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Soviet Architecture and Its Legacy in Contemporary Ukraine. From Revolutionary Beginnings to Post-Soviet Controversies

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Abstract

This thesis studies the legacy of Soviet architecture in contemporary Ukraine, tracing its development through different historical periods and examining its current status. It begins with a brief overview of Soviet architecture and then explores key phases, including the Post-Revolutionary Period and the NEP Period (1919-1932), the Stalinist Period (1933-1955), the Thaw Period (1955-1964), the Stagnation Period (1964-1985), and the transformative years of Perestroika and Glasnost (1985-1991). Each period is analyzed in terms of its architectural features and the socio-political forces that influenced it. The thesis then shifts focus to the controversies faced by Soviet architectural heritage in contemporary Ukraine. It identifies key issues such as economic and commercial pressures, legislative frameworks including the Decommunisation Law, and the increasing involvement of society in the preservation and protection of this heritage. Two case studies are presented: Ukrainian House, as an example of the contextualization of heritage through socio-cultural processes, and Flowers of Ukraine, showcasing the complexities involved in preserving Soviet-era buildings. Through this research, the thesis highlights the multi-contextual nature of the Soviet architectural heritage, emphasizing the importance of a conscious approach to its preservation in the context of constant social, political and economic change. The conclusion summarizes the research and proposes a perspective on the discourse surrounding the Soviet architectural heritage as part of a process of reflection on the Soviet past and societal development.

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1 Introduction

The Soviet period has left a significant legacy on the architectural landscape of Ukraine. Over the past decade, Ukraine has been confronting the role of the Soviet architectural heritage in its contemporary context. As the country seeks to distance itself from its Soviet past and forge a new identity, a challenging question arises: what should be the fate of the remaining buildings from that era? Under these conditions, exacerbated by additional factors, the Soviet architectural heritage is in danger of gradually being destroyed. In response to the destruction of another Soviet-era building, Tetiana Filevska posed a thought-provoking question: "Can the destruction of things in itself free someone from inner un-freedom?" [1] This question highlights the deeper dimensions of the ongoing debate, which extends beyond architectural

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theory to touch upon history, sociology, economics, and politics. What value does this heritage hold in the present, and how does today's society relate to it? This thesis explores the evolution of Soviet architecture, tracing its development through various historical periods and examining its status and controversies in modern Ukraine, particularly given the stigma attached to it. The work investigates key factors influencing the current state of Soviet architectural heritage, including economic factors, the legal system, and the increasing involvement of civil society in decision-making processes. By analyzing case studies such as the Ukrainian House and Flowers of Ukraine, this research aims to contribute to the broader conversation and offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding Soviet architectural heritage in Ukraine.

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[1] Tetiana Filevska, Ukrayinskyy dim Lenina, 5.09.2016, https://platfor.ma/magazine/text-sq/re-invent/ukrdim-vs-lenin/, 4.11.2023 [translate by author]

2 Short history and periodic of soviet architecture

To discuss the position and possible future of Soviet architectural heritage in Ukraine, it is important to clarify what it is and what nuances it holds in the historical context and collective memory of society. Firstly, Soviet architecture generally refers to all architectural objects built between 1919 and 1991, the period when Ukrainian lands were part of the Soviet Union. Soviet period architecture is not monolithic; it reflects the political and ideological directions at various stages of the USSR's existence. One of the goals of architecture was to create an environment that would embody the principles of communism through its form and spatial organization, serving as a physical manifestation of the politics of its time. The overarching design direction across the entire union aimed to foster a shared Soviet identity. A common architectural language was intended to erase boundaries between republics and create a unified, easily recognizable space.

Each successive period politically, ideologically, and often aesthetically and stylistically rejected the views and ideas of its predecessors. Almost every new period began with sharp criticism, declaring a complete break from the old and the creation of a new "correct" architectural environment for Soviet society. All spheres, including architecture, were subordinated to communist ideas and the planned economy, and were also controlled by the authorities. Often, the next period started building its architectural philosophy from scratch. This trend led to a lack of dialogue between different generations and continuity in architectural practice, and the architectural school was almost absent.

Continuity and the architectural school can be discussed within the framework of the educational process - many universities across the Soviet Union, particularly in Soviet Ukraine, followed the MARHI teaching methodology. The static nature of the teaching methodology, on the one hand, and the cyclical repetition of destruction and starting anew, on the other hand, strengthened the trend of superficial and formal approaches to design. The lack of serious independent criticism and dialogue between different streams of architectural

thought only reinforced this situation. During the Soviet period, professional periodicals, although they highlighted contemporary trends in the field, were limited by the socialist space and familiarized with projects, did not offer a critical assessment of contemporary architecture. Primarily, publications served the ideology of the party, praising and demonstrating the achievements of the Soviet regime — an endless ode to communism.

In fact, under such conditions, there was no free field for the exchange of opinions, discussions, and debates in the architectural sphere. Discourses were often limited to narrow professional topics and circulated exclusively within the specialist community. Debates and criticism again lay within the realm of state control. Politics had the primary and decisive voice in determining the direction of development and the assessment of architectural quality. The architecture of previous "incorrect" periods, as well as that of political opponents, was subjected to harsh criticism. It was often described as hostile and harmful, attempting to destroy the achievements of communism, and negatively affecting the

Soviet person. Public opinion or dialogue between architects, society, and the authorities did not exist at all. The population, as users, was completely excluded from the process, one reason being the absence of an "open market" where the citizen was not the client, but the government structures were. Projects were usually approved at the state level and followed pre-created general plans. Thus, the role of the architect was confined within the framework of an executor, subordinate to a rigid vertical decision-making structure. Under such conditions, architecture was not attuned to the actual needs of society and could not satisfy them. This, in turn, led to the intellectual-philosophical component in theory and practice being relegated to the background, with the focus becoming aesthetic-functional. Of course, the dynamics of expressing opinions and ideas in the public sphere varied from period to period, fluctuating from total control to some degree of controlled freedom.

In fact, the transition from one architectural period to another occurred because of political changes, such as the coming to power of a new head of

state. Thus, the following periods, which had their specific local features for Ukraine, can be distinguished.

2.1 Post-Revolution Period and the NEP Era (1919-1932)

After the February Revolution of 1917, the Ukrainian lands initially saw the formation of the Ukrainian Central Rada as an autonomous entity, which later, in January 1918, evolved into the independent state of the Ukrainian People's Republic. During the same period, on December 12 (25), 1917, the Bolsheviks announced the creation of the Ukrainian People's Republic of Soviets, which was supported by Soviet Russia. From this moment, the gradual military intervention of the Bolsheviks, supported by the RSFSR[2], began in the Ukrainian People's Republic. The Ukrainian People's Republic, which was already torn apart by various warring forces (anarchists, foreign interveners, White Guard units, and small ataman groups), ceased to exist after several years of struggle. On March 18, 1921, under the Treaty of Riga, the territory of the Ukrainian People's Republic was divided between Poland on one side and the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR on the other. On December 30, 1922, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic joined the USSR.

The economic situation in the country was undermined by years of armed conflict and war. To stabilize the situation and revive the economy, a New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced at the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party on March 12,1921. According to this policy, limited free trade was allowed, and the farmers were permitted to lease agricultural land and hire workers. Overcoming the economic crisis was also important for the ambitious plans of the young communist state. The Soviet leadership set itself the goal of large-scale industrialization, which in turn required large financial investments.

Despite the establishment of centralized control over both social and economic life by the authorities, innovative approaches were welcomed during this period, and the architectural sphere was no exception. Large state

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[2] From author: Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

orders, the partial but still existing free market, and other clients, along with the need for rapid, technological, and functional construction, and the rational and economical use of materials, created the conditions in which Constructivism was developed.

According to the tenets of Constructivism followers, it was not merely a style but rather a method that rejected art for art's sake and focused on constructing the environment in the most practical and functional way, exploring the aesthetics and form-creating possibilities of the materials themselves. Constructivists promoted a new aesthetic—composing geometric forms where the shape clearly communicates its function. The Soviet leadership welcomed this new direction positively due to its stark contrast with previous architectural trends, which were considered bourgeois. Unlike the preceding styles of Modernism and Historicism, Constructivism completely rejected decorative façades, sought radical renewal in art and architecture, and was in a constant state of search and experimentation with forms of expression. This approach was characteristic of the Avant-garde movement. Architects had considerable freedom for creative experimentation and the expression of new ideas. The young Soviet state was in search of its identity, and architecture was one of the aspects that had to give this identity a physical manifestation. This period was marked not only by bold architectural experiments, many of which remained merely on paper, such as Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the III Communist International but also by vibrant intellectual discourse in the field of architecture. A space for the free exchange of thoughts and ideas between specialists and supporters of various trends was being formed. Despite Constructivism becoming one of the most prominent phenomena of its time, it was not the one and only architectural direction. The 1920s and 1930s were the most stylistically diverse period in the entire Soviet history of Ukrainian architecture. Supporters of various movements gathered around their most notable representatives and created numerous architectural and artistic associations,

societies, and unions. In Kyiv, following the model of the Moscow Architectural Association, the Kyiv Architectural Association was established under the leadership of architect Pavlo Alyoshin[3], who, throughout his career, designed numerous buildings in various architectural styles ranging from Historicism to Modernism and Constructivism. Architect Dmytro Dyachenko began serving as the head of the Society of Ukrainian Architects in 1918.[4] In 1928, young architects established the Ukrainian Association of Contemporary Architects (UACA), modeled after the Moscow Association of Contemporary Architects (ACA). This organization later evolved into the Society of Contemporary Architects of Ukraine (SCAU).

Theorist and practitioner of architecture Georgiy Lebedev identified four main trends: "the search for national forms; the continuation of Classical traditions; the adoption of Modernist principles and the pursuit of contemporary forms.".[5]
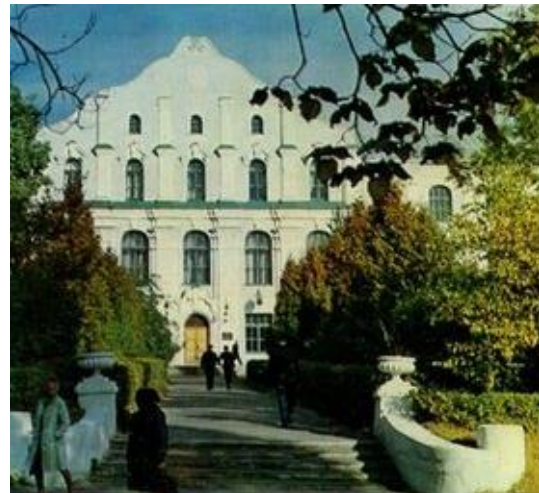
1. Holosiivsk Agricultural Academy in 1980s.D. Dyachenko 1926-1929, Holosiivsk

The search for national forms was based on the study and inspiration from traditional architectural styles. Proponents of this trend aimed to create a new national style that would draw on the continuity of generations of building traditions, emphasize national identity and reflect Ukraine's cultural heritage. One of the most prominent representatives of this direction was the Dmytro Dyachenko. He was the author of Ukrainian Neo-Baroque, which was rooted in the stylistic features of Ukrainian Cossack Baroque. This style was characterized by symmetrical facade compositions with

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[3] Smolens'ka 2017,133

[4] Viktor Vechersky: Dmytro Dyachenko,w.Y.,https://esu.com.ua/article-19796, 13.10.2023

[5] Lebedev 1968, 62

clear axes, restraint in the use of decorative elements, pediments with breaks, stucco work, and angular windows and doors. One of Dyachenko's most well-known projects is the buildings of the Holosiivsk Agricultural Academy, constructed between 1926 and 1929.

The continuation of Classical traditions was characteristic of an older generation of architects who had been trained in the old architectural school and relied on their pre-revolutionary design experience. This style is characterized by the use of decorative elements of historical architectural styles; it was common to use orders and decoration moldings in the design of facades, which emphasized monumentality and solemnity. This style struggled against the rise of new Modernist and Avant-garde trends, leading its proponents to reconsider their design approach and blend both styles to create a new architectural language. Notable representatives of this direction included: P. Alyoshin, O. Krasnoselsky, and A. Beketov. Many of them eventually transitioned to more modern and popular styles of the time,

such as Modernism and, specifically, Constructivism.

The adoption of Modernist principles; and the pursuit of contemporary forms aimed to create new modes of architectural expression that fully met the demands and challenges of their time. According to G. Lebedev, the pursuit of contemporary forms includes Rationalism, Functionalism, Constructivism, and Organic Architecture.[6]

2. Kyiv train station in 1960s.P. Alyoshyn and O. Verbitsky 1927-1939, Kyiv

Despite the pluralism in architectural styles, most architects eventually leaned toward new methods, resulting in projects that incorporated features from several directions. One example of such a project is the Central Kyiv Railway Station, designed by

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[6] Smolens'ka 2017,136

O. Verbitsky and P. Alyoshin and built between 1927 and 1932. The main façade is crowned with an avant-corps of a beveled shape characteristic of Ukrainian Neo-Baroque.

3. Interior of the central hall of the Kyiv train station in 1930s. P. Alyoshyn and O. Verbitsky 1927-1939, Kyiv

Here, this element, simplified to its pure geometric outlines, becomes a continuation of the façade wall. The interior decoration was minimalist and devoid of ornamentation. The supporting parabolic arches were a striking accent and the critical element of the station's main hall decoration. They added expressiveness and rhythm to the otherwise ascetic appearance. Unfortunately, after being damaged during World War II bombings, the building's interiors were restored after the war in the style of the Stalinist Empire.

With such a diversity of architectural directions and various groups forming around each of these directions, intense debates unfolded among representatives of different trends regarding the future course of architectural development. Discussions took place in all possible formats.

One such format was professional newspapers and magazines. One of the significant publications in Ukraine at that time was the journal "Nova Heneratsiya[7]" — an avant-garde art and literary magazine published in Kharkiv from 1927 to 1930. The journal

[7] From author: Nova Heneratsiya from Ukrainian means new generation.

served as a platform that brought together artists, poets, literary critics, architects, and other cultural figures who sought to create new, revolutionary art that would serve society and embody the achievements of progress. The journal "Nova Heneratsiya" played a crucial role in the development of the architectural field primarily by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience among architects and engineers and by fostering a multifaceted discourse involving representatives from various fields. In this way, architects were integrated into the socio-cultural context and were not disconnected from the social needs and significant issues of their time. This, in turn, influenced the quality of architectural projects, making them capable of addressing contemporary problems.

Modernism, particularly Constructivism, emerged as the most innovative and contemporary direction of its time and gradually became dominant. Constructivism was one of the most prominent phenomena of its era, offering new and unconventional solutions. Its goal of serving the community's needs led to experimental and groundbreaking projects.

4 Derzhprom in 1930s, Kharkiv. S. Serafimov, S. Kravets, and M. Felger, Kharkiv 1925-1928

A jewel of Ukrainian Constructivism is the Derzhprom Building in Kharkiv. At that time, Kharkiv was the capital of Soviet Ukraine and required a new administrative center. Constructed between 1925 and 1928 by the Leningrad trio of S. Serafimov, S. Kravets, and M. Felger, Derzhprom[8] became one of the first skyscrapers in Soviet Ukraine, standing 63 meters tall. [9] Derzhprom embodies all the characteristics of Constructivism: a restrained color palette, absence of façade decoration, massive volumes, a monolithic structure, and practicality. The building's ribbon glazing, complex system

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[8] From author: its name is an abbreviation of two terms — state and industry.

[9] Hrytsai(ed.) a.o. 1962,.60

of transitions, balconies, open terraces, and horizontal divisions of the facade contribute to its expressive and complex compositional design.

For the construction of such a large building, a group of engineers led by M. Rudnick developed a reinforced concrete frame, which was an innovative technical solution for the time. Derzhprom was meant to represent the technical capabilities and ambitions of Soviet industrialization, embodying the optimism and progressive ideas of its era.

Throughout its history, Derzhprom has suffered damage from military actions twice: first during the Nazi occupation in World War II and again during the bombing of Kharkiv by the Russian invading army in January 2024. The damage was not critical in both instances, and the building retained its integrity. In 2017, the building was included in the preliminary list of UNESCO, and on January 25, 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers granted it the status of, and on January 25, 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers granted it the status of cultural heritage of national significance.[10]

During this period, a new urban type known as the *sotsmisto*[11] emerged under the influence of rapid industrial development. These towns were constructed around industrial facilities, providing workers housing near their workplaces. In the Ukrainian SSR, one of the first socialist towns was built around the Kharkiv Tractor Plant (KTP) between 1930 and 1932.[12] The *sotsmisto* was designed to accommodate 100,000 to 120,000 residents. Along with the residential buildings, the development included essential infrastructure such as nurseries, schools, stadiums, hospitals, cultural centers, and dining halls. Under the direction of the architectural team led by P. Alyoshin, the *sotsmisto* was intended to be an autonomous settlement, a satellite city of Kharkiv. The planning structure of the town featured a clear rectangular grid of streets. Each block was designed to house approximately 3,000 residents.

[10] Postanova Kabinet Ministriv Ukrayiny No32 25.01.2018
[11] From author: socialist city
[12] Olena Gella, Liubov Kchemtseva: Sotsmisto Novyi Kharkiv, w.Y., https://constructivism-kharkiv.com/obiekty/63-26-45-sotsmisto-khtz#archiv ,4.11.2023

Buildings were arranged to include large green spaces between them. At this time, the party's policy actively promoted the new social role of women — particularly the role of female worker, who was expected to spend more time at work rather than being "trapped in kitchen slavery." This policy was reflected in the spatial organization of the housing, where apartments were not equipped with bathrooms and kitchens. These facilities were designed as shared spaces for communal use.

One of the primary goals of this project was to implement a new socialist way of life aligned with the planned economy and the system of Five-Year Plans.[13] After the destruction caused during World War II, only a tiny portion of the buildings from the 97 original structures and the planning structure remain.[14]

2.2 The Stalinist Era (1933-1955)

With the introduction of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928, the so-called *pyatyrichka*, the New Economic Policy (NEP) period ended. The policy of forced collectivization was implemented to eliminate private peasant farms and consolidate them into collective farms (*kolkhozes*). This process was accompanied by persecution and repression of wealthier peasant classes, confiscation of property, and, as a result, widespread resistance from the population, leading to numerous human losses. Centralization of power was introduced, and state control was established over all areas of life in the country. The architectural sector was no exception.

By the decree of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on April 23, 1932, titled "On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organizations," a ban was imposed on independent artistic associations, which also applied to architectural organizations. In

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[13] From the author: The Five-Year Plan (or Five-Year Program) is a method of economic planning that was introduced in the USSR in 1928. The goal was to implement centralized planning of the economy, science, technology, and education over a five-year period.

[14] Olena Gella, Liubov Kchemtseva: Sotsmisto Novyi Kharkiv, w.Y., https://constructivism-kharkiv.com/obiekty/63-26-45-sotsmisto-khtz#archiv ,4.11.2023

practice, this ban entirely subjected the creative sphere to state control. The period of lively debates, free exchange of ideas, and the existence of competing architectural styles came to an end. The era of centralized architecture began, where the current party policies set the direction. All independent groups were dissolved, and in their place, the Union of Architects of Ukraine was established in 1933. Architects who were not part of this union essentially had neither legal rights nor opportunities for professional activity. The state was the sole client, and obtaining a project commission was only possible by being part of one of the numerous state design bureaus. During this period, the political elite determined which architectural direction was "most appropriate for a socialist society" and controlled professional publications and criticism. It defined what was relevant and what was not.

Beginning in the 1930s, the policy of Socialist Realism was introduced. Previous styles faced severe criticism and were even labeled as antagonistic to ideas of communism. Architects could be accused of sabotage and anti-Soviet activities. In their article "Architecture of Soviet Ukraine: Socialist Realism Ascends," [15] authors A. Bozhenko and E. Gubkina identify the publication "Architecture of Soviet Ukraine", which was released from 1938 to 1941, as one of the main propagators of the new ideological direction in art. A "battle of styles" began, with the most intense phase occurring in 1937-1938. At the height of Stalinist repression, a "war" was declared against Constructivism and national forms in architecture. Architects were often compelled to criticize their own previous projects to avoid falling under repression. Constructivism and Modernism were branded as "box-like" architecture.

Architects who endeavored to evade repression and sustain their professional activities were compelled to adhere to the stylistic directives imposed by the authorities. During this period, the doctrine of Socialist Realism was systematically established, asserting that its core paradigm was to be national in form and socialist in content.

[15] Anastasiia Bozhenko, Ievgeniia Gubkina: "Arkhitektura Radyanskoyi Ukrayiny": sotsrealizm nastupaye, w.Y.,

https://chytomo.com/ekzempliary-xx/arkhitektura-radianskoi-ukrainy-sotsrealizm-nastupaie/, 18.10.2023 [transate by author]

This ideological framework was first articulated in a speech delivered by Stalin at the 16th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): "In fact, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the construction of socialism in the USSR is the period of the flourishing of national cultures, socialist in content and national in form, for the nations themselves under the Soviet system are not ordinary "modern" nations, but socialist nations, just as their national cultures are not ordinary, bourgeois cultures, but socialist cultures."[16] One of the early formulations of the socialist realism method was presented in the statute of the Union of Writers: "Socialist Realism, the method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, demands truthfulness (*pravdivost*) from the artist and a historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development. Under these conditions, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic portrayal ought to be combined with the task of the ideological remaking and education of laboring people in the spirit of socialism ".[17]

Embodying the postulates of Socialist Realism, one dominant trend emerged in architecture, which returned to classical forms. Monumentalism, Neoclassicism, and Art Deco are preferred in design. Elements such as columns, porticos, arches, stucco, sculpture, etc. are widely used. The return of classical elements to architecture was not unique to the Soviet Union but also to the totalitarian regimes (Germany, Italy) that came to power in the beginning of the 30s. This style will retrospectively be called Stalinist Empire, the pompous and monumental character of buildings that combined elements of Baroque, Classicism, Empire, and national motifs. In the post-war years, along with the reconstruction of destroyed buildings, the authorities paid particular attention to the development of public buildings and memorial complexes. Urban planning is dominated by neighborhood housing, and buildings are designed as integral ensembles. While more high-rise housing is planned for the central districts of cities, low-rise housing is scheduled for the periphery. For district residential development, standard designs are used, with relatively minimal façade decoration, simple cornices, and a minimum of ornaments.

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[16] Stalin 1949, 367-368.

[17] Baitsym/ Nikiforov 2022,.9

In contrast, houses built in the central parts of cities have richly decorated facades, main entrances, and staircases, which can be topped with towers and spires and decorated with sculptural compositions. Such buildings were often built according to individual designs. Another feature of these buildings was the spacious apartments with high ceilings, unlike the typical building with compact apartments. Such houses were built for local party officials, managers of various factories, professors, etc. — the stratum of society that made up the elite of the time. One of the most notable of these residential ensembles was the rebuilding of Khreshchatyk Avenue in Kyiv, which was almost destroyed during the Second World War.

5. Apartment house on Alma-Atinskaya Street 101, Kyiv 1953. A. Dobrovolsky 1950, Kyiv

The pre-war Khreshchatyk had a much denser development and consisted of

buildings from different historical periods, and the street itself was much narrower — 32 meters between the red building lines. In 1944, a tender was announced to rebuild the main street of the capital of Soviet Ukraine, and a working group led by architect O. Vlasov. Vlasov was in charge of the project only until 1949, when, after his transfer to Moscow, A. Dobrovolsky became the new head of the project. The new buildings on Khreshchatyk were constructed according to individual designs but had a coherent decoration, with lightered ceramic tiles and granite. a coherent decoration, with light-colored ceramic tiles and granite.

6. A view of Khreshchatyk Street, Kyiv 1980s.   O. Vlasov, A. Dobrovolsky 1949-1960, Kyiv

The new buildings were characterized by their massiveness and façades decorated with columns, arches, and sculptures, emphasizing their grandeur and significance, and elements of Ukrainian Baroque architecture were also used (multi-profile cornices, curly pediments, hanging columns). The street was considerably widened and had chestnut alleys on both sides of the street. The new architectural ensemble of Khreshchatyk was to become a symbol of Kyiv's revival and victory over the Nazi invaders.

7. Arches of Khreshchatyk, Kyiv 1980s. O. Vlasov, A. Dobrovolsky 1949-1960, Kyiv

Another striking example of Stalinist Empire architecture is the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy (VDNKh), designed by architects B. Zhezherin, V. Orekhov, I. Mezentsev, A. Stanislavsky, and D. Batalov and built in 1952-1958. The complex was built to host exhibitions dedicated to the achievements of the Ukrainian SSR in various sectors of the national economy. The central element of VDNKh's layout is a two-axis composition. The main alley functions as the central reference axis. Along this axis are the key exhibition buildings and monumental sculptures that create the impression of an organic and logically structured space. The transverse axis leads from the entrance gate to the central pavilion, which is 58 meters high and is the main dominant feature of the complex. VDNKh was the second largest Stalinist Empire style ensemble after a similar complex in Moscow and was one of the last projects of this style to be built in Kyiv.

8. Architectural complex Exhibition of achievements of the national economy of the Ukrainian SSR, Kyiv 1980s. B. Zhezherin, V. Orekhov, I. Mezentsev, A. Stanislavsky 1952-1958, Kyiv

2.3   The Thaw Period (1955-1964)

The Stalinist era ended with the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. A period of Thaw began the same year when Nikita Khrushchev became the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In the Ukrainian SSR, Mykola Pidhornyi took a similar position. On 25 February 1956, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev read a report titled "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences." This speech marked the beginning of a political course called de-Stalinization. The policy of de-Stalinization was aimed at deconstructing Stalin's personality cult, condemning repressive methods in state governance, rehabilitating victims of repression, liberalizing political life, and easing censorship.

In the field of architecture, the era of the Stalinist Empire finally came to an end with the adoption of Resolution No. 1871 of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 4 November 1955, "On the Elimination of Excesses in Design and Construction." The decree aimed to combat excessive decorativeness in architecture, calling for simplicity and functionality. Stalinist Empire style was criticized for its excessive pomp and irrational use of resources. Architects were returning to Modernism, which, with its minimalist, clean forms, was the exact opposite of the Stalinist Empire. The architectural community was sympathetic to their colleagues who had to work in the harsh conditions of the Stalinist regime. Criticism of the Stalinist Empire in this period was not as harsh as the criticism of Constructivism in the 1930s. While the official authorities considered the Stalinist

Empire itself to be politically danger- ous, architects who worked in this style were not labeled as "enemies of the people." They continued to work and adapt their approaches to the new requirements of the time. Meanwhile, while in the West, there was a dis- course among architects about the crisis in Modernism, their colleagues in the USSR, after more than twenty years of interruption in the practice of modernist principles, were returning to the beginning, to the roots of the Avant-garde and the foundations of constructivism as the basis for build- ing the principles of post-war Modernism. A kind of bridge of dia- logue was being built between the ar- chitecture of the Avant-garde twenties and the architecture of the Khrush- chev era. In her book "Soviet Modern- ism, Brutalism, Postmodernism," Ie- vgeniia Gubkina calls this dialogue an attempt to "overcome the feeling of guilt for the crimes committed during Stalinism. "[18]

In Soviet Ukraine, the return of Modernism was considered a product of the liberalization course of the

Thaw period, and was heavily associ- ated with the movement of the Ukrainian avant-garde.[19] The Intelli- gentsia experienced a certain amount of creative freedom, which led to the formation in the 1960s of a movement that would later be called the *shistdesiatnyky* [20], a community of cre- ative young people who opposed governmental Soviet ideology. The Sixties worked outside the framework of social realism and advocated the re- newal of the Soviet system based on the priority of human rights, as well as the revival and support of Ukrainian culture and language. Humanistic Western ideas greatly influenced the movement. In Europe, these concepts emerged as a reaction to the tragedies of World War II. In the field of archi- tecture in the West in the first postwar years, the focus was on creating and rebuilding infrastructure and social housing. The situation in the Ukrainian SSR was similar. The Stalinist Empire style dominated the first years of re- construction. The housing develop- ment was not fast enough. Most pro- jects were of low or medium height, and construction technologies still

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[18]Bykov/ Gubkina 2019,10
[19]Ibid.

[20] From author: *shistdesiatnyky* from Ukrainian is people of the sixties.

used relatively few prefabricated elements, which affected the efficiency of construction work. Another factor in the slow construction of houses was the creation of decorative elements for façades, which were resource- and labor-intensive. The standardization of design in residential and industrial construction began in the Stalinist period, but it was fully developed in the Khrushchev era. Mass housing construction was introduced as fast and cost-effective solution. High-rise neighborhoods buildings replaced the low-rise neighborhood buildings of the Stalinist period. There was a change in construction technologies: the main emphasis was on using prefabricated structures and industrial methods. This made it possible to mass-produce panel houses, which would later be known as *khrushchevka.* This intensification in housing construction was due not only to the loss of a significant housing stock during the Second World War but also to the active resettlement of people from villages to cities and the establishment of new settlements built around certain industrial facilities. These conditions also affected the structure of architects' work.

9. *Krushchovka* destroyed during the shelling of Kharkiv by Russian troops on July 11, 2022.

The work in design bureaus was accomplished collectively, where each specialist performed their part of the work in correspondence with the assigned design responsibilities. This improved design rationalization and productivity but, at the same time, reduced the room for individual creativity and a personal approach to design. Architects had to adapt standardized solutions to each specific situation and requirement. Even though political and cultural life saw significant liberalization and some decentralization of decision-making, centralized decision-making, and state control remained unchanged in the field of architecture. However, architectural bureaus gained some freedom for creative research and the opportunity to propose new, challenging, constructive ideas in their projects.

10. Building of the Ukrainian Institute for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information, Kyiv 1985. F. Yuriev 1971, Kyiv. Photo: O. Ranchukov

A symbol of its time became Florian Yuriev's innovative project, the building of the Ukrainian Institute of Science, Technical Expertise, and Information. According to the architect's plan, it was supposed to be an acoustic and light theatre. The building in the shape of a UFO had high acoustic qualities. This project was a synthesis of Florian Yuriev's many years of research about the relationship between sound and color and his architectural practice. Even though the building was constructed in 1964-1979 during the reign of Brezhnev, it quite clearly reflects the utopian hopes for a better future for architecture during the Thaw. Unfortunately, the project was not fully implemented, and instead of an experimental theatre, the building was used to house an Institute.

Most public buildings designed before the policy of combating excesses were implemented according to Stalinist Empire style designs, but were often simply stripped of decorative facades.

One of the first public buildings of post-war Modernism in Ukraine was the Kyiv Bus Station, built in 1959-1960 by Avraam Miletsky.[21]
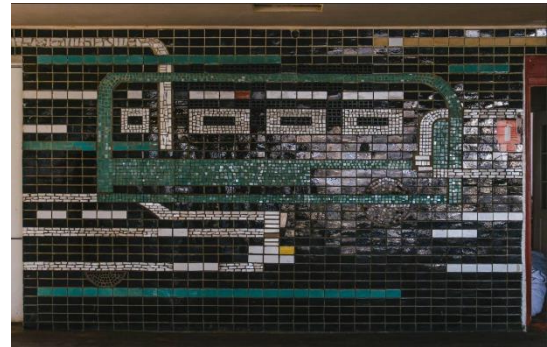
11. Mosaics of Kyiv central bus station. Architect: A. Miletsky, artist: A. Rybachuk, V. Melnychenko 1959-1960, Kyiv

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[21] Shyrochyn 2023,192-193
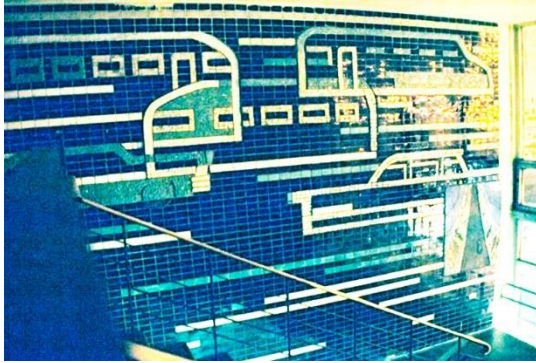
12. Mosaics of Kyiv central bus station. Photo: Yurii Kravchenko. Architect: A. Miletsky, A. Rybachuk, artist: V. Melnychenko 1959-1960, Kyiv

The interiors of the station were decorated with mosaic panels created by A. Rybachuk and V. Melnychenko. The mosaics were conceived to have a common motif of motion and travel and were utterly devoid of any ideological or political connotations.

Monumental art (mosaics, stained-glass windows, sgraffito, bas-reliefs, wall paintings, tapestries) experienced a significant rise during the Thaw. Architects and artists worked in close collaboration, which led to the integration of monumental works into architectural projects. The mosaic decoration of both interiors and exteriors became especially popular. Not only critical representative objects but also numerous standard buildings were decorated with such a form of ornamentation. Objects of monumental art were created for all types of architectural structures, from public transport stops to museums and palaces of culture. Mosaics, frescoes, reliefs, and other artworks helped to make monotonous standard buildings more appealing and give them a distinctive character.

2.4 Stagnation period (1964-1985)

In 1964, Leonid Brezhnev replaced Nikita Khrushchev, who had been removed from office. Khrushchev officially resigned for health reasons. In the Ukrainian SSR, the leadership change took place much later, in 1972. Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi was appointed Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Ukrainian SSR instead of Petro Shelest. The official reason for Shelest's removal from office was that he had been transferred to a new job, where he had worked for only a year. Leonid Brezhnev sharply criticized Petro Shelest for several reasons that had a significant impact on his political career. One of the main reasons was his suspicion of Ukrainian nationalism, his emphatic interest in Ukrainian culture and history, and his articulation of the

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importance of learning the Ukrainian language at school. He was the author of the book "Our Soviet Ukraine," in which he placed considerable emphasis on the identity of the Ukrainian people. He also supported the publication of the ethnographic encyclopedia History of Towns and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR, which consisted of twenty-six volumes. Shelest defended the economic autonomy of Ukraine, advocating greater self-government in the management of the republic's financial resources**.** This contradicted Moscow's centralized monetary policy. On the other hand, his position was quite harsh towards many cultural figures who were accused of dissidence. Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, who replaced Petro Shelest, was considered more loyal to Moscow, and today's researchers see him playing a role in the Russification of Ukraine.[22]

The Thaw period gradually faded with Brezhnev's rise to power. Relative freedom was replaced by a policy of censorship and total control over all spheres of life. In Ukraine, this had a significant impact on intellectuals and artists. Various forms of persecution of members of the Sixties movement began. Their works were censored, some of them were removed from the public space, they were harshly criticized in the press, and some were fired from their jobs. Many figures were accused of dissidence and convicted. For example, the poet and civic activist Vasyl Stus was arrested twice: first in 1972 for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, and in 1980, after joining the Helsinki Group for Human Rights, for dissidence and anti-Soviet activities. After his first arrest, Stus was sentenced to three years in exile, and after the second arrest, five years. Another well-known artist and author of monumental works, Alla Horska, was active in the human rights movement, supporting dissidents such as Vasyl Stus and Vyacheslav Chornovil. She signed open letters and petitions to defend prisoners and participated in protests. Together with other activists, she participated in the investigation of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of victims of Stalinist repression in Bykivnia. On 28 November 1970, Alla Horska was found murdered, a tragedy that caused a wide resonance and

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[22] Bykov/ Gubkina 2019,10

outrage among the Ukrainian community of intellectuals. Many historians see in her murder signs of a politically motivated act related to her social and human rights activities. For architects, the return of restrictions and strict control meant working in a bureaucratic environment with little freedom in decision-making and implementing new concepts in planning. architects were forced to find workarounds to implement their ideas, adapting to official norms to avoid conflicts with the authorities and preserve opportunities for professional activity. Many figures who could not adapt to such requirements were forced out of the profession and practice. The field of architecture was affected not only by political changes but also by the economic situation. At the beginning of Brezhnev's rule, the economy was performing well, thanks to the reforms introduced by Yevsey Lieberman. In the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1966-1970), the entire Soviet Union experienced high levels of economic growth. However, in the mid-1970s, stagnation began, caused by declining labor productivity, inefficiencies in the planned economy, bureaucratic governance, and a lack of incentives for innovation. Dependence on raw material exports and commodity shortages further worsened economic problems. This primarily affected housing construction and non-representative public facilities (schools, hospitals, kindergartens, shops, etc.). The limited resources forced us to reduce the costs and simplify projects. With the beginning of the period of economic stagnation, public buildings and government institutions began to be constructed in the Brutalist style, which became the official style. More expensive materials were used for such buildings, and much larger budgets were allocated. The priority in construction policy was to reflect in the public space the official narrative of the Soviet Union as a strong, progressive, wealthy state that had won the Second World War. Although Soviet Brutalism was visually similar to Western Brutalism, but it was essentially different. While classical Brutalism emphasized the honesty of bare materials, Soviet Brutalism mostly did not leave façades "bare." The most popular materials for façades were quite expensive natural stones, marble, limestone, and sometimes granite. Soviet Brutalism, although known for its massiveness and

strict forms, did not abandon decorative elements. Monumental art, which was actively developing during the Thaw, continued to play a significant role in architectural projects. It complemented brutal structures and performed important aesthetic and ideological functions. With the development of the nuclear and space industries, works of monumental art were used in public space to promote the narrative of the peaceful atom and enthusiastic scenes of space conquest. Many works conveyed socialist values such as labor, collectivism, patriotism, and loyalty to the party, reinforcing a certain image of an idealized Soviet person in the public's minds. Art strengthened the sense of common identity among Soviet citizens by using the same symbols and images in public spaces. One of the high points in the combination of monumental mosaic and Soviet Brutalism is the project of the Regional Literary Museum-Memorial to Mykola Ostrovsky in Shepetivka build in 1974-1979 designed by architect A. Ihnashchenko and a group of eighty artists under the direction of A. Haydamaka. This architectural ensemble is not only an impressive visual structure of brutal style

with its characteristic geometric shapes and massive walls but also includes a façade completely covered with red smalt mosaic, which is striking in its dynamics.

13. Regional Literary Museum-Memorial to Mykola Ostrovsky in Shepetivka, today Museum of Propaganda. A. Ihnashchenko 1974-1979. Shepetivka. Photo: Alex Bykov

Hence, Soviet Brutalism integrated monumental art to create an ideologically saturated public space that strengthened the state's influence on citizens' minds. The use of art to emphasize state ideals became an essential part of architectural projects of this period. Unlike the Western world, where Brutalism emerged because of intellectual discussions and the search for new architectural concepts, in the Soviet Union, the transition to Brutalism was initiated by the ruling elite. Besides bringing the ideals of communism into the public space through monumental art, the architectural projects of the period

became markers of the dominance of power in this very space. Brutalism in Soviet architecture was intended to broadcast the power of the Soviet Union. Public spaces and buildings of this style were designed in such a way as to direct their use in accordance with the state plan. Thus, urban planning was less focused on the daily needs of citizens and more on functions that met the needs of the authorities.

2.5 Perestroika and Glasnost (1985-1991)

Leonid Brezhnev died in 1982. This event catalyzed political struggles that destabilized an already complex political and economic situation. The first three years after Brezhnev's death, the USSR changed two leaders. First was Yuri Andropov, who led USSR from 1982 to 1984. He was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko, who stayed in office for only a year, from 1984 to 1985. Andropov and Chernenko tried to fix the difficult economic situation by introducing reforms. Still, they failed to achieve significant changes in the current situation, primarily due to their short terms in power.

Meanwhile, the political situation in the Ukrainian SSR was more stable compared to the overall situation in the country. Shcherbytskyi served as head of the republic until 1989. He can be characterized as a rather tough politician whose rule was aimed at total control over public life. However, general reforms in the USSR and introducing a new political course led to certain changes in Shcherbytsky's rather conservative management of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, initiated a series of political and economic reforms. This period of reforms would come to be known as Perestroika. Perestroika was a reaction to the crisis that had accumulated over the previous decades: a policy of strict control that had caused tensions in society and a stagnant economy under Nikita Khrushchev. Despite the changes introduced, they were not enough to overcome the deep bureaucracy in the institutional system, which made Gorbachev's reforms ineffective. Liberalization of the economic sector by introducing elements of market relations, instead of

the expected positive result, led to inflation and shortages of goods, which became a common occurrence during this period. The introduction of a rationing system, which was supposed to regulate the distribution of goods in conditions of shortage, led to an even more significant decline in living standards. In the political sphere, despite efforts to combat corruption, the period was marked by its growth. The bureaucratic system remained extremely deeply rooted at all levels of government, making it difficult to implement reforms. The Glasnost policy was a major component of Perestroika, which involved the active relaxation of censorship and support for freedom of speech as a strategic step towards political reform and openness in society. Glasnost gave stimulus to open discussion of problems in public life and open criticism of the authorities. This contributed to the emergence of numerous civil and national movements. For the first time in the history of the USSR, an opposition force, the Interregional Deputy Group, appeared in some republics. In 1989, the "People's Movement of Ukraine

for Rebuilding" was founded as a social and political organization in the Ukrainian SSR. At the beginning of its existence, this organization did not aim to separate Ukraine from the Soviet Union but promoted the idea of a confederation.[23] Transparency in the cultural sphere has facilitated the opening and discussion of topics that were previously considered taboo or restricted by censorship. This allowed artists, writers, and intellectuals to express their thoughts and ideas more freely, which contributed to cultural flourishing and the restoration of historical memory. Following the adoption of the resolution of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee of 11 July 1988, "On additional measures to complete the work related to the rehabilitation of those unjustifiably repressed in the 30s and 40s and early 50s", many cultural figures were rehabilitated, and the ban on their works was withdrawn.

The changes that took place also affected the architectural sphere. The Glasnost policy gave architects the opportunity to explore their creative po-

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[23] Garan/ Sydorchuk 2010, 184-186

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tential. Against this backdrop, Postmodern architecture emerged in Soviet Ukraine as an expression of the desired freedom and an attempt to move away from regulated and standardized building types.

14. Cherkasy Regional Museum, 1980s. S. Fursenko 1983, Cherkasy

Postmodernism, with its characteristic desire for eclecticism, deconstruction, and play with architectural forms, allowed architects to implement more individual and non-standard solutions. This style was a kind of rebellion against the strict canons of Soviet Modernism and socialist realism that had dominated the architecture of the previous decades. This period was also marked by attempts to adapt to Western architectural trends. Such adaptation remained in the realm of the aesthetic. Soviet Postmodernism lacked criticality, self-reflection, fundamental

philosophical changes in design methods, and insufficient involvement in the problems and needs of society.[24] In Ukraine, there are several regions that demonstrate examples of postmodern architecture with regional characteristics. The researcher Ievgeniia Gubkina notes, in particular, Chernivtsi and Ivano-Frankivsk with what she calls the Hutsul style.[25] Gubkina also draws attention to the presence of elements of ancient Rus' architecture in some Postmodernist objects. These architectural solutions include motifs referring to historical forms and styles. One example of such a project is the Regional Museum in Cherkasy building, designed by architect S. Fursenko in 1983.[26]
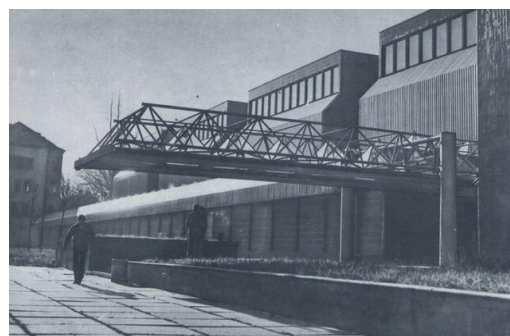
15. Architecture faculty of Kyiv National University of Civil Engineering, 1983. L. Filenko, V. Korobko 1982,

[24] Bykov/ Gubkina2019, 17-18
[25] Mykyta Gladchenko, Ievgeniia Gubkina:Lyubym my nashu arkhitekturu chy ni – tse ne volnuye ni developeriv, ni vladu, 18.01.2019, https://korydor.in.ua/ua/opinions/evgenija-gubkina-modernizm.html, 20.03.2024
[26] Bykov/ Gubkina2019,224

Not only the public and political spheres were affected by the changes. On 26 May 1988, Law No. 8998-XI "On Cooperation in the USSR" was passed, allowing private entrepreneurial activity. Thanks to this law, construction cooperatives appeared. For the first time since the NEP, not only the state was the client, but architects were able to carry out projects that were more oriented towards the needs of society. Due to the financial crisis, the number and quality of large-scale projects have decreased dramatically, and architects were forced to focus on smaller projects. A significant number of large Postmodernist projects are concentrated in Kyiv as the capital had more financial resources in the first place. One of these objects was the Kyiv National University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, built in 1982 by L. Filenko, V. Korobko, and M. Gershenzon, and the four-block ensemble in Podil, completed in 1983-1993 by two working groups led by architects I. Shpara and V. Rosenberg. [27]

16. Rosenberg Quarters, 4 Khoriva St., Kyiv 1980s. V. Rosenberg 1983-1993, Kyiv. Photo: Viktor Marushchenko

17. Apartment house in a historical medium on Khoriv street 40, Kyiv 1984. V. Rosenberg, 1983-1993, Kyiv

[27] El'ma Ettinher: Klasika zhanru: Vzirets postmodernizmu na Podoli, 16.07. 2023,

https://birdinflight.com/architectura-uk/vzirets-postmodernizmu-na-podoli.html,27.11.2023

In 1990, an event took place that proved to be important not only in the historical and political context but also in the interaction of society with public space. The Revolution on Granite in Kyiv, which took place from 2 to 17 October, was a large-scale student protest movement. Protests began with a student political hunger strike on October Revolution Square, now known as Independence Square, and spread to other key locations in the center of Kyiv, including the Verkhovna Rada[28] and Kyiv University.

18. A tent city in the center of Kyiv on the then October Revolution Square (now Independence Square),1990. Photo: Alexandr Malakhovsky

It was one of the first examples in Soviet Ukraine of a social group appropriating public space. The protesters used these squares to express their needs and ideals, overturning the traditional mechanisms of control that governed public life. It was an act of realizing the right to the city[29] through exercising the right of use. Citizens themselves determined how the space should be used, establishing a new form of social interaction and political participation.

19. Symbolic shackles on one of the participants of the political hunger strike, 1990 Kyiv

[28] From author Verkhovna Rada is a Ukrainian parliament
[29] From author: The right to the city is a philosophical concept that defines equality of opportunity for all residents to participate in urban life and use its resources. It includes the principles of social and spatial justice, democratic governance, and cultural inclusion. Formulated by Henri Lefebvre in his book "Le Droit à la ville" (1968), this idea was developed in further works such as "Social Justice and the City" (1973) and "Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution" (2012) by David Harvey, who focused on the economic and political aspects of social justice in the city.

Perestroika was a phase when problems in all spheres of life in the Soviet Union reached their peak. Despite attempts to reform society, many of these problems remained unresolved or even worsened, ultimately leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Postmodernism continued to exist in a new environment. Architecture became largely commercialized, turning into a tool that primarily serves the needs of the market rather than society. This led to a crisis in the architectural field, where the intellectual aspect and awareness of responsibility towards society were in decline. Commercial interests and profitability of projects became the main priorities.

2.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to note that architecture in the Soviet Union and in the Ukrainian SSR at all stages of its development was defined as a critical tool of state ideology and political goals. The government has always been the ordering party, controlling both the formal and symbolic content of architectural objects.

Architecture has always reflected its time, an embodiment of the technical and artistic development of society. The Soviet architectural heritage, despite its complexity and controversy, is not just an artefact of a former epoch. It is a complex phenomenon that includes various aspects and dimensions. Working under ideological limitations and technical difficulties, local architects managed to create significant architectural objects, sometimes successfully integrating elements of traditional architecture. Besides to architects, it is worth mentioning the engineers and builders whose physical and intellectual labor materialized in the buildings of the time. The Soviet architectural heritage also includes traditional techniques and arts, as well as the application of local materials in projects. Thus, Soviet architecture is not only the result of state planning but also a testament to the skill of local artisans.

Further attention is needed to Soviet-era architecture's cultural and social significance, which is part of the national memory. This heritage evokes complicated feelings, but its role in

shaping Ukraine's modern architectural landscape and historical and cultural context is undeniable. Its study requires a broad discourse and critical approach, as this architecture reflects the contradictions of the time in which it was created.

3 Soviet architectural heritage in modern Ukraine. Main issues, key factors, and actors involved in the process.

During the Soviet period, thousands of architectural structures were built across Ukraine. After Ukraine gained its independence, the Soviet architectural heritage, as well as the Soviet past in general, remained neglected for a long time. For a long time, discussions on the significance of these buildings were confined to academic circles, with research and debates taking place primarily among specialists with narrow focuses. This isolation from public discourse meant that ordinary citizens were not involved in shaping attitudes toward Soviet heritage, making it difficult to develop a unified approach. The exclusion of the public from these discussions can be seen as a legacy of the Soviet system, where centralized control led to societal inertia regarding heritage issues in the post-Soviet period.

Additionally, the lack of tradition in public debate and professional criticism — another remnant of the Soviet era — has further obstructed the creation of broader discussions. As a result, there is a fragmented dialogue between experts, authorities, and the public, making it challenging to form a shared understanding of the Soviet era's place in Ukraine's history. Developing a strategy for engaging with this architectural heritage requires a clear understanding of how Ukraine, both a state and a society, positions its Soviet past in the present context.

In 2014, after the Revolution of Dignity[30], Ukraine witnessed a significant development of civic consciousness, which led to intensified public discussions of political and social issues. Civic engagement has become an essential factor in shaping new social structures and relationships. The Revolution of Dignity served as a catalyst for increased public discussion on the Soviet legacy, leading to significant shifts in attitudes toward that period in Ukrainian history. Despite its histor-

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[30] From author: The Revolution of Dignity, also known as the Maidan Revolution, was a significant political and social movement in Ukraine that occurred in 2013 -2014.

ically traumatic context, this period remains complex and controversial, but there has been a noticeable shift toward more open and public understanding. One key area of discourse has been the dark aspects of the Soviet regime, including political repression, the Holodomor,[31] and other tragedies. These topics, particularly those related to human rights violations and mass casualties, are now actively researched, and discussed. Alongside these historical tragedies, there has been a growing effort to rediscover and promote previously suppressed or banned cultural and artistic figures, which has become increasingly important in shaping Ukraine's national identity.

The architecture of the Soviet period was not spared from this process. The appreciation of this architecture is complex and ambiguous due to the presence of cultural and historical stigma associated with the era in which it was created. There are two extreme poles in the attitude towards Soviet architecture. One of them can be defined as "absolutely negative,"

calling for the liberation of space from the markers of the past totalitarian regime. According to this position, Soviet architecture is often seen as a symbol of repression and carries only negative associations. The other pole can be broadly defined as "absolutely positive." It is characterized by a tendency to romanticize Soviet architectural objects, accompanied by a disregard for the historical context. This approach focuses exclusively on aesthetic and architectural qualities, neglecting the political and social conditions in which these buildings were built. However, the rhetoric of both researchers and public opinion mainly fluctuates between these extremes. Bright radical positions are extremely rare. Contemporary scholars and activists seek to rethink the Soviet architectural heritage objectively and critically, recognizing its complexity and contradictions. They advocate for the preservation of Soviet architectural heritage, as evidenced by numerous publications, public lectures, and events dedicated to this topic.

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[31] From author: Holodomor was a man-made famine in the beginning of 1930's.

Ukraine is not unique in its reflection on architectural heritage. Many post-Soviet and post-socialist states are going through an evolutionary path from categorical rejection to a comprehensive discussion of the future of these architectural objects in the modern context. In the initial stages of this evolution, there is often a strong rejection of heritage, manifested in attempts to dismantle or radically rebuild architectural objects associated with authoritarian regimes. This is due to the desire to distance themselves from negative associations and symbols associated with the past. Over time, as society and the scientific community begin to assess heritage more critically and deeply, the process moves to the stage of comprehensive discussion. At this stage, the architectural and cultural aspects of the heritage are actively studied, its historical contexts and functional changes are analyzed. The need arises to integrate these objects into the modern environment, considering both their cultural and historical value and todays needs and requirements. This process often involves public debate, academic research, exhibitions, and cultural events, which contribute to a more balanced approach to the assessment of architectural heritage. In many cases, the concept of adaptation or renovation of these objects is being developed to preserve their historical value while ensuring their functionality in the modern context.

At the current stage of Ukraine's development, the country is in the process of actively rethinking and reflecting on its Soviet-era architectural heritage. This process is part of a broader cultural and social transformation that includes a revision of historical narratives and identity. However, along with the tendency to reflect on and reevaluate architectural heritage, there are also signs of reactionary denial, which indicate contradictions in the public perception of this heritage. Leaving aside the theoretical and philosophical aspect, in practice, Soviet-era buildings face a serious threat of partial or complete destruction. This threat is a consequence of a set of interrelated factors that go beyond political transformation and Decommunisation alone. An analysis of the main factors allows to identify several key categories: legal and administrative issues, economic and commercial interests,

and social factors. After the full-scale invasion of Russia on 24 February 2022, a new critical component was added to the above factors — the destruction of architectural objects due to military operations. Over the two years of active warfare, a significant number of buildings have been destroyed and damaged, seriously increasing the threat to architectural heritage. The ongoing war not only causes physical damage to the sites but also deepens the crisis in the preservation of cultural heritage, making it difficult to restore and reconstruct the destroyed buildings.

The situation concerning the preservation of architectural heritage is influenced by a complex interplay among several key actors: government agencies, the business community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), architectural professionals, and society. Each of these actors has varying degrees of influence over the preservation or destruction of buildings.

Government agencies and local authorities play a critical role in shaping the regulatory frameworks that govern architectural preservation. However, these policies are not always effective and can often complicate the process by creating bureaucratic obstacles or failing to prioritize heritage protection in the face of development pressures. Also, the business community, through lobbying and economic influence, exerts significant control over legislation related to historic preservation. Economic interests frequently drive decisions about the demolition or reconstruction of structures, especially when redevelopment is seen as more financially beneficial than preservation. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including advocacy groups and professional associations such as architects and conservators, are vital to the preservation effort. They engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and work to shape policy. However, their impact is often limited by insufficient resources and a lack of institutional support. Despite their best efforts, NGOs often struggle to protect architectural and artistic heritage due to strong economic and legislative pressures. A collaborative approach involving government agencies, the private sector, and civil society will be crucial in overcoming

these challenges and ensuring the protection of valuable heritage sites.

Modernist buildings are the most vulnerable to destruction. The widespread lack of appreciation for modernist architecture, both among the public and decision-makers outside the professional community, significantly contributes to its vulnerability. This stems from a combination of factors, including cultural preferences for more traditional styles and limited awareness of modernist buildings' historical and artistic value. They are often perceived as "gray boxes," modernist structures are undervalued, leading to an increased risk of demolition. In addition, monumental artworks such as mosaics and sculptures are also at risk of disappearing due to the same factors as architectural objects.

3.1 Economic and Commercial factors

Since gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine has transitioned from a planned economy to a market economy, significantly affecting the architectural heritage of the Soviet era.

Many large, inefficient public buildings from that period are now expensive to maintain in the current economy. As a result, the original functions of these buildings often no longer meet market demands, leading to their abandonment or sale to private investors. Local governments and communities frequently need more financial resources to manage these structures, and with new uses, many still need to be addressed. In addition to financial issues, the technical condition of these Soviet-era buildings is another major concern. Due to their age, many require extensive repairs and restoration, further burdening local authorities. Without adequate maintenance, these buildings face the risk of continued decay or demolition.

The business community plays a vital role in determining the fate of Soviet architectural sites. Commercial factors and economic interests contribute to reconstructing and repurposing these buildings, which are often converted into commercial facilities such as offices, shopping centers, etc. Developers usually do not see commercial advantages in preserving Soviet buildings. Still, rather the opposite, and are

therefore more inclined to rebuild into objects that are more profitable from their point of view. As a result, the original architectural and interior features that constitute a significant part of the cultural heritage are largely lost. There are several ways in which investors destroy Soviet architecture. One example is immediate reconstruction, which often involves the complete demolition of the building. Another option involves transferring the building to private ownership, leaving it unoccupied for years until the object undergoes such destruction that it loses its cultural, artistic, and architectural value. Because most Soviet-era buildings need more protection, private investors can take such actions, allowing construction work to proceed without a thorough preliminary assessment of the building or consultation with its authors. However, it should not be overlooked that even objects with the status of a protected site are not always safe from destruction or partial damage. In such cases, government authorities often react after the fact and only after significant media coverage and pressure from the public and NGOs. Government officials' bias and corruption play a significant role in

these processes. Corruption in state bodies facilitates decisions that benefit investors, often to the detriment of preserving the architectural heritage that allows this dynamic to occur.

20. The three-dimensional composition "Dnipro Waves" near the Meteor Ice Palace of Sports in Dnipropetrowsk (now Dnipro). E. Kotkov 1985, Dnipro

This happens through the issuance of permits without proper consideration of the value of the architectural objects, manipulation of building regulations and standards, and disregard for heritage preservation requirements. Importantly, this situation of destroying architectural objects for commercial purposes was not limited to Soviet architectural heritage. It also concerns architectural objects of earlier historical periods, which is more evidence of the absence of ideological or political motives in demolishing Soviet build-

ings. Instead, it is a commercial interest aimed at maximizing profits that comes to the foreground.

One example is the demolition of the sculpture "Waves of the Dnipro," created by Ernst Kotkov in 2019 in the city of Dnipro, to make way for the expansion of a shopping mall. Despite the lack of official status as a cultural monument, the city administration opened an investigation. According to the fact that the sculpture was on the balance sheet of a private enterprise, it was their obligation to obtain a protection status for the sculpture. However, the private enterprise did not initiate the process to obtain this status, as doing so would not have been financially advantageous for them. If "Waves of the Dnipro" had been recognized as a heritage site, the enterprise would have been obligated to maintain it according to heritage preservation standards and invest in its restoration, adding to their financial burden.

In addition to the challenges faced in preserving Soviet-era architecture, there are also successful examples of preservation efforts. Some investors are adopting a thoughtful approach by developing projects that align with their economic interests while preserving the architectural integrity of Soviet-era buildings. These investors undertake reconstruction and adaptation efforts that respect and preserve the architectural value of the buildings, thereby facilitating their integration into contemporary urban infrastructure.

21. Monument "Dnipro Waves "after destruction on 26 March 2019, Dnipro. Kotkov 1985, Dnipro.
Photo: Artem Kostyuk

A successful case is the tramway control room located in Lvivska Square, Kyiv. Spearheaded by developer Alex Kuper, this initiative showcases a nuanced approach to renovating Soviet-era structures while preserving their architectural significance. The project focuses on a sensitive renovation of the tram control center. Architect Janos Vig designed the building in 1982. Over the years, the building has been neglected and faced potential redevelopment threats due to outdated facilities and changing urban

needs Led by developer Alex Kuper, the 2023 project includes a substantial renovation of the tramway control room, transforming it into a modern and functional space while maintaining its architectural integrity. In particular, the project includes the creation of a shawarma café. The project initially faced significant challenges related to structural integrity and material quality, so the effort was framed as a renovation rather than a full-scale rebuild.[32] The project emphasizes the preservation of the building's distinctive architectural features. This included overcoming challenges such as replacing missing tiles and restoring aluminum contours that cover concrete slabs[33]. Efforts were made to match the new materials to the building's original design.

The tram control room project demonstrates how thoughtful investment and strategic planning can combine architectural preservation with the commercial interests of the developer. By respecting the architectural heritage of Soviet-era buildings and addressing current needs, the project

sets a positive example for similar efforts from the business community.

22. Tram dispatcher's station, Kyiv 2023. J. Vig 1982, Kyiv

The interplay of economic factors and commercial interests has a significant impact on the preservation of the Soviet architectural heritage, underscoring the need for a nuanced approach that balances economic viability and cultural preservation. A coordinated strategy is needed to effectively integrate Soviet buildings into modern urban environments while preserving

[32] Lesia Donets: Aleks Kuper pro dyspetchersku keys Kvitiv Ukrainy-developeriv mudakiv ta dodanu vartist modernizmu,18.04.2023, https://shotam.info/biznes-vlada-y-suspilstvo-tse-systema-aleks-kuper-pro-

dyspetchersku-keys-kvitiv-ukrainy-developeriv-mudakiv-ta-dodanu-vartist-modernizmu/, 8.10.2023
[33] Ibid.

their architectural and cultural significance. This strategy must balance economic goals with protective measures to ensure that Soviet-era structures are neither unduly compromised nor neglected.

3.2 Legislative factors

In contemporary Ukraine, the preservation of Soviet-era architecture is largely influenced by a legal framework and governance system mostly inherited from the Soviet period. This legacy is characterized by highly bureaucratic processes, insufficient interaction with citizens, and minimal public debate, often disregarding citizens' needs, and voices. Outdated administrative procedures make it difficult to effectively manage and protect architectural heritage. In addition, systemic corruption further intensifies the existing difficulties.

The legislative framework governing architectural heritage in Ukraine is a complex system of laws and regulations designed to manage and protect the country's cultural and historical assets. This framework includes both broad national laws and specific regulations addressing various aspects of architectural preservation. The primary legislation governing the protection and management of architectural heritage in Ukraine is the Law of Ukraine No 1805-III "On the Protection of Cultural Heritage." Its purpose is to ensure the preservation and proper management of various cultural assets, including architectural monuments, historical sites, and urban ensembles. The Law outlines the legal status of these heritage objects, establishes regulations for their protection and use, and specifies the duties of both state and local authorities in the management and maintenance of cultural heritage. Paragraph 2 of the Law defines the management structure within the various state bodies, detailing the distribution of responsibilities for the protection of cultural heritage. Until 2012, the management structure outlined in the Law maintained a clear vertical hierarchy with a well-defined chain of command for overseeing the protection and preservation of cultural

heritage.[34] This vertical structure facilitated direct and organized oversight, with responsibilities being passed down from higher levels of government to local authorities.

The adoption of Law of Ukraine No 5461 on October 16, 2012, "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Concerning the Activities of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, and Other Central Executive Bodies Directed and Coordinated by the Relevant Ministers, as well as the State Space Agency of Ukraine," introduced some changes. The new structure includes central executive bodies responsible for formulating and implementing state policy in the field of cultural heritage protection; the executive authority of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea); regional, district, Kyiv, and Sevastopol city state administrations; and the executive bodies of village,

settlement, and city councils.[35] In contrast, the previous structure was under a single central executive body. According to Article 5, "Powers of Central Executive Bodies in the Field of Cultural Heritage Protection," of the Law "On the Protection of Cultural Heritage," the central executive bodies have a large spectrum of responsibilities. These include forming state policies, developing legal acts, coordinating with UNESCO or other similar organizations, declaring protected archaeological zones, managing state historical reserves, and monitoring compliance with heritage laws. They also maintain the State Register of Immovable Monuments, coordinate research, grant permissions for relocations, ensure public access to heritage information, supervise conservation activities, coordinate urban projects affecting heritage sites, implement protective measures, impose penalties for violations, and report annually on heritage preservation to the Cabinet of Ministers and UNESCO. The law does not explicitly identify the relevant

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[34] Instytutsiyni ta pravovi problemy zberezhennya kul'turnoyi spadshchyny,19.04.2019, https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/gumanitarniy-rozvi-tok/instituciyni-ta-pravovi-problemi-zberezhennya-kul-turnoi ,9.11.2023

[35] Zakon Ukrayiny vid 16.10.2012 No 5461-VI, article 3 [translate by author]

authorities, but it implies the involvement of central agencies such as the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Regional Development, and the Ukrainian State Geodesic, Cartographic, and Land Registry Service. Additionally, regional, and local authorities are anticipated to play significant roles in the implementation of these policies and regulations.

The decentralized approach to the protection of cultural heritage has created a branched system in which responsibilities are distributed among different levels of government. Frequently, responsibilities overlap or are not clearly defined, making it difficult to determine which institution should fulfill them. The Department of Culture, under the control of the Ministry of Culture, subordinate cultural heritage protection bodies in many regions. In contrast, in other regions, these bodies function within the departments of architecture, which are subordinated to the Ministry of Regional Development, Construction, Housing, and Communal Services of Ukraine.

This reorganization significantly broadens the scope of responsibilities for regional departments, including the task of submitting proposals to the Cabinet of Ministers for the inclusion of cultural heritage objects of national significance in the State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine and for amendments to this register.

However, this decentralized system presents several challenges. The approval process is now more complex, involving multiple stages and requiring coordination among various ministries and agencies, each with distinct procedures and criteria. This complexity can result in lengthy approval times and inconsistencies in heritage management across different regions. As of 2018, this situation has led to a significant gap, with only up to 7 percent of all cultural monuments—out of an estimated 130,000 across Ukraine, according to the Ministry of Culture—having been included in the State Register of Immovable Monuments.[36] The lack of employees and resources in the regional offices increases these delays and leads to less effective work.

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[36] Stenohramma parlamentskykh slukhann' "Stan, problemy ta perspektyvy okhorony kul'turnoyi spadshchyny v Ukrayini", 18.04.2018,http://static.rada.gov.ua/zakon/new/par_sl/sl1804118.htm , 13.03.2024

For Soviet-era architecture, this bureaucratic structure and limited resources can pose additional difficulties. The prolonged approval process and the need for large amounts of documentation and evaluation can slow down the process of registering and preserving these buildings. In addition, the involvement of multiple government agencies can lead to administrative overlap and inefficiency, potentially sidelining Soviet-era architecture in favor of an architectural object from a more widely appreciated period.

In addition to problems with the established work structure of government bodies, there are also significant difficulties with legislative measures for the preservation of cultural heritage. Ukraine has set a series of complex laws, such as the Law "On the Protection of Cultural Heritage" and the Law No 1626 "On the Protection of Archaeological Heritage" and adheres to the "Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe." However, a lack of balance between

heritage preservation and economic stakeholders remains. They often put pressure on the legal framework to change laws to suit their own interests.

Legislative changes in the last decade have added a further burden to an existing situation. For instance, the law No. 3038, "On Regulation of City Planning Activities" of 17 February 2011[37] and Law No.365 of 2 July 2013, "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine in the Field of Land Relations to Simplify the Procedure for Land Allocation"[38] led to changes in the laws "On Protection of Archaeological Heritage", "On Protection of Cultural Heritage" and the Land Code of Ukraine. Those changes have reduced the oversight of heritage protection bodies. The removal of provisions for scientific archaeological expertise and the weakening of project approval processes have undermined the ability of authorities to protect sites from potentially harmful development activities.

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[37] Zakon Ukrayiny vid 18.03.2004 No 1626-IV (red.05.02.2011) https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1626-15/ed20110205, 13.03.2024

[38] Zakon Ukrayiny vid 02.07.2013 No 365-VII" https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/365-18 13.03.2024

For Soviet-era architecture, amendments No. 5496-VI of November 20, 2012, to Chapter 7 of the Law "On Architectural Activity" have introduced significant changes threatening its preservation. The most notable change is eliminating the requirement for additional expert reviews and approvals for projects modified by urban planning conditions and restrictions on land development. The streamlined approval process may result in the loss of valuable heritage, as the absence of review mechanisms removes crucial protection measures.

These changes are dangerous for Soviet-era architecture because many buildings from this period were often built outside the designated protection zones or are considered too "young" to automatically qualify for mandatory inspection as a potential protected object. These structures may not receive the protection they need without additional assessments to evaluate their historical and cultural value. The legislative changes benefit developers and businesses by simplifying the approval process and eliminating the need for numerous expert reviews and permits. This speeded up process allows developers to move their projects forward more quickly. As a result, there is a growing dynamic in the relationship between developers and government agencies, where the reduced regulatory burden allows developers to implement more aggressive redevelopment plans. This shift has led to the prioritization of economic and commercial interests over the preservation of cultural heritage.

In addition to the problems with the government structure and legislative measures, the issue of insufficient penalties and enforcement further worsens the challenges of protecting architectural heritage. Penalties for violations of heritage protection laws are often too low to prevent significant violations. According to Article 44 of the Law "On Protection of Cultural Heritage", penalties typically range from 17,000 to 170,000 UA. According to Criminal Code Article 298, the penalty for deliberate destruction, damage, or harm to heritage sites is a fine of up to 150 non-taxable minimum incomes, imprisonment for up to three years, or a combination of the penalties, which may include the depriva-

tion of the right to hold certain positions or engage in specific activities for up to three years, or without such deprivation. In addition, the lack of consistent law enforcement contributes to the problem. The penalties and fines provided for in administrative and criminal laws are not consistent with each other. Such inconsistency can lead to inefficient application of legal acts, as it is unclear under what conditions which law should be used. Also, many loopholes in the legislation allow unscrupulous developers to circumvent existing prohibitions and penalties. Along with minor fines, the cultural heritage protection authorities under Article 30 of the Law "On the Protection of Cultural Heritage" are not empowered to stop work or revoke permits in case of non-compliant or potentially dangerous nature of the work for the cultural heritage site.

In addition to all the aforementioned factors, one specific law that has a direct impact on Soviet-era architecture is the Law of Ukraine No. 2558, "On the Condemnation and Prohibition of Symbols and Propaganda of Communist and National Socialist Totalitarian Regimes." Adopted on 9 April 2015, this law is commonly known as the "Decommunisation Law". This law prohibits National Socialist symbols and propaganda, as well as Soviet symbols and propaganda. However, due to Ukraine's historical context, it focuses more on the Soviet aspect. Ukraine is not the only country with such legislation; many post-socialist countries have enacted their own processes to come to terms with their communist pasts. Decommunisation processes are often part of a broader effort to address historical injustices and promote a national narrative that acknowledges the suffering and oppression experienced under communist regimes.

The focus of the law on Decommunisation in Ukraine is to create a legal framework to prohibit the propaganda of communist and national socialist symbols and to define procedures for the elimination of symbols associated with the Soviet totalitarian regime. As specified in Articles 2-4, the main principles of the law can be broadly categorized as follows:

- Condemnation of totalitarian regimes: The Communist regime (1917-1991) was officially

condemned as a criminal organization for its state terror and numerous human rights violations, including murder, deportation and torture, and suppression of individual freedoms. Similarly, the National Socialist regime, known for its state terror, genocide, human rights violations, and racially motivated persecution, as documented at the Nuremberg Trials, was also recognized as a criminal organization.

- Prohibition of propaganda: The spreading of propaganda for the communist and national socialist totalitarian regimes, as well as related symbols, is strictly prohibited. This includes the public display and promotion of such symbols by organizations, political parties, and the mass media.
- Restriction on Symbols: The creation, distribution, and public display of symbols associated with the Communist and National Socialist regimes, including souvenir items and the public performance of anthems from the USSR, Ukrainian SSR, and other Soviet republics, are forbidden throughout Ukraine.

The ban does not apply to:

- Historical documents and artifacts before 1991.
- Museum exhibits, educational materials, scientific research, gravestones and places of honorary burial, and cemeteries
- artworks created before the law took effect.
- Specific uses include historical reconstructions, private collections, and antique trade, informational, analytical programs, documentary films, and works of art created after the law took effect, provided they do not promote or excuse the regimes.

The enactment of the Decommunisation Law in Ukraine gave rise to a plethora of critiques. Oksana Shevel in her article "De-Communization Laws Need to Be Amended to Conform to European Standards" insisted that the law required amendments to align with European standards, emphasizing the necessity for a more nuanced

approach to dealing with the past.[39] In addition, the difference between the legislative goals of the Decommunisation Law and its practical implementation is also a matter of controversy. While the law is intended to facilitate Ukraine's separation from Soviet totalitarianism, its practical implementation often does not correspond to this goal. Critics contend that the law's enforcement sometimes neglects to consider the broader context of the Soviet era and its complex legacy, leading to a simplistic approach that may inadequately capture the nuances of Ukraine's historical experience. This imbalance between intentions and implementation underscores the need for a subtler and context-sensitive approach to Decommunisation. Although the Law on Decommunisation does not apply to objects created before Ukraine gained independence in 1991, its implementation had a significant impact on Soviet-era architecture and art. It is important to note that the Decommunisation Law has had less of an impact on the field of architecture than on monumental art and sculpture. While buildings may undergo certain adaptations, monumental art and sculpture associated with Soviet symbols and propaganda are more vulnerable to removal or destruction. One of the primary criticisms of the Decommunisation Law is its lack of clear mechanisms and classification criteria, creating an environment enabling inconsistent application. The broad and frequently vague definitions in the law permit subjective decisions influenced by political and ideological motives rather than objective historical or cultural assessments. This misuse can manifest itself in efforts to suppress alternative views or advance political agendas, rather than focusing on genuine historical and cultural preservation. This ambiguity undermines the law's effectiveness in achieving a balanced and fair approach to Ukraine's Soviet past.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has prompted a shift in the academic and political agenda, with a move away from the previously dominant focus on Decommunisation to-

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[39] Oksana Shevel: "De-Communization Laws" Need to Be Amended to Conform to European Standards ,7.05.20215, https://voxukraine.org/en/de-communization-laws-need-to-be-amended-to-conform-to-european-standards, 16.03.2024

wards a broader consideration of de-colonization. This broader framework aims to address not only the symbols and influences of the Soviet era but also the remnants of Russian imperialism and other forms of colonial influence. This shift highlights a more comprehensive effort to redefine Ukrainian national identity and cultural heritage in the context of persistent external threats.

Another crucial issue is the lack of communication and involvement of society and professionals in the decision-making process. The process of Decommunisation has been largely concentrated in the hands of the government. Despite this, some recent improvements, particularly in relation to street and square renames, are worthy of note. In many Ukrainian settlements, local communities are now empowered to participate in the voting process and to propose new street or square names.

In contrast, the situation regarding art and architectural objects remains complex. To illustrate, the sculpture composition situated beneath the Arch of Friendship of Nations in Kyiv was dismantled by the municipal government without sufficient critical reflection or broader dialogue involving in addition to government officials, art specialists, historians, and the public Despite the sculpture's overt political narrative of brotherhood between the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, its removal was not followed by a comprehensive discourse. Vladyslava Osmak, a researcher, emphasized the need for a professional approach to each object to overcome the impact of the Soviet legacy. She further observed that the act of solely destroying objects mirrors the actions of the Soviet regime.[40] A significant number of researchers, artists, architects, academics, and historians contend that the removal of objects from public spaces is not a sufficient measure; rather, it is essential to engage in profound reflection and comprehensive dialogue. In some instances, government bodies have made hasty and superficial decisions within the context of Decommu-

[40] Liliia Rzheutska: Arka druzhby narodiv u Kyyevi: "yarmo" zalyshylosya, 30.04.2022, https://www.dw.com/uk/arka-druzhby-narodiv-u-kyievi-skulptury-prybraly-iarmo-zalyshylosia-a-61638976/a-61638976 , 11.12.2023

nisation and decolonization processes. These decisions have often resulted in the mere replacement of one symbol with another. An illustrative case is the Motherland Monument, where the Soviet emblem was replaced by the Ukrainian national emblem, an example of a symbolic change rather than a fundamental revision. However, this decision included a vote by citizens, with 85 percent of participants supporting the change from the Soviet emblem to the Ukrainian Trident.[41] The inclusion of public voting reflects a shift towards a more democratic and participatory approach, where citizens have a direct say in how historical symbols are reinterpreted.
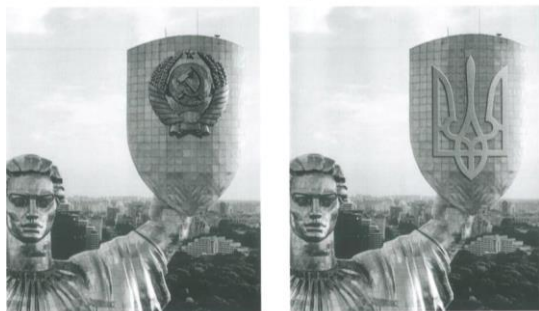
23. Motherland Monument. Old and new state. I. Vuchetych, V. Boroday 1979-1981, Kyiv

The preservation of Soviet-era architecture in contemporary Ukraine faces significant obstacles, largely due to a legacy of bureaucratic inefficiency, complex legal frameworks, and inconsistent enforcement. The complicated system of laws and regulations, including recent amendments and the Decommunisation Law, has complicated the protection of architectural heritage. The reorganization of bureaucratic bodies and the reduction of control, combined with inadequate penalties and a lack of public engagement, serve to complicate effective conservation efforts. To ensure the preservation of Ukraine's architectural heritage, a more integrated approach is needed that addresses both legislative and administrative shortcomings.

3.3 Uprising participation of society in the decision-making process and protection of soviet architecture.

A notable increase in activism and public engagement regarding the analysis and preservation of Soviet-

41 Dekomunisatsia Batkivshchyna-Maty: DIAM vydala dozvil na zaminu radianskogo gerba na gerb
Ukrainy,3.07.2023, https://mtu.gov.ua/news/34506.html ,1.11.2023

era architecture has been observed in the years following the Revolution of Dignity. This transformative period in Ukraine's contemporary history, which was characterized by significant political and social upheaval, resulted in a profound shift in civic consciousness, leading to the emergence of numerous organizations and movements dedicated to the preservation, study, and documentation of Soviet architectural heritage, with an emphasis on modernist structures. These organizations use a variety of forms and strategies, including educational initiatives, protest actions, legal challenges, and efforts to involve the public in decision-making processes.

24. A column of architects on the March for Kyiv, 2021

Over the past decade, several organizations and initiatives have been established. To illustrate, the Renovation Map project, which extends beyond the examination of Soviet-era structures, plays an important role in the investigation of historical architectural heritage across the country. This initiative includes the mapping and documentation of historical structures. The Renovation Map project is promoting the principles of preservation, reuse, and reconstruction of historic buildings in a manner that respects their authenticity. Another illustrative example is the Save Kvity Ukrainy initiative, a movement dedicated to the protection of the "Flowers of Ukraine" building in Kyiv, which has been subjected to threats of demolition and serious reconstruction. This initiative is a powerful example of the potential impact of such efforts. The NGO achieved major success by using a multi-pronged approach that combined legal strategies and public mobilization to challenge the developer's plans. The movement was successful both in litigating the case against the developer and in securing protected status for the building from local authorities.

This achievement represents a critical victory for a public initiative and underscores the effectiveness of public engagement and legal advocacy in heritage preservation. Originally focused on the preservation of this single structure, Save Kvity Ukrainy has since expanded its mission to create educational content and promote open dialogue between experts, communities, private businesses, and government. One of the largest public demonstrations, the March for Kyiv, occurred on October 2, 2021, with the involvement of over 40[42] distinct NGOs and municipal initiatives. The primary objective of the demonstration was to advocate for comprehensive reforms in the realms of architecture and urbanism, wherein the interests of the community, rather than those of developers, should prevail.

One illustrative example of local initiatives that effectively facilitate the reconnection of communities with their architectural heritage is the forum "Kherson Modernism: Back to the Future." A principal aspect of this initiative is the popularization of the modernist architecture of Kherson, with a particular focus on industrial structures, which are often the most neglected and underappreciated elements of the city's built environment. Ukrainian Modernism, an initiative launched by Dmitry Solovyov in 2018, is a private endeavor dedicated to the documentation and promotion of modernist architecture throughout Ukraine. Solovyov's work, particularly through social media, has been crucial in raising awareness of the architectural value of Soviet modernist buildings and the threats they face.

A particularly illustrative case of individual activism is architect Florian Yuriev and his efforts to safeguard his own project, the so-called "Saucer" building in Kyiv, against the developer's intentions to turn it into a shopping mall. Yuriev's actions, which attracted considerable attention, highlight the personal implications of preserving architectural heritage.

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[42] Tetiana Yavorovych: 18 kolon i p'yat' vymoh: u stolytsi vidbuvsya "Marsh za Kyiv". Fotoreportazh, 2.10.2021, https://suspilne.media/kyiv/168592-u-stolici-vlastuvali-mars-za-kiiv-cogo-vimagaut/ , 5.11.2023

Filmmaker Oleksiy Radynsky contributed to this cause with his short film "Façade Color: Blue," which documents and explores Yuriev's efforts.

25. Poster to the film "Façade color: Blue".

In addition to organized initiatives, there has been a notable increase in the number of grassroots responses by local communities when Soviet-era architectural objects or works of art are threatened with demolition or partial damage. Such community-driven actions often manifest themselves as a spontaneous response to the potential loss of architectural or artistic objects and as a demonstration of the growing demand for transparency and participation in processes that affect public spaces, cityscapes, and cultural heritage.

It is evident that educational initiatives are a very important part of these organizations' efforts to preserve the architectural heritage of the Soviet era. Many of these organizations focus their efforts on public education to raise awareness of the value of these buildings. This is achieved through a variety of methods, including exhibitions, lectures, and the production of publications that highlight the artistic and cultural significance of these structures. These initiatives seek to cultivate a deeper understanding of the value of Soviet-era architecture, particularly modernist buildings, and to generate a more nuanced discourse about the place of this complicated legacy in contemporary Ukraine. One of the key challenges is to encourage a change in the prevailing attitudes of developers. To address this issue, organizations have initiated lectures and discussion platforms with the goal of

establishing a unified vision of how to engage with Soviet-era architecture respectfully and constructively. These educational initiatives are designed to cultivate a collective understanding of the value of preserving these buildings while exploring methods for integrating them into contemporary urban environments.

Addressing systemic problems within the legal structure, government apparatus, and business interests that often lead to the ruination of Soviet-era architectural sites is one of the tasks of these movements and NGOs. A key issue that activists address is the dysfunctional legal system. The problem is worsened by a lack of dedication and support from government authorities, who often do not prioritize heritage preservation or actively enforce existing laws. To address these challenges, organizations and activists use a variety of tactics:

- Petitions: Activists organize and circulate petitions to garner public support and pressure authorities to act. These petitions highlight the need to enforce historic preservation laws and advocate for the preservation of specific buildings.
- Protests: Organized public demonstrations are an important tactic for drawing attention to the dangers facing Soviet-era buildings. These protests are designed to attract media attention and community support, thus building a strong case for the preservation of these architectural assets.
- Working with local authorities: Activists and NGOs participate in public consultations and work with local authorities to influence decision-making processes.
- Partnering with Experts: Forming strategic partnerships with historians, architects, researchers, and media professionals to ensure deeper and more comprehensive study and coverage of the issue.

Despite these efforts, activists and NGOs face serious barriers. The primary challenge is that transformative

change initiated at the grassroots level is particularly difficult to achieve without substantial support from government agencies. The current system is not sufficiently flexible to accommodate fundamental change, and without active engagement from government officials, activists are unable to make lasting impacts. A further concern within the political domain is the growing concern among activists and professionals engaged in the protection of Soviet-era architectural heritage regarding the misapplication of Decommunisation legislation and Law of Ukraine No. 7253 "On condemnation and prohibition of propaganda of Russian imperial policy in Ukraine and decolonization the Toponymy ", particularly in the context of intensifying political opportunism since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It has been observed that certain political figures utilize populist narratives to gain favor amongst citizens by advocating for the removal of Soviet-era structures, often without adherence to the legal procedures required for such decisions. The inappropriate application of both legislations has resulted in the demolition or alteration of architectural and artistic objects that were not intended for removal under the law. Activists insist that such actions not only disregard the legal protections in place for these objects but also undermine the careful and considered approach needed to address Ukraine's complex architectural heritage. A recent example of such misuse occurred on November 8, 2023, when the city administration of Brovary ordered the dismantling of metal panels from the façade of the city's Post Office building. The panels, created in 1970 by the artist Elfat Kadyrov, depicted various cities connected through postal services, including Moscow and St. Petersburg. The administration justified the removal on the grounds of Law No. 7253, arguing that the depictions of these Russian cities warranted the removal of the panels.[43]

[43] Demontazh radianskykh symvoliv,8.11.2023, https://brovary-rada.gov.ua/news/demontazh-radian-skykh-symvoliv ,5.02.2024

26. Employees of the Brovary-Blagoustriy municipal enterprise dismantle the panel of Elfat Kadyrov, 8 November 2023. E. Kadyrov 1970, Brovary

The decision was made one-sidedly by the city administration, based solely on their interpretation of the law, without engaging in any consultation with specialists. It is worth highlighting that the art initiative DE NE DE had previously engaged with Ukrposhta, the national postal service, to advocate for the preservation of the panels due to their cultural and historical value. Notably, the artist's daughter, Zhanna Kadyrova, is also an artist and has produced extensive work examin-

ing the concept of cultural legacy, often with a focus on Soviet-era objects. Notwithstanding the facts, the municipal government proceeded with the demolition of the artwork in question rather than engaging in a collaborative process with the artist or other relevant stakeholders to examine and potentially contextualize the artwork.

Another important goal of NGOs and various movements is to re-establish meaningful connections, both in form and function, between Soviet-era architectural structures and the local

communities they serve. Recognizing the contributions of Ukrainian professionals, both in terms of labor and intellectual capital, is essential to achieving a paradigm shift in which these buildings are no longer viewed as mere remnants of the Soviet era but rather as integral components of Ukraine's architectural heritage. Initiatives are also underway to cultivate a nuanced understanding and re-appropriation of these structures by local communities. This includes fostering an acceptance of the complex contexts and multiple meanings associated with these architectural works, while striving to avoid both romanticization and demonization. The goal is to create a social environment that encourages reflective engagement with heritage and facilitates informed and balanced discourse. By promoting deliberative discourse, these organizations and movements encourage communities to examine the historical, cultural, and functional aspects of Soviet-era architecture. Such dialogues facilitate an understanding of the role these buildings have played in shaping local identities, reflecting societal changes, and addressing community

needs. By fostering a broader understanding of these structures, preservationists seek to integrate them meaningfully into contemporary reality.

In the context of Russia's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the struggle to define and preserve Ukraine's cultural and historical identity became increasingly important. Russia's narrative attempts to invalidate Ukraine's distinctive culture and history, thereby intensifying the importance of the work of Ukrainian preservationists and cultural advocates.

The objective of these efforts is not merely the preservation of tangible structures; rather, it is a matter of defending Ukraine's right to narrate its own history. Ievgeniia Gubkina, a distinguished Ukrainian architect and researcher, is a major contributor to this initiative, advocating for the acknowledgment of Soviet-era architecture as a component of Ukraine's modernist canon. Her work highlights the significance of these structures as manifestations of Ukrainian ingenuity and creativity. Gubkina challenges the notion that they are mere remnants of Soviet domination, asserting that they exemplify the distinct characteristics of

Ukrainian Modernism. As Gubkina articulates, "Our goal should be to assert our rights to the narrative and not allow (Russia) to appropriate it. For many years, I have fought to explain that this architecture is not just Soviet Modernism but Ukrainian Modernism."[44] Her perspective represents a broader movement within Ukraine to reclaim and redefine its cultural identity in the context of external aggression. In this manner, Ukraine reaffirms its status as a nation with a profound and distinctive cultural heritage, thereby demonstrating resilience against efforts to erase or appropriate its history.

3.4 Conclusion

The conservation of architectural heritage is shaped by a dynamic and often contentious interaction among government agencies, the business sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), society, researchers, and professionals. Each actor influences the outcome based on their respective interests and resources. The vulnerability of Soviet-era buildings and monumental art highlights the need to raise awareness among the public to better understand Soviet architecture and to create more reliable support systems to ensure the preservation of these elements of cultural heritage. Effective heritage conservation depends on the networking and collaborative engagement of all relevant parties. It is critical that government agencies work with the business sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and architectural professionals to develop and implement policies that balance development needs with heritage conservation. This requires a unified strategy in which policies are formed from a comprehensive understanding of the value of cultural assets and the potential consequences of their loss. Public input is also essential in this process. When society is actively involved, there is a greater likelihood of fostering a collective sense of ownership and responsibility for heritage sites.

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[44] Phoebe Page: It's our heritage: Defending Ukraine's modernist architecture, 3.05.2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/3/its-our-heritage-defending-ukraines-modernist-architecture ,2.12.2023.

In addition, public involvement can help mobilize public support for conservation initiatives and influence policy changes. Involving all stakeholders, especially the public, in the decision-making process helps to overcome differences in understanding and appreciation of heritage. It also helps to implement more inclusive and sustainable conservation strategies that consider a range of perspectives and needs.

Intellectuals, NGOs, and civil society are engaged in a crucial struggle against a system rooted in the Soviet tradition. This system has often promoted a monolithic interpretation of history, avoided critical discourse, and presented past eras through a simplistic, black-and-white lens. It is imperative that the focus be shifted from merely dealing with the physical artifacts of the past to addressing the systemic legacy. To achieve effective preservation, government efforts must prioritize transforming the underlying system and fostering a more nuanced and reflective approach to historical and cultural preservation.
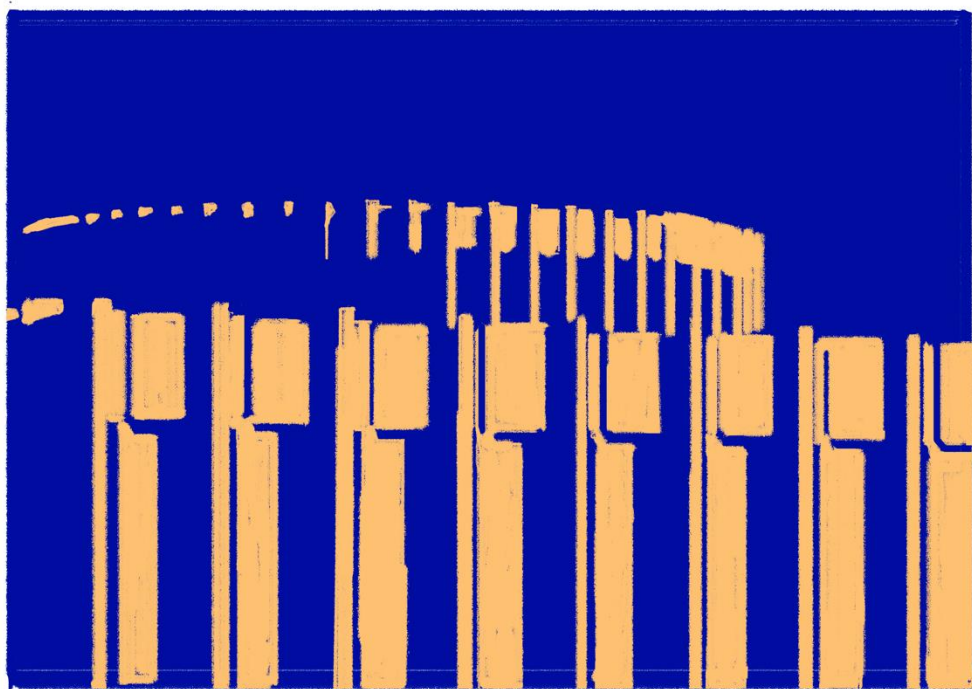
4 Case study Ukrainian House

The building, now known as the Ukrainian House, was originally constructed to house a branch of the Central Lenin Museum. This building was central to the Soviet effort to propagate its ideological framework. The decision to establish the museum in Kyiv was made in 1934, during a time when Soviet influence was at its height. The museum was at first housed in a historically significant structure, the former Pedagogical Museum, which had been completed in 1911 and was designed by the renowned architect Pavlo Alyoshyn.
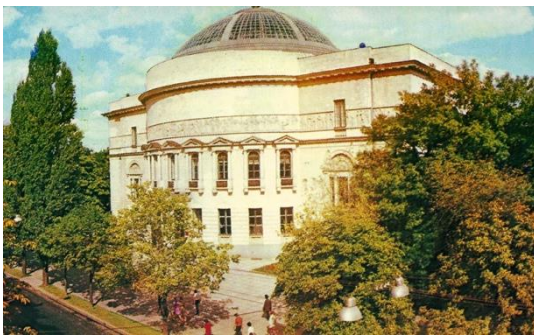
27. Pedagogical Museum, Kyiv 1974. P. Alyoshyn 1911, Kyiv

The decision to create a new space was made to mark the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth. As Tetiana Filevska writes in her article "The Ukrainian House of Lenin: The Story of One Decommunisation", "...There was no reason to move it to another place, except for the desire of the Kyiv party leadership, led by Shelest and then Shcherbytskyi, to please Moscow and build a huge building in the city center for the museum on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth. And the opening of the museum was timed to coincide with the celebration of the fictional 1500th anniversary of Kyiv."[45]

A competition was announced to develop the project, which lasted for two years. Participation was both voluntary and compulsory, meaning that none of the design bureaus could refuse to participate. Such a situation was not uncommon. The project was regarded as a prestigious undertaking at the time and in the context in which it was conceived. However, it also gave rise to a considerable degree of controversy. The resistance was not primarily driven by ideological reasons or as a protest the government. The rationale behind this opposition was the proposed construction site, which was the

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[45]Tetiana Filevska, Ukrayinskyi dim Lenina, 5.09.2016, https://platfor.ma/magazine/text-sq/re-invent/ukrdim-vs-lenin/ , 4.11.2023

former location of St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral. For both the architects and the residents of Kyiv, the proposed construction was regarded as blasphemous, given the potential destruction of the surviving remains of the church and monastery complex. As the Soviet government began to demonstrate greater leniency towards historical monuments in the 1970s, the architects, in collaboration with the people of Kyiv, were able to secure a change of the site designated for the construction of the future museum.

To understand why this caused so much outrage, it is necessary to know the significance of the Cathedral in the history of the city and its historical, cultural, and architectural value. The history of the cathedral dates to the 12th century. According to the Tale of Bygone Years chronicle, the church was built by order of Kyivan Prince Sviatopolk Isiaslavych in 1108-1113. The cathedral also served as a crypt, where its founder was buried. Over time, the cathedral developed and became a large monastery complex. As the cathedral evolved, it became a vital part of Kyiv's spiritual and architectural landscape, reflecting the city's rich history. The surrounding monastery complex became a center of monastic life and an important destination for pilgrims. The 18th century brought significant changes to the Cathedral's architecture, particularly through Baroque renovations. This architectural evolution reinforced the Cathedral's role as a key symbol of Kyiv's religious and cultural identity. Its design, combining Byzantine and Baroque influences, underscored the city's historical continuity and ties to broader European architectural traditions. Beyond its religious functions, the cathedral became an important place of pilgrimage and a repository of local heritage. The monastery's importance was severely challenged in the early 20th century. The Bolshevik Revolution brought changes that led to the closure of the monastery, and its buildings were repurposed by the new Soviet regime.

In 1934, the capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic was moved from Kharkiv to Kyiv, and it was decided to build a new government quarter on this occasion. The project was to be located on the site of a monastery. The

decision to dismantle the monastery was made in February 1934 by a commission for the liquidation of religious buildings headed by Vsevolod Balytskyi.[46] The building was recognized as having no value.

One of the academics who did not agree to sign the demolition certificate and was actively advocating for its preservation was the Ukrainian art historian and archaeologist Mykola Makarenko. He advocated for the preservation of the complex, and when this failed, Makarenko insisted on at least dismantling and preserving the frescoes and mosaics of the medieval period. Thanks to him, some of the frescoes and mosaics were saved. Thanks to him, some of the frescoes and mosaics were saved. The frescoes were relocated to a museum of Sofia Museum, two of them, the most valuable, were taken to Russia[47], and during the Second World War, during the occupation by Nazi Germany, another part of the mosaics was taken to Ger-

many. They have never been returned.[48] Mykola Makarenko himself was exiled to Kazan, and then to Tomsk Correctional Labor Colony No. 2. On 15 December 1937, he was arrested again and killed in prison on 4 January 1938 by order of the NKVD. Mykola Makarenko was posthumously rehabilitated in 1989 by a resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.[49]

On August 14, 1937, St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral was destroyed by explosives, leaving only its foundations intact. The government quarter project was never implemented, and the site remained unoccupied. Numerous attempts have been made to design a structure on this site, but they have consistently been met with opposition from both architects and Kyiv residents. The construction of the Lenin Museum has been relocated to Volodymyr's Hill, which is situated at the historical heart of the city at the intersection of key

[46] Mykorskyy 1951,5
[47] Ibid., 11
[48] Natalya Khamayk, 23.01.2023 St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral: stolen, mutilated, appropriated, http://vgosau.kiev.ua/novyny/proekty/1320-vypusk-22 ,7.11.2023

[49] Viktor Vechersky : Makarenko Mykola,26.05.2022 ,https://vue.gov.ua/%D0%9C%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE,_%D0%9C%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0_%D0%9E%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%87, 7.11.2023

streets and serves as a point of connection between different parts of Kyiv. No project for the Lenin Museum was awarded the top honor in the competition. The second-place designation was shared by two project groups. The first was spearheaded by architect Vadym Hopkalo, while the second was led by Valentyn Yezhov. Ultimately, Hopkalo's project was implemented, as Yezhov was opposed to the construction of Volodymyr's Hill. His team put forward alternative locations for the construction, with one proposal being the placement of the museum on the left bank of the Dnipro river.

The proposal was met with complete rejection by the commission, who deemed the left bank to be of a lesser "prestigious" caliber and unsuitable for a museum honoring the "leader of nations." It is worth noting that even in the last two decades of the Soviet Union's existence, the figure of Lenin still had a huge, idolized significance; one might say "the saint of communism." Yezhov considered it unacceptable to destroy the site of Volodymyr's Hill.

28. Model of Kyiv Branch of Lenin Museum,1977. V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv

In an interview for the newspaper "Interesting Kyiv", Yezhov recalls: "Vladimir's Hill had an established image, and I considered it improper to change it. For my critical statements, I was summoned to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, exhorted, threatened, and called my speeches immature and even anti-party. But I was not going to back down. My group declared they were refusing to continue working on the Lenin Museum project. And then this order was given to Vadim Hopkalo's group."[50] Construction began in 1978, and the dissatisfaction among Kyiv residents with the fact that part of the Volodymyrs Hill was being cut off did not subside. M. Kryvolapov, who worked as a member of the board and head of the department of the Ministry of Culture of the Ukrainian SSR in the seventies, recalls that they received a stream of letters from citizens outraged by the destruction of St Volodymyr's Hill.[51] Despite this, construction continued, and the natural landscape of this part of the city was destroyed.

On April 21, 1982, the Kyiv branch of the Central Lenin Museum under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine was officially opened.[52] As noted above, the author of the project was V. Hopkalo, and his team included V. Hrechyna, L. Filenko, and V. Kolomiets. The building, which was both monumental and laconic in its design, encompassed an area of 17,550 m^2 and was constructed with three above-ground and two underground floors. The building was constructed using the finest materials from across the Soviet Union and the most sophisticated technologies that the USSR had to offer at the time. These included granite from Zhytomyr, pure white Ural marble devoid of any veins for the central statue of Lenin, and numerous other high-quality materials. The museum building is elevated relative to the street, with a wide red granite staircase leading to the main entrance, which gives the building an almost sacral temple-like character. The light stone decorated façade is formed by sculpted vertical elements, which break up the volume

[50]Muzey Lenina (nyne Ukrayinskyy dim),w.Y. https://www.interesniy.kiev.ua/muzey-lenina-nyine-ukrainskiy-dom/, 11.11.2023 [translated by author]

[51] Ibid.
[52] Istoriia Ukrainskogo Domu, w.Y., https://www.uadim.in.ua/history 11.11.2023

of the building and make it less heavy. Its design resembles a museum in Tashkent. After visiting the Lenin Museum there in the early 1970s, the then Head of the Ukrainian SSR expressed a desire to construct a similar building in Kyiv. Nevertheless, it appears to be more of a hypothetical assumption than a definitively verifiable fact. The Lenin Museum in Tashkent subsequently emerged as a canonical prototype for the design of future Lenin Museum branches. This architectural paradigm was formalized by architect E. Rosanov[53], who built upon earlier projects and competition proposals, crystallizing a distinctive architectural typology. The new design approach was characterized by a prominent central hall featuring a sculpture of Lenin, with the surrounding exhibition spaces arranged around this focal point. This layout became a defining characteristic of the Lenin Museum branches established thereafter. The design of the building features a square plan with a centrally located round atrium, which aligns with the principles established by Rosanov.

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[53] Komov2005,71
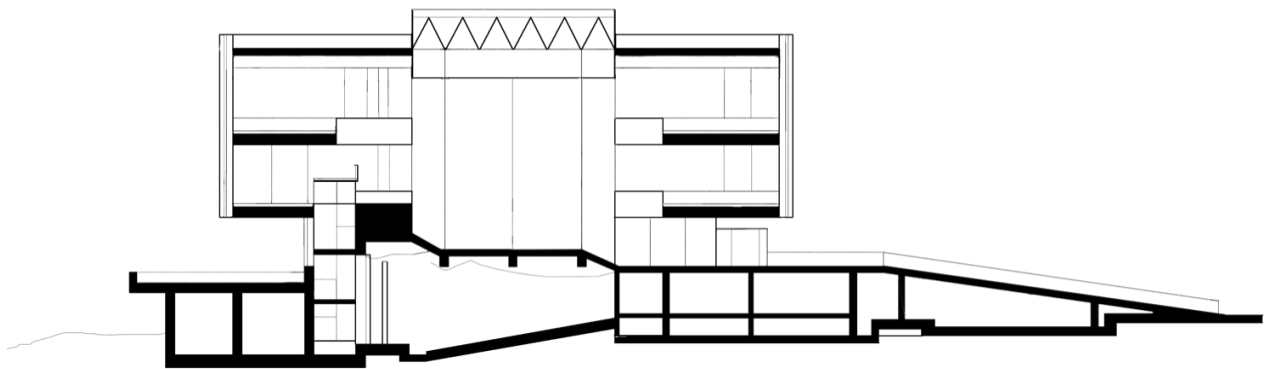
29. Sketch of the section of the branch of the Lenin Museum in Tashkent, E. Rosanov 1970, Tashkent
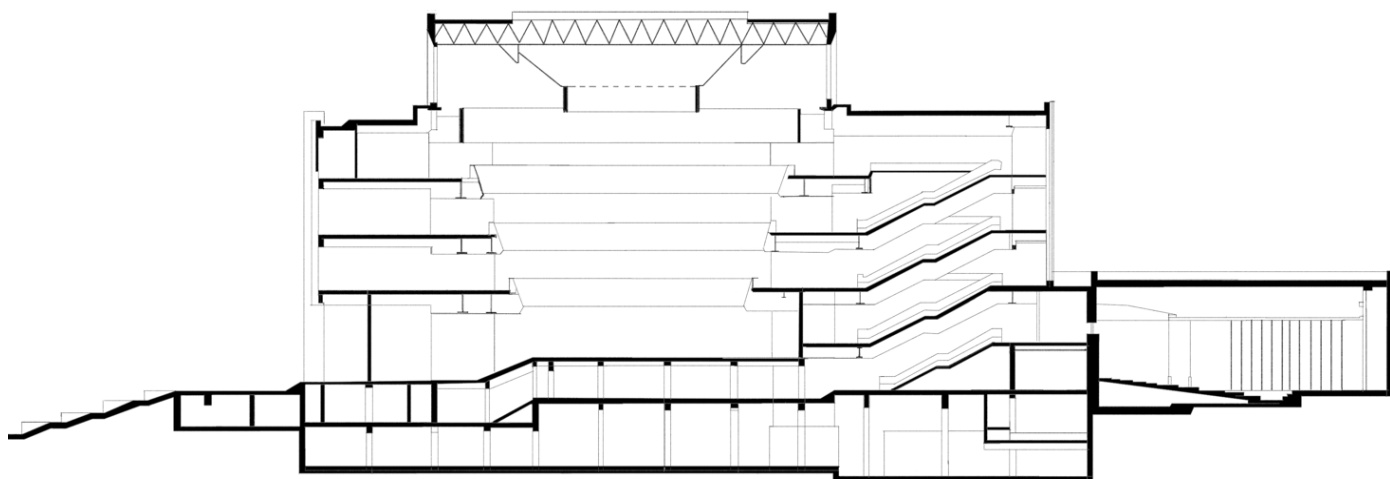
30. Sketch of a section of the Ukrainian House, V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv
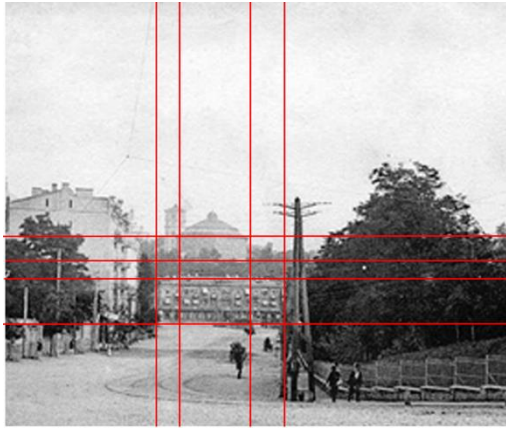
31. a Golgotha Panorama building from the perspective of Aleksandrovskaya Street

   b Ukrainian House from the perspective of Khreshchatyk. Google street view.

proportions of old structures   proportions of new structures

↑ Up
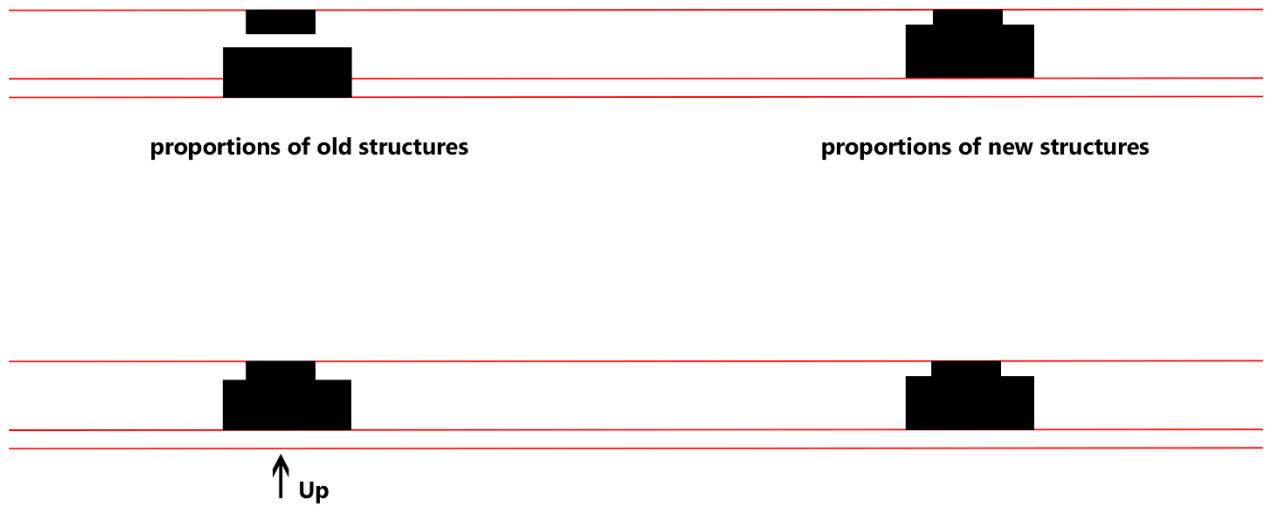
32. Comparison of the proportions of old and new structures

Another notable aspect is that the shape and proportions of the Hopkalo's Lenin Museum closely resemble the silhouette and proportions of the site before its redevelopment. Previously, the location featured a pre-revolutionary multi-story building alongside a cylindrical pavilion on Volodymyr Hill. The silhouettes of these two structures, as viewed from Khreshchatyk Street, are echoed in the new Lenin Museum when observed from the same vantage point. The architects have made a prudent decision to integrate the defining characteristics of the previous site into their design. Despite the significant alterations that transformed the area's visual appearance, the architects have demonstrated a commendable commitment to preserving the overall silhouette and essence of the original development. It is challenging to determine whether the dominant influence on the design was the museum typology established by Rosanov or the attributes of the existing space. On one hand, the project is notably "assertive" in its relationship with the surrounding landscape. On the other hand, the architects made considerable efforts to integrate the new structure into its environment while establishing it as a compositional focal point. The success of this integration can be attributed to the local knowledge and sensitivity of the working group, who were well-acquainted with the specific characteristics of the site.

This careful balance between assertiveness and integration is further exemplified by the intricate details of the building's interior, particularly the stained-glass windows that adorned the atrium. These windows, along with other aspects of the interior design, were crafted by a team of artists led by architect Anatoliy Ihnashchenko, including Vitalii Solodov, Anatoliy Haidamaka, Volodymyr Pryadko, and Viktor Hryhorov. Adding to the building's dramatic and almost sacred atmosphere, a five-meter-high marble sculpture of Lenin was prominently placed in the center of the hall, positioned on a small elevation, and illuminated by the natural light streaming through the atrium windows. Behind the statue, an inscription in bronze letters proclaimed, "Lenin's work will live forever," reinforcing the museum's

symbolic significance. This arrangement created an almost temple-like ambiance, where Lenin, represented as a deity on a pedestal, was bathed in sunlight, with museum visitors akin to pilgrims approaching a shrine.
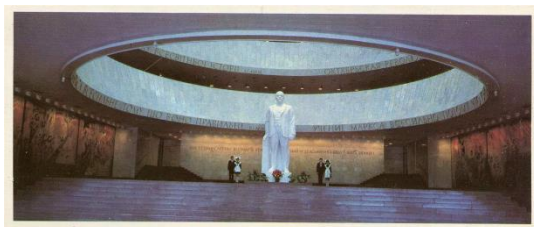
33. Entrance Hall of Ukrainian House in 1980s. Architect: V. Hopkalo, sculptor: V. Borysenko 1978-1982, Kyiv
Photo: R. Yakymenko, V. Krymchak

The sculpture, crafted from Chelyabinsk marble renowned for its cold undertone and deep light absorption, was the work of artist V. Borysenko, who also designed the bas-reliefs on the museum's façade. Not only was the central statue made of precious material, but no expense was spared for the entire building, which was also featured modern lifts and escalators. An innovative air conditioning system was developed and connected to the fountains located in the square behind the museum building. This was a huge contrast to what was available to the average citizen of the Soviet Union. As

Tetiana Filevska, a researcher of the history of the Lenin Museum, noted: "In the USSR, there was nothing for ordinary people, and any technology was available for the party's tasks - the construction of the Ukrainian House."[54] It was indeed a standard practice that state or public buildings, especially those with an ideological load, received the best materials and equipment. In turn, housing, schools, hospitals, and kindergartens were built rather austerely and with cheaper materials. Of course, this did not apply to buildings for the party elites.

The building coped with its task to impress, to be majestic, and to emphasize the importance of the figure in whose honor it was created. Although Lenin never visited Kyiv, the entire exhibition had any original pieces that belonged to him. A copy of the overcoat in which Vladimir Ilyich was shot by Fanny Kaplan, a life-size recreation of Lenin's study room, models of the apartments and houses where he lived, copies of Lenin's manuscripts, and original newspapers with his writings, posters, paintings, and so on.

[54] Zghadaty Vse: Vid muzeiu do Ukrains'koho domu, 10.07.2019,

https://24tv.ua/zgadati_vse_vid_muzeyu_do_ukrayinskogo_domu_n1177347, 7.11.2023

The people of Kyiv, especially elderly one, who did not like the new building and nicknamed it "the box", often joked that there is no place for two Volodymyrs on one hill.[55] The fact is that on Volodymyr's Hill, there was a monument to the prince of the same name who baptized Rus' and, according to historians, started from this very place by overthrowing the statue of Perun. It is ironic that the idol, albeit in a different appearance, has returned to its old place. For the younger generation of that time, this place had a more positive connotation. This building also hosted initiation into the pioneers, and many Kyiv residents have childhood photos with a marble Lenin. So, for them, the Lenin Museum has associations with childhood and evokes rather nostalgic memories. But even so, opinions about the building differ. Some memoirs refer to the museum as a Zikkurat, cold and unwelcoming[56]. Others, on the contrary, describe the building as sunny, spacious, and welcoming, praising the ingenuity of the exhibition. Some of Lenin's personal items that were not available in the original were presented in the form of holograms, which was quite innovative at the time.[57]

34. Last exhibition floor of Ukrainian House in 1980s. V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv. Photo: R. Yakymenko, V. Krymchak

[55] Tetiana Filevska, Ukrayinskyy dim Lenina, 5.09.2016, https://platfor.ma/magazine/text-sq/re-invent/ukrdim-vs-lenin/, 4.11.2023

[56]Interview with N.N., taken by Anastasiia Kutsova, Online 20.10.2023.
[57] Interview, with K.K., taken by Anastasiia Kutsova, Online 7.11.2023

35. Monument to St. Volodymyr on a Volodymyr Hill,1853

A joke of Kyiv residents turned out to be prophetic, and the two Volodymyrs really could not hold on to the same hill. The museum operated for a decade, and in 1990, by resolution of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, it was restructured into the Lenin Social, Political, and Cultural Centre.[58] After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the museum de facto ceased to function. The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a significant turning point in Ukraine's history. With newfound independence, the country underwent a transformation in its political and ideological landscape. The once-celebrated figures and symbols of the Soviet era became contentious and subject to reevaluation. The Museum of Lenin, dedicated to an icon of the Soviet regime, found itself at the crossroads of changing values and identity. Despite his role in historical context, Lenin's figure lost its significance politically and socially. Ukraine was not unique in this decision; after the collapse of the Soviet Union, branches of the Lenin Museum were closed one by one in many former republics. The Tashkent branch was closed in 1991, and the building is used as a museum of the history of Uzbekistan. In the same year, the Baku branch was also transformed into a museum center talking about the culture, art, and history of Azerbaijan. This common socio-political trend quite logically continues the prevailing frame of mind in the 1980s. The Eighties were a period of stagnation, with an economic crisis

[58] Istoriia Ukrainskogo Domu, w.Y.,
https://www.uadim.in.ua/history 11.11.2023

and a significantly decreased standard of living, political problems, and movements for national liberation. Most of the society no longer took seriously political slogans, the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, or promises of a "socialist paradise". According to a Soviet Interview Project, a research work that was made in first half of 1980's shows a decline in commitment to the party's ideas and an increase in critical attitude.[59] The Collapse of the Soviet Union finalized the long-term process of declining interest in the figure of Lenin, his de-idealization, and the rejection of the cult of personality. With the change in the political paradigm, it turned out that there was no longer any great interest in his figure without the intervention of state propaganda. Countries that had just gained their independence were striving for self-determination and strengthening their own identity. The abandonment of such institutions was associated with the need to separate and distance themselves from the Soviet past to be able to set their own course for each

of these post-Soviet countries. One of the few remaining permanent museums of Lenin is in Tampere, Finland. Unlike many others, it not only did not close with the collapse of the USSR but also expanded its exhibition. Contrary to Kyiv, Lenin visited Tampere. In 1905[60], a secret meeting of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party took place in the museum building, where Stalin and Lenin met. The museum has expanded its focus beyond Lenin's personality to cover the entire historical period of Soviet socialism. The opening of the archives has also contributed to deeper and broader research and further reflection on historical events. Under the leadership of Kalle Kallio, the museum went through a process of reconceptualization, the main goal of which was to show the complexity of both the Soviet period of history and the personality of Vladimir Lenin[61]. It was important to make the museum a resource for maximizing the fullest possible understanding of the Soviet era, the relationship between Finland and the USSR, and the

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[59] For detailed report on the SIP, see: James R. Millar(ed.): Politics, Life, and Daily Work in the USSR, New York 1987
[60] Minkkinen:1996, 133
[61] Gordon Sander: In Finland, a one-time shrine to Lenin adopts an uncensored view, 9.01.2018,

https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2017/0108/In-Finland-a-one-time-shrine-to-Lenin-adopts-an-uncensored-view ,18.11.2023

position of Finnish society within this complex context. In the case of the museum's branch in Kyiv, it was the same as with branches in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan: a matter of changing the profile and, accordingly, the internal content and structure of the institution itself. After the museum stopped working and the exhibition was moved to the archives, the building stood empty, and the museum staff had no idea what would happen next. In the first years of independence, it was common for such institutions to be out of sight, for they were not a priority, and the focus was on establishing the vertical of power, adopting a new constitution and laws, resolving financial issues, and so on.

During this transitional period, when it was not yet decided what the building would become in the future, in 1991,[62] Fedir Tetiatnych approached the administration with a proposal to hold an exhibition. The entire third floor was transformed into a continuous installation, and Tetianych himself was in his Fripulia persona, creating a performance throughout the museum.

"Bezmezhzhia!"[63] — Fripulia proclaims, and in the middle of it all, a stone Lenin still stands. The installation, as well as the artist's costume, were created from garbage as it was the main philosophical idea that everything is creativity, and everything contains infinity. Tetianych considered the entire planet, the entire universe to be his canvas. Abandoned and empty, the building was taken by the artist and integrated into his artwork, just like any other material he used. For a moment, this building was in a state of ideological emptiness. The old institution was gone and the new one has not yet emerged, and no propaganda was imposed on it. And at this moment, the art of Fedir Tetianych metaphorically transforms it into a new infinite and unknown. Almost three decades later in spring 2023, on its anniversary, the Ukrainian House was once again offering the opportunity to see this performance, but this time in the form of an archival video.

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[62] Online archive Ukrainian unofficial: Fedir Tetianych, Online: https://www.archive-uu.com/ua/profiles/fedir-tetyanich, 11.11.2023

[63] From author: bezmezhzhia from Ukrainian – infinity, endlessness.

36. A scene from Fripulia's performance at the Ukrainian House., 1991

In the statement, the Ukrainian House describes this work as "... Fripulia's performance became a symbolic cleansing of the building from the communist legacy. ... "[64] Fedir Tetianych's exhibition-action quite sensitively emphasized this moment of the turn of the epochs, which became a fixed point of the beginning of the transformation for the now former Lenin Museum. It was the first act of spatial and contextual changes in the structure of the clearly programmed relationships of all elements within this architectural object.

Two years passed between the moment when the point of the transfor-

mation was identified and the moment when the decision on the building's future was made. Mykola Zhulynskyi — a Deputy Prime Minister for Humanitarian Policy of the time, was the initiator of creating another cultural institution here – the Ukrainian House, it should become a cultural and representative center. He believed that for a country that had just gained independence, it was especially important to create platforms for the country to gain its identity and promote it to the external world. The choice was not accidental; Zhulynskyi was aware of the advantageous location of this building and its architectural quality. To realize his idea, Zhulynskyi first approached Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma. Kuchma did not quite understand the building in question, as he had just moved to Kyiv, but he did not see any significant obstacles. With that, he sent Zhulynskyi to Leonid Kravchuk, the president at the time. His reaction to this proposal was quite revealing: he called it "a complicated and difficult issue" and

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[64] Kurators'kyi vybir: znakovi mystets'ki proiekty "Ukrains'koho Domu",16.05.2023, https://suspilne.media/culture/477397-kuratorskij-vibir-znacki-mistecki-proekti-ukrainskogo-domu/ ,10.02.2023

added, "And how will Moscow react? "[65]. This quite clearly illustrates the dynamics of political relations between the two already separate states. On the one hand, despite the separation, Moscow is still putting itself in the position of a hegemon and continues its policy of metropolis-province relations and putting itself on a higher level. On the other hand, Ukrainian government elites remained politically dependent on the opinion of the Russian leadership by inertia. Leonid Kravchuk's reaction was also explained by the fact that the Lenin Museum was already de-facto out of function at the time, so there was no reason to fear Moscow's displeasure.

Interestingly on 12 November 1993, the Central Lenin Museum in Moscow ceased to function as an independent institution and was transferred to the State Historical Museum. [66]The former exhibition was partially relocated to the archives and partially incorporated into the new exhibition.

Officially, the Ukrainian House as a cultural and educational center of the Ministry of Culture began to exist in 1992. And finally, on 2 April 1993,[67] by Cabinet of Ministers' Decree No. 266, the building of the former branch of the Lenin Museum became the permanent home of the center "Ukrainian House" under the Cabinet of Ministers. According to the resolution, the establishment of the institution was declared to be aimed at: "In order to create conditions for holding state, socio-political and cultural actions aimed at to establish the authority of the Ukrainian state, to promote its achievements in various spheres of life...".[68] The change of content as the beginning of the recontextualization process was not accompanied by a significant reflection on the history of the building, its meaning and connotations. The transformation process itself went through the vertical of power without initiating discussions with the public on what content and function-

[65] Ukrayinskyi Dim: vid muzeiu Lienina do tsentru kultury, 10.05.2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QTYD-6grY4&t=325s&ab_chan-nel=%D0%A3%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%97%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%8C%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9%D0%9%4%D1%96%D0%BC, 10.02.2023

[66] Istoriia museiia,w.Y.,https://lenin.shm.ru/istoriya-muzeya/10.02.2023
[67] Postanova Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrayiny vid 02.04.1993 No 266 Pro Centre "Ukrainskiy Dim"
[68] Ibid. [translate by author]

ality the community would in fact consider necessary. Despite the declared desire to broadcast a new identity and values, the system of centralized decision-making that the government inherited from the Soviet system will remain for many years to come, and the process towards decentralization and participatory governance will not be completed even by 2023. In fact, using methods of the same Soviet era, Mykola Zhulynskyi proposed to re-design the interiors by replacing Soviet symbols and decorative elements with images of socialist propaganda with patriotic ones.[69] Although the external symbols were supposed to convey a different message, this was essentially a rather superficial approach through a series of nominal external attributes. It would be a purely visual change, with the same model of communication through spatial organization. In essence, Zhulynskyi's idea is an attempt to replace some symbols with others instead of reflection to broadcast a different ideological narrative. This approach leaves the old ideology in the system and does not allow to

overcome it. Following the process of transformation into the Ukrainian House previous design objects had no place in the new institution dedicated to the young state, of course, because of the symbolism they carried, so the main axis of the entire interior space - the marble monument to Lenin - was dismantled and the tapestries that had been used to decorate the walls around were transferred to the archive, without critical examination and deconstruction of the symbols, despite the fact that these objects would have been an excellent example of the retransmission of propaganda in the architectural space and could be potentially exhibited in a right context for educational purposes. The statue was handed over to the Ukrainian Sculptors' Union and dismantling went pretty much quiet, it wasn't highly covered by media and mostly "silent". The further fate of the marble is lost, as no documents remain. The only thing we know is that a part of the leg and the left boot once fell into the hands of the sculptor Nazar Bilyk, grandson of Valentyn Borysenko, the

[69] Tetiana Filevska, Ukrayinskyy dim Lenina, 5.09.2016, https://platfor.ma/magazine/text-sq/re-invent/ukrdim-vs-lenin/, 4.11.2023

author of the sculpture. Bilyk used this material to create a tombstone. One may assume that corruption is to blame for the disappearance of documentary evidence. As is often the case, to make inspections impossible. This is one of the problems that affect the effective preservation and re-evaluation of both artistic and architectural objects. On the other hand, the sculpture was donated as a material for recycling, as the monument was not recognized as having any artistic, cultural, or other value.[70] In this case, dismantling into pieces did not have any symbolic meaning, but was dictated by practical considerations; the statue cannot be transported from the building. Therefore, insinuations about corruption and the deliberate concealment of the marble's further use are only speculation.[71] The changes, as mentioned above, were not subject to significant reflection also because the Ukrainian House team faced a very complex task with many challenges. In addition to the need to establish a

new institutional structure, create connections and relationships between the public, the museum, and the building itself, and implement a new program, there was several practical problems. The change in the political and economic systems affected not only the ideological level, but also the physical level. The building, constructed in the late seventies and early eighties, proved to be unsustainable and resource intensive. Some problems in the building's construction were also revealed, the underground floors where the archives are located, which experienced constant temperature and humidity fluctuations due to climatic conditions and worn-out insulation. Another reason for this situation was the centralized air conditioning system, which the staff had to turn off for financial reasons. As of 2019, the current director, Olga Viieru, reports the same problems and a planned partial renovation for 2020[72]. In addition, the institution did not receive any subsidies from the state due

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[70] Tetiana Filevska: Vova si lvova lekziia, abo Sorm'yazlyva dekomunizatsiya muzeyu Lenina v Kyyevi, 18.08.2016,https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqbcH2iQPbU ,4.11.2023
[71] Ibid.

[72] Dariia Trapeznikova: Ukrayinskyi Dim na Yevropeyiskiй ploshchi: yake napovnennya vidpovidatyme nazvi? ,w.Y.,https://www.prostranstvo.media/ukrainskij-dim-na-ievropejskij-ploshhi-jake-napovnennja-vidpovidatime-nazvi/ ,15.02.2024

to its status of a self-supporting institution. Funds however were needed to implement art projects and exhibitions, as well as to ensure the functioning of the building. Thus, the administration had to rent out the premises of the Ukrainian House for various events. Conferences and markets were held there, where one could buy everything from fur coats to cats. Such a use of a pompous building could easily be criticized as inappropriate. Therefore, the Ukrainian House was in constant fluctuations from function to function, from one spatial organization to another.

Once filled with the grandeur of Lenin, inner spaces now broadcast a completely different narrative. The central hall during market days was occupied with rows of tables, forming aisles for visitors. The created structure is a typical structure; by which it is easy to recognize any market or fair. The entire layout of the objects in the hall space can be easily compared to the same market organization on any square, all of which creates a certain rather specific atmosphere, but placed in a non-

standard environment. Such interventions in spatial organization establish a different level of relationship between society and space and create a new sense of interaction with the place through a series of individual experiences. This also leads to the emerging of a routine in its dynamics like the routine in the daily activities of individuals. Looking at these transformations through the lens of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad theory[73], new spatial experiences of Lived and Perceived Space are layered on top of the building's existing context, history and already established interconnections. These informal meanings partially mitigate the level of perception of the Ukrainian House as a former Lenin Museum. This can be seen as one of the elements of creating a new social space, which in turn is part of a long process of rethinking the building. And in this case, it is not a fully conceptualized process, but rather a side effect. As mentioned above, markets did not appear as a tool for a recontextualization, but purely out of practical necessity. Additionally, markets

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[73] Lefebvre 1991

exhibited a distinctive temporal organization, with content aligned with seasonal cycles and major holidays. The public start interacts with the building in a more informal manner, as they are accustomed to such a schedule. The primary function of the main space also had the additional benefit of increasing visibility for the ongoing exhibiting program, which in turn could attract a greater number of visitors. Ukrainian House is not unique in such a way of solving the issue. Museums, palace of youth or art, ice skating palaces, dioramas and so one. In short, all institutions operate in massive buildings with large open interior spaces. Cultural institutions do not generate income, and without state support, they become vulnerable to the new economic environment. Public buildings experienced extreme hardship adapting to the new reality, and in the most extreme cases, they needed a completely new functional program. Such a change of use is often criticized as inappropriate and even damaging to the authenticity of architecture. These events were not limited only by the interior of the building but were also present on the

façade in the form of posters and banners. While in the case of advertising for exhibitions, the management of the Ukrainian House tried to place it in line with the structure of the facades, commercial advertising for seminars or fairs tried to capture as much space as possible, completely ignoring how it interacted with the architecture. At the time when this building was designed, the architects did not envisage any posters or banners being placed on the exterior, the only elements provided by the authors were flags that should be placed in the vertical recesses of the façade. Artist Mykyta Kadan in his series Catalogue of Opportunities from 2012 highlights this problematic by referring to the architecture of the Soviet era. One of works in this series depicts the Ukrainian House. The artist reflects on the changes in post-Soviet society and these changes are projected onto architecture. He empathizes with the helplessness of Soviet architecture in the face of the threat of aggressive privatization in the form of the occu-

pation of its physical body by commercial advertising.[74] Agreeing with Kadan's thesis, it can be further noted that architecture not only reflects the period in which it was designed and built, but also, through various interventions in its structure and the nature of interaction with this architecture, reflects the changes that society is undergoing. As the economic model changes from a planned to a market-based one, a new actor emerges - business. The urban environment is turning into a "wild west" where rules are hardly observed, and facades become a promotional tool, an advertising background, where the value and individuality of architecture is buried behind banners and signs. Changes in the function of buildings often follow the path of commercialization or forced into it due circumstances. Such processes certainly occurred not only with Soviet-era architecture but also with objects from other epochs. This situation is the result of a few factors. Legislation is one of them. Prior to the adoption of the decentralization reform, the procedure for placing signs

and banners was regulated by the Law of Ukraine from 1996 No. 39 "On Advertising", Article 181[75], and the Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No. 2067 of 29 December 2003[76]. According to these laws, the norms of placement on facades were outlined only in general terms and did not limit the number of signs. Following the introduction of the reform in 2014, local authorities were given the opportunity to determine how signage should be placed in accordance with the specifics of the area. In Kyiv, the regulations were adopted only in 2017 and are determined by a Decision of the Kyiv City Council of the 4th session of the 8th convocation dated April 20 2017 No. 224\2446 "On approval of the procedure for placing signboards in the city of Kyiv". The level of cluttering of street space with signs and banners is so high that dismantling is still ongoing in Kyiv. Most of the signs are installed without the necessary permits and designs from an architect or designer. Among the factors, one can highlight the complex bureaucratic process for obtaining the

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[74] Nikita Kadan: the Catalogue of oportunities,2012, http://www.nikitakadan.com/works/the-catalogue-of-opportunities/ , 12.02.2023

[75] Zakon Ukrayiny vid 03.07.1996 No 270/96-VR
[76] Postanova Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrayiny; Pravila, Forma typovoho dokumenta vid 29.12.2003 No 2067

necessary documents, as well as the frequent lack of desire on the part of owners to invest in the professional designd project for the signboards.

In parallel with the emerging commercial reality, Ukraine House was in the process of creating an institutional structure. According to Natalia Zabolotna, the head of the Ukrainian House from 2005-2010: "After two years of active work with art, the building lost its status as a cold tomb for the leader in the minds of Kyiv residents and became vibrant. For the first time, people started buying tickets to art exhibitions, and there were even queues for art. ..." [77]. Contemporary art, young artists, and underground artists from the Soviet Union were exhibited here. Through its programmes, the Ukrainian House tried to crystallise its understanding of Ukrainian art and culture. New exhibition methods and themes were tested. In an interview on the occasion of the museum's 30th anniversary, sculptor Nazar Bilyk notes the extraordinary plasticity of the layout,

which allows for the creation of almost any type of space. For the first time, the Ukrainian House is described as a sunny, friendly place.This was done with varying success, and a new identity was struggling to be found, as evidenced by the numerous changes in the institution's official direction. Since its establishment, it has changed four times: 1997, the Centre was reorganised into the Palace of Arts, in 1999 it became the National Complex "Expocenter of Ukraine", in 2005, by the order of the Head of the State Administration of Affairs, the State Enterprise "Centre for Business and Cultural Cooperation "Ukrainian House" was created , and finally in 2010, by the order of the President, the institution received the status of national, and the building acquired the status of an architectural monument under No. 562/12.[78]

[77] Mariia Chadyuk: Perezavantazhennia Ukrainskogo Domu, 16.10.2019, https://day.kyiv.ua/article/kultura/perezavantazhennya-ukrayinskoho-domu ,12.02.2023

[78] Istoriia Ukrainskogo Domu, w.Y., https://www.uadim.in.ua/history 11.11.2023

37. Battle for the Ukrainian House, 26 January 2014

Ukrainian House was also part of many important political events in the country. These included the Orange Revolution[79], the Language Maidan[80], and the Revolution of Dignity. The events of 2014 had the greatest impact and significance. On the night of 25-26 January, the building was stormed by protesters trying to free the building from the police, who had barricaded themselves in and formed a human corridor for their escape. The Ukrainian House was an important strategic point because it was in the rear of Maidan Nezalezhnosti[81], the epicenter of the protests. From this point, the barricades could easily be attacked by security forces. At around

5am, the Ukrainian House was abandoned by security forces and entered by Maidan activists. The premises of the Ukrainian House were adapted to the needs of the protesters, and the distribution of the interior space changed to suit specific tasks. In a few months, it evolved into a full-fledged multifunctional space. This period was the peak of the openness of the Ukrainian house, as the public had access not only to the building itself, but more importantly, the power to make decisions and implement them. This happened for the first time in the history of the building. The new spacial structure was formed by the joint efforts and initiatives of groups and individuals. The building was accessible to everyone twenty-four hours a day. The protesters occupied the first and second floors and the ground floor. In the early days, spaces were created for purely coordination and utilitarian functions. The existing large halls of the museum were divided by furniture and partitions to form new smaller rooms. The first to

[79] From author: protest from November to December 2004 organized against electoral fraud, leading to a re-run election and V. Yushchenko's victory.

[80] From author: Protests in 2012 against the language Law, that was promoting Russian language in certain regions.
[81] From author: Independence square

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be set up were the coordination headquarters, a collection and distribution point for clothing and other supplies, a first-aid post, a kitchen, and places for sleeping and resting. Later, a whole range of different functions was formed here: a hospital, a kitchen, a dining room, a Maidan library, the Open Maidan University, a student assembly, the Automaidan headquarters, places for sleeping and resting for Hundreds[82] of Maidan participants and separately for all those in need. The entrance hall housed the main social and administrative functions: the coordination headquarters, the Maidan headquarters, the student assembly, medical care and the library. The entrance hall hosted lectures, discussions, readings and concerts organised by the Open Maidan University and the Maidan Library, and became the axis of social and cultural life in the Ukrainian House. On the ground floor, artists were based - the Artistic Hundred, who were responsible for creating posters, paintings of shields and helmets, and

various art objects, performances, etc. At that time, a workshop was set up there, open not only to professional artists, but to everyone, and it became a place of collective creativity and a call for all areas of art to unite for a peaceful protest. "The task of the Artistic Hundred is to raise the level of culture in society, and if any of the artists feel the need and opportunity to direct their activities towards the development of peaceful protest, we provide a platform for this. There is a military atmosphere on the Maidan and in the Ukrainian House in particular, and we want to bring peace through art. " - Andriy[83], activist of the Art Hundred On the second floor, the large exhibition space was divided by partitions into smaller shared sleeping rooms, which housed hundreds of Maidan. The resulting new spaces were created by joint efforts and clearly reflected the fact that society has a stable, fixed relationship between function and a specific typology. This is most clearly expressed in the structure of the library space, which reproduces the

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[82] From author: a term of a Cossack military unit that means 100 combats

[83] Asia Bazdyreva: Zhyl' Delez v Ukrayins'komu Domi, 4.02.2014, https://artukraine.com.ua/a/zhil-delez-v-ukrainskomu-domi/ 11.12.2023

archetype from the level of spatial organisation to the decorative elements. The bookshelves are placed perpendicular to the wall, with a librarian's desk opposite them, and the spaces between the shelves serve as reading sections. The end walls of the shelves were covered with embroidered *rushnyk*[84], a well-established visual marker in the interiors of small libraries. Created visual and atmospheric dimensions could be seen in any district, school or village library.

38. Library in the Ukrainian House during the Revolution of Dignity

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[84] From author: *rushnyk* is a traditional ritual and decorative embroidered rectangular piece of fabric

☐ Monument of Lenin
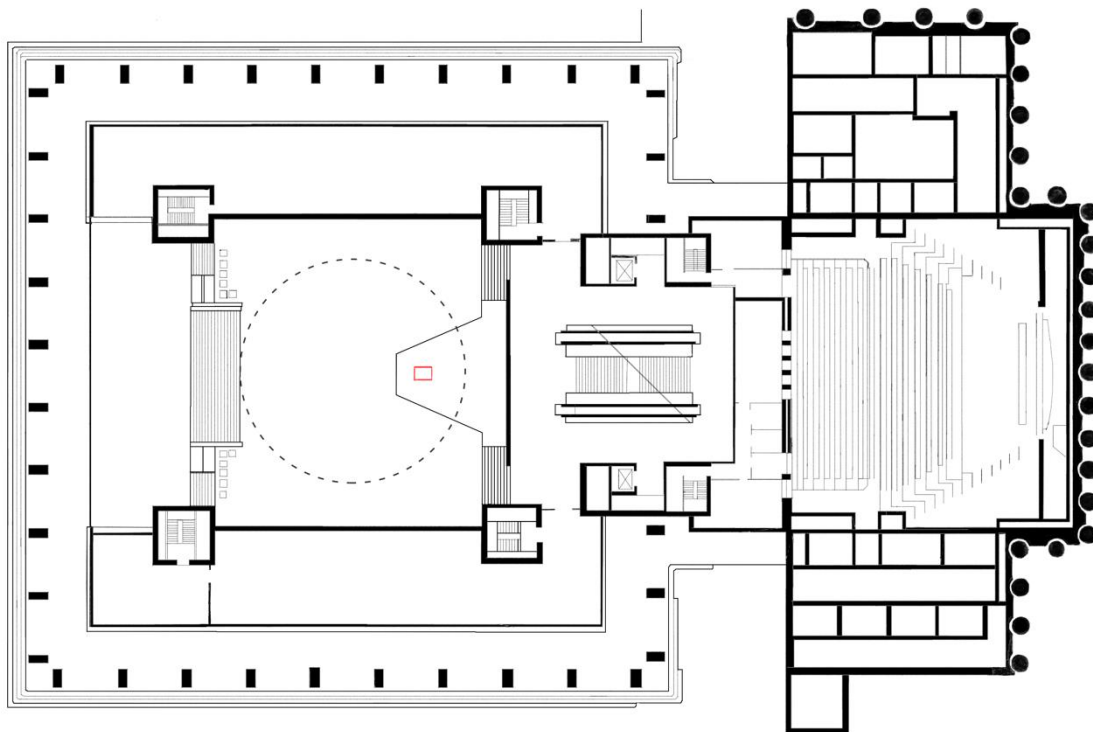
39. Sketch of the spatial organization of the Entrance Hall of Ukrainian House (at the time Kyiv Branch of the Lenin Museum),1982-1991.
V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv

Fair isles
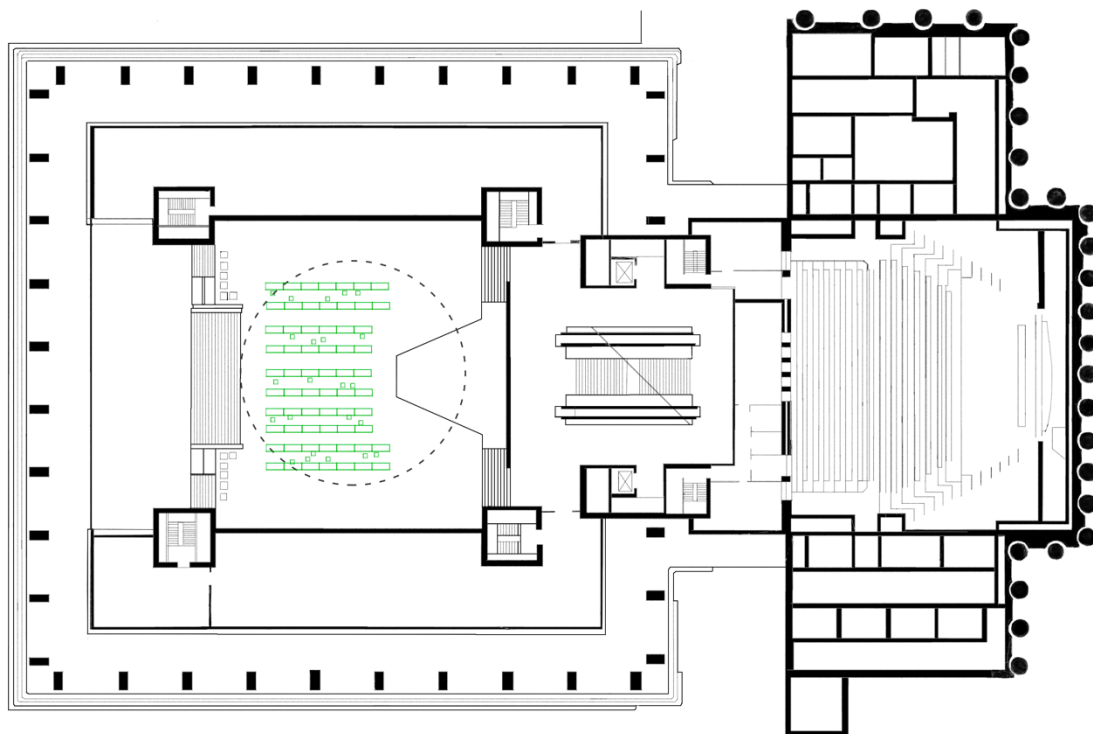
40. Sketch of the spatial organization of the Entrance Hall of Ukrainian House during fairs (approximate view). V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv

1. Automaidan headquarter;
2. Place of public events;
3. Maidan headquarter and medical aid point;
4. Students Assembly;
5. Maidan library.
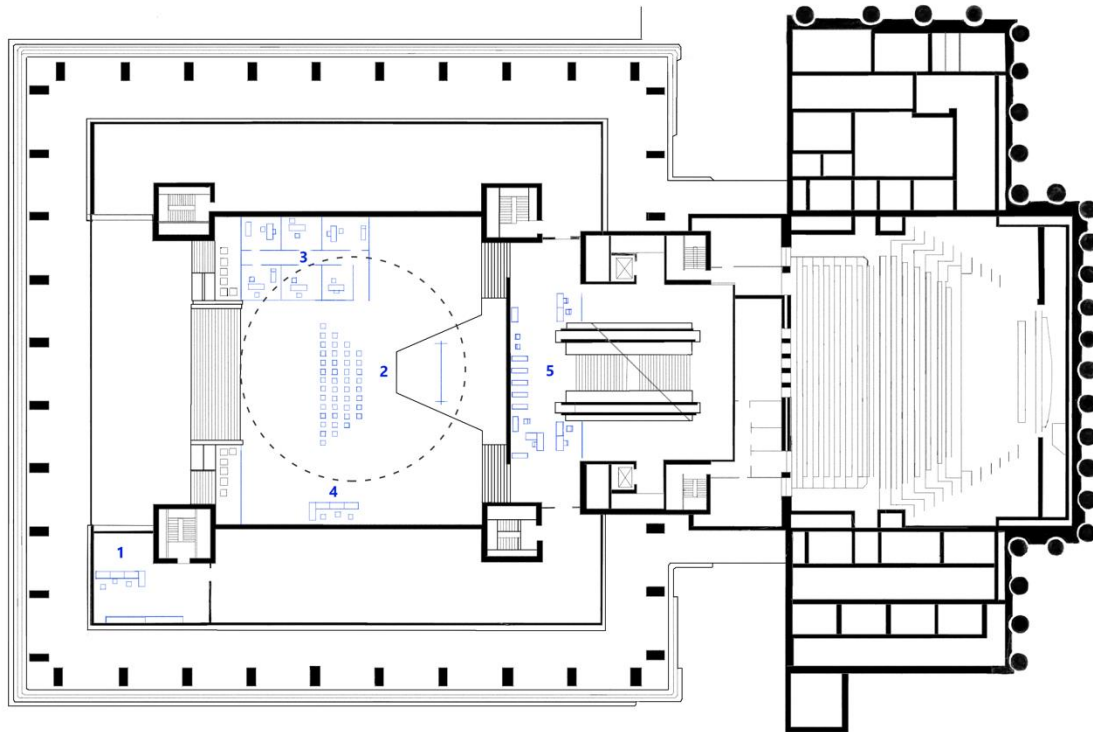
41. Sketch of the spatial organization of the Entrance Hall of Ukrainian House during the events of the Revolution of Dignity, winter 2014. (approximate view). V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv

Installation
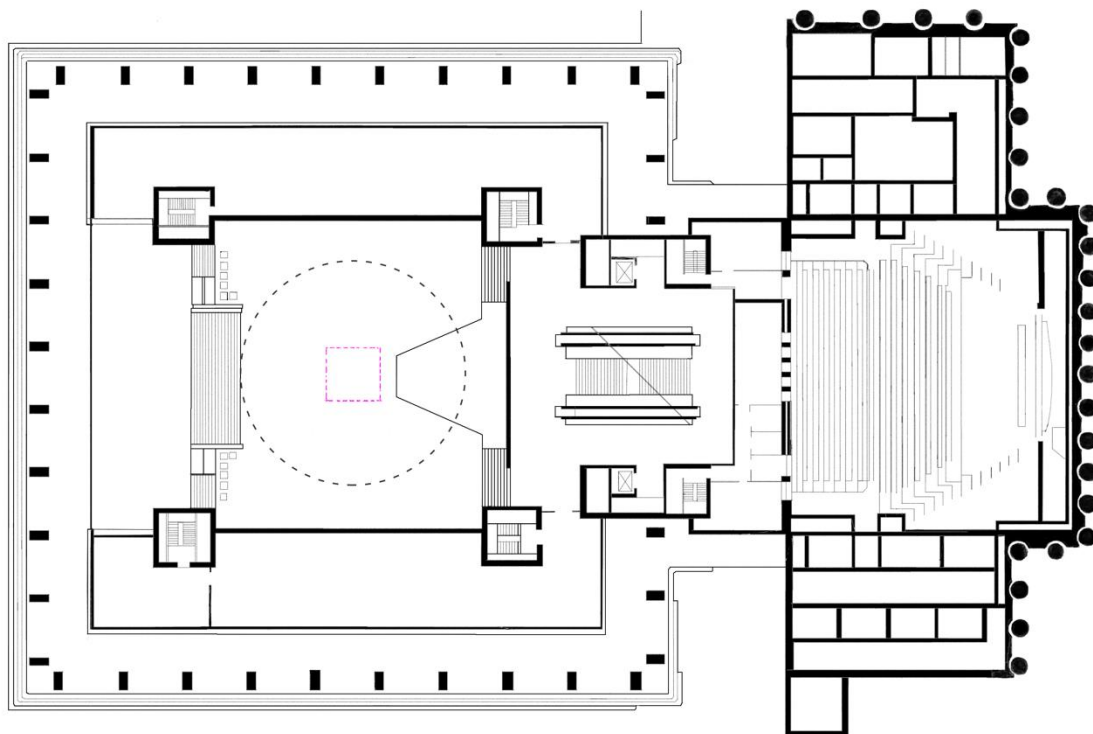
42. Sketch of the spatial organization of the Entrance Hall of Ukrainian House during exhibitions in the period since 2019. V. Hopkalo 1978-1982, Kyiv

The processes that occurred during Revolution of Dignity were not a fully conscious, affirmative act of reclaiming the space and asserting the right to occupy it. This can be considered an act of liberation when space is used to serve the needs of society, thereby making the past, with its associated historical context and inherent propaganda function, powerless. This represents a significant milestone in the integration of Ukrainian Soviet architectural heritage into the modern Ukrainian context. The emancipation of society and the realization of the right to these spaces as an active participant creates a different dynamic and pattern of interaction, one that is characterized by a shift in the relationship between the individual and the collective. This facilitates the overcoming of the attitude associated with traumatic memory and emotions evoked by the epoch represented through this architecture, thereby offering the possibility of interpreting and reflecting on it from a different perspective. Furthermore, it initiates the process of comprehensive acceptance of the past and the overcoming of the fixation on self-victimization and the role of the subject of oppression. Through these processes, an important aspect emerges: the ability to recognize and analyze one's active role, as well as the significant amount of human labor that went into creating these architectural objects.

The transformation of the Ukrainian House into a symbol of the Revolution of Dignity can be enriched by examining Laurajane Smith's theory of heritage as a cultural process. Smith posits that heritage is not a static or fixed entity but rather a dynamic and ongoing cultural practice shaped by the needs, values, and identities of contemporary society. According to Smith, heritage is continuously made and remade through social processes and is deeply intertwined with current cultural and political contexts. This perspective helps us understand why the Ukrainian House, previously an instrument of socialist propaganda and a museum dedicated to Lenin, has undergone such a significant transformation. As a site where the Revolution of Dignity partially unfolded, the Ukrainian House has been redefined by its new role in

shaping and reflecting national consciousness and political change. The building's new identity and value as a site of resistance adds a contemporary layer to its historical narrative. Moreover, the changes in the spatial structure of the Ukrainian House further highlight Smith's concept of heritage as a cultural process. As the building has transitioned from a monument of socialist ideology to a symbol of national resistance, the physical and functional aspects of the space have been reconfigured to reflect its new role. This transformation underscores the active nature of heritage, where the significance of historical events and their impact on society continuously reshape the meaning and use of heritage sites.

However, after the protests on Maidan ended and the Ukrainian House ceased to host demonstrators, challenges regarding Soviet-era artifacts persisted. Despite the building being listed as newly discovered cultural heritage, Yuriy Stelmashchuk, the director at the time, ordered the removal of the bas-reliefs

from the façade. He justified this decision by invoking the Law On Decommunization. However, the law specified that such art objects were not subject to removal if created before 1991. The dismantling began on August 18, 2016, without proper consultation or the involvement of a special commission tasked with deciding the fate of these reliefs. Stelmashchuk's rhetoric of enforcing decommunization processes, represents a superficial change in visual symbols, while the underlying system remains the same. The method he used seemed itself to be inherited from Soviet times, when it was common practice to eliminate objects from previous eras that held different standpoints and agendas. As a reaction to these actions, art critic Olha Balashova wrote a critical article titled "How the Skin Was Stripped from the Ukrainian House. The Incurable Disease of Decommunization".[85] She argued, "The vandalism currently happening in Kyiv is much more frightening—it is sanctioned by a savage official who seeks to be glorified as a patriot but

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[85] Title translated by author from Ukrainian.

refuses to know his own history and culture."[86] Balashova's critique extends beyond the mere act of removing the bas-reliefs; it highlights a deeper ethical and cultural concern. The methods employed by Stelmashchuk, she suggests, mirror the very Soviet practices of erasing history. A genuine de-communization process should focus on addressing the systemic issues inherent from the former soviet period, rather than dwelling on the physical remnants of the past, even if these are associated with traumatic and negative aspects of previous era. Furthermore, Olena Mokrousova, a research associate at the Kyiv Scientific and Methodological Center for the Protection of Monuments, was engaged in the process of including Ukrainian House in the State Register of Cultural Monuments. She offered a critique of Stelmashchuk's actions, noting that the vandalism currently occurring in Kyiv is of a more alarming nature. She observed that it is being carried out with the tacit approval of a brutal

official who attempts to portray himself as a patriot but is ignorant of his own history and culture.[87]

43. Damaged bas-reliefs on the facade of the Ukrainian House, 2016. Sculptor: V. Borysenko 1978-1982, Kyiv
Photo: Vladyslava Osmak

The actions taken against the bas-reliefs are not merely an instance of political or cultural censorship; they also constitute an erasure of individual histories and artistic legacies. It is imperative to consider the ethical implications of the damage to the bas-reliefs. Valentyn Borysenko, the artist behind the bas-reliefs, included himself, his daughter, and his grandson as part of the scene. The act of cutting through these images not only compromises the physical

[86] Olha Balashova: Yak z Ukrayins'koho domu znimaly shkiru. Nevilikovna khvoroba dekomunizatsiyi, 19.09.2016, https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/2016/08/19/216764/ , 14.04.2023

[87] Ibid.

integrity of the artwork but also gives rise to ethical concerns surrounding the erasure of personal and familial representations embedded within a public art context. The removal of these elements can be viewed not only as a cultural and political act but also as a significant personal affront to the artist's legacy and the familial connection that he and his descendants have to the artwork.

The dismantling work was stopped at the request of Nazar Bilyk, Borysenko's grandson, who insisted that any removal should be done in a more professional and respectful manner. Many specialists have also raised concerns that the bas-reliefs by Valentyn Borysenko are integral to the overall architectural design and cannot be simply removed without destroying the original intent of the architects and the building's authenticity.

Despite these concerns, the bas-reliefs were cut with a grinder, yet they still remain on the facade, concealed by yellow and blue banners. This act of "shyly" hiding the uncomfortable heritage symbolizes the ongoing struggle to address and fully integrate

difficult aspects of the Soviet past. The imagery, still present but hidden, underscores the complexities of dealing with a legacy that is challenging to both discuss and remove. As a result, the bas-reliefs remain on the facade to this day.

In 2019, Olha Viieru took the role of director at the Ukrainian House, thereby introducing a new perspective on the institution's future. Her approach was based on the promotion of open dialogue with the objective of establishing the Ukrainian House as a forum for comprehensive discourse. Viieru's objective was to transform the institution from a mere venue into an active platform for engaging the community, experts, and government officials in discussions about Ukraine's multifaceted cultural landscape. Olha Viieru also recognized the unresolved issues surrounding the Soviet-era bas-reliefs on the façade of the Ukrainian House. She planned to initiate a multilateral open discussion on the future of the bas-reliefs, involving experts, politicians, and the public. She emphasized the need for a comprehensive consideration of these artifacts, recognizing their complexity

and the importance of a thougtfull approach to their future[88].

This initiative reflects a broader recognition that the management of heritage requiers not only legal and political considerations but also an ethical and inclusive dialogue about how to address and interpret complex historical legacies. The fate of the bas-reliefs remains unresolved, a situation that has been further complicated by a number of factors, including the full-scale invasion of Russia. This unresolved issue highlights the ongoing challenges in navigating Ukraine's complex cultural heritage. However, under the direction of Viieru, the Ukrainian House experienced a cultural renaissance.

The institution underwent a transformation into a multidisciplinary center that offers a diverse range of interactions beyond the traditional exhibitions and film screenings. Currently, it serves as a venue for educational programs, dialogue platforms, and other forms of public engagement. This revitalization has

also seen the Ukrainian House take on new roles in recent years. It has presented a number of projects that have incorporated the building's internal structure, evoking memories of the 1990 performance exhibition by Fedir Tetyanych. One such project is the multimedia performance "The way to," directed by Vlad Toretskyi. By integrating the building spatial structure into various performances and installations, the Ukrainian House has facilitated a continuous process of contextual transformation, where each project adds a new layer of meaning, extending its significance beyond the era in which it was created.

The Ukrainian House has undergone a series of transformations over time, becoming a symbol of Ukraine's sovereignty and resilience. It represents the country's efforts to preserve and promote its unique history, cultural heritage, and values while also reflecting and shaping the discourse surrounding the Soviet past.

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[88] Hanna Parovatkina: Ukrayinskyi dim. Perezavanta-zhennya, 6.12.2019, https://zn.ua/ukr/ART/ukrayinskiy-dim-perezavantazhennya-332142_.html 20.4.2023

The Ukrainian House continues to play a prominent role in the country's cultural revival, serving as a symbol of Ukraine's enduring identity, particularly in the context of ongoing war.

5 Case study Flowers of Ukraine

The Flowers of Ukraine building, constructed between 1983 and 1985, is an example of late modernist architecture in Kyiv. The project was commissioned by the Republican Department of Green Construction and Complex Improvement as an educational and exhibition center focused on botany. Designed by architect Mykola Levchuk, the building is characterized by its large cascading greenhouse.

The internal structure of the building was organized so that the greenhouse was the central element. There was a large flower shop in the greenhouse, the largest in Kyiv at the time The cascading, three-story glass façade provides maximum lighting throughout the day. The spatial organization creates the illusion of a garden, complete with large exotic plants like palms and lemon trees. In the greenhouse were played sounds of birds singing, waterfalls, and the rustling of trees to enhance the customers' sense of being outdoors. Other spaces of Flower of Ukraine housed an exhibition hall, research spaces, classrooms, administrative offices, and storage facilities.

Alongside commercial and scientific functions, the Flowers of Ukraine also served as a public space, hosting various workshops dedicated to botany and floristics.

The Flowers of Ukraine was constructed in the old city center, surrounded by historical structures. The building was carefully proportioned to fit harmoniously within the surrounding urban environment. Its height and scale were designed to complement neighboring structures, ensuring that it does not dominate the skyline, but rather blends into the environment. The choice of materials for the facade and interiors—travertine tiles—was typical of public modernist buildings from the late 1970s to the 1980s.

44. Flowers of Ukraine end 1980s-beginning of 1990s. M. Levchuk 1983-1985, Kyiv

45. Science Popularization Exhibition Hall Flowers of Ukraine, Kyiv 1986. M. Levchuk 1983-1985, Kyiv

Interior of the building was decorated with a stained-glass window created by Ukrainian artist Serhii Odaynyk, which was unfortunately lost in the 2000s. Recognizing its design quality, the project was awarded the Union of Architects of Ukraine's "Building of the Year" award in 1968.

Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, the building's operational framework was restructured and reorganized into the Rental Enterprise "Flowers of Ukraine". During the 1990s and early 2000s, the building largely retained its original structure and function. By the 2010s, however, the building underwent a significant transformation. Due to financial challenges and the difficulty of maintaining such a large structure—common issues with Soviet-era buildings—the Flowers of Ukraine shifted from its original function and was used as a retail space. From the mid-2010s until approximately 2020, it housed the supermarket "*Bdzhilka*"[89]. The supermarket's sales area was situated in a greenhouse, completely changing its atmosphere. What was once a garden in the middle of the city became a typical store, with a stretch ceiling, that lowered the space height, and colored film on the windows, that reduced natural light. Instead of flower pots, the main area of Flowers of Ukraine was now filled with shelves of goods. Although it became a fully commercial space, it was still accessible for everyone. In fact, its new function as a shop

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[89] From author: *bdzhilka* in Ukrainian language means a bee.

established a different kind of relationship with the space — one that became part of everyday life. During the time of Flower of Ukraine's original function, visits tended to be occasional, often linked to significant life events such as the first day of school, birthdays, anniversaries and more.

46. Interior of the hall on the second floor of the Flowers of Ukraine pavilion end 1980s-beginning of 1990s. Architect: M. Levchuk, artist: S. Odaynyk Kyiv 1983-1985

In 2019/2020, the Flowers of Ukraine building was purchased by a private company "Rockwill Group", with Oleksandr Pyshnyi becoming the director of the enterprise. The new owners brought plans to transform the building into an office complex. These redevelopment plans reached a critical point in June 2021, when demolition

activities began, triggering strong opposition from the community. On June 7, 2021, builders initiated the installation of a fence around the building, signaling the start of preparatory work for demolition. By June 13, the first demolition efforts began, with workers removing part of the glass from the building's greenhouse. In response to these actions, residents from the surrounding neighborhood quickly organized a series of meetings to strategize their opposition. They collectively filed a complaint with the State Architectural and Construction Commission, seeking to stop the destruction. After the demolition workers cut down the grapevines that had adorned the building's façade and continued dismantling the greenhouse, the community's resistance intensified.

In response to the actions of developer, the community issued an open letter to the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy and the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. The letter urgently requested that the Flowers of Ukraine building be granted status of protected site. The demolition process intensified on July

12, 2021, when demolition work on the building's façade began. This led to even bigger public protest, gathering people from outside of the neighborhood. Demonstrators successfully blocked the construction equipment and temporarily stopped the demolition. For three days, the building was occupied by community members, who organized around-the-clock monitoring of the site to prevent further damage. During this period of heightened tension, government agencies confirmed that the private company did not have the necessary building permits from the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, nor was the reconstruction project legally authorized for any demolition work. This discovery further fueled public outrage and activists' commitment to protecting the building.

To coordinate their efforts more effectively the protesters formed the NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy", which plays an important role in the ongoing preservation campaign. Among its founders was Taras Hrytsiuk, a historian and local activist. Thanks to the persistent efforts and well-organized actions of both the community and the NGO, the

Flowers of Ukraine building was granted the status of a newly identified cultural heritage site on July 29, 2021. This official recognition was an important victory for the activists. The new status of the building obliged the developer to pause the demolition work.

47. Exterior of Flowers of Ukraine after an attempted dismantling in summer 2021. M. Levchuk 1983-1985, Kyiv

Before proceeding with their plans, the new owners of Flowers of Ukraine consulted with Mykola Levchuk. The architect explained to the developers that transforming the building into an office center would compromise the original concept and worsen the urban

situation.[90] Despite Levchuk's expert opinion and rights as the author of the building, the developers decided to proceed without his consent. They proposed a new project that involved a complete alteration of the original construction. This new plan included constructing a 27-meter-high building with a glass facade, a design that strongly contrasted with the original modernist design of Flowers of Ukraine. By failing to involve Levchuk in the planning process and ignoring his intellectual property rights to his project, the developers' actions were contrary to the ethical standards of the construction and architectural in-dustries.

The NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" took se-rious steps to protect the Flowers of Ukraine building. This included initiat-ing court hearings. The NGO also col-laborated closely with Mykola Levchuk to advocate for the protection of his intellectual property and ensure that his rights were upheld throughout the legal process. Supported by the NGO, Levchuk the lawsuit to challenge the legality of the redevelopment plans

and uphold his rights as the project's author.

48. Reconstruction project planned by developer. G. Duchovnychy 2020-2021

The first court hearing in Levchuk's case against the developers took place on July 29, 2021. This marked the start of a legal battle that will extend over several years, highlighting the com-plexities and challenges of defending intellectual property rights in the field of architecture. According to the Law of Ukraine "On Architectural Activity and the Law of Ukraine "On Copyright and Related Rights", the author has the right to demand the preservation of the integrity of his project and all

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[90] Aliona Vyzshnytska: "Kvity Ukrainy". V tsentri Kyieva znovu ruinuyut budivlyu, ale nazyvayut tse restav-ratsiyeyu, 2.07.2021, https://zaborona.com/kviti-ukrayini-

v-czentri-kiyeva-znovu-rujnuyut-budivlyu-ale-nazivayut-cze-restavracziyeyu/ ,23.06.204

changes to the project must be agreed with the author. However, on 28 July 2022, ruled that Levchuk's rights had not been violated, as Soviet legal norms, not the Law on Intellectual Property, should apply in his case. According to the judge, Levchuk has only "non-property" rights to the project documentation, not to the project as a whole, meaning that there is no need to agree on any changes to the building with Mykola Levchuk.[91] In fact, the judge's ruling was more in line with the position of the developer's representatives. As the developer's lawyer, Iryna Shevchuk, declared in court: "The dismantling, in our opinion, was carried out in compliance with all urban planning regulations and with all permits. Such dismantling does not indicate any changes to the architectural object at all." [92] This is contrary to the facts that there were no permits for the work, and that the planned construction work would almost completely rebuild the existing building.

Simultaneously, the developers' firm, represented by Olexandr Pyshnyi, pursued legal action against both Levchuk and Taras Hrytsiuk. At the hearing on April 10, 2023, the developers requested approximately 300,000 hryvnias from Levchuk to cover court costs. The NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" launched a fundraising campaign to support Mykola Levchuk in his ongoing legal battle. The, intended purpose of the raised funds was to help cover legal expenses and ensure that Levchuk could continue his fight. On March 14, 2023, the Kyiv Court of Appeal reduced the amount Levchuk was required to pay from 300,000 to 25,000 hryvnias. Despite this reduction, Levchuk's legal team, led by lawyer Lydia Klymkyv, announced plans to challenge the decision by appealing to the Supreme Court.[93] On August 1,

[91] Oleksiy Arunian: Za zakonom URSR, 5.09.2022, https://graty.me/za-zakonom-ursr-yak-i-chomu-sud-u-ki%D1%94vi-vidhiliv-pozov-arhitektora-yakij-boretsya-proti-znesennya-modernistsko%D1%97-budivli-kviti-ukra%D1%97ni/,14.03.2024
[92]Sud u Kyievi pochav rozhlyadaty pozov arkhitektora budivli "Kvyty Ukrainy", shcho boretsia proty yii znesennia,30.07. 2022, raty.me/news/sud-u-kiєvi-pochav-rozglyadati-pozov-arhitektora-budivli-kviti-ukraïni-shho-boretsya-proti-ïï-znesennya/,14.03.2024
[93]Anna Rybalska: Sud u 12 raziv zmenshyv summu, yaku arkhitektor 'Kvityv Ukrayiny' maye splatyty zabudovnyku,10.04.2023 https://suspilne.media/kyiv/441561-sud-u-12-raziv-zmensiv-sumu-aku-arhitektor-kvitiv-ukraini-mae-splatiti-zabudovniku/ , 2.05.2024

2024, a hearing was held in the Supreme Court regarding Levchuk's appeal. The panel of judges determined that the case contained an "exceptional legal problem"[94] that required resolution to ensure the development of law and the formation of consistent legal practices. As a result, the case was transferred to the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court for further consideration. The Grand Chamber will address whether architectural projects and buildings from 1981-1985 qualify for copyright, who held the original copyright for works created under contract during that period, and whether the current Ukrainian law "On Copyright and Related Rights" applies in this case.[95]

Meanwhile, in a separate legal battle, the developers also filed a lawsuit against Hrytsiuk and TV channel "1+1", claiming that Hrytsiuk's public statements damaged their business reputation. The court hearing against Hrytsiuk began in September 2022, and on July 24, 2024, the appellate court ruled in favor of Taras Hrytsiuk, recognizing the validity of his claims regarding the illegality of the demolition. In the Facebook post on December 11, 2023, Taras Hrytsiuk commented on the ongoing legal battles, highlighting the developers' intent to intimidate activists, warn the media about critical coverage, and exploit legal loopholes to disregard community interests in urban development.[96]

49. Visualization of the preservation proposal from activists. O. Doikov, A. Kalambet 2021

The NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" went beyond legal measures to protect the Flowers of Ukraine. Their advocacy

[94] Rishennya Verkhovnoho Sudu vid 01 serpnya 2024 roku. Kyiv, sprava No 761/26660/21
procvadjennia No. 61-5547cv23,
https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/120888812
13.03.2024
[95] Ibid.

[96] Taras Hrytsiuk: Facebook post ,11.12.2023,
https://www.facebook.com/taras.grytsiuk/posts/pfbid02oziWundE8s7TuCA6xwfEjxggHZ2i5vdLdHVQU-rAriQLv8mkxJ3MmHaz7dbXQW6obl, 13.03.2024
[translate by author]

work highlighted the building's importance not only as a valuable architectural heritage, but also as a cherished community landmark that holds deep sentimental value for the residents. Activists state that the proposed conversion into a commercial office center will restrict public access to the Flowers of Ukraine. They also consider that since the new design will significantly narrow the sidewalk, the planned reconstruction will not improve the urban situation. Besides, the height of the new building will dominate the neighboring historic buildings and ruin the architectural harmony of the area. At the same time, a characteristic feature of Flowers of Ukraine is its harmonious integration into the environment.

From the side of activists and the community, there is no opposition to commercial use itself; however, there is a strong emphasis on ensuring that such use respects the building's authenticity and preserves the established interaction between the site and the community The community has already developed a sense of informal ownership of the place, and the plan to create a business center has

raised concerns that this ownership will be taken away. The goal is to preserve a public space that is free and accessible to everyone.

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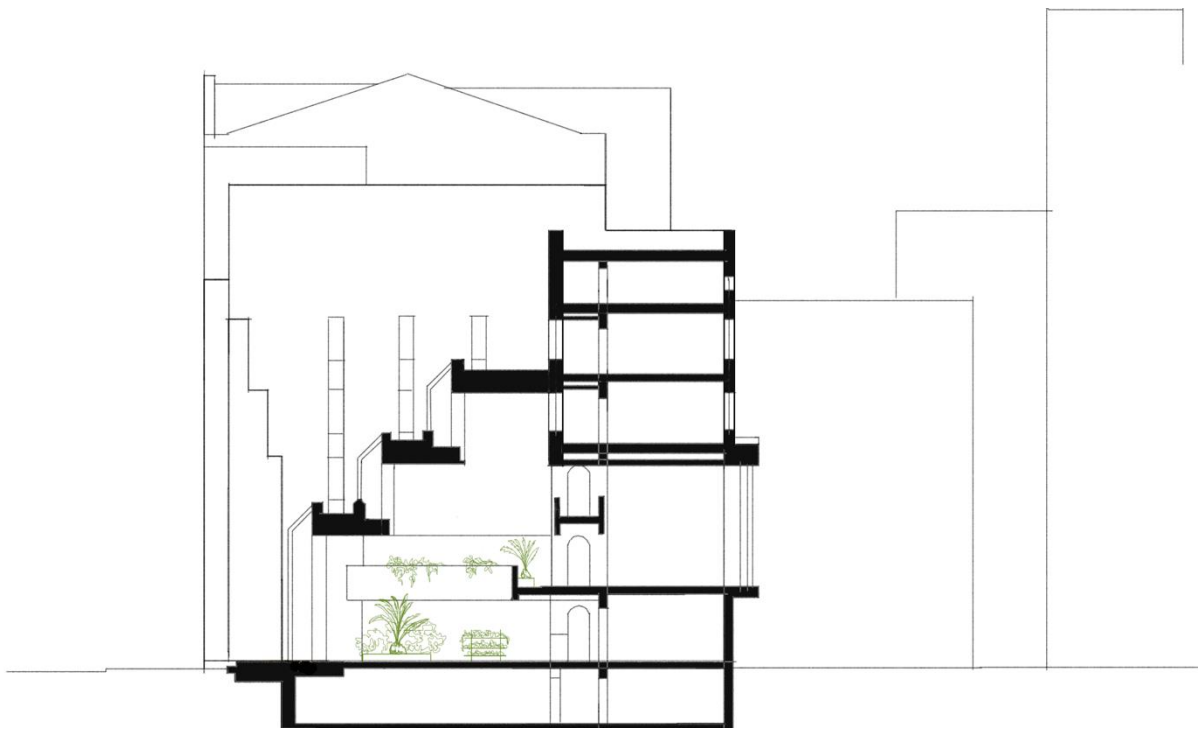
50. Sketch of the spatial organization of the trade and exhibition hall of Flowers of Ukraine, 1985-2010s. M. Levchuk 1983-1985, Kyiv
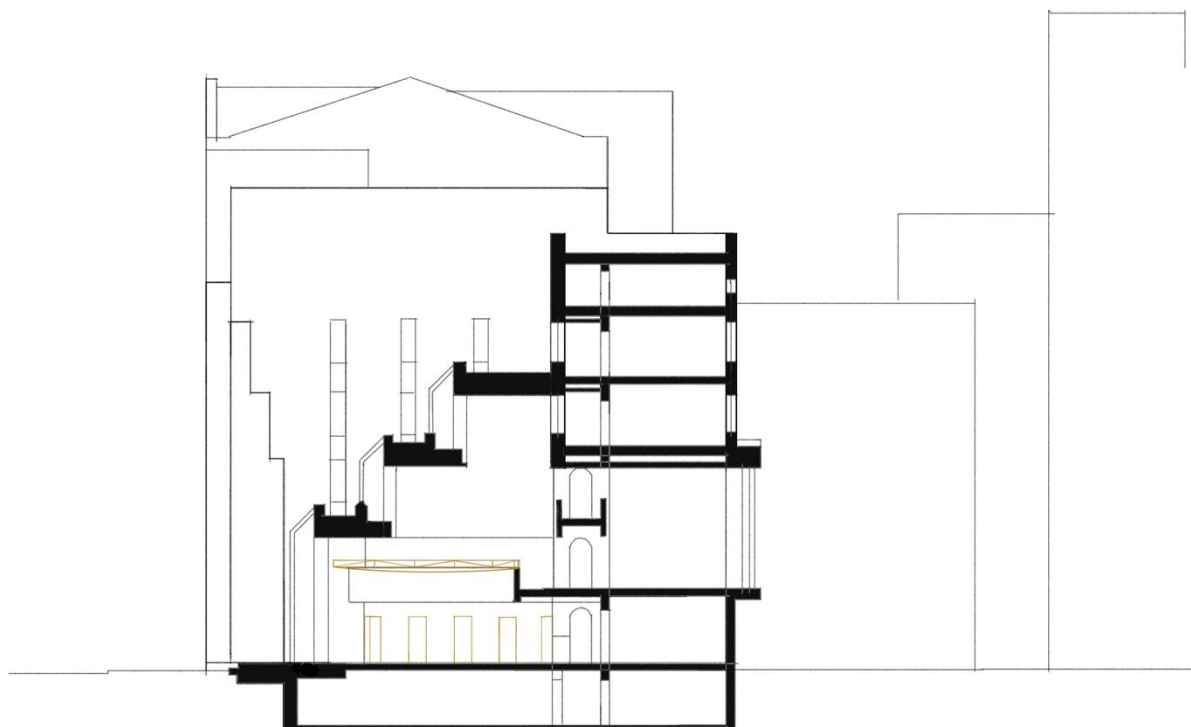
51. Sketch of the spatial organization of the trade and exhibition hall of Flowers of Ukraine as a supermarket, 2010s – 2020.
M. Levchuk 1983-1985, Kyiv
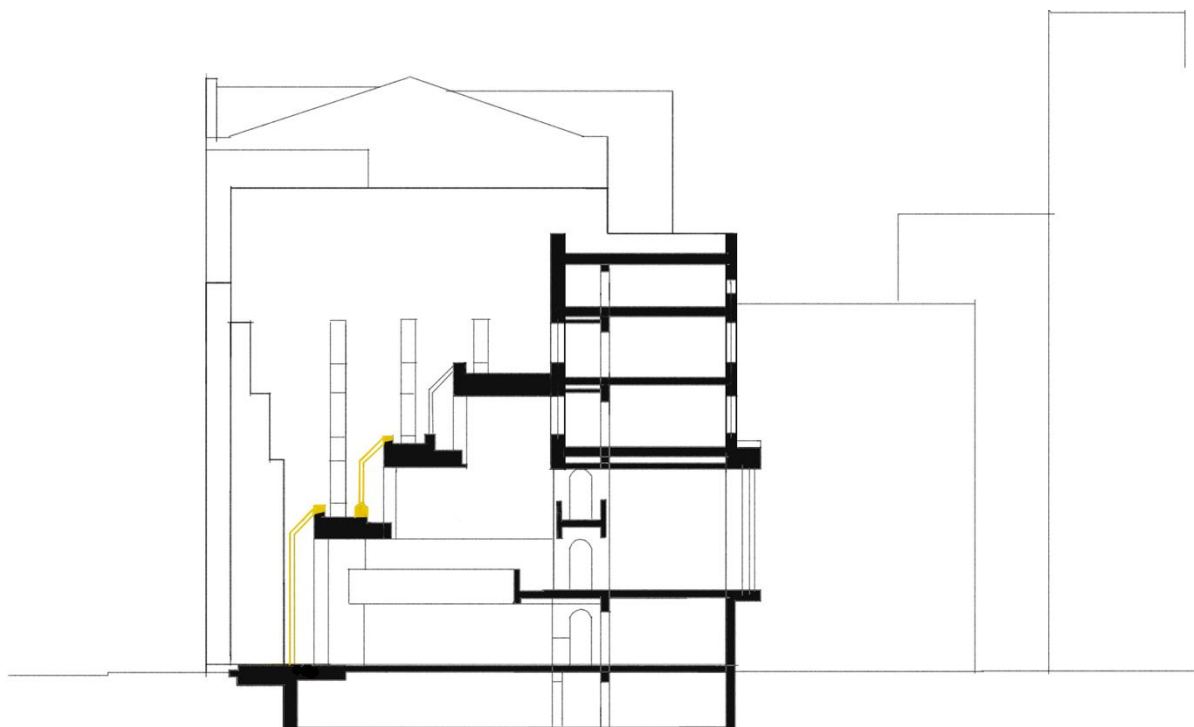
52. Sketch of the state of Flowers of Ukraine after damage on July 12, 2021. M. Levchuk 1983-1985, Kyiv

In addition to addressing architectural and civic issues, the NGO pays considerable attention to educating the public about the local history connected with the Flowers of Ukraine. Their efforts aim to reveal a deeper context that goes beyond the building's association with the Soviet era. Despite being built during this period; the Flowers of Ukraine did not carry an ideological burden. To uncover other layers of context, the NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" interviewed Iryna Kalyuzhna, the daughter of M. Kopiychenko, who was behind the idea of creating this institution. In the 1980s, Kopiychenko was the head of the Ukrzelenstroy[97] department.[98] His daughter shared that he was inspired by a botanical center he visited in France as part of a delegation. The conceptualization of the center—including obtaining permits from local authorities, selecting the location, and even naming—was Kopiychenko's efforts and ideas. Kopiychenko made a significant personal investment in the project, paying attention to the smallest details, such as floral materials. Unfortunately, M. Kopiychenko was unable to witness his creation's opening due to a serious illness, and he never had the opportunity to work in the institution he had developed with such dedication. As his daughter notes in an interview, "After his death, friends and colleagues were unanimous in their opinion that the best monument to Kopiychenko's life was the Flowers of Ukraine building."[99] The potential destruction of the Flowers of Ukraine means not only the loss of an valuable architectural object, but also the erasure of memory and personal history. This will take away from the community its tangible and intangible heritage. Through its social networks, the NGO gathers and distributes personal memories and stories about Flowers of Ukraine, emphasizing its sentimental significance and demonstrating the deep integration of the built environment into personal and community identities.

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[97] From author: Ukrezelenstroy was a state enterprise responsible for green spaces in cities.
[98] Save Kvity Ukrainy: Otrymaly zvorushlyvu i nadvazhlyvu dlya usvidomlennya tsinnosti budivli. Rozpovid pro yii poyavu, 9.07. 2021
https://www.istgram.com/p/CRGaJvfrsnT/?igsh=MXZxN G4wMnkycDZhNw= 6.04. 2024
[99] Ibid. [translate by author]

Another method used by the NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" in their preservation efforts is the organization of *tolokas*. A *toloka*, originating from Ukrainian tradition, is a community gathering where people come together to work on a common task, often involving maintenance or improvement of public spaces. This tradition emphasizes collective action and mutual support within a community.

Toloka serve multiple purposes in the NGO's efforts. They mobilize residents around the Flowers of Ukraine, strengthen the community's right to access the space, and foster a sense of collective responsibility. Originally focused on maintaining the building's surroundings, *tolokas* now play a crucial role in advocating for the Flowers of Ukraine's future by strengthening public involvement.

Through these events, the NGO underscores the building's significance to the community and its dedication to preserving a valued landmark. Additionally, *tolokas* reflect society's willingness to reassess and reevaluate the role of Soviet-era architectural arti-

facts in contemporary Ukraine, recognizing their importance in the nation's architectural and cultural heritage.

53. *Toloka* by Flower of Ukraine, July 2024

Over time, the NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" has evolved from focusing solely on preserving a single building to becoming a significant platform for protecting endangered architectural objects from all historical periods. The organization has broadened its mission to include educational initiatives and create spaces for public discourse.

By engaging with the public and garnering support, "Save Kvity Ukrainy"

has become a driving force for societal action, inspiring communities to protect and value Ukraine's architectural heritage.

One of the platforms to realize this new role became the *tolokas*, which have evolved into larger events that include lectures, exhibitions, markets, concerts, and discussion panels. The lectures and discussions primarily focus on the Soviet-era architecture legacy, with a particular emphasis on modernist structures. By collaborating with other activists and NGO, such as Renovation Map, specialists, politicians, and entrepreneurs, NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" encourages a dialogue that incorporates various perspectives. These events also demonstrate that, despite its current state of partial damage and neglect, Flowers of Ukraine functions effectively as a public space, with the community actively using it. NGO use this as evidence in their legal battle to argue that the developers' project will cause harm not only to the building but also to the community.

The Flowers of Ukraine case has highlighted systemic issues. Among the most influential are bureaucratic inefficiencies, outdated legal frameworks, and the often careless attitudes of developers towards historical preservation. NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" are at the forefront of advocacy for Soviet-era architecture. They use their voice to call for comprehensive reforms. A particularly critical aspect is Mykola Levchuk's lawsuit, which represents a historic moment with far-reaching implications, directly affecting architects across Ukraine. This trial will set a precedent that will influence the course of future hearings in similar cases. Moreover, the situation of architects from the Soviet era is especially poignant. These professionals, who worked under the constraints of the Soviet system, now find themselves struggling for recognition and respect in an independent Ukraine. This is why activists, specialists, and various NGOs, including "Save Kvity Ukrainy," emphasize the ongoing discourse surrounding Soviet-era architecture. Engaging in this dialogue is crucial to prevent the exclusion of Soviet-era architects from the contemporary narrative.

The Flowers of Ukraine case is a bright example of how grassroots activism can effectively challenge systemic inefficiencies, and promote legal and ethical reforms in the field of cultural heritage preservation. NGO "Save Kvity Ukrainy" has set a precedent of protecting endangered buildings through collective action. However, the case also exposes the inherent limitations of grassroots activism. Despite its success, the Flowers of Ukraine campaign underscores the episodic and reactive nature of such movements. It is still an isolated case, lacking the systematic reach needed to influence preservation policies across the country. This case illustrates a troubling trend: public support and activism often operate only when a building is already at risk of demolition, rather than during the earlier stages when proactive measures could prevent endangerment altogether. As a result, many architectural objects, particularly lesser-known ones, continue to decay unnoticed, with their fate largely left to the conscience of specialists and researchers attempting to draw attention to them. Moreover, the Flowers of Ukraine case highlights a critical issue in the preservation narrative: the tendency to focus on the uniqueness of individual buildings as the primary justification for their preservation. While emphasizing a structure's uniqueness can be a strong argument, it risks narrowing the discussion about the value of Soviet-era architecture. Such an approach can unintentionally marginalize other significant buildings that may lack unique architectural or engineering characteristics but still hold cultural, historical or other value, contributing to a deeper understanding of the Soviet architectural and cultural landscape. To move beyond responsive activism, a joint effort is needed to strengthen the connections between preservation movements, urban development, the business sector, society and government policymaking. This requires a shift from isolated, case-by-case battles to a more systemic approach, with an active involvement and support from the government. The business community, as one of the main parties, should be actively involved in shaping the culture of managing important architectural objects. A unified strategy is important to effectively protect Soviet-era architectural legacy, ensuring

that actions are proactive rather than responsive and inclusive rather than exclusive.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, the Soviet architectural heritage in Ukraine is currently in a vulnerable position. The problem with its preservation lies not so much in the lack of appreciation of this heritage due to its historical context, but rather in the systemic issues. This includes an imperfect, overly bureaucratic legal system, insufficient effective legislations, an unregulated development market, and a lack of a culture of ethical work with historic buildings. These include an imperfect, overly bureaucratic legal system, insufficiently effective legislation, an unregulated development market, and a lack of a culture of ethical treatment of historic buildings.

The systemic problem also reflects a certain pattern of thinking, which can be considered the most significant issue. This pattern often leads to decisions to demolish Soviet architecture or monumental art objects. First, it is a lack of understanding of Soviet architecture due to several factors, such as lack of knowledge, the stigma attached to this heritage, and a general lack of perception of modernist architecture from an aesthetic point of view. Effectively addressing these difficulties is complicated by the absence of a well-established dialogue between representatives of different sectors. Consequently, there is no clear common vision for the role of Soviet heritage in the present, nor a clear stance on the Soviet past, which remains an unprocessed collective trauma.

As the researcher Olha Balashova writes, "The world is not black and white, and we need to learn to see halftones and distinguish the *sovok*[100] from the Soviet heritage."[101] The approach that results in the destruction of Soviet architectural objects is partially influenced by the legacy of the Soviet past. In this approach, there is not so much of the typical USSR attitude when space is cleaned from

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[100] From author: *sovok* – (scoop from Russian language) here as a term to describe Soviet-era standards, styles, practices, characteristics, that are seen as negative.
[101] Olha Balashova: Yak z Ukrayins'koho domu znimaly shkiru. Nevilikovna khvoroba

dekomunizatsiyi,19.09.2016, https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/2016/08/19/216764/ 14.04.2023 [translate by author]

physical artifacts of ideological opponents. This practice is primarily carried out not for ideological reasons but rather as a component of populist political narratives, which significantly heightens the stigma associated with Soviet architecture. It involves several factors that are present at all levels, from the individual to the state apparatus. This is what Balashova means by the term *sovok*—the negative aspects of corruption, negligence, and carelessness. The Soviet heritage needs to be studied, comprehended, and contextualized in contemporary Ukraine. This is necessary not only for the preservation of physical objects but primarily for society. Development is not possible without a complete, unbiased perception of one's own past, free from both glorification and demonization.

The approach to Soviet heritage should be critical and multifaceted. It should consider that this architecture reflects the specifics of the time in which it was created and that it is much more than just physical artifacts of the Soviet era. It encompasses the architects, engineers, artists, designers, and builders who invested significant intellectual and physical resources. It also includes local history and personalities. These facts demonstrate how deeply the Soviet architectural heritage is integrated into the Ukrainian historiographical process. Architect Ievgeniia Gubkina, in her work on the protection of architectural heritage, states that by abandoning this part of its history, Ukrainian society is giving away the power to build a narrative about this period.[102]

Society is quite clearly demonstrating a desire to preserve, rethink, and integrate the Soviet architectural heritage into the Ukrainian present. The example of the Flowers of Ukraine demonstrates that without proactive support from government agencies, the process of overcoming systemic problems is incredibly difficult. Therefore, the effective preservation of Soviet architectural heritage in Ukraine depends on addressing systemic issues, encouraging a more complex understanding of this historical legacy, and establishing

[102] Phoebe Page: It's our heritage: Defending Ukraine's modernist architecture,3.05.2022,

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/3/its-our-heritage-defending-ukraines-modernist-architecture ,2.12.2023.

a collaborative dialogue among members of society to meaningfully integrate this heritage into the contemporary Ukrainian context.

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