Coping with the Unwanted Past in Planned Socialist Towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta

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The article examines three cases of planned socialist towns: Visaginas in Lithuania and Tychy and Nowa Huta in Poland. The planned socialist towns, products of the socialist urban planning, were known as the workers' towns in the workers' state and as the outposts of socialism. After the fall of their respective socialist regimes, however, it became necessary to redefine the identities of these towns in order to cope with the socialist past. While the issue of socialist heritage has been researched by scholars, this research addresses an existing gap in the theory – how socialist heritage is presently used in those planned socialist towns that have little other symbolic recourse available. This paper examines the content of various institutionally produced materials, such as websites, tourism brochures, photo albums, and guided tours. The research reveals different strategies used in planned socialist towns to redefine their identities: i) active forgetting of the socialist past; ii) commercialization of the socialist past via tourism; iii) ironic imitation of the West, *vis-à-vis* de–ideologized images of "green and young" towns; and iv) bifurcation of consciousness into private remembrance and public forgetting of the past. The article presents the findings of the research project, 'Transformations of the Socialist Urban Utopias', funded by CERGE-EI (Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education – Economics Institute) Foundation, Prague, Czech Republic.

INTRODUCTION

From 1917 to 1990, socialist authorities built many so-called planned socialist towns across the Eastern bloc, both in the USSR and in the satellite socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe. During this period, such towns served to showcase socialism: they represented the workers' towns within the workers' state. After the fall of the socialist system, however, the towns not only fell into a state of great economic uncertainty, but also had to try to redefine their place identity. Place identity refers to an institutionally produced and/or institutionally supported discourse about a place, which, unlike individual opinions or group interests, is constructed on the basis of historical heritage. After the collapse of their socialist regimes, the planned socialist towns had to cope with their socialist past and somehow incorporate it into their new place identity.

This article examines three cases of planned socialist towns: Visaginas in Lithuania and Nowa Huta and Tychy in Poland. The aim of the research is to shed some light on how planned Socialist towns cope with their Socialist heritage and how this heritage has been incorporated into their new identity by looking analytically at institutionally produced materials (municipality websites, tourism brochures, guided tours, photo albums, and so on). While the issue of Socialist heritage in post-Socialist states has already been analyzed from different academic perspectives, this paper addresses an existing gap in the current research – namely,

the issue of socialist heritage in planned socialist towns that have few, if any, symbolic references aside from the socialist ones.

"DISSONANCE HERITAGE":
DEALING WITH THE UNWANTED PAST IN POST-SOCIALIST STATES

After the political transformations of 1990, the newly emerging post-socialist states of the former Eastern Bloc were obliged to reorganize and reform their political and economic systems, redefine their collective and place identity, and find ways to deal with their largely unwanted socialist pasts. The result has been a 'veritable orgy of historical revisionism, of writing the socialist period out of the past',[1] an ongoing negotiation of '[what is] privileged to be remembered, what is officially disregarded, and what, in spite of official efforts at suppression, resists forgetting'.[2]

The theme of identity is closely linked to the issues of heritage. Heritage is 'the contemporary use of the past'.[3] Through museums and other heritage sites, foreign tourists can be told the "national story", presented in such a way as to affirm and reinforce the national identity and self-image. The construction of identity is integrally bound to tourism discourses that seem to claim: "here is what we *are* (or *were*)." Thus the construction of tourism discourses is, in itself, a process aimed at constructing an identity.[4] Identities are produced and affirmed by the images and representations of a country constructed (or reproduced) for foreign tourists.[5]

Since 1990, there has been a growing amount of literature on tourism of the socialist heritage. The socialist heritage, which is in conflict with the new post-socialist identity, represents the unwanted past and the previous (denounced) political regime; as such it is referred to as a 'dissonance heritage'.[6] The nostalgia for the past might be experienced in different ways (for instance, with movies, museums, food brands, etc.); however, this does not mean that there is an actual desire to return to the past. Although some fractions of the population might have their own radicalized and nostalgic version of the past, the institutionalized memory, place identity and the use of the heritage depends on institutionally produced (or at least institutionally supported) discourses. In the former GDR, nostalgia for certain aspects of socialist life is known under the term of *Ostalgie*

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[1] Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 112.

[2] Nancy Adler, 'The Future of the Soviet Past Remains Unpredictable: The Resurrection of Stalinist Symbols Amidst the Exhumation of Mass Graves', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57 (2005), 1094.

[3] G. J. Ashworth and Brian Graham, 'Heritage, Identity and Europe', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie,* 88 (1997), 381.

[4] M. F. Lanfant, 'International Tourism, Internationalization and the Challenge to Identity', in *International Tourism: Identity and Change,* ed. by M. F. Lanfant, John B. Allcock, and E. M. Bruner (London: Sage, 1995) pp. 24-43

[5] J. Urry, 'Europe, tourism and the nation-state' in *n Progress in Tourism, Recreation and Hospitality Management: Volume 6,* ed. by Chris P. Cooper and Andrew Lockwood, (Wiley: Chichester, 1994), pp. 89–98. O'Connor, B, 'Myths and mirrors: tourism images and national identity' in *Tourism in Ireland: A Critical Analysis*, ed. by Barbara O'Connor and M. Cronin, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), pp.68–85.

[6] G.J. Ashworth and J.E Tunbridge, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict,* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996)

(derived from the German words *Ost*, east, and *Nostalgie*, nostalgia), which is expressed mainly via popular culture (such as in the 2003 German tragicomedy *Good Bye, Lenin* and music trends such as Ostrock) and socialist brands such as Vita Cola. While the phenomenon of *Ostalgie* has been analyzed by many authors, a few of whom are worthy of mention,[7] certain countries have a more ambivalent relation with their socialist past.[8]

The process of coping with the ambivalent and largely unwanted past, or 'dissonant heritage', has been analyzed. Ivanov[9] examines socialist heritage tourism in Bulgaria; Otto[10] works on representations of socialist heritage in Poland; Scribner,[11] Betts,[12] Castillo,[13] and Berdahl[14] focus their attention on museums and memory in the former GDR; Light[15] analyzes the socialist heritage tourism in Romania, Hungary, and Germany; Coles[16] examines "place promotion" in post-socialist Leipzig; lastly, Young and Kaczmarek[17] analyze transformations of post-socialist urban identities by looking specifically at the case of Lodz, Poland.

Post-socialist societies deal with their unwelcome socialist past in various ways. Young and Kaczmarek[18] distinguish three strategies in reconstructing place identity: 1) decommunization; 2) return to the pre-Socialist "Golden Age"; and 3) Westernization/Europeanization of the town. Trying to construct new identities, post-socialist communities look back to a pre-socialist "Golden Age", based on their pre-socialist heritage (palaces, castles, churches, monasteries, etc.), their culturally rich and glorious past, and their roots in history, which give a feeling of identity, stability, and continuity. This strategy was successfully applied in such post-socialist

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[7] G. Castillo, 'East as True West Redeeming Bourgeois Culture; From Socialist Realism to Ostalgie', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 9 (2008), 747-768. Charity Scribner, 'Tender Rejection: The German Democratic Republic Goes to the Museum', *European Journal of English Studies*, 4 (2000), 171–187. Paul Betts, 'The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture', *The Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000), 731-765.

[8] In Lithuania, for example, the introduction of the "Soviet Sausages" brand caused a robust public debate. For more, see Klumbyte, Neringa, 'Soviet Sausage Renaissance', *American Anthropologist,* 112 (2010), 22–37.

[9] S. Ivanov, 'Opportunities for Developing Communist Heritage Tourism in Bulgaria,' *Tourism*, 57 (2009), 177-192.

[10] J. E. Otto, *Representing communism: discourses of heritage tourism and economic regeneration in Nowa Huta, Poland.* University of Minnesota Ph.D. dissertation. Major: Geography. Advisor: Dr. Roger P. Miller (2008), p. 264.

[11] C. Scribner, 'Tender Rejection: The German Democratic Republic Goes to the Museum', *European Journal of English Studies* 4 (2000): 171-187.

[12] Betts, 'The Twilight of the Idols'.

[13] Castillo, 'East as True West'.

[14] D. Berdahl, *Representing the socialist modern: museums and memory in the former GDR,* Unpublished manuscript. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Department of Anthropology (2006).

[15] D. Light, 'Gazing on communism: heritage tourism and post-communist identities in Germany, Hungary and Romania', *Tourism Geographies* 2 (2000), 157–176. Light, D., 'An Unwanted Past: contemporary tourism and the heritage of communism in Romania', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 6 (2000) 145-160,

[16] T. Coles, 'Urban Tourism, Place Promotion and Economic Restructuring: the Case of Post-socialist Leipzig', *Tourism Geographies* 5 ((2003), 190–219

[17] C. Young and S. Kaczmarek, 'The Socialist Past and Postsocialist Urban Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Lodz, Poland', *European Urban and Regional Studies,* 15 (2008), 53-70.

[18] Ibid.

towns as Banska Bystrica, Slovakia;[19] Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina;[20] Tallinn, Estonia;[21] Novgorod, Russia;[22] and Warsaw, Poland.[23] It is obvious that such towns, having long pre-socialist history and rather rich pre-socialist heritage, can cope with the unwanted past and establish their new identities easily.

At the same time, these post-socialist towns try to assert themselves as European/Western – open, liberal, contemporary, and modern. Usually it means accentuating the town's connection with Europe, its good infrastructure, business-friendly climate, qualified human resources, latest technologies, environmentally friendly industries, and so on. Some authors refer to the status of the European Capital of Culture (granted to Krakow in 2000 and Vilnius in 2009)[24] or to the remodelling of the town by world-renowned architects, as was the case with Berlin.[25] Driven by the desire to be more "Western", the post-socialist towns are now emphasizing their links with the rest of Europe and rejecting associations with the Cold War era: in other words, the stress is on their "Western" nature and away from the politically-tainted boundary between Western and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the construction of new identities involves the deconstruction of the identities created during the socialist period. Decommunization means the erasure of the socialist past from urban space through the removal of the cultural landscapes of socialism, changing street names and demolishing socialist-era statues. Researchers agree that in many cases the socialist period is simply erased and the present is directly linked to the Golden Age of the pre-socialist past. This phenomenon is known as "the sleeping beauty complex", and consists in rhetorical acts such as, for instance, envisioning the reawakening of the past national glory,[26] or using metaphors of the "West" as a "knight in shining armor" arriving to awake Eastern Europe from its slumbers.[27]

While post-socialist societies tend to silence their past and identify themselves as modern and European, Western societies tend to see them as semi-oriental, i.e., different, deficient, dangerous, or exotic.[28] Light[29] argues that travel guides written

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[19] A. Bitusikova, 'Transformations of a City Centre in the Light of Ideologies: the Case of Banska Bystrica, Slovakia', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22 (1998), 614–622.

[20] C. Grodach, 'Reconstituting Identity and History in Post-war Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina', *City, 6* (2002), 61–82.

[21] J. Hackmann, 'Post-communist Tallinn: Great Architecture for a Small Nation', paper presented at the conference, *Cities after the Fall: European Integration and Urban History*, Harvard University, USA (March 2005).

[22] N.N. Petro, 'Old Russia's New City: Novgorod the Great as a Political Model', paper presented at the conference, *Cities after the Fall: European Integration and Urban History*, Harvard University, USA (March 2005).

[23] B. Czarniawska, 'Remembering while Forgetting: the Role of Automorphism in City Management in Warsaw', *Public Administration Review* 62 (2002), 163–73.

[24] H. Hughes, D. Allen and D. Wasik, 'European Capital of Culture and its Significance for Tourism and Culture: the Case of Krakow 2000', *International Journal of Arts Management*, 5 (2003), 12–23.

[25] A. Cochrane and A. Jonas, 'Re-imagining Berlin: World City, National Capital or Ordinary Place?', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 6 (1999), 145–164.

[26] A. Agh, *The Politics of Central Europe,* (London: Sage, 1998).

[27] K. Verdery., *The political lives of dead bodies: reburial and post-socialist change*, (New York: Columbia, 1999).

[28] M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Neumann, I.B., *Uses of the Other: the 'East' in European Identity Formation,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

for Western tourists promote Bucharest's legacy of communism, while local tourism promotion within Romania is focused on its pre-socialist tradition and expresses no interest in its socialist heritage. This situation creates a dilemma which Tunbridge[30] describes as "identity versus economy", or, to use Dujisin's famous quotation, 'Forget communism…. or sell it'.[31]

The dilemma is resolved through the decontextualization of the socialist heritage, i.e., removing the socialist symbols from the "normal" environment of daily life and creating a certain physical and/or discursive distance. Otto, in particular, refers to several strategies to achieve this with regards to the socialist heritage: *spatial reframing*, *spatial isolation* and *narrative reframing*. The *spatial reframing* is the case of the Berlin Wall: the Wall was mostly destroyed, and its remnants are "museumified" and divorced from their original social, cultural, and political context. The *spatial isolation* is the case of the Budapest sculpture park. In 1990, the city council decided to remove political statues of Hungary's socialist era and relegate them to a park on the edge of the city. The park was opened for tourists in 1993 and became one of the major tourist attractions in Budapest. This particular event also includes some elements of the narrative reframing, as it indicates a shift from legitimizing the Socialist regime to mocking it. However, *narrative reframing* is best exemplified by the case of a governmental palace in Romania, where the history of the building is reframed by silencing the socialist past and accentuating its link with 'the very best of Romanian architects and craftsmen'.[32] The socialist past is not exactly erased. In a certain way it is remembered: the socialist symbols are exposed in order to sneer and mimic the former political regime, to bear witness to its ferocities, or to emphasize the history of anti-socialist resistance. The "active processing" of the past makes history more palatable to the present time and identity, on one hand, while also making the place more attractive for investments and more suitable for integration into national and global economies, on the other.

THE PLANNED SOCIALIST TOWNS: MONO-HERITAGE COMMUNITIES

Coping with the "dissonant heritage" was dramatically experienced in the former outposts of socialism – the planned socialist towns. The planned socialist towns emerged first as the workers' settlements for socialist industrial enterprises. They, alongside their industrial enterprises, served not only economic aims, but also ideological ones: they created, both discursively and materially, the socialist working

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Kuus, M., 'Europe's Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe', *Progress in Human Geography,* 28 (2004), 472–89.

[29] Light, 'An Unwanted Past'.

[30] J.E. Tunbridge, 'Whose Heritage? Global Problem, European Nightmare' in *Building a New Heritage: Tourism, Culture and Identity in the New Europe*, ed. By G.J. Ashworth and P.J. Larkham, (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.123–34.

[31] Z. Dujisin, 'Forget Communism……or Sell It', *Unknown Albania, a case study: cultural and environmental tourism,* (Berlin: Inter Press Service Europe, 2007).

[32] Otto, *Representing communism.*

class in previously rural areas,[33] fostered political support and political loyalties towards the socialist system,[34] and integrated national republics into the larger economic structures of the Soviet Union.[35]

The planned socialist towns are also called 'mono-industrial towns'[36] and 'spaces of socialism'.[37] Well-known planned socialist towns include Nowa Huta and Tychy in Poland; Prypiat and Slavutich in Ukraine; Novoplotsk and Soligorsk in Belarus; Eisenhuttenstadt and Schwedt in Germany; Dimitrovgrad in Bulgaria; Angarsk, Komsomolsk, and Magnitogorsk in Russia; Sturovo in Slovakia; Dunaujvaros, and Batonyterenye, and Ajka in Hungary; Sillamae in Estonia; and Stucka (now Aizklaukle) in Latvia.

These planned towns were mostly mono-industrial towns with specific industries, such as nuclear energy (Visaginas, Prypiat), steel production (Eisenhuttenstadt, Nowa Huta), or coal mining (Magnitogorsk, Tychy). As previously mentioned, the towns were also designed as outposts of socialism: they were planned by leading architects, the living standards were above the average of the country (in Visaginas, it was twice the country's average,[38] and in Nowa Huta salaries were among the highest in the country[39]) and the socialist culture and way of life were openly celebrated. In other words, they were projects of social engineering designed to develop a new type of community and personality.[40] As model communities for socialism, they were meant to legitimize their socialist regimes, draw a line with the past, and signify the beginnings of a new socialist era. As Brown argues, these were the towns where communism had already been built.[41]

A common feature of planned socialist towns is their absence of (almost) any history prior to the socialist period. Most of the towns were established in poorly populated rural regions (Visaginas in Lithuania, Aizkraukle in Latvia) or expanded from mere villages (Tychy in Poland; Petofibanya, Batonyterenye, and Ajka in Hungary; Dimitrovgrad in Bulgaria; Sturovo in Slovakia). They were usually

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[33] M. Hamilton, and M. Hirszowicz, *Class and Inequality in Pre-Industrial, Capitalist and Communist Societies,* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1987). Koenker, D., 'Urbanization and Deurbanization in the Russian Revolution and Civil War', *Journal of Modern History,* 57 (1985): 424-50. Brunnbauer, U., 'Making Bulgarians Socialist: The Fatherland Front in Communist Bulgaria, 1944 -1989', *East European Politics and Societies,* 22 (2008), 44-79.

[34] A. Ryder, 'Growth Poles City in Poland and the Lenin Steelworks', *Geoforum* 21(1990), 229-40. Regulska, J., 'Urban Development under Socialism: The Polish Experience', *Urban Geography,* 8 (1987), 321-339. Stenning, A., 'Placing (post-) Socialism: The Making and Remaking of Nowa Huta, Poland', *European Urban and Regional Studies* 7 (2000), 99-118.

[35] A. Cinis, M. Dremaite and M. Kalm, 'Perfect Representations of Soviet Planned Space: Mono-industrial towns in the Soviet Baltic republics in the 1950s–1980s', *Scandinavian Journal of History,* 33 (2008), 226-246.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Stenning, 'Placing (post)-Socialism'.

[38] Algirdas Kavaliauskas, *Visaginas: istorijos fragmentai (1972 – 2002,)* (Vilnius: Jandrija, 2003), p. 258

[39] Michael D. Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland,*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[40] J.C. Fisher, 'Planning the City of Socialist Man', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 28(1962), 251-265.

[41] Kate Brown, 'Lethal Landscapes: the Soviet-American history of plutonium, radiation and the communities that learned to love and then fight over the bomb', Seminar held at University of Maryland (21 October 2009).

populated by migrant communities, which also implied the absence of any collective memory with regards to any form of shared past except for the socialist one. Here the socialist authorities started with a complete *tabula rasa*. The socialist media represented heroic narratives of victorious socialist labour, and the construction of the towns was celebrated as the leading project of the century. For example, the entrance to Visaginas was marked by the caption: "*Not everyone is allowed to live so generously: to build the town for the memory of people*".

Some of the planned socialist towns were named after socialist leaders: Visaginas (former Snieckus) in Lithuania was named after Antanas Snieckus, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian socialist party; Aizkraukle (formerly Stucka) in Latvia was named after the Latvian Socialist party leader Peteris Stucka; Dimitrovgrad in Bulgaria was named after Bulgarian Socialist leader Georgi Dimitrov; Eisenhuttenstadt in Germany was initially named Stalinstadt.

The planned socialist towns were also *mono-heritage* towns. Questions of heritage and identity, in fact, became a crucial issue during the post-socialist period. While other post-socialist towns established their new identities via decommunization, a return to a pre-Socialist "Golden Age", and Westernization/Europeanization of the place,[42] these planned socialist towns had no or little pre-socialist history, their identification with (Western) Europe was poor, and, therefore, the removal of the socialist legacy altogether was much harder to achieve (for example, housing district "A" in Tychy, containing large ornaments and sculptures of the working class heroes). Beyond the typical challenges of transition (inflation, privatization, unemployment, changing legal basis, etc.), the planned socialist towns were seeking 'a further remaking of place identity at a range of scales to legitimize new political and economic trajectories and to create places as suitable for integration into regional and global networks'.[43]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this paper, three cases of planned socialist towns (Visaginas in Lithuania and Tychy and Nowa Huta in Poland), including their self-representations and strategies of coping with the socialist past, are analyzed.

The theme of this research is place identity. This theme encompasses a broad range of symbols, monuments, landmarks, and narratives. In addition, place identity is created by processing a historical memory, active remembrance, and active forgetting. Place identity is never homogenous. Different social groups might maintain and try to reclaim their own memories and narratives. Place identities that are strongly incompatible with official and institutionally-produced discourse might never cross a political cordon nor ever be fully presented in public.

The focus of this research is institutionally-produced place identity. The research materials include all *institutionally*-produced self-representations of the towns: municipality websites, brochures, photo albums, tourism booklets, guide tours, and other institutionally-produced resources, depending on their availability in each of

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[42] Young and Kaczmarek, 'The Socialist Past'.
[43] Ibid., p. 53.

the selected cases (for example, while Nowa Huta is mostly promoted by and known for its "communism tours", Tychy might offer brochures only; at the same time, in Visaginas, urban tourism is actually absent and the city is represented by a municipally-published photo album). As the research is only concerned with institutionally-produced place identity, other sources such as local media, interviews, and international tourist guides (e.g. *Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, Thomas Cook Guide,* etc.) are not incorporated.

The primary issue is the institutionalized place identity of the socialist towns and the incorporation of socialist heritage into new place identities. This is investigated using content analysis and interpreting available materials. The aim is to reveal what kind of symbolic recourses are employed in the production of institutionalized place identity for each of the three towns, how socialist heritage is presented (if present), and how it is incorporated into the new place identity.

The research does not follow but rather takes into account the framework offered by Young and Kaczmarek.[44] This framework consists of three strategies: decommunization, pre-socialist Golden Age, and Westernization/Europeanization. In addition to the analysis of written materials, interviews with employees of local municipalities and tourist agencies were conducted. The interviews are not directly referenced, as their primary purpose was to learn about socialist heritage that might otherwise be "invisible". Other fieldwork included examining locations and identifying parts of socialist heritage which are not only unrepresented in the written sources but also unspoken (i.e., people did not mention them during the interviews). The period of analysis was 2010.

VISAGINAS: PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS AND PRIVATE IMAGINATIONS

Visaginas (Snieckus) is the satellite settlement to Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. The power plant was founded in 1973 in a decision by the Soviet leaders and it was intended to be the largest nuclear power plant in the Soviet Union. The town was built following the guidelines of the well-known Soviet architects V. Akulin and M. A. Belyi,[45] who had already planned other Soviet 'atomic' cities: Aktau (Kazakhstan), Navoi (Uzbekistan), and Sosnovyi Bor (near Leningrad).

In 1975, the cornerstone of the town was laid. The town was named after the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian communist party, Antanas Snieckus. The arrival of the first inhabitants was celebrated on 22 April 1977, Lenin's birthday. The town was mostly settled by workers from different areas of the Soviet Union. The construction of the plant was compared to Baikal Amur Main railway (BAM), the great socialist project of the century that was well known all over the Soviet Union.[46]

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[44] Ibid.

[45] V. Akutin, b. 1930, had already been awarded a Russian National Award for designing industrial towns. M.A. Belyi was a member of a planners' group for Akademgorodok of Novosibirsk. See Cinis, et al, 'Perfect Representations'.

[46] Kavaliauskas, *Visaginas.*

The power plant started operating in 1983. Due to the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, construction of the plant's second block was postponed for a year. Later on, due to the requests of the Lithuanian Green movement, construction of the third reactor was suspended and its demolition began in 1989. The national rebirth movement and the declaration of Lithuanian independence caused strong antagonism between the community of the town and the rest of Lithuania. At the very peak of the tension, the workers of the plant issued an open letter to the President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, asking for the town's political separation from Lithuania and reunification with the USSR.[47] In 1992, Snieckus was renamed Visaginas. Following the requirements of the EU, the first reactor of Ignalina NPP was stopped in 2004, the second in 2009. In Visaginas the processes of transition were complicated by the absence of any history prior to 1975, the very specific mono-industrial structure of the town, the Russian-speaking multi-ethnic migrant community, the strong pro-Soviet identities as well as the geographical and cultural isolation of the town.

For years, Visaginas was the fastest growing town in Lithuania, due to both migration and high birth rates. After 1990, with uncertainties about the future of employment and the nuclear power plant, the number of inhabitants stabilized at around 30,000. Visaginas is rather remote from other urban centers in Lithuania and difficult to reach, yet there are 6000 tourists visiting the information center of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant per year and 3000 visitors come to Visaginas for different sport and music festivals.[48] New identities and self-representation of the town are analyzed on the basis of two available[49] sources: an official website of the Visaginas municipality and a photo book, *My Town Visaginas*, which has been published as an initiative of the Visaginas municipality.[50]

The official website of the town's municipality, *www.visaginas.lt*, presents Visaginas as a green town with well-balanced architecture. It emphasizes regional parks, picturesque surroundings, and multiple lakes and camping sites; these are 'nice places for leisure activities, fishing, and sports both in summer and winter'. Visaginas is also promoted as having various sport and music events, such as an international festival of folk music and dance, 'Visaginas' country', and the Visaginas Mayor Cup Winter Rally Driving.

Visaginas' list of places of interest includes the symbol of the town in the form of a crane statue, the information center of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, an aquarium, an ethnographic museum, the cemetery and memorial for the victims of WWII, and three local churches. A monument to the victims of Chernobyl is not listed. In a short introduction of the town's history, the Soviet period is ignored and silenced, and the grand project of Soviet socialism, the construction of the new town and large power plant, is reduced to a single sentence: 'The construction of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant stimulated the development of the plans of a new

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[47] *Dobry Den* newspaper, 13 April 1990, pp.1-4.

[48] Interview with I. Stankeviciene, Specialist of Strategic Planning and Investments Division of Visaginas Municipality Administration, 23 November 2010.

[49] These are the only available materials. As Visaginas is not a popular tourism destination, other sources as brochures, and guided tours are absent.

[50] V. Bogdanovic, 'My town Visaginas = Mano miestas Visaginas = Мой город Visaginas ', *Photo Album,* (Svencionys: Firidas, 2009).

city'. Inconvenient moments of history, such as grand narratives of heroic Soviet labour, or dramatic reactions to the fall of the Soviet Union, are simply silenced: 'When the country regained its independence, Visaginas Municipality was established and Visaginas was granted the city rights'. The town's museum, which contained an exposition of visual and written information about the beginnings of the town and early constructions, was situated in one of the secondary schools in Visaginas but was closed before 1997; the exposition is now archived in the town's library.[51] Visaginas is represented as a green town of young and active people, a town that appears out of nowhere, with a dispersed and incoherent narrative of the local history.

Another significant publication is the photo album, *My Town Visaginas*.[52] The trilingual album (Lithuanian, Russian, and English) has been published by the municipality of Visaginas for the town's 35th anniversary. In the introduction, there are attempts to represent the town's history: to recover some pre-socialist history - the local lake first mapped in 1570, medieval roads crossing the territory, and the battles of Napoleon wars - and to reduce the spectacular developments of the Soviet period to a single sentence: 'In 1975, Visaginas began its life, life of a town which was called 'the nuclear town'.[53]

The content of the album is dominated by nature, sports, and arts. The dominant category, with nineteen pages,[54] is composed of images of nature and picturesque surroundings of Visaginas; thirteen pages cover different sport activities and achievements; thirteen pages are devoted to local youth, and twelve pages represent local arts, artists or art events.

Rather ironically for a planned socialist town, there are nine pages containing images of local churches and only three pages related to the Nuclear Power Plant. In addition, there are three pages about the town's architecture. However, the memorial for the victims of Chernobyl is absent. The cornerstone, placed by the builders of the power plant, is represented in a single photo: schoolchildren of Visaginas form a living flag to honour Lithuania and mark the millennium of its name in 2009 in front of the cornerstone — a dramatic manifestation of loyalty, an attempt at being 'more Lithuanian than Lithuanians themselves', to paraphrase the famous dictum of postcolonial studies.[55]

Within the official discourse and public self-presentation of the town, there is a collective amnesia of the Soviet past. This socialist past is suppressed and suspended but not cancelled. The socialist past is actively memorialized in everyday routine activities. In Visaginas, symbols of the Soviet period continue to be important points of reference in everyday life.

The cornerstone is still there with the engraving: "The town of nuclear energy will be built here, August 1975". One of the central streets is still named Tarybų (Soviet) Street. The monument to victims of Chernobyl remains as a place for

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[51] Interview with A. Kavaliauskas, Representative for Visaginas municipality, 25 November 2010.

[52]Bogdanovic, 'My town Visaginas'.

[53] Ibid., p 7.

[54] One page contains either one large or several small scale photos.

[55] "More English than the English" as cited in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures,*(London: Routledge, 1989), p. 4.

commemoration and annual gatherings on 26 April, the date of the catastrophe. Each year in April, the Chernobyl catastrophe is remembered in the local media.[56] Usually, the theme of Chernobyl is covered in a few large-scale articles, whereas the Day of Lithuanian Independence is commemorated by a single line. The Soviet heritage creates a feeling of continuity and allows for positive identification with one's past; it re-invokes the whole semiotic space in which an individual is an honourable person and where his or her life has significance.[57]

The need for continuity is observable from a trans-generational perspective. A popular restaurant and a coffee bar are called "Third Block" in memory of the third block of the nuclear power plant that was never launched. The restaurant and the coffee bar were opened in 2008, after the final decision on the plant's closure was made. It is a case of 'inherited nostalgia', nostalgia actively employed by the second generation immigrants for making sense of their identities.[58]

Memories of the Hearth, published in 2004, is a documentary novel written by forty-five of the first construction workers of the settlement and the plant. The book celebrates the triumphant narratives of the past, victorious construction of the new town, and heroic labour of the first construction workers. A local weekly *Sugardas* devoted a whole issue to the event, titling one of the leading articles: 'Let [the book] be a monument for all of us…'.[59] The past is seen as magnificent; it remains a bearer of meaning and certainty. The past is not cancelled, it is suppressed and suspended, and it circulates offstage only and is invisible to outsiders.

While any official representations are characterized by the collective amnesia of the Soviet past, daily life is saturated with nostalgia and focused on continuity. As Light has noticed, 'in post socialist countries, the desire to construct new post-communist national identities, characterized by a democratic, pluralist, capitalist and largely Westward-looking orientation involves "de-constructing" identities created during the socialist period'.[60] In Visaginas, the old identities have not been deconstructed and the "unwanted past" remains present in multiple forms, including "inherited nostalgia" of the first post-socialist generation (the restaurant 'Third Block'). The Soviet past is suppressed and suspended but not cancelled; it is rendered invisible in official representations but memorialized in daily life.

As stated, Young and Kaczmarek outline three directions of coping with the unwanted past and remaking the place identity: decommunization, return to the pre socialist Golden Age, and Westernization/Europeanization of the town[61]. The case of Visaginas adds new aspects to this framework.

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[56] 'Chernobyl: the catastrophe of the century. Five years after', *Dobryj Den Newspaper,* (17 April 1991), p 1. 'Twelve years after Chernobyl, Twelve years of Chernobyl related problems', *Sugardas Newspaper,* (24 April 1998). 'Commemoration of the victims of Chernobyl catastrophe', *Sugardas Newspaper,* (28 April 2005).

[57] J. Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[58] For more, see: N. Maghbouleh, '"Inherited Nostalgia" Among Second-Generation Iranian Americans: A Case Study at a Southern California University', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 31(2000), 199-218.

[59] 'Memoirs of the first construction workers', *Sugardas Newspaper* (11 April 2004), p 6.

[60] Light, 'Gazing on Communism'.

[61] Kaczmarek and Young,' The Socialist Past'.

The first aspect is rooted in the specifications of the town: poor references to the pre Socialist Golden Age and weak identification with Western Europe. Many inhabitants are migrants from the former USSR and are still connected, both emotionally and via kinship ties, with their homelands; while the town has no pre-Soviet history with which to identify.

The second aspect is that the planned socialist towns construct a de-ideologized model of a 'green and young' town. In the absence of any other significant and legitimate discourse, youth and nature become the key features of the new post-socialist place identity.

The third aspect is partial decommunization and bifurcated place identity. The signs and symbols referring to its socialist past are maintained (i.e., Soviet Street), and nostalgia for the socialist past is recreated in new forms (the restaurant "Third Block"), but rendered invisible for outsiders. In general, the socialist past remains a significant component of everyday life, yet official and institutional discourse denies or tries to minimize any imprints of the socialist past on contemporary place identity.

TYCHY: SLEEPING SOCIALIST BEAUTY AND KISS OF CAPITALISM

Tychy is a city in southern Poland, Silesia, about twenty kilometers from Katowice. Tychy was first documented in 1467 and developed into a small urban settlement. Between WWI and WWII, the population of Tychy grew to 11,000.

New developments started on 4 October 1950, when the socialist Government Executives made a decision to build the so-called New Tychy. The town was expected to relieve overcrowding in the Silesian region, where spontaneous and ungoverned industrial development resulted in deteriorating living conditions for many people. New Tychy had to be a symbolic city, the embodiment of new socialist principles of urbanization and architecture.[62] Construction started in 1951. New districts were designated by letters of the alphabet. The first two neighborhood units, A and B, were constructed as an example of socialist realist architecture, known for a large number of architectural details, ornaments and sculptures, such as a female worker holding a trowel, a miner and a steelworker, and a mother with a child. Estate D was completed in 1959, estates E and F between 1960 and 1964, and estates G and M were built during the seventies. The letters were associated with female names: for example, district M stands for Magdalena, X for Xymena, R for Regina, S for Stella and Z for Zuzanna.[63] When the town expanded, many nearby villages and settlements were incorporated within its boundaries. The incorporation of established communities with their own identities and life practices resulted in the absence of one cultural centre and made the town's common identity problematic. After the change of political regime in 1990, Tychy was divided again as five counties and villages were separated from the town.

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[62] Marek S. Szceczpanski., 'Planning, Housing and the Community in a New Socialist Town: The Case of Tychy, Poland', *The Town Planning Review,* 64 (1993), 1-21.
[63] Ibid., p. 4.

In contrast to Visaginas, a model town of Soviet socialism, the collective identity of Tychy involved contradictions between old inhabitants and newcomers to the town, a lack of a shared cultural centre, and noticeable disintegration of the town into separate housing estate communities. Though officially celebrated as an outpost of socialism, the town was popularly referred to as a loose collection of large housing estates, a 'socialist dormitory', a 'city with no character', a 'bedroom in a socialist style', an 'unshaped city', a 'desert', or a 'workers' lodging house for Silesia'.[64]

Today, Tychy is known as a new investment and for its successful economic development, yet the town's identity, socialist past, and socialist heritage remain ambiguous issues. New identities of the former "Polish socialist town" and representations of the "dissonance heritage" are analyzed on the basis of two sources: an official website of the Tychy municipality and a brochure, 'Tychy: A Good Place', which is available in most hotels in Tychy as well as on the town's official website.[65]

The brochure, issued in 2007, introduces Tychy as 'a good place, according to Andrzej Dziuba, mayor of the town': 'Tychy is an exceptional place. This exceptionality stems from a number of elements, which together make up the contemporary town identity: tradition and modernity, innovative industry and large green areas.'[66]

What makes the former socialist outpost a 'good place'? The content of the brochure is dominated by images of nature: eleven articles are on surrounding lakes, mountains, forests, local parks, green areas, outdoor activities, ecology, and environmental issues. The second largest category is the local car industry with eight articles, followed by the old historical churches of Tychy with five. Other relevant issues, with four articles each, are sports, art, the local brewery, and pro-European identities of the town.

The general image is of a green town, surrounded by lakes, mountains, and forests; a town with modern, progressive, and environmentally friendly industries, including FIAT; an old town with beautiful churches and an old historical brewery. Other constituent elements of the town's image are sports, contemporary art, and pro-European identities.

However, there is collective amnesia concerning the socialist past. The socialist urban expansion and projects of industrialization are briefly summed up with a single sentence: 'The industrial zone emerged in Tychy on the turn of the 1960s and 1970s',[67] and the collapse of Polish socialism is mentioned in reference to a 'special economic zone established at the end of 1990'.[68] The Socialist period is compared metaphorically to sleep and literally to non–existence:

> Before the war Tychy had only 11 thousand inhabitants. In 1950 the state authorities decided to convert it into a hundred-thousand-town. The "New Tychy" as it was called was supposed to be nothing more than a sleeping place for Silesia – the inhabitants were to commute to

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[64] Ibid., p. 14.

[65] *Tychy. Dobre miejsce,* http://www.umtychy.pl., pp. 1-40. [Accessed 7 February 2012]

[66] Ibid., p. 3.

[67] Ibid., p. 20.

[68] Ibid., p. 23.

work, to university and to a theatre to the neighboring towns. Today Tychy is a modern, vibrant town.[69]

According to the title, it is 'No Longer a Place for Sleeping.' To quote Young and Kaczmarek writing on Lodz,

> The key discourses surrounding this form of acknowledgement of the socialist past reproduce notions of the city as dormant in the socialist period – the "decades of oblivion" – lacking dynamism and lost under a cover of dust and apathy but awaiting discovery and restoration.[70]

In contrast to Visaginas, which appeared out of nowhere with no history, Tychy reappeared after decades of oblivion. It is the sleeping beauty awoken by the kiss of capitalism. Many authors call it 'the sleeping beauty complex', envisioning the reawakening of past national glory,[71] or using metaphors of the 'West' as a 'knight in shining armor,' arriving to wake Eastern Europe from its slumbers.[72]

The socialist period is marked by amnesia. Fifty years of socialism, the expansion of the settlement of 11,000 to a town of 100,000, and its particular role as outpost of socialism are ignored. The housing estate "A", or Anna, an exemplar case of socialist architecture and the single landmark of socialism, is not even included in the brochure,[73] but is listed among the places of interests on the official Tychy website. Ironically, even the local swimming pool - 'the most imaginatively winding place in town'[74] - receives more attention than the landmark of socialist architecture. Housing estate "A", part of the heritage discordant with pro-capitalism, is *actively forgotten*.

The present is directly and mysteriously connected to the pre-socialist past. In other words, Tychy is promoted as the place where the traditional and the modern are interwoven: 'There is a traditional touch to anything modern in Tychy … and modern touch to anything traditional'.[75] The convergence of modern and traditional happens in ironic ways, with modern industries patronized by Catholic Saints:

> Since 1997, the residents have been under the special care of St. Christopher – the patron saint of travelers, drivers, and the town of Tychy. Ceremonial church fair to celebrate his day is held every year in July. It is also an occasion to have your car blessed – the Silesian Archbishop blesses here several thousands cars from Tychy, the region, the country, or even from abroad.[76]

Both the post-socialist revival of formerly suppressed religious practices and the triumphant outbreak of capitalism serve to overshadow the socialist past and create new, more desirable identities.

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[69] Ibid., p. 19.

[70] Kaczmarek and Young, 'The Socialist Past'.

[71] Agh, *The Politics of Central Europe.*

[72] Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Post-socialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[73] A private company, Czarha Wolga, runs tours to Tychy along the "Red Route" which includes *Katowice Koszutka housing estate, Tychy A and the Brewing Museum in Tych.* For more, see: <http://www.czarnawolga.com/en/routes.php>

[74] *Tychy. Dobre miejsce,* p. 4.

[75] Ibid., p. 13.

[76] Ibid., p. 25.

Another ironic convergence of tradition and modernity is Piramida, a local spa and wellness center located at the Paprocany Lake. The Piramida, set up by a well-known Polish bio-energy therapist, has the same proportions as the Cheops pyramid, and is expected to have healing powers. The Piramida is presented as the symbol of Polish entrepreneurial spirit:

The great asset of the town are its residents – hard working, entrepreneurial, and open to new, even the most unconventional, ideas. That is why the Pyramid – an exclusive hotel and therapeutic centre - could come into existence here. It stands on the bank of the lake, on a "chakram" – a place, which is supposed to influence positively a human body.[77]

Having been constructed as the socialist urban and industrial outpost, with little or no symbolic resources for building new pro-European and pro-capitalist identities, Tychy is now seeking a new place identity in order to legitimize new capitalist developments 'with the focus on industrial and entrepreneurial prospective, business and investments friendly environment, highly skilled and qualified human resources, business friendly, and the omnipresent entrepreneurial spirit'.[78]

The Piramida, resembling a smaller version of the Louvre, seems at odds with the natural urban environment. It looks imposed, imported, and alien, like *the Cloisters* in New York that were disassembled brick by brick in Southern France, shipped to New York, and reassembled again in Fort Tryon Park. The Piramida is erected beside a busy road, facing a group of buildings typical of the socialist period, popularly known as *khrushchyovki*.[79] Ironically, it is the *khruschchyovki*, and not the Piramida, that meets the visitors' gaze and represents the real experience of the town.

Following Young and Koczmarek's framework of decommunization, return to the pre-socialist Golden Age, and Westernization/Europeanization of the place, the following conclusions can be reached:

1) Tychy's socialist heritage is marked by amnesia. It remains totally invisible in the officially produced and sustained place identity and there are no attempts to actively use or employ the socialist heritage in urban spaces.

2) Although Tychy has a sufficient amount of pre-socialist history, here, like in Visaginas, the key component of the new place identity is not predicated on the pre-socialist Golden Age but on the image of a young and green town.

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[77] Ibid., p. 37.

[78] For more on negation of socialist identities as "backward" and enforcement of pro-capitalist identities as "advanced and progressive", see Elizabeth Dunn, 'Slick Salesmen and Simple People: Negotiated Capitalism in a Privatized Polish Firm', in *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Transformation in the Former Socialist World,* ed. by Katherine Verdery and Michael Burawoy (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 125-150.

[79] Khrushchyovka (Russian: хрущёвка) is a type of low-cost, cement-paneled or brick three- to five-storied apartment building developed in the USSR during the early 1960s, named after Nikita Khrushchev who was then directing the Soviet government.

3) The pre-socialist Golden Age is a more important component of place identity than the socialist heritage, but both are overshadowed by new pro-European and pro-Western identities, namely, good infrastructure, modern industries, entrepreneurial spirit, and so on. Yet, ironic mimicry of the West, such as in the case of the Piramida hotel, produces rather controversial effects and, by creating such contrasts, merely illuminates the post-socialist nature of its surroundings.

NOWA HUTA: SOCIALISM FOR SALE

Nowa Huta, meaning simply "new steelworks", was founded in 1949 as a new town for Poland's first steel plant, the Lenin Steelworks (Huta imienia Lenina or HiL). It was constructed near Krakow on the foundations of the Mogila, Pleszow, and Krzeslawice settlements. The town was to become a center of heavy industry — an ideal place for socialist propaganda. The development of Nowa Huta and HiL was funded by a loan from the Soviet Union in lieu of Marshall Aid, and the town itself was popularly called 'Stalin's gift to Poland'.[80]

The reasons for constructing the town and the plant were mostly ideological, since coal had to be transported from Silesia and iron ore from the Soviet Union and since the products were shipped to other parts of Poland. It is broadly believed that the construction of the plant and the town was 'punishment for the region's weak vote in the 1946 referendum' in order to 'remake Krakow into a proletarian city'[81] and to 'facilitate the diffusion of the working class into Krakow'.[82] The construction of the steelworks and the town were 'a deliberate piece of social engineering',[83] yet it was not successful. In 1960, the local population revolted against the authorities while trying to protect a wooden cross erected without a permit. Later on, they engaged in an active campaign to construct a church, and in 1966, a church called Lord's Arc was built. In the 1980s, the local community strongly supported the Solidarity movement and took part in multiple street protests. After 1990, the steelworks was renamed after a Polish-born metallurgist, Tadeusz Sendzimir. With production outputs reduced and unemployment rising, the district was facing an uncertain future.

Situated in a suburban area of Krakow, Nowa Huta is easily accessible to tourists and has been positioned as a socialist landmark and authentic experience of socialism. As part of niche tourism, a newly emerging trend in heritage tourism,[84] the sites associated with particular historical events are marketed to consumers with shared interests. These niche tourism sites include, among others, the Nazi

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[80] Otto, 'Representing communism', p. 264.

[81] A. Ryder, 'Growth Poles City in Poland and the Lenin Steelworks', *Geoforum,* 21(1990), 223.

[82] J. Regulska, 'Urban Development under Socialism: The Polish Experience'. *Urban Geography*, 8 (1987), 328.

[83] J. Hardy and A. Rainnie, *Restructuring Krakow: desperately seeking capitalism*, (London: Mansell, 1996), p. 148.

[84] *Selling places. The city as cultural capital, past and present*. ed. by G. Kearns and C. Philo, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993) and C. Lury, *Consumer Culture*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996)

concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau;[85] the Jewish Heritage Route in Kazimierz; the Jewish district of Krakow; a Schindler's List Tour, which visits Oskar Schindler's Factory; a Krakow Industrial Heritage Route tour; and a tour called 'In the Footsteps of John Paul II'. Socialist heritage tourism is a specific niche within heritage tourism, but it exists on the margins and is tiny compared to the 'tour business in the Old Town, the salt mine in Wieliczka, or even Kraków's Jewish quarter, Kazimierz'.[86] These tours are offered by Krakow's municipality, Krakow tours, and Crazy tours.[87]

The Nowa Huta tour, offered by the municipality, includes the administrative centre of T. Sendzimir Steelworks; the Central Square; several residential districts; other outstanding buildings from the Socialist period, such as Swit Cinema, Peoples' Theatre and Arka Pana church; and also several sites of interest from the pre-socialist period, including churches and monasteries.

Krakow Tours offer a "Communism and Nowa Huta Tour". Their website contains a quote from *The Boston Globe*: 'Come visit historic Nowa Huta, where George Orwell's dark vision of a perfect industrial metropolis was executed with stunning precision. Until, that is, the workers rose up and overthrew Big Brother'. The company promises a 'unique insight into socialist Poland' and a first-hand experience with the 'bad old days'.

Crazy Tours offer several tours to Nowa Huta, including the Communism Tour, the Communism Deluxe Tour, and the Socialist Welcome. These tours are conducted in an authentic, vintage automobile — a Trabant or Fiat — and the guides wear workers' uniforms. The tours offer 'first hand details of what it was like living under the Soviet occupation'. For example, tourists can visit a 1970's-style decorated apartment ('Step into our time-warp apartment'), have refreshments in a communist-style restaurant, watch socialist propaganda films, and have a 'rare opportunity to eat pickled cucumbers and toast the "good old days" with our close friend, and socialist relic, Mr.Vieslav'.[88] In contrast to Krakow Tours' 'dark visions' and 'bad old days' of Communism, Crazy Tours offer an experience of the 'good old days', and the socialist period is represented with grotesque and irony. Yet, in both cases, Nowa Huta, the outpost of socialism, is the object of difference. It is marked by a high degree of otherness and secondariness; it is simply 'lesser', as Otto suggests.[89]

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[85] J.E. Young, *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), J. Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), A. Charlesworth, 'A corner of a foreign field that is forever Spielberg's: understanding the moral landscapes of the site of the former KL Paszow, Kraków, Poland', *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004) 291-312. and K. Till, *The new Berlin: memory, politics, place*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2005)

[86] Otto, 'Representing communism', p. 167.

[87] Websites for these tours can be found at the following addresses: www.krakow.pl/en/turystyka/trasy/?id=trasa_nowohucka/trasa.html, www.krakow-tours.com, www.crazyguides.com.

[88] Mr. Vieslav, also called "the legendary Communist worker, Mr. Vieslav", is employee of the tour company, sometimes providing driving services and occasionally performing the role of an "authentic communist worker" and a "communist relic".

[89] Otto, 'Representing communism'.

The local community is actively engaged in producing the self-image of Nowa Huta. In October 2006, the cultural centre, 1949 Klub, was opened by a group of friends in Nowa Huta. The centre is intended both for locals and for tourists, and the socialist heritage tours make regular visits. The center includes a cafe, a reading room, an exhibition area, and a small cinema. It is devoted to fostering local pride in Nowa Huta by telling the stories of the settlement from the perspective of the local people who built it and lived there, thus making their contributions to a sense of place possible. Expositions of personal photos or video materials are encouraged. In this way, the people of Nowa Huta avoid a passive exhibition of themselves and their neighbourhood and actively engage in the construction of heritage, claiming legitimacy for their own personal histories.

In a paradoxical way, the socialist heritage tourism is generating complex associations with the socialist past.[90] Continuous exposure to the tourists' interest and discourses imposed from the outside (Western tourists and Western travel guides) foster self-reflection and articulation of one's own past. These are the empowering effects of tourism; it allows positive identification with one's personal past and softens the effects of the dramatic experiences of disjuncture, discontinuity, and displacement without relocation.

With reference to the three strategies for transforming identities in post-socialist towns, (decommunization, the return to the pre-socialist Golden Age, and Westernization/Europeanization),[91] attempts to invent the pre-socialist Golden Age and attempts to Westernize/Europeanize are insignificant or absent in this particular case. The basis of Nowa Huta's new identity remains its socialist past. The decommunization has happened here not by removal, but by a narrative reframing of the socialist heritage.

The past might be reflected in many ways: from dark visions of the bad old days to happy visions of the good old days. In general, however, the past is elevated from minor and invisible to important. The tourism narratives unveil the complexity of socialist life (pre-socialist, socialist, and anti-socialist narratives), and the local population, instead of being a passive victim of the tourist industry, actively engages in constructing the image of socialist Nowa Huta, thus reclaiming their power and legitimizing their histories.

CONCLUSIONS

Planned socialist towns, the products of socialist urban planning, were all built to be model communities of socialism in the former Eastern bloc, fostering industrialization and supporting the political regime. For years, they were known as outposts of socialism. After the fall of the socialist system, the towns not only had to

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[90] See S. Frank, 'Communist Heritage Tourism and its Local (Dis)Contents at Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin', in *Negotiating Urban Conflicts. Interaction, Space and Control,* (Bielefeld, Materialities/Materialitaten, 2006), 195-207. See also: C. Young and D. Light, 'Communist heritage tourism: between economic development and European integration', in *Heritage and media in Europe - contributing towards integration and regional development,* ed. By D. Hassenpflug, B. Kolbmuller, and S. Schroder-Esch, (Weimar: Bauhaus Universitat Weimar, 2006), 249-63.

[91] C. Young and S. Kaczmarek, 'The Socialist Past.'

deal with problems of economic restructuring, but they also had to create new identities and cope with the trouble of their socialist heritage.

Many authors have analyzed the issue of socialist heritage in the former Eastern bloc. This analysis has applied and furthered the framework proposed by Young and Kaczmarek,[92] which refers to three typical strategies for transforming ex-socialist town identities: decommunization, the return to a pre-socialist Golden Age, and Westernization/Europeanization. This research has unveiled the complex situation of socialist heritage in the planned socialist towns Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta, which have no pre-socialist history and little or no other symbolic resources other than those from the socialist era.

Planned socialist towns, acting on the basis of limited symbolic resources, actively construct and promote a de-ideologized image of a young, green town. This is the case of Visaginas where migrants from the former USSR mostly inhabit the town. It also only has a weak identification with Western Europe and literally no pre-socialist history. For this reason, the myth of the pre-socialist Golden Age is absent, and attempts to Europeanize/Westernize are weak. A significant academic contribution from the case of Visaginas is that of bifurcated place identity. For example, some symbolic resources referring to the socialist past are maintained or recreated in new, "softer" forms, but the official discourse and institutionally sustained place identity deny or try to minimize any imprints of the socialist past on contemporary identity.

Tychy, in contrast to Visaginas, has both a rather rich pre-socialist and socialist history. Ironically, the key component of the new city identity is the image of a green town with multiple parks, lakes, and other places for outdoor activities. The socialist heritage has been all but forgotten and is literally absent from any kind of promotional materials. The symbolic resources of the pre-socialist Golden Age are partially mobilized to create a new place identity. Even though there are strong attempts to promote Tychy as a European/Western town, the ironic mimicry of the West (the case of the Pyramid hotel) merely creates contrasting effects and illuminates the post-socialist nature of its surroundings.

In Nowa Huta, attempts at inventing a pre-socialist Golden Age and at Westernization are insignificant or absent. The identity of Nowa Huta is strongly based on its socialist heritage. Decommunization has happened here not by the removal of socialist heritage but by its narrative reframing. The past is reflected in many ways — dark visions of the bad old days and happy visions of the good old days. The distancing from the past happens via ironic gazes, but in general, the past has been elevated from minor and invisible to important.

Planned socialist towns, coping with their socialist heritage and trying to redefine their identities, use ideologically ambivalent strategies. These include an ironic remembrance of the socialist past alongside ironic mimicry of the West, private nostalgia for the socialist past and public denial of its existence, and, finally, the use of de-ideologized images of green, young towns while other symbolic recourses are absent, insufficient, or considered illegitimate.

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[92] Ibid.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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