

Arch 603, Arch 823

Architecture in Global Socialism

Instructor: Łukasz Stanek

This course offers an alternative history of global urbanization and its architecture during the Cold War through the lens of socialist internationalism. By focusing on architectural exchanges between socialist countries and newly independent countries in Africa, Asia, and South America we will show the emergence of a world that is more urban and more global than ever before. We will study how local authorities and professionals in cities such as Accra, Lagos, Baghdad, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait City drew on Soviet prefabrication systems, Hungarian and Polish planning methods, Yugoslav and Bulgarian construction materials, Romanian and East German standard designs, and manual laborers from across Eastern Europe. The seminar explores how the socialist development path was adapted to tropical conditions in Ghana in the 1960s, and how Eastern European architectural traditions were given new life in 1970s Nigeria. It looks at how the differences between socialist foreign trade and the emerging global construction market were exploited in the Middle East in the closing decades of the Cold War. In so doing, we will study how these and other practices of global cooperation by socialist countries left their enduring mark on urban landscapes in the postcolonial world. Several sessions will be co-taught with Dr Michael Dziwornu, University of Michigan African Presidential Scholar from Ghana.