

4Blocks in Podil: Kyiv's Response to the Crisis of Modernist Planning

Abstract

In the 1970s, most of the architectural principles of modernism have proved their irrelevance, and its proponents were losing grounds as the harsh architectural discussions leveled in the US, Western Europe and Japan. As V. Kulic (2019) has argued, architectural theory and practice of late socialism came to a similar turmoil facing the questions of history, context, and individuality.

In the late UkrSSR, as in many other countries of the Soviet bloc, most of the construction was primarily associated with functional zoning, mass housing, standardized prefabricated elements, microdistricts and stiff typologies. While the design and planning were a product of hierarchically managed state or municipal institutions, the architects were extremely limited in means to bring any individual agency into the design process.

A challenging answer came from the group of young Ukrainian architects who gained momentum and entered the competition for the redevelopment of two sites within the Kyiv's historic district of Podil in the late 1970s. Building on local contexts, human scale and materialities, they developed a revalorization project of four residential blocks that stood out of the ubiquitous design practices.

In the USSR, changes in planning and architecture were preceded by the rise of concern over historic preservation and conservation. The case of 4Blocks allowed for an experiment that provided sufficient freedom to form an integrated urban environment. Oscillating between a pm manifest, a 'conscious reaction' to the overall crisis of modernist ideology and a case of 'discursive formation'/cf. Foucault/, example of *surmodernité involontaire*, project states the need to reconsider the geographic boundaries of postmodernism in architecture.

Keywords

Late Socialism, Kyiv, Architecture, Post-Modernism, UkSSR