

A Town Without Heritage? The Case of Kohtla-Järve, Estonia

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The aim of the paper is to take the notion of heritage – selected features of the past used to contemporary ends – and apply it to former socialist town, namely Kohtla-Järve, Estonia. As Kohtla-Järve was founded 1946 being thus a “proper” socialist town, very few rural pre-socialist elements can be found in urban fabric. Certain amount of time is necessary to create the perspective of what is valuable for present and future purposes, thus soviet period establishments could not be heritage during that era, despite monumental. Heritage belongs to the past by definition therefore re-independence being “sandwiched” between rejection and nostalgia could institute socialist heritage but this is not the case. The stalinist-style centre of town has been ruined by rebuilding and colouring; nobody thinks of benchmarking mass-housing “microrayons” even more so as they are being also remodelled. The revival (retro) of reminiscing “good old days” of socialism through e.g. bars accumulating soviet symbolic has not reached Kohtla-Järve – the coat of arms of USSR is still present on type-projected cultural house. The most controversial is industrial heritage of oil shale mining and chemical processing: on one hand being a “casual” side product of urbanisation, industrialisation and immigration symbolising soviet power, on the other hand it is the manifestation of how people have worked the land – but still not widely appreciated and accepted as heritage being everyday scene. Contemporary end does not make use of selected features of the past in Kohtla-Järve. Why?

Conflicts related to the World Heritage Sites in post-communist urban centres

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The existence of socialist state caused a unique development of the urban place in the post-socialist countries. Before the change of regime the city centres had essential ideological functions that influenced either the structure of the communities living at these urban spaces and the architecture of the towns. As a result of this process the administrative and the residential functions were stronger in the citycentres and the CBD-role was not so strongly present. After the change of regime, due to the growing market processes and the perceptible effects of globalisation a rather fast transformation took place. The changes hit the countries unprepared. The transformation and the lack of legal regulation and non-governmental organisations produced a new situation full of so-far unknown, and now appearing problems.

The research focuses on the historical center of Budapest. My aim is to present the difficulties this UNESCO World Heritage Site had to face in the period of social transformation and has to face now. By interviewing the key-persons of the protection of monuments I would like to outline the opinion of the actors who try to protect the public good of the communities. The discourse analysis of the written media on the topics also forms an essential part of my research, as the frequent opposition between the profit oriented market and the cultural value of a places may become rather visible by using this method.

Art and public space in Romania after 1989

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Romanian post-communist city is still passing through a difficult time in relationship to what was the oppression period before 1989. Even today many traces of the past are being revealed in the ongoing practices in the city.

In the last years I have observed and made research focusing on the cultural actors involved in the city life. After that, I discovered how they often have encountered difficulties in approaching the public space. Through certain artistic interventions in public space they show us the real pulse of the present post-communist city, like samples, tests in the urban tissues. These proves are meant to reveal the urban development, the corruption but also the level of democracy in nowadays Romania. The fact that the state still holds tight of this public space is a clear sign of how the post-communist era really is. In this context, the art connected to public space can only be the perfect indicator of this situation underlining the political but also the social and economical input of the urban changes in post-communist Romanian reality.

Being close to the artistic community which has argued a discourse concerning the public space and its politics, I have realized that I am close to a community which tries to consolidate the civil society (being also a part of it), today still quite weak in our country.

All in all, analyzing public space is in fact analyzing one of the most important faces of the transition in the Eastern European countries.

From sacrum to profanum: transformation of post-communist places of power on Southern Baltic

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The transforming of urban landscape can be evolutionary or revolutionary. The latter named, revolutionary form of landscape development reflects a rapid and usually complete conversion of political and iconographical systems. The transformation of meaning, use and attitude to the obtained landscape was very often similar to post-imperial, post-capitalist, and now post-socialist cities.

The aim of the paper is to follow conversions of the most important places of a Communist city. The *alters* or *holy spaces* are very important part of the everyday practice, culminated during numerous feasts and celebrations. The myths and places were interwoven into urban fabric and become importance parts of urban and ideological identities. These spaces constitute ideological *axis mundi* of the city space, at the same time being copies of the ‘ground zero’ of Communism: Moscow.

The most important spaces marking communist ideology were headquarters of the communist party, squares (with the tribune) of 1 May manifestations and ideologically significant memorials. This project focuses on the transformation of *axis mundis* of communist system *sacral* spaces. With examples in chosen locations around southern Baltic (including Rostock, Szczecin, Gdańsk, Kaliningrad, Tallinn, Riga, St. Petersburg and Vilnius) we focus on the processes of landscape cleansing, reinterpretation, functional and formal changes of the repositioning of the former urban centres of power.