

Critique of the City-Machine: Dismantling the Scientific Socialist Utopia of Soviet Territorialization

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Abstract : The Russian constructivism is usually enshrined in history as another "modernist ism", that is, as an artistic phenomenon related to the early twentieth century's zeitgeist. What we aim in this essay is to analyze the constructivist movement not over the Art History field neither through the aesthetic debate, but through a geographical critical theory, taking the main idea of construction in the concrete sense of production of space. Seen from the perspective of the critique of space, the constructivist production is presented as a plan of totality, designed as socialist society's spatiality, contemplating and articulating all its scalar levels: the objects of everyday life, the building, the city and the territory. The constructivist avant-garde manifests a geographical ideology, launching the foundation's basis of modern planning ideology. Taken in its political sense, the artistic avant-garde of the Russian Revolution intended to anticipate the forms of a social future already put in progress: their plastic research pointed to new formal expressions to revolutionary contents. With the foundation of new institutions under a new State, it was given to the specialized labor of artists, architects, and planners the task of designing the socialist society, based on the thesis of scientific socialism. Their projects were developed under the politico-economics imperatives to the Soviet modernization - that is: the structural needs of industrialization and inclusion of all people in the productive work universe. This context shapes the creative atmosphere of the constructivist avant-garde, which uses the methods of engineering to the transform everyday life. Architecture, urban planning, and state planning integrated must then operate as spatial arrangement morphologically able to produce socialist life. But due to the intrinsic contradictions of the process, the rational and geometric aesthetic of the City-Machine appears, finally, as an image of a scientific socialist utopia.

Keywords : city-machine, critique of space, production of space, soviet territorialization

Conference Title : ICCA 2017 : International Conference on Constructivism and Architecture

Conference Location : Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Dates : February 12-13, 2017