseudohistoricism in the late 1950s. By the early 1980s Petržalka had become a vivid symbol of *sídliště* failure (see Figure 1). Talaš, dissatisfied with the way his design had been compromised during the building process, recalled the late 1950s, when the urbanistic principles of socialist realism were dismissed. In the mid-1980s, he viewed socialist realism as a resource for the architect to "rediscover … classical principles: optimal scale and … revived multifunctionality."[46]

Tension regarding the meaning of neo–socialist realism characterized the international conference titled Socialist Realism Reassessed: Architecture of the Years 1949–1956, organized in Kazimierz Dolny in Poland in 1985.[47] While Soviet and Bulgarian delegates stressed that socialist realism is a method detached from a particular historical period, Czech architectural historian Radomíra Sedláková highlighted the need to learn from the socialist realist architecture of the 1950s and in particular from its urbanism, typification method, and attention to architectural detail. She drew parallels between this architecture and postmodernism and deplored that a "sense of scale and human environment … had disappeared with the waning of *sorela* [socialist realism]."[48] In the conference report Sedláková expressed disappointment that other
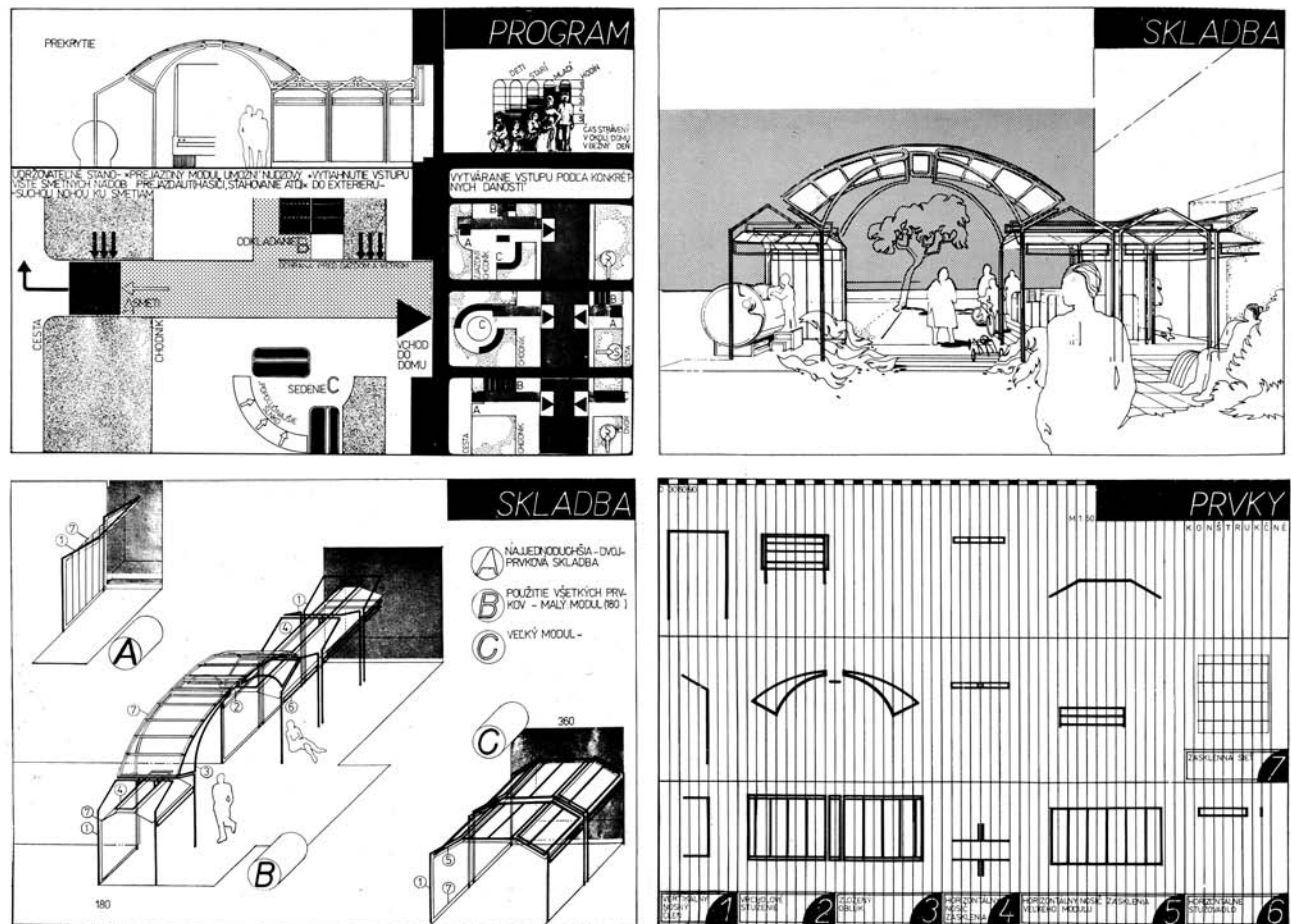
Figure 5 Peter Bauer, construction kit for an entrance canopy on a *panelák* building, 1982 (*Architektura ČSR* 41, no. 6 [1982], 264–65).

conferees ignored the main theme—the architecture of the years 1949–56—and illustrated their methodological inquiries of socialist realism with 1970s architecture.[49]

During the 1980s, previous criticism of socialist realism was itself subjected to criticism; socialist realism was critically revived for socialist architecture and urban planning. Architects attempted to negotiate between the Scylla of industrialization, functionalism, and cost-efficiency and the Charybdis of ideology, historical meaning, and human scale. There remained an ambiguity as to whether socialist realism was a design method or a formal precedent. This conceptual tension came to the fore when architects satisfied one of these aspects but failed to address the other.

In 1982, an apparently innocuous design solution for an entrance canopy on a *panelák* building appeared in *Architektura ČSR* and provoked a reaction from the journal's editorial board (Figure 5). Architect Peter Bauer presented a simple design kit made of seven components that could be assembled in multiple ways. According to Bauer, the canopy, made of iron and glass, could "help create original images for each entrance and thus eliminate the gray anonymity of the

housing estate." The canopy would allow people to meet and interact on the street: "A panel building entrance can resemble the good old village house porch."[50]

The journal's editorial staff embraced the idea of the canopy as a tool for creating an image, stimulating sociability, and reviving traditions. Bauer's kit was clearly not a stylistic imitation of socialist realism but a clever elaboration of its formal qualities. However, Bauer also implied that industrial design could bypass the monolithic character of volumetric typification. The editors reproached him for construing design as a supplement and remedy to architecture and thus prioritizing the former over the latter. They argued that industrial design should be subsumed under architecture, and architecture should be rethought as an all-embracing practice of designing the living environment.[51] The editors' response highlighted the fact that the understanding of socialist realism was ambiguous in the 1980s. *Socialist realism* referred alternatively to particular spatial forms of the 1950s and to the socialist method of design as a unity of productive efficiency and ideological efficacy. While Bauer conformed to socialist realism formally, reviving the canopy as a

Figure 6 Ján Bahna, portal, Ružinov Shopping Mall, Bratislava, 1978–84 (Archive of Ján Bahna).

traditional architectural type and as a semipublic urban space, he failed to uphold it as an ideal method.

Postmodernism in Czechoslovakia

The formal similarities of Bauer's canopy to contemporaneous postmodern works present further complications regarding how to interpret neo–socialist realism and pose the question of the late socialist reception of postmodernism in Czechoslovakia. How were this style and worldview, formulated in the context of late capitalism, introduced and domesticated in a late socialist context? How did Czechoslovak architects interpret the postmodern emphasis on history, meaning, environment, and freedom?[52]

For the Ružinov Shopping Mall in Bratislava (1978–84), a quintessential work of late socialist postmodernism, Slovak architect Ján Bahna designed an exuberant portal employing multiple optical illusions: a triangular-shaped mirror plate evokes a tympanum, and the cladding of the entablature imitates marble (Figure 6). Stylistic irony is complemented with formal theatricality: the freestanding and overscaled portal frames a secondary entrance to the interior hall rather than being situated on the main façade. Formally speaking, the portal functions like the canopy in Bauer's proposal in that Bahna's design aspires to structure the transition between interior and exterior as a social space.[53]

A contemporary commentator, Viktor Ferus, characterized the portal as a monumental apotheosis to architecture and a sign of its rebirth as an artistic practice.[54] Like socialist realism, postmodernism was simultaneously a stylistic and formal toolbox and a new metaphysical viewpoint. After visiting the first Venice Biennale in 1980, Bahna identified the essence of architectural change in the historical-eclectic variant of postmodernism and in its "absolutely new architectural language that would provide for the emotional needs of humanity."[55] A few years later he subscribed to the quest for architecture's historical essence and universally valid principles and related them to the value of historical and local identity.[56]

Like neo–socialist realists, postmodernists often disavowed the stylistic connotations of the label and highlighted a metaphysical return to history and meaning. During the 1980s stylistic postmodernism was often interpreted as only a first step toward a more fundamental historico-phenomenological quest, a quest that was "about architecture itself."[57] But this quest was manifested in concrete formal preferences and strategies that centered on the critique of *sídliště*.

While postmodernism stylistically influenced a number of public, nonresidential buildings, its primary significance in late socialist Czechoslovakia lay in a polemic against the *zeilenbau* urbanism of housing estates and their ostensible architectural homogeneity and aesthetic monotony. A key person in the reception of postmodernism was the Prague-based architectural historian Jiří Ševčík, who functioned as an operative critic for young Czech architects.[58] He introduced the historico-phenomenological theme in the

mid-1970s, and in the early 1980s, after an encounter with the work and persona of Charles Jencks, he developed it further under the label of postmodernism.

His 1978 study of Most, an industrial town where an entire historic center was demolished and replaced with a housing estate, was influential in the professional formation of many architects early in their careers. Drawing on Kevin Lynch's methodology of mental mapping and Christian Norberg-Schulz's phenomenology, Ševčík contrasted the inhabitants' memories of the old city to the placelessness of the new estate.[59] From the late 1970s Ševčík's numerous essays appeared in *Architektura ČSR* and samizdat publications, in research proceedings of the Technical University in Prague (where he was employed at the time), and in catalogues of fringe exhibitions.

Ševčík also coordinated the above-mentioned samizdat translation of Charles Jencks's book and Jencks's subsequent visit to Prague in 1979. This was a watershed year that introduced the term *postmodernism* into Czechoslovak debates. In addition to long excerpts and paraphrases of *The Language of Post-modern Architecture*, numerous positive and negative reviews appeared in architectural and art journals.[60] But rather than introducing entirely new themes, postmodernism functioned as an umbrella concept that integrated the older debates about historicity and meaning. In the early 1980s Ševčík introduced the notions of eclecticism, hybridity, bricolage, and fragment while retaining and further reiterating the themes of historical continuity, archetypal memory, and existential space. In the historical and spatial context of the *sídliště*, canopies and portals were fragmentary portents of a deeper relationship with history. Architects embraced the ideal of historical meaning less as opposed to the purity of modernist form and more against the perceived meaninglessness of the contemporaneous form of architectural industrialization, notably its volumetric typification. In Czechoslovakia postmodernism functioned as a transcendental critique of bureaucratic reason and its determining role in *sídliště* architecture.

Postmodernism or Neo–Socialist Realism?

As metaphysical or methodological viewpoints, postmodernism and neo–socialist realism corresponded to contrasting variants of historicity: one transcendental, archetypal, and the other dialectic, synthetic. As formal strategies for architectural and urban design, they often intersected. In 1984, the young architectural historian Matúš Dulla published an essay on the history of socialist realist architecture in Slovakia from 1950 to 1955, a fascinating historical document that introduced these themes while straddling the viewpoints of neo–socialist realism and postmodernism.[61] After introducing the questions of architectural gesture, historical

quotation, and the return to the past as quintessential to socialist realism, Dulla interspersed his essay with allusions to postmodern debates and buildings in the East and West: "the eclectic traditionalism of Philip Johnson, Venturi's struggle for complexity and contradiction in architecture, the architectural production in the Soviet Union's Asian republics, the extremism of the first Venice Biennale, the competition for the new building of the Academy of Arts of the Soviet Union, and Jencks's concept of radical eclecticism of postmodern architecture."[62]

While the essay was illustrated with photographs of Slovak architecture of the early 1950s, the text presented a striking juxtaposition of exuberant Western architectural symbols with contemporaneous Soviet projects. Beneath the overt theme of socialist realist architecture Dulla unfolded an apology for postmodernism. He read the same historicist thrust in Western postmodernism and (Czecho-)Slovak socialist realism: "We often search abroad for what we have at home and today … we forget that we experienced a similar period of 'returns' thirty years ago."[63] Referring to Karel Honzík, a leading member of the Czech interwar avant-garde who in the 1950s indicted constructivism for excluding the psychological effects of architecture, Dulla revived Honzík's critique for contemporary objectives. His quote from Honzík's 1953 article "Konečné rozloučení s třícetiletou érou konstruktivizmu" (The final good-bye to thirty years of constructivism) could be a postmodernist critique of *sídliště*:

> Not only urbanistic spaces, silhouettes, and renderings of typified projects, but also questions of national character, psychological and ideological effects, and all the consequences of rejecting ornament and [other] expressive elements have been left without consideration. … Constructivist architectural forms and urban schemes, which repeat one and the same limited number of motifs, lead to monotony and confusing repetitiveness.[64]

Thirty years after Honzík bid good-bye to prewar constructivism, his statement lent authority to Dulla's own investment in saying good-bye to thirty years of postwar constructivism.

After quoting Honzík, Dulla presented Slovak and Soviet socialist realist projects and argued that the epoch of socialist realism remained poorly evaluated and undervalued. This was regrettable, he asserted, because the socialist realist conception of architectural continuity would be a welcome contrast to the historical ignorance of contemporaneous architectural environments. In Dulla's opinion socialist realist architecture should be valued "for quality workmanship, … proportions, structuring, scale, and readability of urbanistic spaces and districts, for retaining street character and solving the question of courtyards, … for accentuating the

Figure 7 Štefan Zhorella, Juh housing estate, Handlová, 1952–58 (author's photo).

artistic aspect of architecture."[65] Dulla's recovery of the legacy of socialist realism culminated with a reference to Hans Hollein's Rolls-Royce grille works and golden palms in the travel bureau in Vienna, which he juxtaposed to Jiří Kroha's remark that architecture is an artistic language.[66]

Late socialist architects found similar design strategies in domestic architecture of the 1950s and Western architecture of their own period. While addressing housing estates only tangentially, Dulla's essay demonstrated that the intellectual perspectives of postmodernism and neo–socialist realism intersected on a number of points that were central to the late socialist critique of *sídlište*. Both perspectives related architecture to meaning and stressed the importance of the communicative façade. They resurrected the urban block and advocated a gradual hierarchy between public and private spaces. They put a renewed emphasis on the pedestrian street and street life. More generally, communicative façades, articulated blocks, and lively streets were features in a broader project to rethink and redesign the *sídlište* as a meaningful living environment, as the locus of social identity and historical continuity.

Color and the Ornamentation of Façades

Late socialist architects disparaged the *sídlište* for being gray. They denounced the "universal grayness" of these "gray … fortresses of contemporary urbanism" and even claimed that they were devoid of color.[67] In contrast, they extolled the "joyful and radiant coloring … that is common … in neighboring countries" and praised the "traditional earthy colors" and "splendid coloring" of materials such as brick.[68] This renewed appreciation of color had two equally plausible points of reference: postmodernism and socialist realism.

At the most elementary level, postmodernism was experienced as a colorful explosion that contrasted with the experience of the *sídlište* as gray. Czechoslovak architectural magazines published black-and-white images that contrasted with the dazzling colorfulness of postmodern architecture as conveyed by international magazines, such as Minoru Takeyama's Niban-kan, featured on the cover of the "Postmodernism" issue of *Architectural Design* in 1977.[69] But the expressiveness of this and other graphic façades was also clearly legible in black-and-white reproductions: the excerpt published by Ouřecký and colleagues in 1978 featured photographs of Niban-kan and Casa Battló, and Michael Graves's Portland Building was shown in Zdeněk Kostka's more critical review of postmodernism.[70] Even the samizdat edition of *The Language of Post-modern Architecture*, limited to pen reproductions of the original figures, conveyed this expressiveness.[71]

Magazines also showed numerous postmodernist projects of a historicist bent in which "traditional" colors like earthy brown, brick red, and clay yellow were widely used, such as Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans (1978) and Aldo Rossi's floating theater (1979).[72] In his review of the Strada Novissima of the first Venice Biennale (1980), Ján Bahna highlighted the "red ocher façade of Leon Krier" and Michael Graves's contribution that "resembled a painting in melancholic colors."[73] Bahna's encounter with the Strada Novissima coincides with his design of the Ružinov portal: in both cases the qualities of earth and soil evoked by the portals' ocher coloring indicate that the renewal of architecture coincides with a return to its classic condition.

Traditional colors and graphic elements had been prominent in Czechoslovak socialist realist housing estates.

Figure 8 Peter Jančo, Devínska Nová Ves housing estate, Bratislava, 1982–89 (author's photo).

Variations of clay yellow, earthy brown, and red ocher were used widely. Sometimes they were employed expressively, as in Nová Dubnica, where Kroha, in his own words, aspired to "build a socialist town whose color scheme, lyricism, and architectural concept would be linked in the best way to the healthy tradition of vernacular building in Slovakia."[74] At times architects used color in an understated way, as in a housing estate in the city of Handlová (Figure 7). Ornamental murals modeled on regional folk motifs and sgraffito finishes derived from Renaissance and neo-Renaissance examples were frequently applied.

In late socialist housing estates architects adopted similar colors. For example, the combination of yellow and brown was used extensively in Devínska Nová Ves in Bratislava (Peter Jančo, 1982–89), situated under the Sandberg mountain (Figure 8). According to the architect, the use of sandy and earthy colors was "inspired by the natural context of the site" and was "a decisive factor in individualizing the living environment."[75] In many cases architects aspired to formulate coherent color concepts and introduced "general color schemes."[76] These schemes were usually concerned with color as a tool of expressing building tectonics in relation to panel grids, balconies, elevator shafts, and so on.

In the Dlhé Diely housing estate (1979–95), situated on the other side of the mountain, color was used in conjunction with a more ambitious articulation of façades.[77] The original project from 1979 by architects Tibor Gebauer and Pavol Paňák sought to introduce new building types (multifunctional units, terraced housing) adapted to the hilly terrain. Although these types were eventually rejected, the realized project (architects Jozef Slíž and Eva

Grébertová, 1987) achieved façade articulation by applying accessory elements such as entrance canopies, projecting balconies, bay windows, balcony glazing, and pediments to standard building types. Each neighborhood in Dlhé Diely had a different dominant color (clay yellow, brown, green) applied in multiple hues.[78] While color was used to highlight the structuring effect of the accessory elements, on less articulated façades it was used with an opposite effect (Figure 9). Thus in relation to *panelák* façades color had both accentuating and dissimulating functions.

Like color, graphic ornamentation was employed to fight the ostensible grayness of *sídliště*. The visual concept for the estate in Liptovský Mikuláš, implemented in 1980, included folk motifs simplified into colorful geometric shapes. The architects argued that "residential microenvironments require better-quality treatment [because] they determine men's consciousness and their worldview."[79] In the context of the Petržalka housing estate (1973–86) sculptors Juraj Sapara and Ján Vančo proposed a new method of ornamenting. In 1984 they introduced *arspanel*, a concept for a standardized concrete panel prefabricated with an imprinted S-shaped relief. While such panels were eventually used on only a handful of buildings, Sapara and Vančo hoped for mass application and distinctive, large-scale patterns effective at urban scale (Figure 10). They reasoned that "artistic panels" would soften the hollow and angular appearance of the estate.[80] The abstract motif and dissimulating effect of *arspanels* contrasted with the more figurative murals used in Petržalka on *panelák* blind walls. Bearing names such as Peace, Danube, and Monument to the October Revolution, the

Figure 9 Jozef Slíž and Eva Grébertová, Dlhé Diely housing estate, Bratislava, 1987 (Archive of Twentieth Century Architecture, Department of Architecture, Institute of Construction and Architecture, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava).

Figure 10 Juraj Sapara and Ján Vančo, *arspanel*, Petržalka housing estate, Bratislava, 1984 (*Projekt* 26, nos. 4–5 [1984], 66).

murals functioned as accents within the surrounding urban landscape.

While late socialist architects were aware that coloring and ornamentation of façades were surficial strategies, they were nonetheless attracted to their instant symbolic effect. Scrutinizing the images of postmodern architecture while recalling the folk façades of earlier socialist realist projects, they tried to reproduce something of their rudimentary meanings in the late socialist *sídliště*. But the way colors and ornaments were used simultaneously to

articulate and to disguise *panelák* façades points also to some ambiguities as to postmodern and socialist realist influences.

The Urban Block

Late socialist reception of postmodernism and rethinking of socialist realism fueled the revival of the urban block in Czechoslovak *sídliště* architecture. Perimeter block and superblock typologies were opposed to the parallel rows of

Figure 11 Jiří Ševčík et al., typomorphological drawing from a study of Vinohrady, Prague, 1982 (Archive of the Academic Research Centre of the Academy of Fine Arts, Prague).

zeilenbau estates typical of the 1960s and the early 1970s.[81] In 1978 Jiří Ševčík naturalized the type and detached it from a historical context: "In the 1970s, the urban block returns as a basic element of traditional urban structure. We are able to reflect upon it without prejudice."[82] By claiming impartiality, Ševčík strove to neutralize the functionalist critique of the urban block, but he himself was biased against the linear, open urbanism of *sídliště*.

In the study of the Most housing estate, Ševčík lashed out at the *zeilenbau* morphology, arguing that its "environment … cannot be structured in a satisfactory manner, generates disorientation, and undermines existential and affective security."[83] In contrast, old Most embodied for him the topological relation of boundedness, which "has strong social implications, as is known from old ritual forms."[84] Following Kevin Lynch's and Christian Norberg-Schulz's gestalt approach to the human-space relationship, Ševčík understood place as a fundamental model of this relationship. For gestalt theory, which Ševčík uncritically adopted, place is the archetypal spatial unit of human existence, an existential space structured through perception of boundedness, limits, and centrality.

These anthropological constants then arguably determine a person's image of the city, while architecture is defined as a process of giving concrete forms to existential space.

Ševčík's next study implied that the perimeter block is conducive to the experience of boundedness, and therefore it is the urbanistic embodiment of existential space.[85] Again drawing on Lynch and Norberg-Schulz, he highlighted the link between genius loci and the perimeter block in Vinohrady, a nineteenth-century bourgeois district in Prague (Figure 11). Ševčík drew parallels between the situation in architecture in 1982 and the historicism, symbolism, and eclecticism of the late nineteenth century. He claimed that the architecture and urbanism of this period were being appreciated anew and highlighted the perimeter block as a fundamental component that fosters orientation, which he understood as simultaneously a spatial and existential term as it was respectively formulated by Lynch and Norberg-Schulz. The two studies contrast the perimeter block to *zeilenbau* housing estates, which are spatially and existentially disorienting.

Ševčík did not mention that the principle of boundedness was also central to socialist realist housing estates. Kroha achieved

Figure 12 Jiří Kroha, Nová Dubnica, perspective drawing, 1951 (Museum of the City of Brno).

Figure 13 Jan Bočan and Zdeněk Rothbauer, Velká Ohrada housing estate, Prague, site plan, 1982 (Archive of the Municipal District Office of Prague 13).
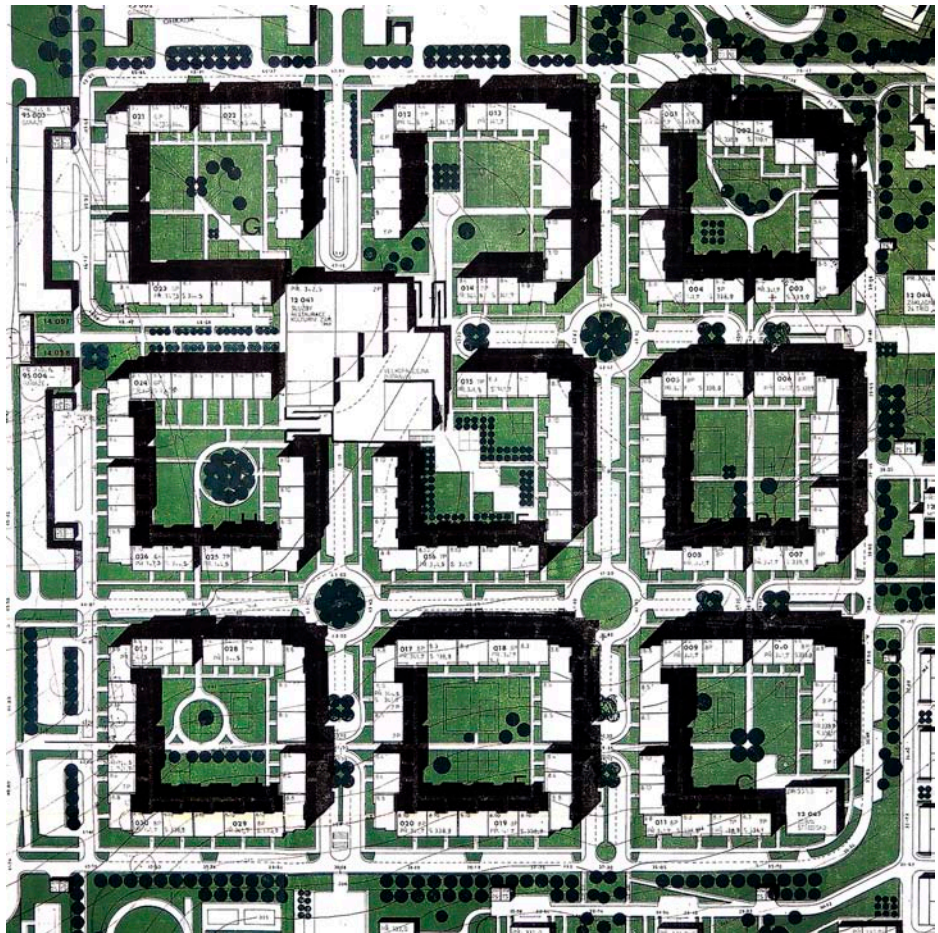
an interesting dialectics of openness and closure in Nová Dubnica (Figure 12). The basic unit is not strictly a perimeter block, but it is not a superblock either, despite the fact that Kroha drew inspiration from socialist experiments in Red

Vienna as well as those of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier.[86] This block is open to pedestrian movement along its central axes and features a monumental public building in the center, yet it is also subdivided into four relatively separate courtyards,

Figure 14 Ivo Oberstein, Jihozápadní Město housing estate, Prague, site plan, competition entry, 1968 (Archive of Ivo Oberstein).

where the architect situated public services. In different variations (without a central building, with additional building volumes that increase the level of internal separation)' this basic unit is repeated throughout the plan.

Compared to the compositional simplicity and integrity of Nová Dubnica, Nová Ostrava is more varied, reflecting the influence of architects other than Meduna, including modernists Karel Prager and Václav Hilský. The monumental urbanism is perceptible in the second district, designed by Meduna and Václav Čtvrtníček, which is planned as a series of elaborate superblocks with a *cour d'honneur* configuration inside the courtyards, contrasting with the linear urbanism of the first district (see Figure 2). These intricate but inviting courtyards correlate with the grid plan of a monumental boulevard (Meduna referred to the Soviet idea of a microdistrict that excludes internal traffic).[87] Smaller socialist realist ensembles, such as Miletičova in Bratislava (Karel Paluš and Miloslav Tengler, 1954–56), were often designed as single superblocks integrated within or adjoining older urban fabric.

Late socialist design of housing estates returned to the typological precedents of the perimeter block and the superblock. Prague's Velká Ohrada (Jan Bočan and Zdeněk Rothbauer, 1977–93) is a composition of nine rectangular blocks structured in a three-by-three pattern (Figure 13). A cultural center situated slightly off center (not realized) breaks the overall symmetry of the plan. Only this element and a narrow pedestrian path integrate the nine blocks, which are otherwise closed onto themselves and separated by access roads. Velká Ohrada simulates a fragment of the nineteenth-century inner city in the condition of late socialist suburbia.

For Ševčík, Velká Ohrada's abstract qualities alluded to the traditional block as a "forgotten constant of urban culture" and an "archetypal geometrical unit of the city."[88] Such transcendental reading of the project precluded the historian from situating it in a dialogue with concrete historical moments, including the socialist realist one. He might have noted formal similarities between Nová Dubnica and Velká Ohrada, asked why the semipublic courtyards of the former become semiprivate in the latter, and speculated about technical, political, and cultural determinations of boundedness in different historical moments, including the postmodern one.

The Jihozápadní Město (Southwest City) housing estate in Prague (Ivo Oberstein, 1968–89) is a contrasting example that harks back to the superblock typology (Figure 14). Over the course of two decades the project went through numerous
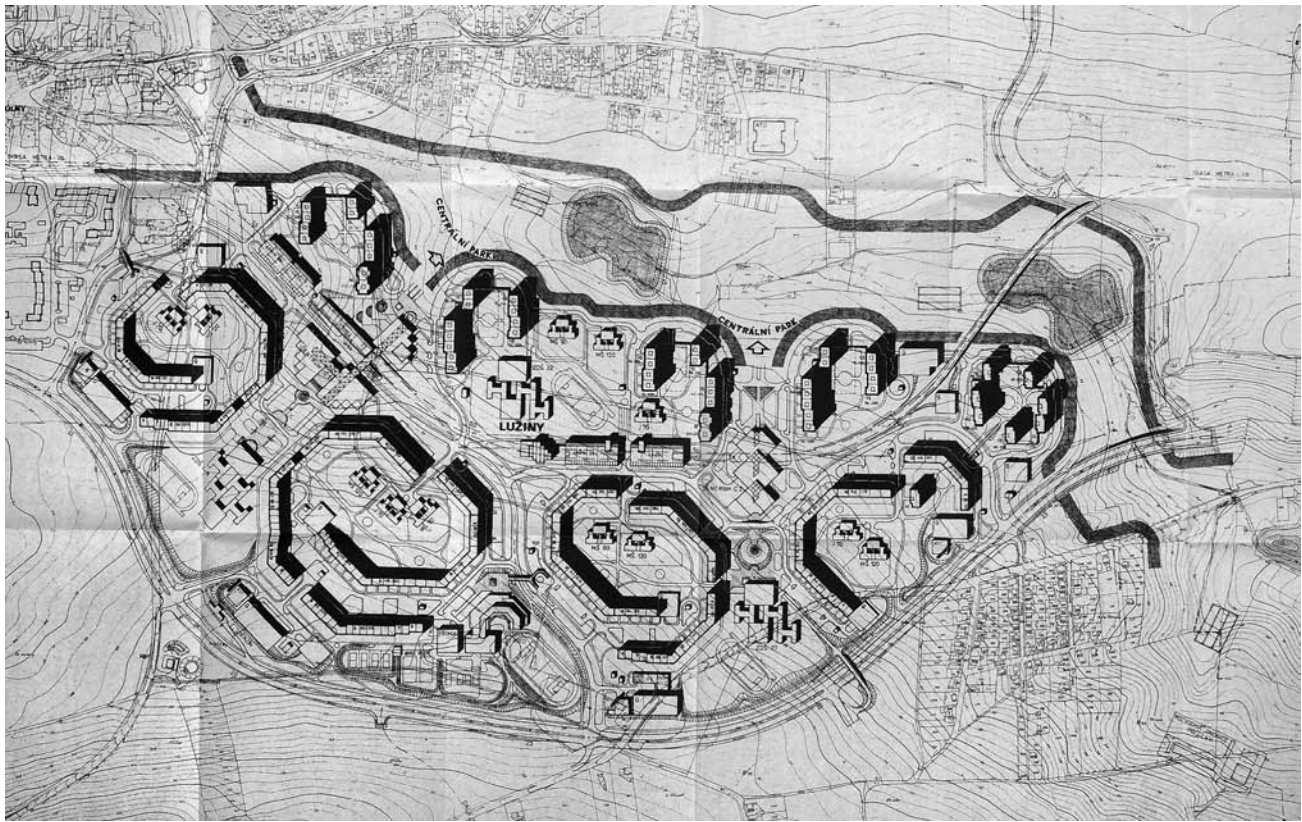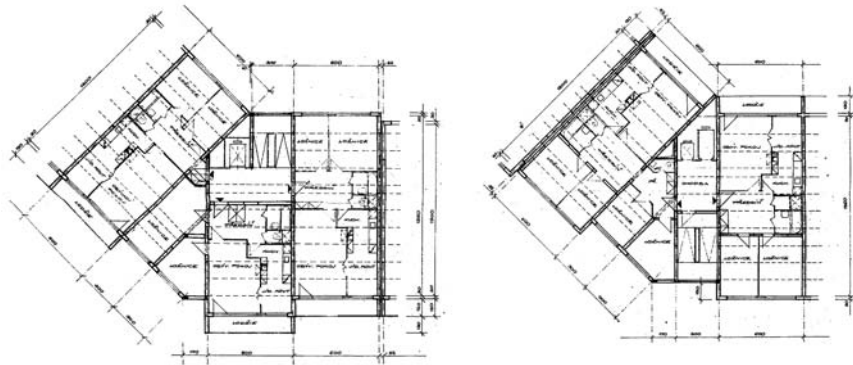
Figure 15 Ivo Oberstein, Jihozápadní Město housing estate, Prague, site plan, 1976 (Archive of the Municipal District Office of Prague 13).

Figure 16 Ivo Oberstein, Jihozápadní Město housing estate, Prague, corner segment, 1976 (Archive of the Municipal District Office of Prague 13).

changes in plan, underpinned by the aim of developing it in response to its environmental context. A creek running through the site was adopted into a central park and already influenced the meandering layout of buildings in the competition entry of 1968. This plan is relatively open and buildings are positioned in a snakelike but angular shape. In contrast, the plan from 1976 (for the southwest segment) introduces four superblocks and five smaller blocks and has a softer and more bounded character (Figure 15).[89] Spatially, each superblock is a variation on two interlocking *cour d'honneur*–type configurations of buildings; functionally, the

superblocks integrate kindergartens and other public services.

The meandering superblock of Jihozápadní Město faced planning and technical problems. In early 1970s, volumetric typified construction; individual building units could be connected only linearly. In the second half of the 1970s Oberstein pushed into production a new corner segment that allowed him to connect two building units at different angles while retaining interior functionality in the connecting segments. Two variants were introduced: a 135-degree segment used in southern superblocks, and a 90-degree

Figure 17 Ivo Oberstein, Jihozápadní Město housing estate, Prague, courtyard in the northern segment, late 1970s (author's photo).

segment used in smaller blocks (Figure 16). The plan of 1976 shows an intermediary situation, in which the former segment is already incorporated but the latter one is not (Figure 17; see Figure 15).

Oberstein did not deny being influenced by traditional city scale and the perimeter block. In the late 1970s his team was also preparing a new master plan for Prague's Vinohrady. Ševčík's typomorphological study of this late nineteenth-century district was conducted within this framework. In contrast to Ševčík, however, at Jihozápadní Město Oberstein was concerned less with the block as a transcendental archetype of boundedness and more with the quality of the living environment stimulated by a semipublic superblock.

While Oberstein was not actively concerned with socialist realism, the project in fact relates to neo–socialist realist themes and critiques of functionalism. In particular, Oberstein bridged the interest in the living environment with the quest for a new, more flexible form of typification. The project's semipermeable urbanism echoes Nová Dubnica, while its *cour d'honneur* superblocks echo Nová Ostrava (see Figures 12 and 2, respectively). Ševčík identified postmodern themes in Jihozápadní Město, but Oberstein was not a postmodernist. In 1988 Ševčík construed the meandering superblock in Jižní Město as a "milestone" that "slowly introduced" the theme of memory into architecture, before the perimeter block "eventually arrived" in Velká Ohrada.[90]

Such an interpretation is characteristic of the postmodern critique of *sídliště*. Ševčík's operative historiography succumbed to a metaphysical conception of history in which architecture is destined to return to its archetypal condition. Thus the implication is that the *zeilenbau sídliště* was nothing but a historical aberration and the superblock only an intermediary step in architecture's return to the perimeter block as its authentic condition. Rather than accepting such a narrative, however, we should point out the multiplicity of conditions for the reemergence of the block.

These include contemporaneous gestalt theories of environmental psychology, existential phenomenology of place, and postmodern urbanism; the Communist Party's rising interest in the quality of life; the architectural *nomenklatura*'s discourse on the quality of the living environment; and the domestic legacy of the nineteenth century—as well as socialist realist architecture. The corner segment episode points to a fragile balance between cost-efficiency and ideology, when a path toward more flexible typification and urbanistic language was opened without compromising the principle of industrialization as such.

The Street

In the pedestrian street late socialist architects discovered an alternative to the functionalist dialectics of freestanding slabs and unstructured voids and an urban type that they believed could stimulate social interaction. In 1975, Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, in which she espoused the sidewalk and its "bends, jogs and T intersections," was translated into Czech.[91] Samizdat publications of Christopher Alexander's *A City Is Not a Tree* and Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, translated by Zdeněk Hölzel in 1978–79, contributed to the argument on the value of spontaneous and polysemic spaces.[92] Late socialist architects wanted streets to become such spaces. Ševčík noted that in contemporaneous housing estates "the street is nothing but a cul-de-sac or … arterial road."[93] In his Venice Biennale review Bahna remarked that the "Strada Novissima … is a portrait of contemporary Western architecture," referring perhaps not only to the plurality of this architecture but also to the way it foregrounded the street as a place where this plurality could materialize.[94]

In socialist realist housing estates of the 1950s the street had been a typical structuring urban element. The Košice-Šaca ensemble was designed around perpendicular,
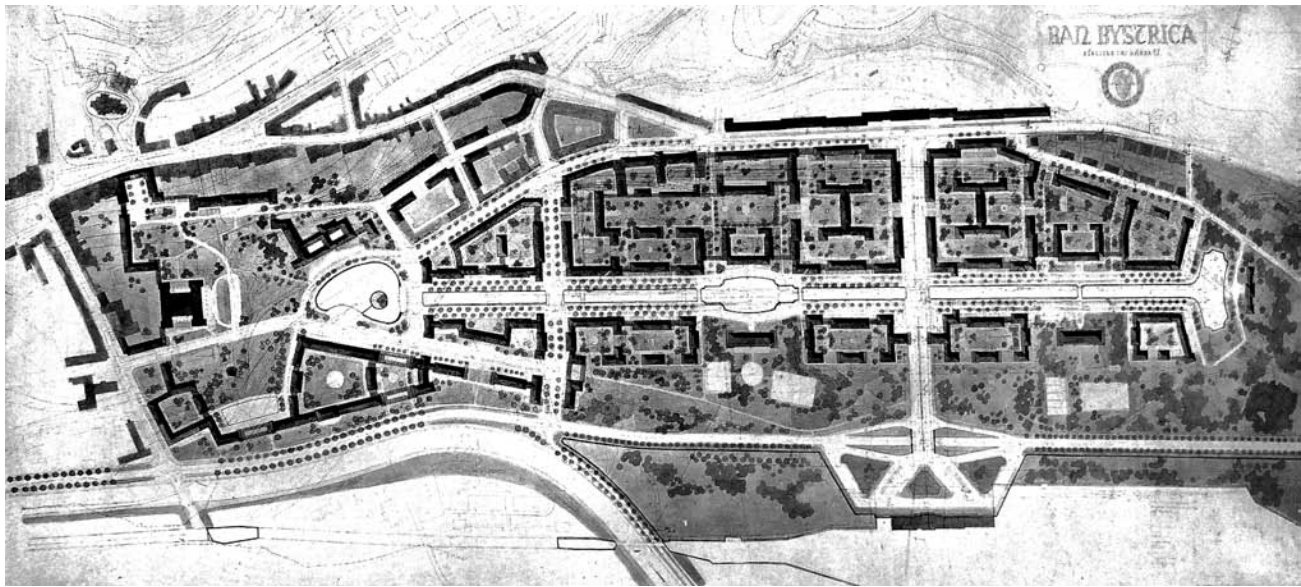
Figure 18 Martin Kusý, Pri stanici housing estate, Banská Bystrica, site plan, ca. 1954 (*Architektura ČSR* 13, no. 8 [1954], 226).

intersecting primary and secondary axes. At the Pri stanici housing estate in Banská Bystrica, the architect situated semiclosed courtyards of various configurations along a monumental axis (Figure 18). Smaller ensembles, such as Hrádek u Rokycan and Handlová, were designed in the shape of a single street flanked by residential buildings. In the original proposal for Nová Dubnica, a tree-lined allée and a monumental arch led from the city's entrance to an access road that broadened into a monumental square flanked by perimeter blocks (see Figure 3). From the square, the axis narrowed and circumscribed the town hall—situated at the southern side of the square—before concluding in an amphitheater situated in the foothills of the nearby mountains. The boulevard of Nová Dubnica was conceived as a dramatic story that unfolded as one progressed toward the amphitheater as its symbolic climax.

Late socialist architects and planners identified many advantages of the street, such as visual structuring and aesthetic cultivation of space, increased satisfaction of residents, and the role of street environment in their (socialist) identity formation. The unions were worried about residents' regular weekend trips to the countryside, which they associated with a hostile *sídliště* environment.[95] Postmodernists saw in the pedestrian street a locus of plurality, diversity, spontaneity, and urbanity, a step toward remaking the *sídliště* into a real city. The social value of the street also hinged on the multiplicity of functional and commercial uses that it offered. The concept of the *parter* (a pedestrian-level storefront) figured centrally in late socialist debates on how to improve the *sídliště*. The *parter* was seen as an alternative to the concentration of culture, commerce, and public services in dedicated building types (cultural centers, department stores). Architects hoped that with the

pedestrian street and its *parter*, uses and functions would blend together and a semipublic space would emerge.[96]

While these ideas resonated widely, they were seldom implemented. A notable exception is the project by Zdeněk Hölzel and Jan Kerel for the Nový Barrandov housing estate in Prague (1977–88). The beginning of the project coincided with Ševčík's study of Most, which had a significant influence on the architects, as well as with Hölzel's own translations of Venturi and Alexander and his encounter with Jencks. Hölzel and Kerel, who worked during the early 1970s with Karel Janů, a key figure in the postwar industrialization of architecture in Czechoslovakia, substituted a historico-phenomenological version of postmodernism for techno-utopian mindedness.[97]

Barrandov is structured around a promenade-like pedestrian street with squares, piazzas, shops, restaurants, and cinemas (Figures 19 and 20). The main square is bounded on three sides by a multifunctional *panelák* with *parter* services and is intersected by a secondary axis that integrates public functions: retirement home, cultural center, library, and primary school (Figure 21). A decision to join the school and the library physically with *panelák* buildings appears to have been symbolically motivated, indicating the architects' preference for multifunctionality and mixed uses.

However, the project pays little attention to the actual residential buildings. Some of the axonometric drawings show typified residential buildings as nothing but cross-hatched footprints. In contrast to Oberstein, Hölzel and Kerel strategically avoided grappling with typification and were resigned to accepting the standard types, with the exception of the multifunctional house on the main
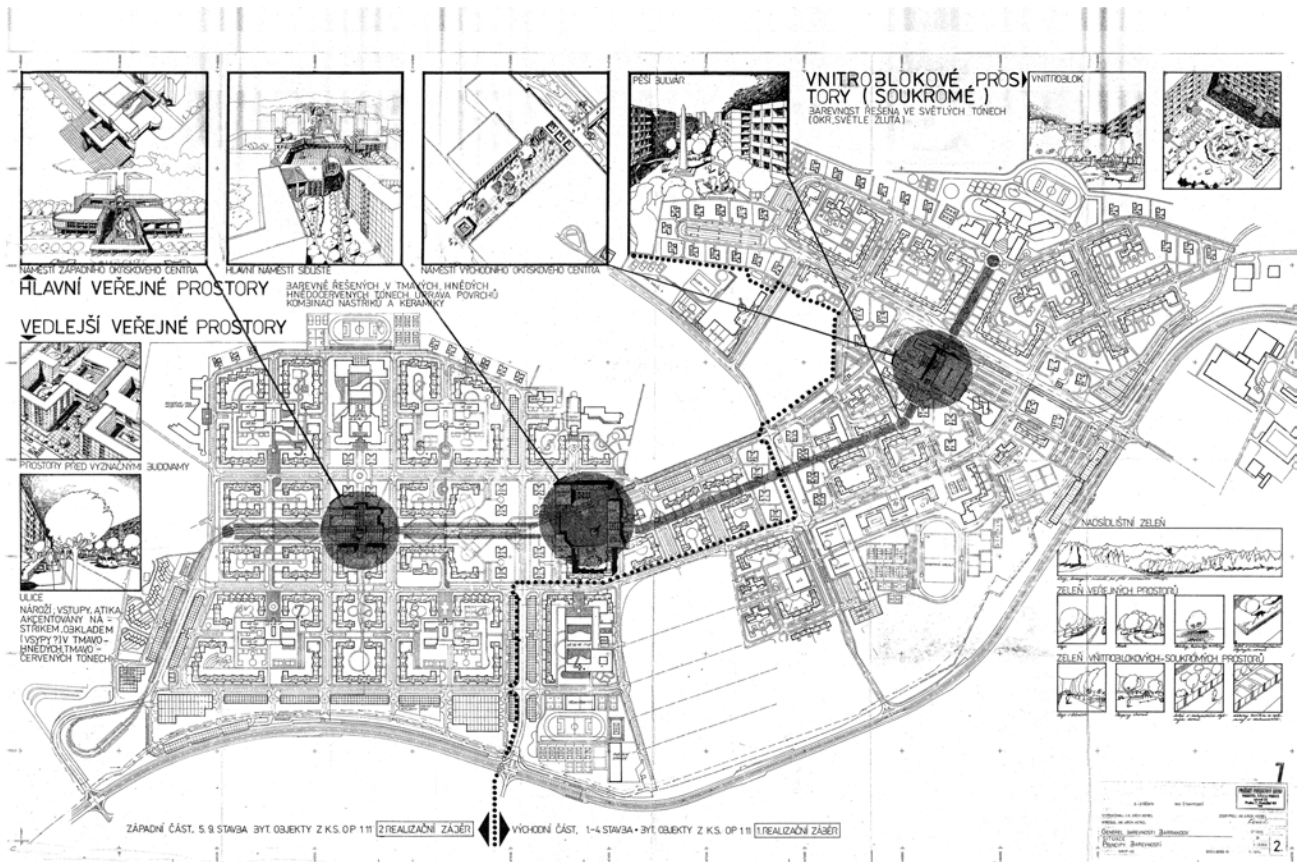
Figure 19 Zdeněk Hölzel and Jan Kerel, Nový Barrandov, Prague, site plan, with promenade and main nodes highlighted, 1987; the westernmost part was not built (Archive of Zdeněk Hölzel).
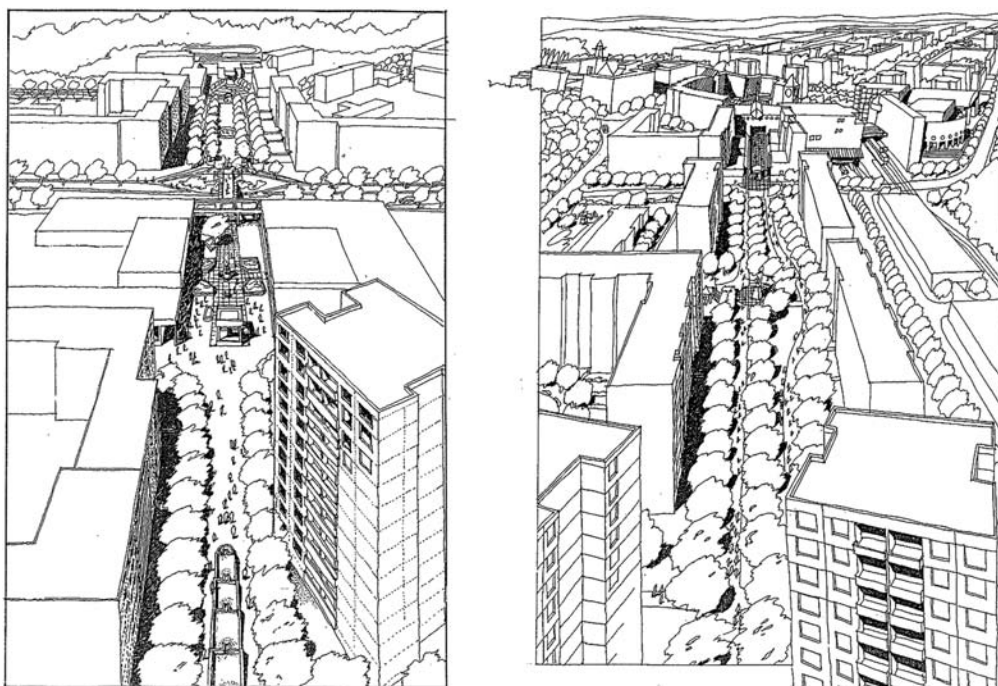

Figure 20 Zdeněk Hölzel and Jan Kerel, Nový Barrandov, Prague, promenade, perspective drawings, 1987 (Archive of Zdeněk Hölzel).
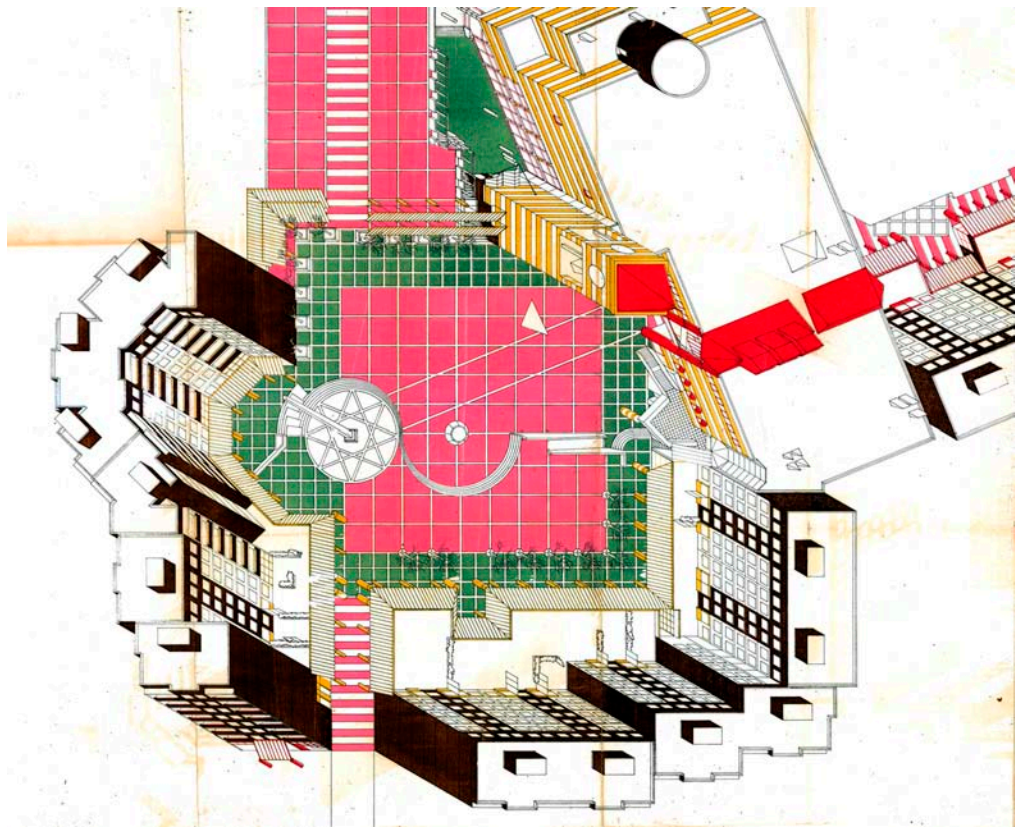
Figure 21 Zdeněk Hölzel and Jan Kerel, Nový Barrandov, Prague, axonometric of Trnkovo Square, 1988 (Archive of Zdeněk Hölzel).

square.[98] In the first phase (the eastern and central segments) the focus was primarily on the street (the western segment—strongly reminiscent of Nová Dubnica blocks—was planned as a second stage but was not realized).

In Barrandov the street also sustains symbolic themes of identity and memory. Most contemporaneous accounts singled out the project's use of sculptures to structure the public space.[99] Hölzel and Kerel proposed sixteen works (statues, obelisks, fountains), of which nine were realized, that would highlight the significant nodes of the new city, enhance its image, "contrast with industrially produced buildings and charge places with meaning."[100] These sculptures were organized around the theme of cinema, largely because the housing estate is situated in the vicinity of Barrandov Studios, the largest film studio in interwar Central Europe, and representatives of the studio were involved in the planning process. One unrealized sculpture, to be named "Fantasy," was to depict a hovering airship moored to a primitive watermill fountain—a reference to Hölzel's earlier fascination with Archigram, which is worked through as a memory of a bygone past (Figure 22). The street is dotted by unpretentious canopies, in which a minimal architectural language and function are met with a maximal symbolic effect: the primitive hut as the archetypal condition of all architecture and as a contrast to the *panelák*.

Hölzel and Kerel translated the influences of Jencks, Venturi, and Alexander—as well as Ševčík—into the street typology. For them the street was a locus of plurality that would gather the entire housing estate into a difficult whole, a semi-lattice that would engender Barrandov as a real, natural city, a traditional urban archetype and an archetype of urbanity. Ševčík saw in Barrandov a "remarkable interest in genuine social communication" and a "simulation of the real city."[101] He was a fellow traveler to Hölzel's conversion from techno-utopia to place making and noted in Heideggerian overtones, "We were excited by a riveting singularity of place that is brought forth when we dwell authentically."[102]

Genuine, authentic, real: with these criteria Ševčík challenged the *sídliště*. Hölzel and Kerel's line perspective drawings are reminiscent of Rob Krier's sketches and Léon Krier's diagrams. Hölzel and Kerel share with the Krier brothers not only a drawing style but also a fundamentally moral view of architecture. In this view architecture becomes a process of restoring its own archetypal principles through dissociation from a negative point of reference. While the Kriers' radical neotraditionalism materialized in opposition to the conceit of modernist architecture, contrasting the true and the false, Hölzel and Kerel's street was a rallying cry against the subsumption of architecture to the Czechoslovak construction industry.[103]
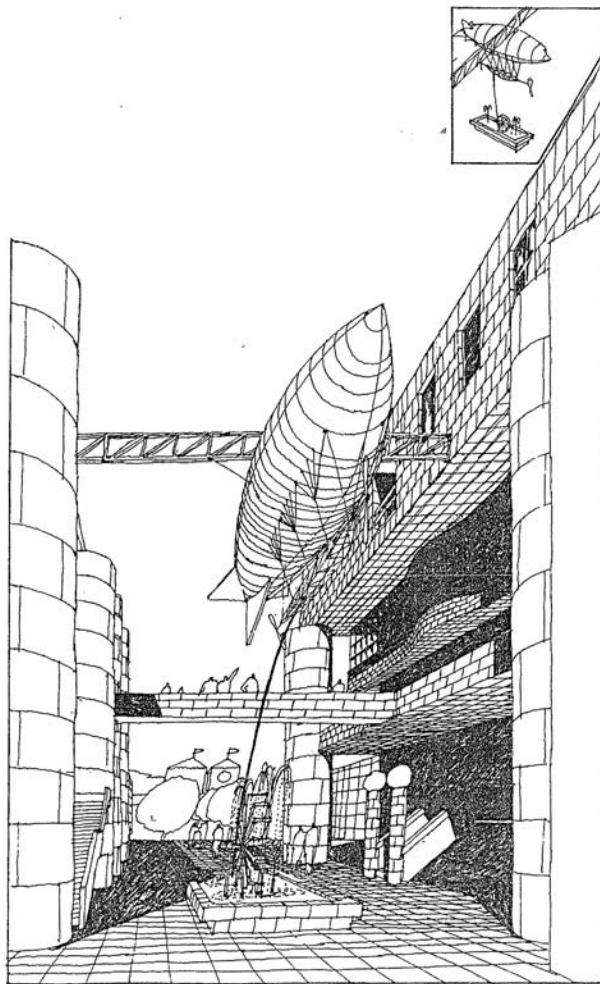
Figure 22 Zdeněk Hölzel and Jan Kerel, Nový Barrandov, Prague, unrealized sculpture "Fantasy," 1988 (Archive of Zdeněk Hölzel).

Conclusion

The encounter with postmodernism made late socialist architects attentive to the urban living environment, meaningful images, existential spaces, and architectural and urbanistic archetypes. In Czechoslovakia the postmodern program of stylistic plurality and eclecticism was taken up in a metaphysical sense. It legitimated a historico-phenomenological turn to streets, blocks, and communicative façades that sought to renew a sense of place and urbanity in the *sídliště*. Ján Bahna argued in 1985 that "we are afraid of … folklore and romanticism, of bolder artistic expression in general. … Overcoming this fear of history and national identity … is the only way toward architecture as a materialized conception of home."[104] Bahna's advocacy of traditions and domesticity implied a critique of universal and utopian

attitudes in architecture. The turn to history and meaning was emphatically anti-utopian, and its proponents were proud of it. As Jiří Ševčík put it: "Today's architecture … is a revival of all revivals. … Inhabiting the whole space of history in a concrete place is in our opinion more authentic and moral. The historicity of postmodernism returns to the past without a priori ideological constructs and the safe compromises of a road secured in advance."[105] He equated "democratic" and "nonutopian attitude[s]" and claimed that contemporary architecture questioned the exalted ambitions of modernism to redeem society.[106] He asserted, "Today's revival of revivals follows 'lower' objectives, and it wants man to be able to live amid contradictions."[107] Postmodernists wanted to trade politics, utopian thinking, and ideology for concrete places ostensibly free from these influences.

The historicity of the Czech and Slovak postmodernists was in many respects similar to Jiří Kroha's philosophy of thirty years earlier. At the height of the socialist realist breakthrough, Kroha urged architects to draw upon "vibrant works of traditional architecture" and "national and popular attitudes without effacing thei vivacity and inexhaustible diversity."[108] Later, Ševčík and Bahna, situated on the institutional margins and deliberately not engaged with questions of Marxist aesthetics, shared with the Communist hard-liner Kroha a commitment to imbue architecture with historical meaning. A similar program was simultaneously advanced by neo–socialist realists in the core institutional segments of the discipline.[109]

Postmodernist and neo–socialist realist historicity diverged, however, in their conception of how history and freedom were related. For the postmodernists history was an unedited repertoire of archetypes and a reservoir of transcendental memory. Postmodern designs advanced negative freedom, freedom from the *sídliště* model, while advancing the principles of boundedness, interaction, and expressiveness without a specific social content. Postmodernism traded concrete history for concrete places. Neo–socialist realism held to a dialectical conception of historicity, in which the turn to history and ideology—including the return to socialist realism—sought to resolve the painful limits of the bureaucratic-functionalist model of the *sídliště*. At the same time, it held to positive freedoms, maintaining that the universal right to housing, as it was embodied in the *sídliště* of the 1960s, should be expanded to include the right to a high-quality living environment.

This conception manifested most clearly in relation to architectural industrialization and typification. The socialist realism of the 1950s put the industrialization of architecture second to ideological questions. The functionalism of the 1960s put ideological questions second to the industrialization of architecture. Neo–socialist realism, arguing

for a reformed, more flexible form of typification, attempted to resolve this contradiction by recovering the role of ideology and meaning in architecture while retaining its industrialized component. It was a way of giving architects a say in how the construction industry operated. By contrast, the postmodernist turn to historical meaning in Czechoslovakia was eventually a way of liberating architecture from its subjection to the centrally operated construction industry.

This discussion of late socialist architects has identified some parallels and tensions between postmodernism and neo–socialist realism. If Dulla built formal bridges between the two, the case of Bauer's canopy exposed the limits of design divorced from the questions of typification and industrialization. Hölzel pioneered a distinctive *sídliště* environment built around a pedestrian promenade but eventually renounced efforts to reform typification. The architects in Bratislava applied color to articulate but also to disguise the façades of *panelák* buildings. And Ševčík, advocating courtyards and semipublic spaces, construed boundedness as the archetypal quality of existential space but failed to observe how this quality had been concretely determined throughout history. Is the nineteenth-century perimeter block defined by a bourgeois or a working-class boundedness? Is the boundedness of the socialist realist block the same as the boundedness of the late socialist block? Paradoxically, it was Oberstein—who was neither neo–socialist realist nor postmodernist—who created the most interesting example of a late socialist housing estate at Jihozápadní Město. Oberstein was perhaps the most successful in juggling ideology and industrialization. His superblock recovered historical meaning and semipublic space for the *sídliště* but also avoided resorting to the pre-industrial nostalgia of the perimeter block. The superblock was made possible by Oberstein's active intervention in the system of typification and the introduction of two corner segment types. Oberstein's interest in place and its historical meaning manifested in the reform of typification rather than in a wish to eradicate industrialization of architecture as such.

Oberstein's intervention was limited, but it sustained an architectural momentum in which the concern for place and the aspiration to be socially relevant were not mutually exclusive. In other words, the quality of the living environment and the quantitative question of how this quality should be socially and spatially distributed—the question that was at the crux of late socialist typification—were not divorced from each other, as they were in other postmodernist projects. As critic Otakar Nový presciently pointed out in 1984, postmodernism correctly criticized the ossification of postwar functionalism and identified the crisis of industrialized architecture, but it was ultimately uninterested in the betterment of society.[110] In late socialist Czechoslovakia postmodernism recovered sociability but also commerce, boundedness but also privatism, articulation but also dissimulation. It espoused historical meaning but renounced architecture's social role. The question for future research remains whether the late socialist historico-phenomenological revival of the *sídliště* also contributed to its postsocialist demise.

Maroš Krivý's research revolves around the history of a broadly conceived postmodernism. He studies governmentality and subjectification in architecture, focusing on housing design, participatory urbanism, and cybernetic thought. His publications have appeared in the *Journal of Architecture*, *Footprint*, *City*, and the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Notes

1. I would like to express my thanks to Richard Anderson, James Baxenfield, Agáta Marzecová, Lukasz Stanek and an anonymous referee for their advice and helpful comments. I use the term *historicity* to denote the idea that things are determined by a historical process. In this respect the term refers to a particular concept of history. There are, however, different modalities of historicity, and below I discuss two contrasting ones: a transcendental, archetypal one and a dialectic, synthetic one. I reserve the term *historicism* for strictly stylistic architectural questions.

2. In challenging the terms *official* and *unofficial* I draw on the argument of Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

3. The term *postmodernism* was widely used in Czechoslovak debates from the late 1970s onward. The term *neo–socialist realism* is my own. I use it to characterize the late socialist revival of early 1950s socialist realist architecture and the simultaneous reawakening of socialist realism as a creative method.

4. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 33–74.

5. In 1932 the Central Committee of the Communist Party disbanded all independent artistic organizations and declared that artists must organize into all-Russian creative unions. At the first congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934, Andrei Zhdanov gave a speech on socialist realism as a method of cultural production. From the 1930s, Zhdanov spearheaded Stalin's cultural policy, which culminated in his late 1940s campaign to divide cultural production into two opposing camps: a progressive trend drawing on the best of the classical tradition and a reactionary trend of formalism, mysticism, and naturalism.

6. Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 108.

7. Andrei Zhdanov, "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature," in Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin, Andrey Zhdanov, et al., *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism in the Soviet Union* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), 24.

8. Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977); Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art Press, 1966); Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Existence, Space and Architecture* (London: Praeger, 1971); Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980).

9. Florian Urban, *Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing* (London: Routledge, 2012), 141–43.

10. The method of socialist realism legitimated the juxtaposition of the classical and the vernacular, or of one tradition or cultural form and another. Unlike the avant-garde, which sought to construct utopia by overcoming ("negating") traditional forms and historical styles, socialist realism cited them freely as instances of different historical moments that were no longer politically dangerous within a "positive" view of the future. In 1934, Maxim Gorky defined the method of socialist realism as being socially optimistic rather than socially critical. Historians have stressed that the method of representing reality through the prism of an imagined future was central to socialist realism. According to Irina Gutkin, socialist realism depicted social reality in its revolutionary development. Sheila Fitzpatrick has described socialist realism as the discourse of a cultured way of life, depicting socialist man becoming cultured. In terms of architecture, Catherine Cooke has challenged the stereotypical view of socialist realism as grotesque and uninspiring, instead portraying its turn to history as an architectural method of producing three-dimensional images of a radiant future, an "environmental" *Gesamtkunstwerk* that integrated other arts. From the socialist realist perspective, the revolutionary progress in culture was not identical to overcoming obsolete cultural forms; rather, it amounted to situating and interpreting these forms within the wider perspective on the Soviet future while making them democratic and accessible to all. But if the radiant future evoked in socialist realism was structured along the Soviet versus non-Soviet opposition, as Antoine Baudin has argued, this meant that the method required translation and domestication in other countries, including Eastern Europe. See Boris Groys, "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism between Modernism and Postmodernism," in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 76–90; Irina Gutkin, *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic, 1890–1934* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 216–37; Catherine Cooke, "Beauty as a Route to 'the Radiant Future': Responses of Soviet Architecture," *Journal of Design History* 10, no. 2 (1997), 137–60; Antoine Baudin, " 'Why Is Soviet Painting Hidden from Us?': Zhdanov Art and Its International Relations and Fallout, 1947–1953," in Lahusen and Dobrenko, *Socialist Realism without Shores*, 227–56. Gorky's definition is cited in Cooke, "Beauty as a Route," 148.

11. There were two Communist Parties in the 1946 elections: the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia. Their combined vote share was 38 percent. In Czech and Slovak parts of the country the respective shares were 40 and 30 percent. In Slovakia the party was second behind the Democratic Party (with 61 percent of the votes). The Democratic Party was abolished in 1948.

12. This rapprochement is associated with the 1947 formation of the Cominform bloc that united the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the geopolitics of the Marshall Plan, its extension to Germany and its rejection by Eastern European countries (including Czechoslovakia) in the same year, the Soviet–Yugoslavian split of 1948, and eventually the formation of NATO and the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, which cemented the "iron curtain."

13. See Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

14. Ibid., 69–176.

15. Jiří Kroha, "Architektura zájmem a majetkem pracujícího lidu," *Architektura ČSR* 10, nos. 7–9 (1951), 234; see also Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 188. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

16. Jiří Kroha, "O socialistický realismus v naší architektuře," *Architektura ČSR* 9, no. 1 (1950), 4.

17. Kroha, "Architektura zájmem," 217.

18. For a detailed discussion of Nová Ostrava, see Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 150–76.

19. Kroha and other architects followed the vision of Zdeněk Nejedlý, minister of education and culture, who grounded socialist realism in domestic traditions of the late medieval Hussite reformation and nineteenth-century national awakening. See Jiří Křesťan, " 'Poslední husita' odchází: Zdeněk Nejedlý v osidlech kulturní politiky KSČ po roce 1945," *Soudobé dějiny* 12, no. 1 (2005), 16–17.

20. Martin Strakoš, "Architektura 50. let v Československu: Dědictví avantgardy a labutí píseň tradicionalismu," in *Monumentorum Tutela: Ochrana pamiatok 20*, ed. Ľubica Pinčíková and Viera Dvořáková (Bratislava: Pamiatkový Úrad Slovenskej Republiky, 2009), 37.

21. Ľubica Pinčíková, "Spoločenská situácia na Slovensku v období 1945–1960 vo vzťahu k architektonikckej tvorbe a stavebníctvu," in Pinčíková and Dvořáková, *Monumentorum Tutela*, 12–13.

22. In structural panel technology, prefabricated concrete panels were used for exterior walls, floors, and structural interior walls. In the mixed technology, a load-bearing reinforced concrete skeleton was combined with prefabricated panels for exterior walls and floors. The main advantage of the latter was that it allowed for a more flexible disposition of the interior plan. Kroha stated, "Making panels into apartments, this is surely not right." Quoted in Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 219.

23. Quoted in Pinčíková, "Spoločenská situácia na Slovensku," 20.

24. I follow Kimberly Zarecor's translation of *typizace* as "typification"; Alan Colquhoun and Eve Blau use the term as equivalent to the German *Typisierung*, as it appeared in early Werkbund debates. The practice of *typizace* was fundamental to socialist architecture, and it must be distinguished from both *industrializace* or *zprůmyslnění* (industrialization) and *standardizace* (standardization). *Typizace* is more specific than industrialization but less technical (and more political) than standardization. The term refers to the process of developing typical modules that encompass the stages of design, experimental testing, and prefabrication. The scale of a typical module determines how construction units are standardized and how the construction industry is organized. On the terminology, see Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*; Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 59–60; Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919–1934* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 120–21.

25. The figure for the 1946–60 period represents about 60 percent of total dwelling units completed. The remaining units were family houses, built mostly in the countryside. In the 1960s and 1970s the proportion of apartment building units in the total number of units rose to slightly above 70 percent. My calculations are based on Czech Statistical Office, "Počet dokončených bytů v České republice 1948–2010," https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20567423/820912t01.pdf (accessed 7 Oct. 2015); Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, "Koncepcia obnovy budov s dôrazom na obnovu bytového fondu," 3, http://www.build.gov.sk/mvrrsr/source/document/000259.doc (accessed 7 Oct. 2015). The actual number for the 1946–60 period is probably slightly higher than that reported here, as no data are available for the Czech Republic for the years 1946 and 1947.

26. The waning of the idea of a techno-utopia was captured in the popular notion of really existing socialism and coupled to a new geopolitical situation. The Soviet military invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 replaced the reformist leadership of Alexander Dubček, a proponent of humanist socialism, with representatives of the Communist Party's orthodox wing. The crisis of socialism in the East paralleled the crisis of the welfare state in the West, as it was manifested politically in the protest movements of the late 1960s, economically in the downturn of the early 1970s, and also environmentally as a challenge to the expectation of infinite growth. During the 1970s the notion of the environment entered the political arena in both the

West and the East. While this article looks at how the environment was historically conceptualized in a sociopsychological dimension, it should be noted that this process was intertwined with the rise of the ecological question. And although Czechoslovakia was one of the most polluted countries in Europe, care for the environment, as a regulative idea, was established there also. See Philip Sarre and Petr Jehlička, "Environmental Movements in Space-Time: The Czech and Slovak Republics from Stalinism to Postsocialism," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32, no. 3 (2007), 346–62.

27. The terms *životní prostředí*, *obytní prostředí*, and simply *prostředí* were used in this sense interchangeably.

28. See Paulina Bren, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall … Is the West the Fairest of Them All? Czechoslovak Normalization and Its (Dis)contents," in *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. György Péteri (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 172–93.

29. Tomáš Štrauss, "List Jiřímu Šetlíkovi" (7 July 1978), in *Slovenský variant moderny* (Bratislava: Pallas, 1992), 226.

30. Tomáš Štrauss, "Konceptuálne umenie ako analýza média a model skutočnosti (poznámky k vývoju umenia 1970–1975)" (1978–79), in *Slovenský variant moderny*, 76.

31. Tomáš Štrauss, "Design osobnej zodpovednosti," *Projekt* 22, no. 3 (1980), 2.

32. Bořislav Babáček, Jiří Kučera, and Jaroslav Ourecký, "Řeč postmoderní architektury," *Architektura ČSR* 37, nos. 9–10 (1978), 467.

33. "Stavby šesté pětiletky," *Architektura ČSR* 41, no. 9 (1982), 388–416, 404.

34. Charles Jencks, *Jazyk post-moderní architektury* (samizdat, 1979). The samizdat edition included pen reproductions, drawn by Zdeněk Hölzel, of all photographs in the original edition.

35. See Kamil Dvořák, "A/sloupek," *Československý architekt* 27, no. 20 (1981), 2; Benjamin Fragner, "Urbanita 86," *Technický magazín* 29, no. 9 (1986), 39.

36. Ján Lichner, "Koncepcia rozvoja socialistickej architektúry a urbanizmu na Slovensku do roku 2000," *Projekt* 23, no. 5 (1981), 5.

37. See Jaroslava Pecharová, "Architektura, výtvarné umění a kulturní rozvoj společnosti," *Architektura ČSR* 43, no. 8 (1984), 343–44.

38. Miloš Jakeš, speech to the Second Assembly of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects, 1982, *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 6 (1983), 253.

39. Vladimír Meduna, speech to the Second Assembly of the Union of Czechoslovak Architects, 1982, *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 6 (1983), 250.

40. Meduna's staunch support for the Stalinist variant of socialist realism in the early 1950s was not without consequences for his later career. In 1959 he became professor of urbanism at the University of Technology in Brno, but he had little design practice in the 1960s. During the 1970s he worked on research that included such socialist realist themes as multifunctional blocks, integrated housing estates, and the reflection of socialist society in architecture. His career moves, from design practice in the early 1950s to academia in the 1960s and 1970s to top-level administration in the 1980s, are indicative of socialist realist dynamics as a whole. On Meduna's role in Nová Ostrava, see Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 152–76. For an overview of Meduna's later career, see František Bartek, ed., *Vladimír Meduna: Architekt-urbanista* (Brno: VUT, 1984).

41. "Stavby šesté pětiletky," 416.

42. Zdeněk Strnadel, "Za socialistickou architekturu," *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 5 (1983), 197–202. It was later revealed that the economic department of the KSČ forced Strnadel to rewrite his original speech, in which he harshly criticized the party for ignoring architecture. The architect Jan Sedláček incorporated some of Strnadel's deleted passages in his talk, which did not go through the review process. See Jan Novotný, "Jaká byla a jaká bude," *Architekt* 36, no. 1 (1990), 1, 3. Sedláček said: "What happens here? Without doubt, we are concerned here with something that was very

clearly criticized at a number of party and state congresses. … While the interests of state companies, its branches, or local organizations prevail, the interests, requirements and needs of society are ignored. Building organizations, which have quality construction as their obligation, can no longer one-sidedly follow their own economic criteria." Jan Sedláček, "Architektonická tvorba a výchova architektů," *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 5 (1983), 226. What is significant for the present purposes is that Strnadel's attack on functionalist and modernist architectural principles and his critical revival of socialist realism as a creative method were *not* censored.

43. Two conceptions of *typizace* were confronted throughout the socialist period: *otevřená* or *prvková* (open, elemental) and *uzavřená* or *objemová typizace* (closed, volumetric). While socialist realism favored the former model, whose higher degree of modularity was conducive to formal and stylistic expressiveness, the subsequent politics of architectural industrialization opted for the latter model of typifying entire buildings, which minimized the modularity of standardized components. Efforts to restore open typification featured centrally in late socialist architecture. See, for example, Irina Kedrová, "O typizácii v bratislavskom Stavoprojekte," *Projekt* 21, no. 8 (1979), 19–22; Imrich Jankovich, "Spoločenské požiadavky na vývoj nových stavebých sústav pre komplexnú bytovú výstavbu," *Projekt* 22, no. 7 (1980), 4–8.

44. Rudolf Šteis, "Urbanistická tvorba," *Projekt* 25, no. 2 (1983), 12.

45. Šteis's mention of corner segments was a reference to the technical possibility of connecting *panelák* buildings at different angles, and hence the ability to design blocks and courtyards. The relation between corner segments and block typology is discussed below with regard to the Jihozápadní Město project.

46. Stanislav Talaš, "Včera, dnes a zajtra," *Projekt* 27, nos. 4–5 (1985), 2.

47. Radomíra Sedláková, "Socialistický realismus po létech," *Československý architekt* 32, no. 1 (1986), 1, 4.

48. Ibid., 1. The term *sorela* was widely used in Czechoslovakia to characterize the historicist style of early 1950s architecture. While it was originally coined as a pejorative, Sedláková meant it affirmatively in this context.

49. Ibid.

50. Peter Bauer, "Panelový dům a design," *Architektura ČSR* 41, no. 6 (1982), 266.

51. See the editorial response in ibid., 264.

52. The turn to meaning is one way of identifying the onset of postmodernism in architecture as it relates to the present inquiry. From the 1970s the early theorists of postmodernism talked about plurality of styles (Charles Jencks), narrativity and fictitiousness (Heinrich Klotz), and architecture of communication (Paolo Portoghesi). They highlighted the liberation of expressive elements from the functional in architecture and portrayed architecture and its history in linguistic terms. Historians and critical scholars situated postmodernism itself within broader cultural, social, and economic change. According to Reinhold Martin, postmodernism brought forward a new concept of the city as a linguistic environment. In this sense it converged with the agendas of environmental psychology and phenomenological philosophy. For Kevin Lynch, the experience of urban space amounted to the decoding of a finite number of archetypal meanings. Christian Norberg-Schulz viewed this experience as an existential endeavor with a moral result, and he analyzed it in terms of its authenticity. If postmodernism highlights the individual experience of the city as a linguistic environment, we must also highlight freedom as its key import. According to Tahl Kaminer, this freedom is a "freedom from": from the modernist moral canon and from its insistence on socially committed architecture. Mary McLeod related postmodernism's rejection of architecture's social engagement to its search for meaning in historical types, traditional forms, and local contexts and to the mutation of this query into a formal pursuit. Historical allusions resulted in a nostalgic denial of history, and urban contextualism legitimated inner-city gentrification by

upwardly mobile classes. The main insight is that postmodernism as an architectural, cultural, or aesthetic phenomenon is coincident with broader political and economic change, such as the crisis of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism. For the postmodern theorists, see Jencks, *The Language of Post-modern Architecture*; Heinrich Klotz, *Moderne und Postmoderne: Architektur der Gegenwart 1960–1980* (Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1987); Paolo Portoghesi, *Postmodern, the Architecture of the Post-industrial Society* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983); Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960); Norberg-Schulz, *Existence, Space and Architecture*; Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*. For critical and historical readings of postmodernism, see Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 49–67; Mary McLeod, "Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism," *Assemblage* 8 (Feb. 1989), 22–59; Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: The Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011), 57–59.

53. For a detailed reading of the portal, see Viktor Ferus, "Pocta portálu," *Výtvarný život* 30, no. 6 (1985), 11–13.

54. Ibid., 13.

55. Ján Bahna, " 'La presenza del passato'—prvé bienále architektúry v Benátkach," *Projekt* 23, no. 6 (1981), 51.

56. Bahna cited in "Latka musí ísť stále vyššie," *Projekt* 27, nos. 4–5 (1985), 72.

57. Vladimír Šimkovič, "Postmodernizmus a architektúra," in *Zborník zo stretnutia Spišská Kapitula 13.–14.10. 1984*, ed. Alica Štefančíková (Košice: VsKV SZM Košice, 1985), 53–59.

58. Manfredo Tafuri defined operative criticism as the "analysis of architecture … that … has as its objective the planning of a precise poetical tendency … and its theoretical horizon is the pragmatist and instrumentalist tradition." Such characteristics apply to Ševčík insofar as he functioned as an importer and translator of postmodernism in Czechoslovakia and as a "cartographer" and guide for young architects. Ševčík's poetical tendency was not the singular myth of modernism that Tafuri attributed to Sigfried Giedion or Bruno Zevi but the pluralist vision of historical archetypes and archetypal meanings antithetical to the industrialized architecture of *sídlište*. Ševčík's criticism was pragmatic in that he exhaustively "charted" the young Czechoslovak architectural scene but never subjected it to a critical analysis or looked at how the coordinates of this scene were themselves historically determined. Manfredo Tafuri, "Operative Criticism," in *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 141.

59. Jiří Ševčík, Ivana Bendová, and Jan Benda, "Obraz města Mostu," *Architektúra a urbanizmus* 12, no. 3 (1978), 165–78; Jiří Ševčík, Ivana Bendová, and Jan Benda, "Město Most v obrazu svých obyvatelů: Metoda výzkumu obrazu města a její využití," *Acta Polytechnica—Práce ČVUT v Praze* 1, no. 3 (1978), 5–28; Jiří Ševčík, "Tři krajiny a dvě města," *Architektura ČSR* 40, no. 2 (1981), 61–68. Although Ševčík coauthored the publications resulting from the study of Most with architect colleagues from Prague's Technical University, he was responsible for the underlying philosophical concept of the research.

60. These included Babáček et al., "Řeč postmoderní architektury"; Jan Michl, review of *The Language of Post-modern Architecture*, by Charles Jencks, *Umění* 27, no. 3 (1979), 262–66; Martin Sedlák, "Hledání jazyka současné architektury," *Technický magazín* 25, no. 3 (1982), 34–39. See also the special issue of *Výstavba a architektura* 26, no. 8 (1980).

61. Matúš Dulla, "Umelecká stránka architektúry a jej prejav v období socialistického realizmu 1950–55," *Projekt* 26, no. 2 (1984), 6–9. The following year Dulla participated in a workshop on postmodernism in Spišská Kapitula, a small eastern Slovak town. Ševčík, Bahna, and Hölzel were among the participants. This workshop (and another, smaller one in 1984) was historically important because it brought Czech and Slovak postmodernists into a closer dialogue. Dulla presented a talk on "lay

architecture" in which he highlighted the hospitable and rustic character of domestic socialist realist housing estates and then added immediately that postmodernism was not really a new conception. Dulla thus obliquely connected postmodernism to socialist realism and to the interest of both in the rustic, popular character. See Matúš Dulla, "Laická architektúra," in *Zborník zo stretnutia Spišská Kapitula, 1985*, ed. Alica Štefančíková (samizdat, 1987), 3.

62. Dulla, "Umelecká stránka architektúry," 6.

63. Ibid.

64. Karel Honzík quoted in ibid., 7. For the original reference see Karel Honzík, "Konečné rozloučení s tříceletoletou érou konstruktivizmu," *Architektura ČSR* 12, nos. 5–7 (1953), 141–44.

65. Dulla, "Umelecká stránka architektúry," 9.

66. Ibid. Dulla confounded two of Hollein's projects in quoting "Rolls-Royce grilles in a Vienna travel bureau."

67. Antonín Novák, "Nevyřešené otázky barevnosti sídlišť," *Československý architekt* 28, no. 4 (1982), 1; Viera Lichardová, "Bojíme sa vyjadrovať farbou?," *Projekt* 21, no. 9 (1979), 50.

68. Jan Novotný, "O barvě a barevnosti," *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 2 (1983), 85; Lichardová, "Bojíme sa vyjadrovať farbou?," 50; Antonín Novák, "Ani panelové domy nemusí být šedivé: Komentář k teorii barevnosti architektury," *Československý architekt* 28, no. 18 (1982), 6.

69. Zdeněk Hölzel later recalled the far-reaching influence of *Architectural Design* magazine on his formative years. Zdeněk Hölzel, interview by author, 12 June 2014, Prague.

70. Babáček et al., "Řeč postmoderní architektury"; Zdeněk Kostka, "Kam bude směřovat architektura," *Výtvarná kultura*, no. 4 (1984), 11–16. Kostka focused on the commercial-absurd face of postmodernism and disputed Ševčík's argument (without actually referring to Ševčík by name) that postmodernism humanizes urban environments. Kostka presented Hans Hollein's column variations (from the Venice Biennale's Strada Novissima) and SITE's supermarket façade as exemplary of postmodernism's absurdity. However, he exonerated the European version of postmodernism as arguably more cultivated and receptive to historical traditions. Kostka concluded by distinguishing between true and false decorativism—depending on whether it is integrated into architectural composition or remains superficial to it—and contended that true decorativism has a legitimate place in socialist architecture.

71. Jencks, *Jazyk post-moderní architektury*. The book was reproduced using the cyclostyle process, which prevented the use of shading.

72. These two projects appeared in *Technický magazín* in Sedlák, "Hledání jazyka současné architektury." The magazine, which featured color illustrations, was widely read in architectural circles. Under the editorial guidance of Benjamin Fragner it became an influential platform for urbanistic and ecological criticism in the late 1970s.

73. Bahna, " 'La presenza del passato,' " 50, 51.

74. Quoted in Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 204.

75. Peter Jančo, "Bratislava—Devínska Nová Ves" (unpublished manuscript, ca. 1980), n.p.

76. See, for example, Milan Klíma and Iva Hořejší, "Lužiny, generel barevnosti: Etapa prací na dotvoření prostorového záměru," *Architektura ČSR* 41, no. 6 (1982), 247–49. The term *general color schemes* critically referred to the "general art schemes" required for housing estate projects throughout the 1960s and 1970s. These schemes were perceived as inefficient and insufficient, and in the early 1980s a suggestion was made that they be replaced with "librettos." See Klára Kubičková, "Uplatnenie monumentálneho výtvarného prejavu pri tvorbe životného prostredia," *Projekt* 24, no. 9 (1982), 49–51.

77. On Dlhé Diely, see Tibor Gebauer and Pavol Paňák, "Experimentálny obytný súbor Bratislava—Dlhé diely," *Projekt* 21, no. 3 (1979), 28–31; Jozef Slíž, Tibor Gebauer, and Eva Grébertová, "Územný projekt zóny Karlova Ves—Dlhé diely," *Projekt* 25, no. 4 (1983), 21; Eva Grébertová, "Bytová

výstavba na Dlhých Dieloch, Bratislava," *Projekt* 32, no. 1 (1990), 15–18; Peter Szalay and Mária Topolčanská, "Dostupné bývanie ako ideologické rozhranie verejných a privátnych záujmov v plánovaní mesta," *Forum Historiae* 8, no. 1 (2014), 127–45.

78. Green was used in a segment that adjoins the forest. Following this contextual use of color, green was frequently used in the mountainous regions of Slovakia, such as in the Sásová housing estate in Banská Bystrica.

79. Jozef Brath and Michal Šarafín, "Dotváranie sídliska 'Na nábreží' v Liptovskom Mikuláši," *Projekt* 24, nos. 4–5 (1982), 46–49.

80. Ján Vančo and Juraj Sapara, "Tvarovaný panelblok alebo arspanel? Pokus pre viacerých než dvoch," *Projekt* 26, nos. 4–5 (1984), 67. The architect of the housing estate welcomed the idea but questioned the visual tension between *arspanel* patterns and the tectonic rhythm of *panelák* façades. See Stanislav Talaš, "Tvarovaný panelblok alebo arspanel? Námet na zamyslenie," *Projekt* 26, nos. 4–5 (1984), 66.

81. The perimeter block is a form typical of late nineteenth-century urbanization and urban renewal projects in European cities. It usually encompasses apartment houses laid out in a rectangular plan bounded by streets and enclosing a semiprivate courtyard. In working-class neighborhoods the courtyard is usually sacrificed for the construction of additional apartments. The superblock is an early twentieth-century premodern typology that acts on a larger scale and rejects the self-contained character of the perimeter block. The superblock challenges the urban fabric and its social logic and integrates public squares and streets at the same time. While introducing semipublic spaces, it does not renounce the intimacy of semiprivate courtyards. The superblock has some similarities with Stalinist microdistricts but is distinct from the post-Stalin microdistrict insofar as the latter is defined functionally, culturally, and ideologically but is much less bounded spatially and morphologically. On the superblock, see Eva Blau, "From Red Superblock to Green Megastructure: Municipal Socialism as Model and Challenge," in *Architecture and the Welfare State*, ed. Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete, and Dirk van den Heuvel (New York: Routledge, 2015), 26–49. On the microdistrict, see Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 116–21.

82. Jiří Ševčík, "K urbanismu a architektuře 60.–80. let: Pražské Jihozápadní město," in Jana Ševčíková and Jiří Ševčík, *Texty*, ed. Tereza Nekvindová (Prague: Tranzit.cz and VVP AVU, 2010), 69.

83. Ševčík et al., "Obraz města Mostu," 166.

84. Ibid., 167.

85. Jan Ševčík, Jan Benda, Josef Pleskot, and Alena Hanzlová, *Vinohrady: Obraz města 19. století* (Prague: ČVUT FA, 1982). Like Ševčík's other publications concerning the research on Most, this work was coauthored, but its central arguments bear a strong resemblance to other writings by Ševčík from this period.

86. Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 198–204.

87. Vladimír Meduna, "Nová Ostrava," *Architektura ČSR* 10, nos. 7–9 (1951), 263.

88. Jiří Ševčík, "Aktuální tendence v české architektuře 70.–80. let," in Ševčíková and Ševčík, *Texty*, 117; Ševčík, "K urbanismu a architektuře 60.–80. let," 70.

89. In the 1968 competition the site of Velká Ohrada was part of the Jihozápadní Město project. By 1976, however, it was developed as a separate project. Oberstein recalled that there were conflicts with the architects of Velká Ohrada. See Ivo Oberstein, "Rozhovor s Ivo Obersteinem," interview by Lenka Popelová, EARCH.CZ, 30 Apr. 2007, http://www.earch.cz/cs/rozhovor-s-ivo-obersteinem (accessed 7 Oct. 2015).

90. Ševčík, "K urbanismu a architektuře 60.–80. let," 69. For other contemporaneous reviews, see "Stodůlky: 1. obytný soubor v realizaci," *Architektura ČSR* 41, no. 6 (1982), 244–46; "Jihozápadní město v projektech a

realizaci," *Architektura ČSR* 43, no. 10 (1984), 469; Eva Hejdová, "Největší návštěva ve Fragnerově galerii," *Československý architekt* 30, no. 16 (1984), 6.

91. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 395. For the Czech edition, see Jane Jacobs, *Smrt a život amerických velkoměst* (Prague: Odeon, 1975). Note that Oberstein disavowed influence from Jacobs and argued that "she didn't know much about life, let alone about our life." See Oberstein, "Rozhovor s Ivo Obersteinem."

92. Christopher Alexander, *Město není strom* (samizdat, 1978); Robert Venturi, *Složitost a protiklady v architektuře* (samizdat, 1979).

93. Ševčík, "Tři krajiny a dvě města," 65.

94. Bahna, " 'La presenza del passato,' " 51.

95. See the argument of the director of the Union of Slovak Architects in Vladimír Fašang, "Urbanistické a architektonické prostredie ako dôsledok spoločenských premien," *Projekt* 23, no. 3 (1981), 14–15. On the late socialist phenomenon of weekend getaways in Czechoslovakia, see also Paulina Bren, "Weekend Getaways: The Chata, the Tramp, and the Politics of Private Life in Post-1968 Czechoslovakia," in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 123–40.

96. See, for example, the editorial "Jak dál s parterem obytných souborů," *Architektura ČSR* 40, no. 6 (1981), 246–47. The problem of the *parter* also defined most visions of future housing. See Gorazd Čelechovský and Vladimír Langr, "Bydlení po roce 1990: Soutěž na novou generaci obytných domů a kompletujících objektů občanského vybavení určených k výstavbě po roce 1990," *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 1 (1983), 2–24.

97. Zdeněk Hölzel, Petr Keil, Jan Kerel, and Jaroslav Šafer, eds., *Go-buňko: Studie dispozičního, tvarového a hmotového řešení základních typů občanské vybavenosti z průmyslově vyráběných kompletních stavebních systémů* (Prague: PÚ ČSVD, 1974).

98. Hölzel, interview by author, 12 June 2014. In the late 1970s, however, Hölzel and Kerel were involved in research on open typification. See Jankovich, "Spoločenské požiadavky na vývoj."

99. See Olga Myslivečková, "Město, sochy, film," *Tvorba*, no. 34 (1988), 4; Jana Ševčíková and Jiří Ševčík, "Město, sochy, film," *Ateliér* 1, no. 5 (1988), 5; Pavel Zadražil, "Město, sochy, film," *Československý architekt* 34, no. 15 (1988), 8. For more comprehensive accounts, see Martin Sedlák, "Cesta z labyrintu sídliště," *Technický magazín* 22, no. 10 (1979), 42–43; Benjamin Fragner, "Nový Barrandov," *Technický magazín* 28, no. 2 (1985), 2–5; Olga Myslivečková, "Domy odněkud," *Československý architekt* 32, no. 16 (1986), 1, 4.

100. Zdeněk Hölzel and Jan Kerel, *Nový Barrandov: Výtvarný generel* (Prague: Pražský Projektový Ústav, 1987), 2.

101. Ševčík, "Aktuální tendence v české architektuře," 120; Jana Ševčíková and Jiří Ševčík, "Postmodernismus a my II: Situace doma—pokus o typologii," in Ševčíková and Ševčík, *Texty*, 100. The latter essay, which Ševčík coauthored with his wife, includes reference to contemporaneous Czech art, but the quote clearly refers to the architecture of Barrandov, which was Jiří Ševčík's primary concern.

102. Jiří Ševčík, "Poučení z leporela JOTRS," in Ševčíková and Ševčík, *Texty*, 103.

103. See Ursula Kleefisch-Jobst and Ingeborg Flagge, eds., *Rob Krier: A Romantic Rationalist—Architect and Urban Planner* (Vienna: Springer, 2005); Léon Krier, *The Architecture of Community* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2009). For Hölzel and Kerel such a moral position represented only a particular, late socialist moment of development, and unlike Krier, they were never stylistic "neotraditionalists."

104. Quoted in "Latka musí ísť stále vyššie," 72. Bahna responded to the journal's inquiry, "How do you perceive the development of architecture and urbanism in Slovakia during the last forty years?"

105. Jana Ševčíková and Jiří Ševčík, "Postmodernismus bez pověr, ale s iluzí," in Ševčíková and Ševčík, *Texty*, 83. This coauthored essay includes a

brief discussion of premodern architectural historicisms and revivals, but the quote is clearly a programmatic statement that I attribute to Ševčík's view of history.

106. Ševčík, "Aktuální tendence v české architektuře," 116.

107. Ševčíková and Ševčík, "Postmodernismus bez pověr," 83.

108. Kroha, "O socialistický realismus v naší architektuře," 3; Jiří Kroha, "K základním otázkám první konference architektů v ČSR," *Architektura ČSR* 11, nos. 5–6 (1952), 142.

109. The turn to historicity and meaning in late socialist architecture in Czechoslovakia involves another paradox that cannot be discussed in depth here. This turn was informed and legitimated by concurrent debates in the Soviet Union. Soviet architects vigorously discussed whether and how postmodernism is compatible with the creative method of socialist realism. In the early 1980s key representatives of the Soviet discipline disseminated these debates in Czechoslovakia. Comparing Khrushchev's industrialization of architecture to its undressing, theorist Vasily Rabinovich argued that there are limits to baring space and this model was in a dire need of reform. Anatoly Polyanski, chairman of the Union of Soviet Architects, spoke directly to his Czechoslovak colleagues, praising their progress in developing architectural language and enjoining them to study how national character and cultural diversity can be expressed in this language. Czech and Slovak readers were also familiar with Aleksandr Riabushin, deputy chairman of the Union of Soviet Architects, whose articles and interviews appeared in the local architectural press. Riabushin contrasted tedious functionalism with legitimate architectural traditions and formulated the role of historicity in a postmodernist fashion: "Not a literal imitation, but only a reminiscence, metaphor, association, or work in 'the spirit of a style'; only a small quote, ideally in the form of a witty joke, is allowed." Quoted in Radomíra Valterová, "Súdobé a tradičné—dialektika odmietania," interview, *Projekt* 25, nos. 7–8 (1983), 51. See also Aleksandr Riabushin, "Postmodernismus: Slepá ulička, nebo rozcestí v západní architektuře," *Výstavba a architektura* 26, no. 8 (1980), 3–11. For the other references, see Valery Rabinovich, "Představujeme profesora V. I. Rabinoviča," interview by Michal Šarafín, *Projekt* 24, no. 10 (1982), 54–55; Anatoly Trofimovich Polyanski, *Architektura ČSR* 42, no. 6 (1983), 254–55.

110. Otakar Nový, "Moderní a postmoderní architektura," *Architektura ČSR* 43, no. 4 (1984), 157–64.