

The Soviet and State Socialist Historiography of Urban Planning:

The Cross-Nationally Oriented Publications in Slavic
Languages, Professional Profiles, Contexts, Not-Aligned
Correlations, and Legacies from the 20th Century

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The dissertation was grounded in the premise that Slavic-language historiography of architecture and urban planning constitutes a significant and integral part of European historiography. This is relevant for critical analysis as it offers distinct, valuable, and often overlooked perspectives and insights that operate at different levels and extents on the regional, national, and transnational levels. An existing body of scholarship on Communist, Marxist, Soviet, and state socialist historiographies of arts, architecture, and urban planning has emerged as an evolving field from the mid-20th century to the present. The Soviet and state socialist historiography of urban planning during the 20th century incorporated a diverse body of professional interpretations. However, a significant part of past professional profiles, publications, and related sources from the Soviet and state socialist era remains insufficiently examined, partially ignored, or even dismissed.

The research examined the corpus of sources, which were primarily produced in the USSR and state socialist European countries, together with the professional and cultural profiles of its protagonists, offers historical accounts and critical insights into personalities and their works, as well as the connections and correlations across selected studied publications. A complex corpus of established material is capable of enriching 20th-century intellectual history, identifying cross-national connections, and critically examining the circulations of architectural knowledge and discourses within the Soviet republics, state socialist European countries, and beyond. The main focus was primarily on the Slavic academic perspectives that were analysed through both aligned and not aligned publications and contexts, and also previously inaccessible and unpublished state and personal archival materials (the archival sources after the state socialist working group from the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the Herder prize related documentation, the Bauhaus colloquia, the UN and private sources, some of which were not published or broadly available to the scientific and general audiences.

The reflection upon the Soviet and state socialist historiography includes the deconstruction of canonical and less known state- or institution(s)-sanctioned publications on architecture and urban planning. These were originated as the Soviet and state socialist educational, academic, and institutional materials that incorporated academic and architectural insights, and comprise of professional debates, and sources addressed within the interpretations of history and theory of architecture and urban planning, along their practices and concerns. This approach highlights the constructed, dynamic, and often contested nature of architectural and urbanistic knowledge from the USSR and state socialist Europe. The investigation was developed through detailed critical readings through marking discourses and professional vocabularies, and relating towards archival sources, personal recollections.

The diversity of existing sources at first complicates the recognition of overarching correlations between official, foreign, and correlated narratives; however, these connections become discernible through contrapuntal readings, professional contacts, and the analysis of institutional frameworks, and contexts. These methods also challenged monolithic portrayals of state socialist interpretations of architecture and urban planning.

One of the contextual explorations of the early Soviet architectural and urbanistic discourses and publications from the age of J. V. Stalin was developed by offering the critical analysis of the private library of Hannes Meyer, which was preserved in Weimar. The ensemble of his books is a unique collection of the early Soviet architectural and urbanistic publications, representative for the early and later Soviet discourses and for tracing the changes of the academic paradigms. Despite its incomplete coverage of Soviet monographs, particularly from the 1930s, as well as preceding and followed periods, the preserved collection remains compelling evidence of the emerged of Soviet architectural discourses during the politisations of the fields, their circulation within the private architectural libraries, and beyond national borders. These artefacts do not illustrate the individual readings, but a personally valued collection with the insights for the Soviet historiography of architecture and urban forms.

The research focused on specific individuals, their publications, interpretations of the history and theory, thematic focuses, geographical scopes, collective events and authorial approaches, and the legacies. The Soviet and state socialist scholars such as A. V. Bunin (1905—1977), E. Hruška (1906-1989), B. Maksimović (1900–1988), W. Ostrowski (1907-1990), T. F. Savarenskaya (1923-2003), E. Goldzamt (1921–1990), and O. A. Shvidkovsky (1925-1990) worked under similar institutional conditions that were marked by political pressures, state necessities, professional concerns, and dominant discourses. However, their narratives incorporated differences in geographical focus, personal expertise, and exemplar selections. Their moments of encountering, bibliographic cross-book references, shared interests, and professional concerns indicate scholarly direct and indirect interactions, mutual recognitions, and transnational dialogue rather than a pure unified narration of history and theory.

Through detailed critical readings of published and unpublished sources predominantly from the second part of the 20th century, archival documents, and personal recollections, this research demonstrated that professional sources produced under the USSR and other state socialist European institutes occupy a complex position within the 20th-century intellectual history. The texts often incorporate political contexts, ideological elements, evolving professional narrations, political and architectural debates and orientations, as well as the diverse range of professional terminologies. Their pedagogical inputs became significant contributions from respective institutes and countries, facilitated by institutional affiliations, respected positions, large print runs of their publications, acknowledgements, and professional contacts.

The discussed pedagogical materials, related contexts and secondary materials reflect evolving approaches to architectural interpretation shaped by political, institutional, collective, and individual necessities, or earlier traditions rather than by pure aesthetic or technocritical trends. The critical analysis revealed that these materials constitute a collective discursive field and autonomous elements of professional literature. Although these sources were produced under dominant political and professional orientations,

institutional frameworks, and impacted by censorship apparatus, a reductive interpretation framing them solely as propaganda fails to capture their full complexity.

Contrapuntal readings expose ideological markers and politically correct elements, such as references to K. Marx, F. Engels, and V. I. Lenin, interpreting the global past according to the socio-economic formations. Accusations or critiques of the so-called ‘formalism’, and effects of different forms of censorship impacted the Soviet and state socialist academic historiography of architecture and urban planning. They shaped parts of the textbooks and correlated published and unpublished texts, where these were not always constituting their dominant places and substances. Across national borders, selected authoritative and discursively influential publications functioned as educational media.

A.V. Bunin’s key textbooks *History of Art of Urban Planning* (1953, 1957, 1961), co-authored with T. F. Savarenskaya (1971 and 1979) and continued by their colleagues such as E. Goldzamt and O. A. Shvidkovsky (1985 and 1987), represent a notable Soviet narrative of the urban planning history. This interpretation of the global past is not merely localised as a particular case, but it was acknowledged, widely disseminated, and reviewed narration that functions as discursive and representative. Their narration was directly or indirectly presented in other aligned state socialist countries and beyond as correlated interpretations and publications. The professional interests, presences, and correlations are traceable in the GDR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia due to the circulation of their narratives outside the USSR and its educational centres, which highlighted the transnational dimensions of Soviet and state socialist historiographies.

A. V. Bunin’s and his younger fellow colleagues’ narrative as well as other state socialist researchers’ monographs, interpretations, and correlated writings from the former Soviet and state socialist countries appear as distinct pivotal references for understanding the interpretations, evolutions, and discourses of Soviet, and state socialist professional histories. Their publications present evidence and document discursive transformations into how the architectural and urban planning past was narrated in specific decades of the Soviet and state socialist era.

Collective aspects emerging from institutional cross-national initiatives and debates—such as the state socialist working groups, scholarly networks, and organised international colloquia—demonstrate how publications may be read synchronistically or synthetically. International initiatives such as the state socialist working group on the written history of urban planning and constructing in the historical centres from the 1950s, the Herder Prize acknowledgements and network, and the HAB (Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar) Bauhaus colloquia (1976-1989) facilitated the academic exchange of knowledge, methodologies, ideas, and interpretations of the professional past. These moments of professional encounter enrich understanding of scholarly networks, the collective dimensions, and help to overcome the sense of disjointedness potentially caused by readings of individual publications.

Critical reading and related insights enlighten complexities behind the Soviet and state socialist publications, and partly uncovered suppressed, censored, or marginalised elements, and interpretations. The case of V. Z. Papernyi's dissertation *Culture Two* (1985 and 1996) represents a rare example of samizdat and tamizdat in architectural historiography. His monograph, rejected institutionally and circulated unofficially, offers an alternative suppressed voice from the Soviet academic system. Other evidence of censored publications, editorial changes, Glavlit lists, 'for internal use only' sources, and delayed rediscoveries further demonstrate that Soviet and state socialist historiography of was far from being monolithic.

The study traces terminological developments and linguistic diversity in formulations, expressions, translations, and conceptualisations of 'urban planning' and 'living\urban\built environment'. Their plural formulations and meanings within linguistic diversity contributes to professional complexity in Europe, which co-exists with other professional notions and parts of the architectural vocabularies as the 'art of urban planning', 'synthesis of arts', 'urban planning culture', and other concepts that gained broader currency.

The distinguished narratives of urban planning past and theory with the institutionally developed interpretations, and incorporated discourses were produced by A. V. Bunin, B. Maksimović, E. Hruška, W. Ostrowski, E. Goldzamt, J. Hruža, T. F. Savarenskaya, O. A. Shvidkovsky, and others, which functioned as parts of the dominant Soviet and state socialist academic meta-narratives. Meanwhile, alternative insights and perspectives emerged through research such as by V. Z. Papernyi (1944-), including professional engagements with the interwar practices and an increasing familiarity with debates surrounding American post-modernism and its writings.

After 1989, the historiographical turns intensified with the shifts towards reflections and analytical focuses within and beyond canonical, official, local or single-nation interests, stories, and perspectives. The implemented and emerged publications and dimensions after the collapse of Communist regimes offer the possibilities to deconstruct and reveal previous and ongoing discursive markers, specificities, internal contestations and intellectual tensions. The books of the respective authors with the relevant recently became accessible documentation and studied contexts highlight layers of ideological negotiation, editorial omission, evolving reinterpretation, and particular suppression or downplaying that are within official Soviet and state socialist historiographies. The reflection on post-1989/1991 historiographical continuities and shifts, viewed through professional legacies and paradigms, contributed to recognising inherited, dismissed, or rarely remembered professional profiles of the aforementioned individuals and their publications, as well as earlier discourses that persisted and continued to shape professional and academic debates into the first quarter of the 21st Century.

The research demonstrated that the Soviet and state socialist historiography of architecture and urban planning should not be understood as a static product of state ideology and shifting of policies that impacted the scholarly debates and discourse(s) but as an active

field of discursive and educational production with multi-layered contexts, markers, concerns, and interpretations. By reconstructing the broadly available and acknowledged narratives, as well as the neglected scholarly discourses and landscapes through authorial, unpublished, suppressed, and not widely presented sources—the research brings a more nuanced understanding of the academic foundations of urban planning history as a distinct academic field, existed in the USSR and state socialist Europe.

The Soviet and state socialist historiography of urban planning from the 20th century and its legacies remain far from exhausted and reflected in their full complexities due to the existence of the cross-national connections and interactions. Further critical contrapuntal readings, future state and private archival access, subsequent inquiries, and continued engagements with personal recollections have considerable potential to bring and uncover rarely discussed, reflected, or known additional contexts, meanings, layers, and insights for the respective authors, their publications, along individual and institutional historical developments and evolutions. Rather than further privileging linear, state-centered or meta narratives, the study proposes and advocates for future relational, transnational, and discursive approaches towards the European, and especially Slavic, historiography of arts, architecture, and urban planning from the ‘long 20th century’. This would acknowledge the multiplicity of the historiographies, where diverse and opposing interpretations, voices, and intellectual strategies merged and their foundations and embedments are traceable. The future inquiries have potential to deepen understanding of the developed interpretations, legacies, continuities, and unresolved debates surrounding writings before and after the collapse of Communism and their interrelations with broader European and non-European historiographical traditions.