

The Ins and Outs of Socialism:

Visions and Experiences of Urban Change in the Second World



August 25-27, 2017

Center for Urban History / Lviv / Ukraine

This conference aims at bringing together scholars who study different time periods and cities where socialist projects were either launched or collapsed in the 20th century, as well as those that are still in place. The theme of transition into and out of socialism and the (un-)making of socialist cities serves as entry points into broader discussions about the specificity of urban change in the Second World and its relationship to similar currents in the global North and South. The conference examines the content of the socialist city — its “ins and outs” — from power grids and housing stocks to museums and places of worship at these points of transition.

Participants are asked to question and revisit the very concept of the “socialist city” by exploring its fabrication and deconstruction (or assembling and re-assembling in Bruno Latour’s formulation). Looking at the series of junctures that produced new forms of urbanity can help create a fresh narrative of socialist urban experiences and visions at the crucial moments of their realizations and reconceptualizations as both the future and the past of the socialist project. The conference invites proposals in all fields of the humanities and social sciences, and aims to bring into conversation scholars who focus on vastly different periods and locations of the socialist city’s past and present. We seek proposals that include but are not limited to the following points of entry or exit: late imperial and the early Soviet/Socialist period; the continuities and ruptures of 1939/40 and 1944/45 in the making of the “socialist bloc” and the “Soviet west”; the years of launching and leaving socialist projects in the Global South; and most recently, 1989/91 as a major divide in socialism’s “before” and “after” as a state, a geopolitical actor, and a vision of the future.

The conference will specifically examine the role of cities and their transformation during the transition periods in or out of socialism. Focusing on these turning points in the history of Second World urbanity can help us examine in more detail the key resources and materials, both symbolic and physical, and the major actors, both human and non-human, that engaged in the making and unmaking of socialism. Coming on the heels of the 25th anniversary of 1991 and in the context of the centennial of the 1917 Revolutions, this conference will tap into many parallel reflections and insights about these turning points in 20th century history. We hope that bringing together a wide range of cases, both chronologically and geographically, will help generate stimulating discussions and allow participants to assess the characteristic peculiarities and ramifications of the societies and cities that embraced and later abandoned socialism all across the Second World.

Lviv is the designated city for this conference since it is one of the chief locations that features and highlights several moments of such transitions in/out of socialism.

Conference themes include but are not limited to:

rescaling to urban: chronologies, dates, and periods
trajectories of change: urbanization, de-urbanization, suburbanization
now and after: visions of change, resources for change
promises and premises: infrastructural legacies and developments
medias and mediatization of change: information, flows, communications
(de-)regulating change: rights, properties, ownerships, and responsibilities
managing change: decision-making, regulations, institutions
following change: publics, audiences, and observers
finances of change: supplies, shortages, and opportunities
speeds of change: resilience and acceleration
networking change: expertise, templates, circulations
plans for change: sketching, mapping, and master planning the urban future
construction materials of change
actors of change and changing actors
acts and sites of urban change
experiencing change: strategies and everyday practices
responding to change: individual trajectories and narratives
trans-local, regional, national, and global connections of change
(un-)fixing the change: recording, visualizing, and representing urban changes
before or behind: relating, negating, and recycling the urban past
population changes: exile, emigration, and in-migration
memorializing change in urban space: streets, monuments, and memorials
representing cities under change in art, fiction, and film
conceptualizing 'change': expectations, assumptions, explanations, emotions

Deadlines:

Please submit a brief CV (1-2 pages) and paper proposal (paper title + 400 word abstract) no later than **January 15, 2017** to conferences@lvivcenter.org with the subject "Ins Outs of Socialism"
Your proposal should relate your topic to conference theme(s) and briefly discuss primary sources. The conference language will be English. The conference selection committee will announce its selection of papers for the conference by February 15, 2017.

Selection Committee:

Daria Bocharnikova (KU Leuven / The Center for Fine Arts BOZAR)
Sofia Dyak (Center for Urban History of East Central Europe)
Steven E. Harris (University of Mary Washington / National Air and Space Museum)
Natalia Otrishchenko (Center for Urban History of East Central Europe)

Funding:

The organizers will provide accommodation in Lviv.
A limited number of travel grants will be available.

Conveners:

Daria Bocharnikova (KU Leuven / The Center for Fine Arts BOZAR)
Sofia Dyak (Center for Urban History of East Central Europe)
Steven E. Harris (University of Mary Washington / National Air and Space Museum)

Organizations:

Center for Urban History of East Central Europe
Second World Urbanity network

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