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# Disturbing Values: *Historic Thematic Framework* as a Tool to Deal with the Soviet Architectural Legacy

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**Abstract:** The value of cultural heritage is a constantly evolving and debated issue in heritage theory. While primarily the focus was on tangible qualities, intangible values gained more importance in the twenty-first century. However, in some cases, it can be complicated to evaluate the intangible values of specific artefacts with politically disturbing associations, such as Soviet architecture in a post-Soviet context. Based on a Lithuanian case study, the paper contributes to the debate on the value of Soviet architecture, focusing not on individual buildings but on broader themes. By using framework analysis as a conceptual background, the article analyzes the legacy of the Soviet past not as physical objects but as cultural references. Interpreting "cultural references" as containers of social and cultural meanings that are much broader than just the embodiment of the ideological system, the paper suggests that dissonance should not lead to the uncompromising delisting and probably the destruction of the built heritage of troublesome past. Although the article focuses on the evaluation of Soviet architecture in a post-Soviet context, the conceptual approach can contribute to the broader debate on postcolonial heritage globally.

**Keywords:** built heritage; dissonant heritage; postcolonial heritage; cultural reference; Soviet architectural legacy; thematic framework

## 1. Introduction

Previously identified with progress and modernity, the architecture of the twentieth-century is going through a controversial period of physical transformation and conceptual revaluation. Stylistic and technical innovations lost their original novelty, structures either disappeared or gradually transformed into historical relics. Furthermore, while in 1930′s the ideas of mass modernization were well-appreciated, later on, the modernist worldview came to be seen as too mechanical, ignoring the subtler nuances of society and human nature [1–3]. Soviet modernism represents one of the most complicated forms of this architectural legacy. In addition to the usual problems associated with the authenticity of materials, changes in functions, or doubts about modernist aesthetics and ethical attitudes, in many of post-Soviet territories, these artefacts contain a certain degree of dissonance of value. Embodying the achievements of twentieth-century architectural processes, they also bear witness to the consequences of the regime of occupation [4,5]. Deciding whether to preserve this dissonant legacy is, therefore, a complex task that requires an innovative methodological approach.

The question of *value* of the twentieth-century built heritage is a long-debated topic, not only from the perspective of dissonance. Not rarely, the appreciation of these artefacts as heritage objects can be relatively low [6,7]. One of the main reasons for this is the short time that passed since they were first constructed. The second reason might be the attempt to transfer the modernist idea of technological progress into cultural heritage, which can also be seen as a controversial idea [8]. Most designers associated with modernism were focused on creating architecture that was "rational, functional, innovative and rich, with strong political and cultural identities—futuristic in all senses" [9]. Targeting future and

dynamism fundamentally clashes with the conservationist attempt to preserve the artefact in its current state, to avoid change, and to perceive the environment as a complete and, therefore, valuable setting.

In the post-Soviet context, the evaluation of the architectural legacy of the second half of the twentieth century additionally depends on political transformations. The complicated nature of the process can be well illustrated with the case study of Lithuania. In some cases, such as the Supreme Council (now Parliament) building in Vilnius, Soviet architecture has acquired the status of cultural heritage just few decades after their construction, in the 1980s, under the Soviet regime, as a testimony of political power [10]. In the 1990s, the Soviet list was transferred to the Register of Cultural Heritage of independent Lithuania and, since then, is constantly being reconsidered. The first act of eliminating monuments with direct political-symbolic significance happened in the early 1990s. It was the first step for Lithuania to distance itself from the Soviet period [11]. This was followed by a lengthy debate on the value of Soviet architecture, in which one of the dominant opinions among professionals was the conditional acceptance of this heritage, acknowledging the ideologized past while at the same time accepting the contribution of local architects in shaping a characteristic architecture and urban environment [12–14]. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2014, has led to a renewed and critical re-thinking of this legacy [15]. Therefore, it is possible to state that the definition of value in heritage conservation is based on constant debating or, in the words of David Lowenthal "our legacy, divine and diabolical alike, is not set in stone but simmers on the incipient flux of time" [16].

Based on the Lithuanian case study, this paper aims to contribute to the debate on the value attribution to Soviet architectural legacy by applying the framework prepared by the Getty Conservation Institute and ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage (ISC20C), which is called *Twentieth-Century Historic Thematic Framework* (HTF). The framework promotes the interpretation of heritage places not as individual monuments of artistic value but as artefacts representing broad thinking about the historical processes that shaped the world's twentieth-century built environments [17]. Following this assumption, the paper proposes a new methodological principle for the interpretation of value of the Soviet architectural legacy. Even though most of the Soviet architectural heritage in Lithuania or other countries of the former socialist bloc have been inscribed as locally significant (none of these sites are yet included in the UNESCO WHL), it is proposed that this heritage should be evaluated in the context of the global narrative developed by the HTF. Therefore, the HTF encourages interpretation of the Soviet architectural legacy not only as a local phenomenon focused entirely on the issue of occupation but also as part of a global process, which includes a critical assessment of modernity and reveals the underlying forms of imbalances of power and inequalities [18].

A global perspective encourages us to interpret Soviet architectural legacy not only as a phenomenon representing local or regional history, but as a reflection of broader political, artistic, and social phenomena. Following this approach, the first part of the paper aims to highlight the general problems related to defining the value of modern heritage in different geographical and political contexts. Using the concept of dissonant heritage, the field of research is narrowed down to a discussion of the controversies surrounding the significance of the heritage relevant to the socialist legacy. Based on the insights of the universal problems of assessing modern heritage, the paper then proposes to address the issue of the value of Soviet heritage through the HTF.

By focusing on the case study of Lithuanian Soviet heritage, the article also aims to assist in the broader understanding of the dissonant heritage. In this regard, elaborating on the *thematic* aspect of value, the article will analyse the Soviet architectural heritage as a specific system of *cultural reference* of the twentieth century. Although the concept of *cultural reference* is not widely used in the context of heritage protection, it was mentioned in the *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* (1985) [19]. After giving a short overview of the Lithuanian architectural legacy from the Soviet period, the article

attempts to explain the references as certain containers of social and cultural meanings that are much broader than just the embodiment of the Soviet system. Following this perspective, the paper suggests that the new political situation should not lead to the uncompromising, delisting, and probably destruction of the built heritage of a troublesome past.

## 2. Twentieth-Century Heritage: Beyond Tangible

The architectural legacy of the twentieth century has been at the centre of discussion for a long time, between art critics and historians, due to the contentious criteria for the evaluation process of these structures [20,21]. While one of the most important criteria for evaluation was the age value for prior periods, the post-World-War-II architecture only passed over the age limit recently. As a result, they were not evaluated as heritage objects or remained unrecognised in the heritage lists of local or national authorities, which put this potential heritage at risk [22,23]. The shift in the age limit to the second half of the twentieth century is associated with radical changes in quantity. Due to the technical innovations and rapidly developing standard elements of construction, the scope of the built environment increased substantially in the twentieth century. As Wessel de Jonge states, more buildings were constructed in the twentieth century compared with the number of buildings constructed during all prior periods in architecture [24].

The continuously changing concept of *value* also has a major impact on the potential evaluation of post-war modern architecture. In the second half of the twentieth century, heritage theory began to discuss the idea that heritage value rests not only on the individual qualities of the monument but also on cultural, architectural, and natural contexts. Even though the *Charter of Athens* of 1933 referred to the environment and the surroundings of historical monuments (sites), it was not until the 1970s that the notion of the link between the environment and the monument as an element to be protected became firmly established [25]. The *Venice Charter* of 1964 was one of the first documents to give meaning to the heritage status of everyday artefacts. It stated that heritage includes "not only famous works of art but also modest testimonies of the past which have acquired cultural significance over time" [26]. The idea was further elaborated in the *Quito Norms* of 1967, which appeared a few years later. Its first paragraph stressed that "the concept of the monument is inseparable from space, and conservation must therefore be extended to the surrounding urban context and the natural environment". Additionally, it stated that "a monumental zone, structure or site may exist even if none of its elements could individually qualify as monuments" [27]. Hence, the criterion of the uniqueness of an individual monument was gradually replaced by the criterion of the character of the environment.

The relationship between the monument and its setting was further defined by the *European Charter for Architectural Heritage* of 1975, which stated that "Europe's heritage cannot be represented only through its major monuments. It also consists of less significant buildings in old towns or characterful villages in their natural or man-made environment. < . . . > Today, it is recognised that whole groups of buildings, even if they do not contain objects of outstanding value, can have an atmosphere that gives them the quality of a work of art and brings together different eras and styles into a harmonious whole. Such groups must be preserved" [28]. As a consequence, even the UNESCO World Heritage List has included sites representing standardised solutions such as the city of Le Havre [29]. Debates on the wider environment in the heritage discourse have a significant consequence: more and more artefacts of everyday life are being discussed as potentially valuable and under threat. This factor is crucial in assessing the legacy of the twentieth century in general and the Soviet legacy in particular, since a significant part of these constructions was based on standard typologies and technologies [30,31]. In this regard, the twentieth-century legacy contains both architecturally exceptional landmarks and, at the same time, less significant buildings, which also require to be assessed.

### 3. Dissonance of the Twentieth-Century Heritage

Heritage can influence how people remember their pasts, but at the same time it can affect how they build their identities as well. According to Macdonald, heritage can be described as physical proof or a material representation of identity or culture, even if they were built only a couple of years ago [32]. However, there is a certain kind of heritage, i.e., the dissonant heritage, that is not always agreed upon. Tunbridge and Ashworth define *dissonant heritage* as a particular type of heritage that is unwanted due to it containing discordance [33]. Frequently, identifying a heritage object as dissonant is related to the way it is perceived. As Smith states, heritage is about the promotion of an agreed version of history between the state-sanctioned cultural institutions and elites who control the cultural and social tensions in the present [34]. Furthermore, according to Timothy and Boyd, most of the time, the uses of national heritage reveal the exclusion of the past or present role of minority groups or support a particular social, ethnic, political, economic, or cultural hierarchy and hegemony [35]. Dissonant heritage can easily occur due to the unwanted or unappreciated past in cosmopolitan or multi-ethnic societies. However, as it might be the case in the present, it can be affected by present phenomena, such as immigration, multiculturalism, and/or transnationalism since they might be more likely to focus on the protection of a certain image or identity [36]. Therefore, it can be stated that, it is not merely related to the features of the heritage object, but it is also related to the way the object is interpreted. In that regard, *who* interprets, and *how* it is interpreted are particularly important factors in the evaluation of dissonant heritage.

The interpretation can be affected by various aspects, such as the priorities of the time or political, geopolitical, and ideological circumstances. These often occur in places where minority cultural heritage has surfaced again in recent periods, which can cause nationalistic reactions through distortions in the local narrative or the regions with complex histories [33]. Especially the problematic relations between the various groups before, during, and after World War II, in Europe and the world, with the collaboration of Nazi or Soviet authorities followed by the impact of the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the 1990s. All these events created a difficult situation in the Balkans and Baltic states regarding collective memories, which were shaped in these periods. Unfortunately, these memories were disregarded for a while by neither investigating in-depth nor openly facing and discussing, which affected the approach towards architectural objects and heritage.

In the case of Northern Macedonia, the government that was in power between 2006 to 2017, decided to rebuild central Skopje and make changes to the post-1963 modernist buildings, which were constructed in the Yugoslavian period [37]. The buildings were remodelled and experienced a baroque-style facelift with added ornaments and statues, even though there was some harsh criticism towards it from the architectural community. At the time, none of these buildings was found valuable enough or protected by law as cultural heritage since they represented an unwanted heritage. According to Dimova, the rebuilding process was seen by some architects and the citizens as a healing power for the nation, which helped to fix the architectural and civilisational injustice inflicted on Skopje [37]. However, it changed the image of the city totally.

While the authorities wanted to promote nationalism in Northern Macedonia, in the example of Tatarstan, the aim was to promote and solidify the religious identity. The authorities in Kazan did not demolish the socialist heritage, but they made additions to the heritage areas representing the socialist past by constructing a mosque, which also affected the image of the city. As Kinossian states, all structures from the pre-Russian period were destroyed during and after the siege of the city; therefore, the existing citadel was built entirely during the Russian period [38]. It is crucial to note that, the case of Tatarstan should be viewed differently from other post-Soviet countries, since it is still a federal district in Russia. However, restoring this dissonant heritage and building a mosque in this area was not only a physical change in the city but it was also a statement that underlined the construction of a new history in the city. Therefore, it was a different approach from erasing the past.

In the case of the Soviet legacy, most of the post-Soviet countries are unlikely to see Soviet heritage as overtly dissonant, but the connotation of Soviet-ness is bound to provoke a reaction of rejection. Therefore, this legacy can be classified as undesirable, which is defined as the type of heritage whose physical remnants are the outcome of an identity that many in the present might wish to distance themselves from on the one hand. However, on the other hand, they can also recognise and identify this heritage as a part of their history [32]. This can be considered the same in the example of the Baltic States [39]. The evaluation of heritage can be primarily related to what elements of the past a society wishes to keep [35,40]. For a controversial heritage like this, it is critical to establish objective criteria for its evaluation and develop a better understanding of the circumstances of the time and their reflection in the present. Therefore, it can be essential to contextualise the heritage objects within history and in relation to other objects. One of the methods to achieve this is to perform framework analysis because frameworks can accommodate the identification of sites with troubled histories or dissonant heritage.

## 4. Theoretical Framework Analysis

Cities are complex maps of ideas, forms, and possibilities, revealing not only material forms but also intangible processes. As Albena Yeaneve states in her research on mapping controversies in architecture, "the design is neither in the mind of a sole architect nor in the outer framework of a society. It is always a composite" [41]. Referring to this, the history of architecture can be summarised as a constant attempt to find a balance between a complex reality full of contradictions and controversies and a utopian aspiration to create a spatial structure that reflects a stable, ideal cosmic (in antiquity) or social (in modern world) order. The process of defining value must reflect this complex nature of architecture. The article proposes a combination of framework analysis by the HTF and cultural reference as a methodological approach to this challenging task.

Goldsmith states that framework analysis is a form of thematic analysis that is based on comparison [42]. The comparison can be conducted on an organised structure of cross-sectional analysis that uses description and abstraction both inductively and deductively. Hence, framework analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting the key patterns that can be compared across cases and themes [43,44]. This approach can be efficiently applied to the assessment of cultural heritage since cultural heritage is a product with specific constraints. As it is stated in the Experts Meeting Report of ICOMOS in 2011, even though there are various events that occurred almost universally during the twentieth century, each was manifested in countless ways depending on the differences between time, place, and context [45]. Therefore, the developed frameworks of the comparative analysis of modern architecture should accommodate diversity and should be globally relevant.

One of the recently established frameworks is "The Twentieth-Century Historic Thematic Framework: A Tool for Assessing Heritage Places" (HTF). In the meetings during the preparation of this framework, it was agreed by the participants that the purpose of this specific framework is "to support the contextual understanding of the twentieth-century by recognising the global drivers, using typological prompts (uses/functions) to aid in global comparisons, and to suggest examples that illustrate these" [46]. Therefore, it supports the idea of identification of the narrative and not merely of the structure itself with a context. The HTF contains ten different themes that can assist in connecting these artefacts with the context: (1) Rapid urbanization and the growth of large cities; (2) Accelerated scientific and technological development; (3) Mechanized and industrialized agriculture; (4) World trade and global corporations; (5) Transportation systems and mass communication; (6) Internationalization, new nation-states, and human rights; (7) Conserving the natural environment, buildings, and landscapes; (8) Popular culture and tourism; (9) Religious, educational, and cultural institutions; and 10) War and its aftermath [17]. In many cases, a cultural heritage object covers more than a single HTF theme. Soviet mass housing for example, could be analysed both as an example of "rapid urbanization" (Theme 1), and "war and its aftermath" (Theme 10). While the phenomenon of mass housing represents

the universal dogmas of modernism, the theme of post-war brings to the foreground the experience of occupation, which is inseparable from World War II and the process that accompanied it. Therefore, the structure of the framework operates dynamically.

On the other hand, themes and their combinations unfold in unique temporal and spatial situations, which are far more subtle than described by the universal classifications of the HTF. Therefore, the HTF as a methodology requires to be complemented by a more flexible instrument to defining value. The article proposes identifying these local unique characteristics through the concept of cultural reference. The definition of heritage as a cultural reference was first mentioned in the Granada Convention while explaining the document's aim [19]. In this document, it is stated that one of the aims of the document is " … Recalling the importance of handing down to future generations a system of cultural references, improving the urban and rural environment and thereby fostering the economic, social and cultural development … " In that regard, cultural heritage is not only a tangible object but can also be any object that provides a reference to a certain theme or narrative. In other words, it can be used as a source of information about the living conditions of a society.

As it is identified by cultural psychology, every item or event in a cultural field, relates to other items or events, establishing the system of cultural references [46]. In daily life, citizens tend to experience architecture as a tool of communication, even while they acknowledge its functionality [47]. Hence, architecture is commonly recognised for its communicative and physical peculiarities. Identifying an architectural object as a cultural reference can provide information about different aspects of the analysed culture. The first aspect can be regarded as the social aspect, which contributes to the understanding of the different requirements of society at the time. Analysing the various functions and forms designated to the architectural objects can give information to the next generations on the dynamics of the society in a specific time. Additionally, examining the forms and materials used in construction can provide information on the technological aspect of the specific culture and the level of development of the society. In that regard, analysing the architecture of the twentieth century as a system of universal themes and unique cultural reference can be interpreted as an inclusive methodology aiming to avoid the unbalanced definition of value (Figure 1).
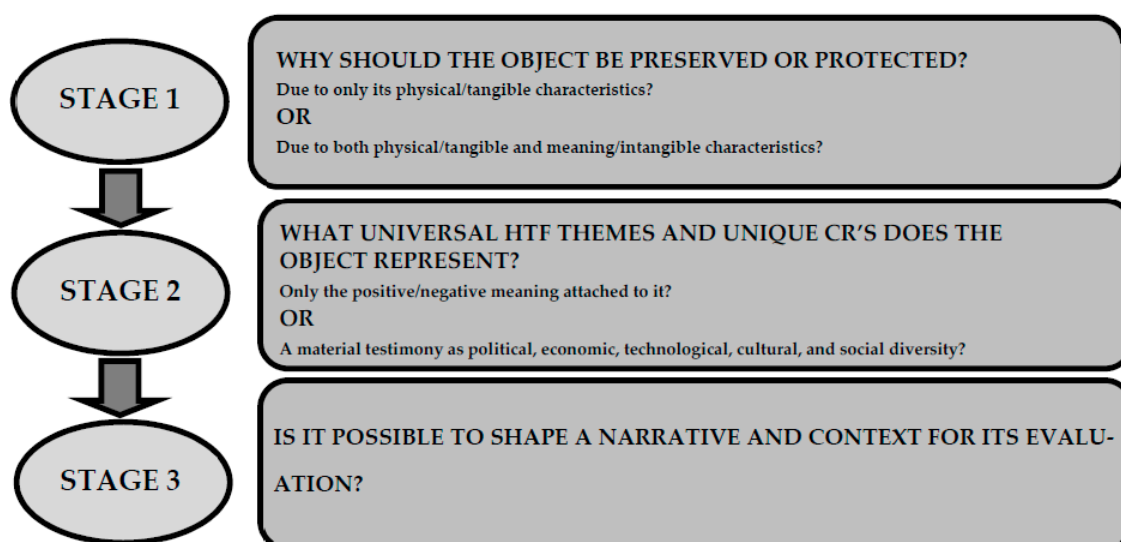


**Figure 1.** Overview of the identification of developing objective criteria for heritage assessment by cultural references.

For example, if industrialization and the Soviet ideology represent the universal nature of mass housing, then such a factor as the shortage of construction materials might be interpreted as a specific cultural reference. Specific local circumstances may be endlessly

diverse and will never fit into the strict system of themes and sub-themes proposed by the HTF. Furthermore, in many cases, the cultural reference might be intangible, for example, the local traditions of a community that is supposed to live in new industrial towns. Such an integration of global themes and local character complements *The Quebec Declaration* of 2008, which emphasises that the spirit of the place "is made up of tangible (sites, buildings, landscapes, routes, objects) as well as intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, festivals, commemorations, rituals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colours, odours, etc.)" [48]. These references, if identified, might give an additional layer of value. In this way, the system of theme-cultural reference becomes a universal and flexible methodology of value definition.

## 5. Discussion: Case Study of Soviet Architectural Legacy Lithuania

In public discourse, the standard position towards the Soviet legacy mainly represents two ways of interpretation. Part of society accepts this heritage as an inseparable fragment of history, which, despite being Soviet, is also witness to Lithuanian history. According to this point of view, destroying troublesome legacy will not destroy the past [49]. Preserving this heritage in this way provides an opportunity to explain history. The best example of this explanatory principle is the interpretation project for the Green Bridge sculptures in Vilnius (Figure 2). Opponents of this position consider Soviet architecture an indisputable product of the ideological system. The sooner the artefacts disappear, the sooner society will the remnants of Sovietism will be disposed of. Although somewhat simplified, the debate usually takes place between these two groups. Naturally, the Russo–Ukrainian war has considerably strengthened the political position of those who are determined to eliminate any tangible evidence of the Soviet past. In 2015, the Green Bridge sculptures were removed. Therefore, can the HTF contribute to this debate? What universal themes and local cultural references embody Soviet architectural legacy in previous Soviet Republics?



**Figure 2.** Symbolic imprisonment of Soviet sculptures in metal cages (designed by A. Ambrasas, 2014) on the *Green* bridge in Vilnius (architect V. Anikinas, 1948–1952). From the personal archive of A. Ambrasas.

Even though the architectural legacy of the second half of the twentieth century in the countries of the former Soviet bloc inevitably carries political weight, it is important to distinguish between the Stalinist and the post-Stalinist periods. Not only in politics, but also in architecture, these two periods of the Soviet regime have quite evident differences. The Stalinist architecture of *socialist realism*, as a specific result of propaganda and military demands, has become a long-lasting and explicit testimony to Sovietism even after the collapse of the Soviet Union [50]. Meanwhile, Soviet modernism, following the universally

accepted trends of the mid-twentieth-century, essentially embodies a universal aesthetic of the modern movement (Figure 3). If socialist realism, permeated by Soviet visual symbolism, is clearly linked to political propaganda, the ideological message of modernism is less visible and explicit. In terms of pure form, the aesthetics of mid-century modernism in the Soviet Union were not that different from their global counterparts. Therefore, while being an indisputable witness to the Soviet system, these buildings, can also be considered a testimony to the universal and global language of modern architecture as it was defined by Bruno Zevi [51].
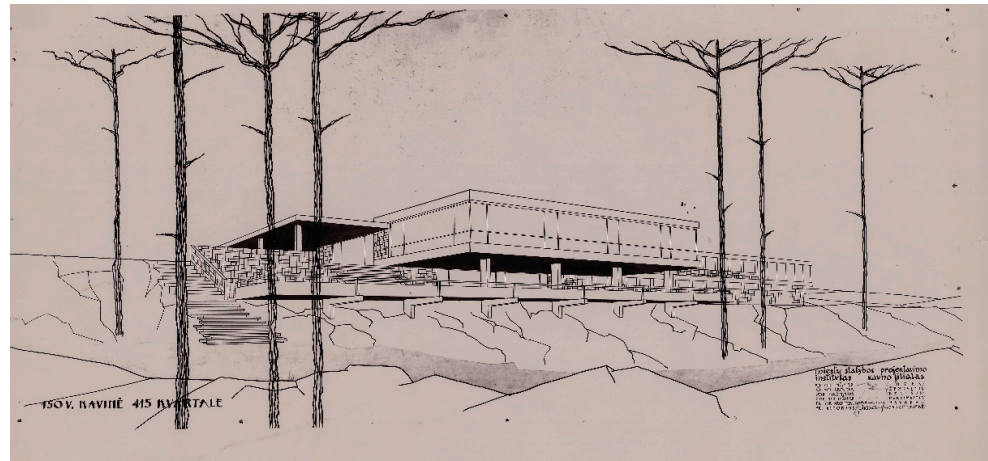


**Figure 3.** The design of the restaurant "Trys mergelės" in Kaunas, designed in 1965 by A. and V. Jakučiūnai. From the personal archive of V. Jakučiūnienė.

Even symbolically charged objects such as the complex of the Ninth Fort in Kaunas, Lithuania (Figure 4), or the Salaspils monument in Riga, Latvia (Figure 5), and many similar objects across the Soviet influence zone, embody not only the political agenda but also technological preferences. The aesthetics of the rough concrete brutalist surface does not convey explicit political message but is rather indicative of the international vision of architecture "based on rough materiality" [52]. In this way, Soviet modernism is an obvious manifestation of the universal theme of technological development (Theme 2), while socialist realism exemplifies war and its aftermath (Theme 10). However, despite the dominant political and economic framework, different parts of the Soviet Union, such as the Baltic states, developed their regional interpretation of Soviet modernism [53]. Therefore, on the level of stylistic preferences, universal trends are complemented by local specificities: local architects who seek to shape a local modernist tradition; a combination of universal and local building materials; functional typologies adapted to the local scale.

The technical quality of Soviet architecture can be another angle to implement the methodology of theme and cultural reference. Modernist technological development (Theme 2) in the Soviet Union turned into the cheapest but, at the same time, the worst quality construction (Figure 6). As it was articulated in the propaganda literature of the time: "economic interests in Soviet architecture are the primary, most important and determining ones. Interests of aesthetics and form, although quite active in influencing the content, expressing it in a correct and objective or distorted and subjective way, are nevertheless of secondary importance" [54]. Therefore, while being universally modern, these buildings also embody the cultural reference of being Soviet. The Soviet-ness of these structures is merely rooted in poor technical quality, especially when it comes to such elements of architecture as doors (Figure 7), windows, lighting, or the tiles of the floor. In this way, the value represents universal modernism and *Sovietism* a specific cultural reference that is not valuable and can be removed if necessary.

**Figure 4.** Architect V. Vielius during the process of the construction of the Ninth Fort monument in Kaunas, the late 1970s. From the Kaunas Ninth Fort museum.



**Figure 5.** The Salaspils Memorial Ensemble in Latvia, designed in 1967 by sculptors L. Bukovskis, O. Skarainis, J. Zarinš, and architects G. Asaris, O. Ostenbergs, I. Strautmanis, O. Zakamennijs. Photo by V. Petrulis, 2022.

**Figure 6.** Soviet neighbourhood in Kaunas, designed by Neringa Dičiuvienė, Reda Dringelienė, Alvydas Pranas Steponavičius, Raimonda Augustienė, and Gražina Miškinienė, built in 1963, photo by an unknown photographer, from the personal collection of V.Petrulis.



**Figure 7.** Standard aluminium doors in the memorial complex of the Ninth Fort in Kaunas. Photo by V. Petrulis, 2021.

One of the most convincing embodiments of the priority of economy and efficiency in Soviet construction is the so-called cascading structure of the social service. The aim of such an urban system was to construct the social infrastructure system, based on the principle of walkability. According to this principle, the urban territory must be divided into a network of districts and subdistricts, with each fragment being assigned for a certain number of predetermined service establishments, the size of which is characterised by various indicators per thousand inhabitants [55]. Such a system of typologies essentially

corresponds to the modernist principles of effective urban planning and represents the theme of rapid urbanization (Theme 1). Following this universal logic, over several decades, Lithuanian cities have been infused with a network of mass housing, public services, and industrial enterprises (Figure 8). Although at the same time, their poor technical quality, clearly represents Soviet-ness, and thus, encourages a critical assessment of their possible value.



**Figure 8.** Community centre for Dainava settlement, 1970s. From the archive of the Institute of Architecture and Construction.

Late modernism in the Soviet system can also be linked with the global development of architecture and the themes of HTF. Official statements, the Soviet Union of Architects, and other political institutions in the 1970s often stated that "industrialisation leads to the stagnation and monotony of architecture, narrows the creative possibilities of architects" [56]. In the Soviet press, it was even suggested that the standard construction "has a negative effect on a person's aesthetic imagination, taste and creative initiative and that the desire to live in such a house disappears" [57]. In the absence of advanced structural solutions, the search for local architectural identity has become one of the possible ways of overcoming these problems. In the context of Lithuania, one manifestation of this kind is related to a specific cultural reference—rural architectural traditions (Figure 9). The desire to adapt some of the details, materials, volumetric-spatial solutions or individual elements of vernacular architecture in a distinctive and creative way has become not only ideologically but also locally acceptable as an alternative to the Soviet version of modernism.

Finally, the second half of the twentieth century is unthinkable without mentioning postmodernism, which is related with the symbolic and spectacular nature of architecture and can be identified with the global theme of popular culture (theme 8). Obviously, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was no reason in interpreting Soviet postmodernism as a pop version of modernism. On the contrary, the Soviets regarded postmodernism as another expression of the capitalist order: "architecture, after all, had replaced its position as the leader of social progress with a submissive posture that satisfied the tastes of every client" [58]. However, such exceptional examples such as the Mykolas Žilinskis Art Gallery in Kaunas (Figure 10) testify that architectural Soviet ideology had local exceptions.

**Figure 9.** Restaurant "Ešerinė" in Nida, designed by Vaidotas Guogis, built in 1977. From the archive of the Institute of Architecture and Construction.



**Figure 10.** Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery in Kaunas, designed in 1981 by E. Miliūnas, K. Kisielius and S. Juškys, built in 1988. From the Central State Archives of Lithuania.

Thus, instead of having a single image of Soviet architecture dominated by ideology, deeper case studies reveal that the cultural references encoded in the objects of this period are much more complex, combining within themselves the Soviet matrix, but at the same time, global thematic frameworks as well. The Soviet modernism in Lithuania can be hardly treated as sole result of global trends represented as themes or, a straightforward result of Soviet ideology, or just the collection of local cultural references. It is a multifaceted phenomenon. Several examples from different decades have shown that the value assessment should, in most cases, be organized as a construction of complex narratives. Furthermore, value should be debated not only from the perspective of the narrative represented at the time of construction, but also through the architectural meanings developed over time. In this way, the methodology can be based on deep historical research, which consciously seeks to evaluate the object in terms of global themes, but at the same time in terms of local cultural references.

## 6. Conclusions

The still short history of twentieth-century architectural inheritance demonstrates that value defining is a highly dynamic process, and that the narrative usually has more facets than what is actualized at a specific historical moment, region, and political climate. The definition of purpose and value during construction can be very different from the value we place on the object from a retrospective conservation perspective. It is, therefore, necessary to introduce a degree of flexibility in the methodology of value assessment to grasp the dynamic nature of architecture and heritage conservation. The legacy of Soviet modernism is characterised by a particularly explicit gap of values. In a post-Soviet context, it is not only the functional or aesthetic preferences of a society that are important, but also the political shift. This means that studying Soviet architecture can help us understand how to value the controversial legacy of the twentieth century.

In terms of aesthetic and stylistic preferences, one can clearly identify the universal characteristics of Soviet architecture. *Socialist realism* obviously represents the global theme of war and its aftermath. Soviet modernism, on the other hand, is the unmistakable manifestation of rapid modernisation. However, these arguments are not enough to define the specific values of particular objects in specific post-Soviet contexts. To define value, it is also necessary to consider the local specificities, which manifest themselves as a combination of different factors (local architects, materials, social patterns, etc.) and are an equal part of the value. Both the post-war political ideologization of architecture and the overemphasized industrialization can be interpreted as dissonant factors from a contemporary point of view. However, acknowledging local cultural references enriches the global thematic grid with specific adaptations that become the basis for unique narratives and individual interpretations of values.

Therefore, a definition of value and significance should not ignore complicated topics. Just because a topic is complex does not mean that it should be ignored as a material testimony. On the contrary, it means that it requires an effort to shape the narrative and identify the broader set of related cultural references. When heritage objects, even if they are dissonant and unwanted, can be perceived not only as the accumulation of a physical collection but also as cultural references, their contemporary meaning and interpretation can help to establish a meaningful relationship between space and society that can become part of the value.

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