

Architecture in Global Socialism

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ARCH 633, 823

This course offers an alternative history of global urbanization and its architecture during the Cold War through the lens of socialist internationalism. Focusing on architectural exchanges between socialist countries and newly independent nations in Africa, Asia, and South America, we trace the emergence of a world that is more urban and more global than ever before. We examine how local authorities and professionals in cities such as Accra, Addis Ababa, Abu Dhabi, Baghdad, Hanoi, Lagos, Luanda, Kuwait City, Shanghai, and Ulaanbaatar engaged with Soviet, Yugoslav, and Cuban prefabrication systems, Chinese, East German, and Romanian standard designs, and Hungarian, Czechoslovak, and Polish planning methods. The seminar explores how the socialist development path was adapted to tropical conditions in 1960s Ghana, and how Eastern European architectural traditions found new life in 1970s Nigeria. It considers how the differences between the political economy of state-socialist foreign trade and the emerging global construction market were leveraged in the Middle East in the final decades of the Cold War. In so doing, we study how these and other practices of global cooperation left an enduring mark on urban landscapes in the postcolonial world.