CHAPTER 5
ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIAS: THE PEDAGOGY OF STILL-EXISTING SOCIALIST INFRASTRUCTURE

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DEBATES IN AND AROUND the realm of critical theory on the relationship between art and politics, at least those primarily referenced in academic literature and even social movements of recent decades have, in general, focused primarily on particular forms of "art" such as literature and painting, performance and theater. This is not an absolute proclamation or "a general law," as Gabriel Rockhill puts it, as scholars such as Walter Benjamin, David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, and those inspired by the latter, including Andy Merrifield, have taken on architectural politics.[1] Moreover, there is no such ontological "thing" as

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1   Gabriel Rockhill, *Interventions in Contemporary Thought: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 244.

architecture, for not only do other forms recognized as art entail architectural features—like the organization of a poem or novel—but what comes to be seen as architecture is the result of ongoing struggles of various forces rather than individuals or single social movements. As such, Rockhill's argument is that theoretical engagements on politics and art, particularly in the European and U.S. traditions, "have evidenced a disproportionate interest" in art forms "at the expense of what is commonly recognised as a distinct field of practices, namely those of architecture, building, design, urban planning and public art."[2] Rockhill partly attributes architecture's absence in these conversations to the class standing of those who helped produce the concept of the fine arts and theory, as they were products and producers of "the bourgeois liberal ideals of education" and were accordingly interested in how the works they knew as "fine art" might "contribute to the political struggle that they hoped to instigate or support."[3]

Unlike the "fine arts," however, architecture and the built-environment are overtly engaged in and therefore the ongoing result of direct struggles between a host of forces, from banks and developers to local politicians and hedge funds, neighborhood committees and progressive organizations to the homeless and urban recreationalists. The architecture around us, the pavement, curbs (maybe curb cuts), sidewalks or lack thereof, height and density of buildings, hidden paths, and green spaces, are always dynamic, open to surprises, and either protected or under threat. They are manifestations of struggles for a spatial order and form that creates and recreates, calls attention to, or directly challenges the reproduction and naturalness of the social order. Here ideology is literally concrete, a direct means to enable and constrain our movements and encounters while being *used* in ways that can undermine or usurp the architectural design." As such, architecture could be seen as, in Rockhill's words, "the political art par excellence."[4] Rockhill renders critical theory's lack of engagement with architecture in the art and politics debate visible and provides a quite nuanced and clear historical-materialist analysis for this absent connection. The determinants of the theorists

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2   Ibid., 246.

3   Ibid., 254, 256.

4   Ibid., 259.

and schools of thought to which Rockhill refers share much in common with those who did and do consider the relationship between art and politics via architecture insofar as they are premised on a rejection of actually-existing socialism.

This article illuminates the significance of aesthetics, architecture, and political struggles by turning to concrete historical examples of socialist urbanism and city planning. In addition to drawing out architecture as a prime exemplar of political art, I find it a useful model for *pedagogical* politics. More specifically, these examples illustrate the inherently political nature of all education and of Paulo Freire's utopian pedagogy. Although some mischaracterize Freire's conception of the educational relationship as one of absolute equality, Freire always maintained the teacher can *start* as a learner but can never stay a learner. To start implies direction, and political pedagogy implies a political direction. The political educator, like the utopian architect, *begins* from learning from the people as part of understanding the current conjuncture. Yet what defines the educator as such is that they *depart from* a certain point toward another [...] there exists within the verb to *start out* a connotation of movement, and another of intentionality, and another of directivity."[5] With this in mind, I turn to the role of architecture and planning in revolutionary pedagogy before turning to concrete examples of political architecture that add an additional element contributing to its status as the exemplary form of political and pedagogical art: its role in the revolutionary process of transforming society and the creation of socialist urbanism, as well as its capacity to endure and persist in the face of counterrevolutions such that, socialist architecture is still with us in "post-socialist" states.

The Politics of Apolitical "Good" Utopian Pedagogy

In education, David Halpin's *Hope and Education* was a noteworthy starting point of utopia's reemergence in educational scholarship, including architectural education. Halpin's utopian realism is half ro-

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5   Paulo Freire, "South African Freedom Fighter Amilcar Cabral: Pedagogue of the Revolution," trans. S.L. Macrine, F. Naiditch, and J. Paraskeva. In *Critical Pedagogy in Uncertain Times: Hope and Possibility*, ed. S.L. Macrine, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 168-169.

mantic and half pragmatic, resting in the middle ground of piecemeal reforms. Educators, he holds, must insist on the potential for "a specific better future for society" but the *only* social movement through which this is possible is "progressive and patient incremental social reform."[6] Utopian realism is oriented toward "radically progressive conceptions of the future of education" in pursuit of "positive, unusual, but ultimately practicable visions for the form of schools and teaching and learning generally."[7] Halpin's utopic curriculum moves young people from students to "creative learners" defined by their 1) openness to new ideas and experiences; 2) capacity to translate knowledge and skills across different contexts; 3) understanding that learning is or can be hard; and 4) are motivated to redress social problems. Utopian curricula create, Halpin writes, "situations in which pupils are led to create for themselves sustained structures of thinking and meaning around well-chosen subject matter."[8] However, what appears as a combination of movement and direction is, on closer inspection, a subsumption of direction under movement and, hence, a movement *for* movement, a curricular accommodation to the present conjuncture.

Proper utopian education is progressive in the sense that it "takes for granted and promotes a less passive and more active role for the student, who is viewed, with the teacher, as a co-constructor of curriculum and knowledge."[9] The teacher is thus not really a teacher but a fellow learner who demonstrates the endless circle of learning how to remain open to the shifting coordinates of contemporary capitalism. The emphasis on movement and rejection of direction is a product of the intellectual struggle from which Halpin acknowledges his utopian realism emerges. Utopian realism is practical and pragmatic, open and realizable under current conditions unlike "bad" utopianism, which is "ground-

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6   David Halpin, *Hope and Education: The Role of the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.

7   Ibid., 59.

8   Ibid., 114.

9   David Halpin, "Utopian Spaces of 'Robust Hope:' The Architecture and Nature of Progressive Learning Environments," *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, no. 3 (2007): 245.

ed in *mere* wistful thinking" to draw "detailed blueprints for change."[10] Bad utopias engage debates about futures that are "impracticable ideal states" whereas good utopias "are capable of transforming it for the better in the future, so as to provide a significant dynamic for action in the here and now."[11] The very invocation, let alone dismissal, of "impracticable states" and therefore of "bad utopias," expresses the maxim there *are* alternatives to the current order, but only ones the current order can accommodate. "Good utopias," then, are not utopias at all.

A similar battle line between bad and good utopianism is drawn in architectural education, where good utopianism is pragmatic, and thus aligned with producing appropriate forms of labor-power for capital, and bad utopianism produces an inability to solve the real problems of the day. For Nathaniel Coleman, architectural education must deal with the troubling omission of utopia from the discipline's curriculum, as architecture entails a *vision* that is often *realized* in built-form. We all grow up in and move through built environments that are pedagogical, teaching and instructing our bodies how we should or must move, how we might move, and the capacities the environment enables and disables in our lives. Utopia and architecture permeate our lives and constitute the web through which our lived experiences and conceptions are produced or degenerated. "Without Utopia," he writes, "architecture and urban design have no vocation other than to adorn capital and its processes."[12] In those cases that the architectural curriculum emphasizes "imaginaries" instead of market-ready skills "the register is primarily *fanciful*, related more to unbuildable projects unburdened by the demands of use," reducing them to theoretical rather than concrete exercises in utopia.[13] Coleman endorses Halpin's conception of utopia as a language of possibility as a progressive step in this direction, seeing architectural education as lacking even the space and time to explore other political and social possibilities.

The main task, Coleman argues, is "to imagine what might be pos-

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10   Halpin, *Hope and Education*, 39, emphasis added.

11   Ibid.

12   Nathaniel Coleman, "Utopic Pedagogies: Alternatives to Degenerate Architecture," *Utopian Studies*, 23, no. 2 (2012): 315.

13   Ibid., 316.

sible," which depends on understanding what exists, because if what exists is taken as the best there can be, Utopia is meaningless.[14] Coleman rejects "bad utopianism" that totalizes in favor of "good utopianism" that is ephemeral, always under attack, and that serves as examples of possibility rather than blueprints. Despite insisting utopianism is political, then, here Coleman's utopian architectural curriculum is devoid of a political vision, ending up endorsing utopia as a method or over and against utopia as an actuality to be accomplished. Yet in a later article, Coleman argues reclaiming utopian architecture necessitates its position within a social project and political endeavor, on entailing:

a significant level of detail in the description of what is proposed; elaboration of a positive transformation of social and political life as key to what is proposed or constructed; and, not least, a substantive—ethical and aesthetical—critique of the present informed by a critical-historical perspective.[15]

While his earlier works endorsed the binary utopias, they importantly began by challenging the anti-communist orthodoxy that restrains our present horizons. In sum, then utopia entails both an ephemeral imaginative process but must ultimately be aimed toward and constructed in a built form that is not only *different* but *radically* and, at present, unimaginably better.

Utopian Pedagogy: Open and Closed, Partial and Total

To reclaim the essence of utopia, education must supplement imagination with action, openness with direction or, in Paulo Freire's formulation, the dialectic between *denouncing* and *announcing*. Freire remarked early on that overcoming dehumanization is the utopia of the human in "which they announce in dehumanizing processes."[16] Utopian pedagogy for Freire is a combination of denouncing the present order and announcing a new order, which means it is a process of open-ended

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14   Ibid., 333.

15   Nathaniel Coleman, "The Problematic of Architecture and Utopia," *Utopian Studies*, 25, no. 1 (2014): 8.

16   Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action and Conscientization," *Harvard Educational Review*, 40, no. 3 (1970): 456.

imagination and wonder but one guided by a political project. This is clear when Freire, in the same early article, qualifies denouncing and announcing in several ways, the most significant of which is a desired ending point. He turns to Marx's distinction between the worst architects and the best bees where Marx separates the worst of the former from the best of the latter because, as good as bees are at constructing their cells and habitats, the worst architect has a vision and a *plan* to build their housing and habitat. Of utopia as the coupling of denouncing and announcing is accompanied by several qualifications, including the need for an endpoint. Freire turns to Marx's definition of the *capitalist* labor process, which *presumes* a distinctively human form of work distinct from other animals. "A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells," he writes. However, the difference between "the worst architect" and "the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality."[17] One who enters a situation intending to teach without a plan—or with a plan to learn with the learners—is, by definition, not a teacher. Utopian education is not an endless dialogue of imaginative potentialities, and the utopian project need not *always* entail or move through dialogical processes; *that* would be wistful thinking.

What should be highlighted is that Freire's praxis isn't presented as and doesn't emerge from pure abstract thinking but concrete situations. Thus, after defining utopian pedagogy Freire applies it to the revolutionary project. The revolutionary utopian pedagogue adopts "their action to historical conditions, taking advantage of the real and unique possibilities that exist" in order "to seek the *most efficient and viable* means of helping the people" accomplish the revolutionary project.[18] The figure that, more than any other, embodies "the pedagogue of the revolution" for Freire is Amílcar Cabral. In the introduction to

17   Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (Vol. 1): The Process of Capitalist Production*, trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1867/1967), 174. Note that this definition is a presupposition for labor under capitalism and Marx doesn't make a qualitative judgement between humans and other animals overall by, for example, merely stating humans are better than bees.

18   Freire, "Cultural Action and Conscientization," 470, emphasis added.

Pedagogy in Process—a series of letters to the Republic's Commissioner of State for Education and Culture, Mario Cabral, and bookended by his reflections on his visits there—Freire acknowledges Cabral as a prophet because he started with the real concrete or "what was actually true" and not with the ideal concrete or "what he might wish were true" whenever "he both denounced and announced. Denunciation and annunciation in Amílcar Cabral were never disassociated from each other, just as they were never outside the revolutionary process."[19] Freire's first public talk after his exile from Brazil makes it even clearer how Cabral helped Freire's formulation of utopian pedagogy.

He recalls a discussion with an educational worker who fought with and under Amílcar Cabral in the anti-Portuguese national liberation struggle. Freire asked what was most impressive to him in his experiences with Cabral. The young man answers: his imagination, or "his capacity to know beyond his immediate surroundings and to imagine the not yet." Freire didn't understand, and eventually, the comrade provided Freire with a concrete example, one of Cabral's seminars delivered at military encampments during the armed struggle. At this lecture, delivered after an intensive air-bombing campaign Cabral gathered the fighters together for a lecture (not a dialogue). Knowing the bombs could start dropping again at any moment, Cabral directed to shift 200 troops out of the frontlines "to send to a different battlefront. I need two hundred of you to send to Guinea-Conakry, to the Capacitation Institute" so they could return "to the liberated zones, in order to work as teachers."[20] The political and military struggle was against the present order but for a new one, and thus Cabral recognized the necessity of dialectical utopianism but within a concrete praxis. The built-spaces and the aesthetic configuration during the struggle and after its accomplishment were, as always, deeply pedagogical.

Architectural utopian pedagogy for Freire is enabled by, reflective of, and generative toward actually-existing projects, imperfect as they may be and unattainable as all utopias must be to qualify as such. For

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19   Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (London: Bloomsbury, 1978), 11.

20   Freire, "South African Freedom Fighter Amilcar Cabral: Pedagogue of the Revolution," 164.

this reason, it is worthwhile pointing out that the dominant narrative of Paulo Freire's praxis as the starting point of critical pedagogy is historically inaccurate and theoretically unsound, which means we should be cautious of importing critical theory as it presents itself into other projects.[21] Architectural utopian pedagogy must entail an educational mode in which possibilities are opened and horizons expanded but within an overall political objective to be accomplished. Yet Freire demonstrates these are not only the "not-yet" but the "already" or "actually-existing" materials of our present, which necessarily includes our past. We can now turn to examine these present alternatives that persist in our present thanks to the work of recent scholars working to overcome the anti-communist dogma of the academy.

Still-Socialist Architecture Outlasts Actually-Existing Capitalism

While the "base-superstructure" model plays a far outsized role in Marxism, Michal Murawski taught me its significance as a pedagogical and aesthetic metaphor.[22] "The German words translated into base and superstructure," he writes, carry "explicitly architectural connotations." Even as architectural praxis must engage with land and spatial property, it does so in a way that delinks property from infrastructure, which is odd because that infrastructure of urbanism "constitutes the key site of the making and unmaking of socialism" because socialist social relations and their spatial form are predicated on the expropriation of the property of the expropriators.[23] The production of socialist cities and the built environment are physical manifestations of Marxism and a socialist society "planned and drawn on paper; rendered in stone, wood, glass, ce-

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21   See, for example, as, for example, the recent and solid paper, Cameron McEwan, "Architectural Pedagogy for the Anthropocene: Theory, Critique and Typological Urbanism," *Archnet-IJAR*, **ahead of print**.

22   See Derek Ford, "The Base-Superstructure: A Model for Analysis and Action," *Liberation School*, 22 November 2021, available here: https://www.liberationschool.org/base-superstructure-introduction.

23   Michal Murawski. (2018). "Marxist Morphologies: A Materialist Critique of Brute Materialities, Flat Infrastructures, Fuzzy Property an Complexified Cities." *Focaal*, 82, no. 1 (2018): 17, 19.

ment, and concrete; and filled with life, with living entities who were, by inhabiting and using these cities and buildings, engaged in the process of becoming socialist themselves."[24] Given that socialist revolutions occurred not where capitalism was most developed—as Marx's critique of capital seemed to indicate—but where it was least developed, once the expropriators were expropriated the new governments had to not merely collectivize ownership of the means of production and reproduction, but produce them as well.

Because socialist revolutions have, thus far, occurred not where capitalism and its contradictions were the most developed but where the capitalist class was weakest, revolutionary states had and have to address a deluge of overwhelming problems from underdevelopment and colonialism to the absence of basic infrastructure and literacy. In the first socialist state, what soon became the Soviet Union, cities were key spaces and mechanisms to take on such tasks simultaneously. Through a particular kind of urban planning, they could not only develop productive forces but also create a new set of social relations, a new collectivity and socialist spirit. It should go without saying that socialist urbanism manifested in various iterations and phases across concrete situations. Many could appear or even take a similar form as the capitalist urbanization that accompanied capitalist industrialization. Take the "company town" model, a space organized around a specific corporation or industry, which developed in opposing socialist systems. The *content*, however, manifested their antagonisms, for in the U.S. they were unplanned, unregulated, and designed purely for the pursuit of profit, in the Soviet Union they were *socialist* towns insofar as they were planned with the needs of the people (in the town and beyond) in mind and didn't generate profits for a small group of owners, among other differences.

Mark Smith argues the transition away from this model was due largely to the obstacle posed by scale, in size and in distance, as implementing this model in rural areas was technically difficult and created social antagonisms. There is no doubt that isolated districts would tend to encourage individual rather than collective identities. Another likely factor had to do with the evolution of the Soviet system and economy, particularly after their defeat of the Nazis in World War II. Implement-

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24   Ibid., 20.

ing pre-planned towns in this way, however, could not but hamper the collectivity central to socialist ideology. Moreover, as the Soviet Union rebuilt itself and its new and old allies, their forces of production developed quite rapidly, enabling an increasing specialization and division of labor within and between different cities and states. From the ashes of the socialist town came the microdistrict, or *microrayon*, the form of socialist urbanism that endured and spread throughout the world during the mid-late 20th century and still exists in some states and sites today.

Among the various forces contributing to this model and its ability to spread and expand in dynamic ways was, of course, the collective spirit of the people but, more pertinent to this article, the utopianism integral to Soviet architectural imagination. As Kimberly Elman Zarecor argues, blueprints for microdistricts were drawn up "years before there were material, financial, or labor resources to support their construction" such that socialism is "always a future-looking and aspirational ideology."[25] What seemed utopian one decade was realized—or realizable in the next—thereby extending the socialist horizon's actuality and distance. Freire's utopianism is also a kind of dialectic of excavation (digging into the present and past) and architecture (projecting or announcing a future). Such dynamism is emphasized in Murawki's study, addressed shortly, which focuses on Poland. As the Nazi forces decimated Poland and its capital city, communist architects were already envisioning designs for a future city the architects themselves wrote, in 1935, appeared "purely utopian" insofar as it required collective control over the land the planning—and therefore the expropriation of the expropriators—but within 10 years the "purely utopian" foundations "move quickly from 'theoretical premises' to implementation."[26] The infrastructure, itself determined by the global class war at the time, determined the concrete dreams and plans of utopian socialism.

As the relations within and between the socialist camp developed such that each socialist city could occupy a thread in a fabric of pro-

25   Kimberly Elman Zarecor, "What was so Socialist about the Socialist City? Second World Urbanity in Europe," *Journal of Urban History*, 44, no. 1 (2018): 101.

26   Michal Murawski, *The Palace Complex: A Stalinist Skyscraper, Capitalist Warsaw, and a City Transformed* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 44.

duction with their own specializations as part of a coordination within and between states. This company town, in a sense, overcame its barriers and "expanded outward geographically and through increased industrial production multiplied their economic effects" such that "any one of these cities then also had the possibility to become a site of expansion."[27] No longer a single factory or even industry, microdistricts were neighborhood-scale cities occupied by between 5,000 and, at the limit, 20,000 inhabitants planned not only to maximize walking space but to provide the educational and recreational services, collective kitchens, nurseries, factories parks, and so on desired and appropriated by its inhabitants.

The microdistrict, which was adopted in 1958 as the general framework for socialist urbanism by the Congress of International Union Architects, differed in both form and content from capitalist modernization. When utopianism entered architecture and city planning in 19th century Europe, it attacked the winding roads and narrow streets with diverse towns with wide boulevards to smooth and hasten the circulation of commodities and accelerate capital's expansion. In the early 20th century, the resulting concentration of urban populations led to the fear of the proletarian masses and their chaos. Capitalist architecture—represented best by Le Corbusier—knew it couldn't eliminate the laborers (because it needed their commodity of labor-power) and worked to restrain or contain it through functionalist planning and limiting encounters or public spaces. To be sure, this wasn't uniform, as social-democratic states provided mass housing and basic rights of the residents to inhabit their own cities (unlike, say, the capitalist states like the U.S). Socialist urbanism, on the other hand, was based on *micro*districts, each representing a node in an expansive and expandable centrality. Housing wasn't an afterthought but a guiding principle or "a material infrastructure," so that "new factories were not built without proposals for additional housing and neighborhood services."[28] Microdistricts worked to facilitate socialist relations by *providing* spaces for encounters with differences.

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27   Zarecor, "What was so Socialist about the Socialist City?" 102.

28   Kimberly Elman Zarecor, "What was so Socialist about the Socialist City? Second World Urbanity in Europe," *Journal of Urban History*, 44, no. 1 (2018): 106.

Intentionally designed to overcome the capitalist ideology of the private individual and the subjugation of women to reproductive labor in the household, they were the opposite of suburban sprawl and chaotic urbanism under U.S. racist capitalism in which the city (re)produces white supremacy and class inequality, Soviet microdistricts *embodied* a collective sense of equality in built-form. Smith notes that "all kinds of people lived in the microdistricts. The doctor and accountant brushed up against the factory worker and the cleaner."[29] Even if they *looked* like repetitive prefabricated high-rises, what happened in the microdistricts was anything but monotonous, homogenous, or segregated. Here the content and form of urbanism clearly worked toward overcoming the division of mental and manual labor, as evidenced by the social backgrounds of the membership of the leading bodies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: the Politburo and Central Committee. Whereas in the U.S. only the children of the elite have a chance at political positions of power, in the USSR the vast majority of its leaders emerged from social groups outside of "Party elites." As Albert Szymanski notes, one 1966 study of the 74 percent of Central Committee members with available information, "36 per cent had manual working-class parents, 47 per cent peasant parents and only 16 per cent non-manual (i.e. either intelligentsia or low-level white collar) parents."[30]

The expansion of microdistricts in the Soviet Union also worked to overcome the division between the town and country. As Smith notes, the first "Stalinist" town organized around a production or firm wasn't so distinct from the countryside. This is not only because of the infrastructure that connected them but because of internal migration and the blending of factory and agriculture, such that "many factories effectively ran their own farms, without which they would have been unable to feed their workers."[31] In the end, Smith disproves the "socialism failed" narrative by arguing that, while reductive, the primary distinction between socialist urbanism (in the USSR) and capitalist urbanism was the

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29   Mark B. Smith, "Faded Red Paradise: Welfare and the Soviet City after 1953," *Contemporary European History, 24*, no. 4 (2015): 605.

30   Albert Szymanski, *Is the Red Flag Flying? The Political Economy of the Soviet Union Today* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 74.

31   Smith, "Faded Red Paradise," 614.

presence of equality and the relations of property.

Zarecor's research leads to the same conclusion. What, if anything, differentiated the similar appearance of prebuilt mass housing in capitalist or socialist Germany, for example? It is easy to point out the differences between housing in the Soviet Union and the segregated U.S., but what about social-democratic European countries? Zarecor insists it wasn't the degree of specialization or the quality of the materials or products. Her conclusion coincides with other case studies demonstrating "that it was more than just the formal expression and urban design of the cities that made them socialist but also the social relations and sense of community that they consciously produced."[32] Put plainly, the primary difference was that socialist cities were part of an architectural totality and socialist urbanism was premised on the revolution of social relations within that totality in a revolutionary direction of equality and egalitarianism. This was a through-line not limited only to the era of the microdistrict. As Smith—no fan of the Soviet Union—argues, "one could even claim that the concept which was most Soviet about the company town was equality."[33] Based on interviews, he argues this sense of equality and collectivity existed until the overthrow of the Soviet Union; existed even in the last days of the first manifestation of socialism.

Conclusion: The Pedagogy of Still-Socialist Architecture

However, socialism etched in built-form, socialism and infrastructure, is not so easily wiped out, which is what makes Murawski's research so fascinating. His object of inquiry is Poland's Palace of Culture and Science and the surrounding Parade Park in contemporary Warsaw. The towering skyscraper is 42-stories tall and until 2022 was the largest structure in Poland. The goal wasn't (only) monumental height but the production of a space through which social difference could encounter each other as even in 2015 it included numerous theaters for performances and screenings, universities, a Congressional Hall with several thousand seems, the War City Assembly room, a Palace of Youth, in addition to dance schools and entertainment facilities. The sheer verticality of the

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32   Zarecor, "What was so Socialist about the Socialist City?" 109.

33   Smith, "Faded Red Paradise," 604.

Palace *was* important insofar as socialist realism rejected modernist abstraction in favor of "a much more *hierarchical, symmetrical,* and *holistic* relationship between the absolute center of the city and its remaining parts."[34] Whereas capitalist skyscrapers are built on speculation, for profit, and without any planning or care as to its effect on the totality of the environment or social relations in which it is built, socialist tall buildings were constructed where they were needed and "fulfilled public or residential functions rather than revenue-accumulating ones" with a form guided not by exchange-value but by use-value, and constructed in order to synthesize the dialectic of the everyday and the totality.

The Warsaw Palace was not only modeled on the planned but never constructed Supreme Palace of the Soviets, but on similar architectural forms that united heterogeneous elements in a building or complex and were, like collective residential neighborhoods called microdistricts produced across the socialist camp. Guided by the need to produce a *collectivity* out of a fragmented and isolated set of individuals or families and other restrictive social groupings, microdistricts housed diverse groupings of workers and families who regularly encountered each other through shared educational, leisure, green, residential, food, commercial, and cultural spaces. The Palace functioned similarly, as a physical space for formal and informal encounters partly through the condensation of various cultural and social sites, partly through its vast size and the surrounding park, but most importantly because it was founded on the expropriation of expropriated property.

Since the capitalist counterrevolution, the Palace and its surroundings have been subjected to intense debate. It still stands, Murawski holds, because it not only *represents* a vision of an alternative society but is a concrete manifestation of one. "The palace," as he puts it, isn't a relic of socialism in a capitalist city but a "still-socialist one" that, because of "the economic aesthetic and public spirit built into it by its designers— is able to endure as an enclave off a noncapitalist aesthetic, spatial, and social world at the heart of a late capitalist city." He even suggests it can still function as a "socialist horizon" for the country.[35] This isn't a return to a past but the concrete present out of which not only alternatives, not

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34   Murawski, *The Palace Complex*, 46.

35   Ibid., 271.

only possibilities of alternatives, but *real, existing, and more just alternatives* are dreamt and materialized. Utopia is not only a process, not only an aspiration, but an *actuality*, and together these constitute the real "stuff" of curricular utopias in our conjuncture.