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Lithuanian Modernism in Architectural Criticism: Between Political Directives and Creative Freedom / 1955-1988

This doctoral research project is focused on the phenomena of architectural criticism in Soviet Lithuania. Due to the common misconception in the history of Soviet occupation in Lithuania, that true architectural criticism could not have existed or was extremely limited, one of the primary goals is to explore and find evidence that there were specific, individual forms of architectural criticism. Currently, there is a void in the historiography of Lithuanian architecture that would analyze the various forms of exchange of ideas through architectural texts and also not limited to texts (e.g. photography, guided tours). To narrow down research, a binding keyword: *modernism* has been introduced, thus leaving the debates about Stalinist architecture, and historical architecture criticism for the future studies of architecturology.

The need for research of architectural criticism in Soviet Lithuania is related to the constructed authority of a modernist architect, the relationship of the authority to the society and vice versa. To put it in context, between 1920's and 1940's Lithuania's interwar period, modernist architecture prevailed and an *engineer* was the main protagonist in planning it. Following the Stalin's death, the modernist ideas unrolled in Lithuania SSR and consequently a new authority – that of a modernist architect was brought out. Architectural criticism can be seen as a key to unlock the disparity between the growing influences of an architect, respected opinion in the society and at the same time inability to decide to build as everything appeared to be controlled strictly by the regime.

The initial theoretical framework is constructed based on Wayne Attoe's "Architecture and Critical Imagination" and is used to distinguish types of architectural criticism in the specialized periodicals. It has been expanded by distinguishing texts by architects and non-architects. The research is motivated to explain the formal structure of central planning institutes, challenges of typified projects and Architect's Union activities in critical comparative method against the perceived forms of architectural criticism in the Western Europe. New

viewpoints are presented at the specific aims of the architects to spread modernist ideas, to compete among themselves in the internal rivalry who gets to build and what were pockets of critical opinions, not reached by the political regime. Next the interviews and collected materials from the personal archives are used to cross reference and expand on the impact and importance of architectural criticism in the Soviet Lithuania.

Another key challenge related to the authors of architectural criticism was to uncover the empowerment to disseminate modernist agenda, teachings and, finally, informal influence to the decision to build or not to build modernist architecture. This doctoral research deals with uncovering the social, historical and political contexts in which architects were forced to act, thus to adapt to them as well. One such example can be Soviet architectural awards or wider, public recognition of architect's authority through distinguished appraisal. The aim being here as to discover the multitude positions of architect's on the so called *gradient ruler* with full political commitment on one end and independent, personal creativity at the other.

Research of architectural criticism in Soviet Lithuania is essential in the wider context of architectural historiography as it can help to explain the theoretical background, the context of ideas in which the Soviet' Lithuanian architects were functioning. Several hypotheses are explored: either Western Europe's architectural theory was not sufficiently absorbed, used superficially, or the isolated, specific environment of Soviet Union lead to the unique appropriations of theory of modern architecture.