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Jaroslav Ira, Jiří Janáč (eds.)

Materializing Identities in Socialist and Post-Socialist Cities

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Preface

Luďa Klusáková

The focus on identification strategies explored in the volume Materializing Identities in Socialist and Post-Socialist Cities brought together a team of six authors, who studied and worked together the last six years. The authors are determined to examine not only what was happening in the cities in post-socialist countries in the last three decades as a result of their transformation, but they also delve into what had preceded it. We hope that readers will approach the book with the same curiosity which we experienced while working on the research with our students. Indeed, cities and the identification of citizens with their cities and regions have been present in the research interests of the members as well as of the students of the Seminar of General and Comparative History since its very foundation. This is clearly shown in our six collective volumes published by the Karolinum Publishing House in its series AUC Historica et Philosophica,[1] and in the five volumes published by Edizioni Plus, Pisa University Publishing House, and focusing on Frontiers and Identities in its Cliohres.net book series.[2] We were working very closely with a consortium of four universities the last six years within the Erasmus Mun-

1 Luďa Klusáková – Milan Scholz (eds.), *Studia historica* LXI, AUC Philosophica et historica 1 (2010), Prague: Karolinum 2012; Tim Kirk – Luďa Klusáková (eds.), *Studia historica* LVII, AUC Philosophica et Historica 3 (2004), Prague: Karolinum 2009; Luďa Klusáková – Karel Kubiš (eds.), *Studia Historica* LVI, AUC Philosophica et Historica 2 (2003), Prague: Karolinum 2006; Luďa Klusáková (ed.), *Studia historica* LIII, AUC Philosophica et Historica 1 (2000), Prague: Karolinum 2004; Luďa Klusáková (ed.), *Studia historica* XLI, AUC Philosophica et Historica 1 (1995), Prague: Karolinum 1997.

2 Luďa Klusáková – Martin Moll – Jaroslav Ira – Aladin Larguèche – Eva Kalivodová – Andrew Sargent (eds.), *Crossing Frontiers, Resisting Identities*, Edizioni Plus, Pisa: Pisa University Press 2010; Luďa Klusáková – Laure Teulières (eds.), *Frontiers and Identities. Cities in Regions and Nations*, Edizioni Plus, Pisa: Pisa University Press 2008; Luďa Klusáková – Steven G. Ellis (eds.), *Imagining Frontiers, Contesting Identities*, Edizioni Plus, Pisa: Pisa University Press 2007; Luďa Klusáková – Steven G. Ellis (eds.), *Frontiers and Identities: Exploring the Research Area*, Edizioni

dus Master Programme TEMA Territories – identities and development, having a common study programme and students. The first outcome was a volume co-authored by TEMA alumni and students, bringing together four generations of TEMA scholars sharing an interest in identification processes linked to nation-building, and often staged in cities.[3]

In the present volume, we decided to respond to the challenges of the latest turn in historiography, to the so-called Material Turn, and look more deeply into the materialisation of identities. The volume can stand on its own as a work of a contemporary generation of junior scholars, but, at the same time, it represents a logical continuity in research interests of the Seminar of General and Comparative History. "Materializing Identities" joined the efforts of lecturers, doctoral students and graduates of our TEMA Erasmus Mundus Master Programme. Jaroslav Ira and Jiří Janáč as the leaders of the team inspired the authors to obey a certain coherence in the application of the concept in question. The contribution of Natallia Linitskaya working in Prague and Nari Shelekpayev working in Montreal, both already advanced doctoral students of urban history, is based on their doctoral research. Olga Niutenko and Ivana Nikolovska were, together with Nari, our very first students of the Erasmus Mundus TEMA programme. Together, we experienced and went through the different intellectual challenges stemming from the academic communities of the four universities involved in the programme. The students fully integrated into our debates and thematically inserted into our research project. We can trace the beginnings of these projects in the early 1990s in the analysis of the uneven development, backwardness, and a variety of forms in perceiving otherness. Not only meeting the other, but also neighbouring, exchanging, competing, and conquering the symbols as well as spaces, was taken into account. Research into the inhabitants' identification with places, strongly related to the perception of spaces in the past, preceded our interest in materialising identities in cities. We are convinced that all of the social processes, all important changes in the urban environment, have a spatial and a three dimensional effect sooner or later. They cannot happen haphazardly, as anything that was and is being done in the city was intentional, and, therefore, it has to be understood as conceived and indeed planned.

Plus, Pisa: Pisa University Press 2006; www.cliohres.net keeps all publications in free on-line access of this research network of excellence of the 6th Framework of excellence.

3 Jaroslav Ira – Jan de Jong – Imre Tarafás (eds.), *Identity, Nation, City: Perspectives from the TEMA Network*, Budapest: Atelier 2015.

The volume is divided into seven chapters. It is opened by Jaroslav Ira and Jiří Janáč in a methodological introduction presenting the position of the authors in the research area, and by Natallia Linitskaya through an overview of the state of urban research in socialist and post-socialist cities. The core five empirical chapters show the possibilities of the concept's application. They are conceived as case studies devoted to the old and new capital cities responding to the challenges of post-war reconstruction, or systemic transformations, together with state disintegration, and the formation of new, successor nation-states. Natallia Linitskaya studied the post-1945 reconstruction of Minsk, with a particular focus placed on a Tractor Plant District as desired by new urbanism for new socialist citizens. In his two chapters, Nari Shelekpayev studied the transformation of Almaty and Astana into capital cities of new states, while Ivana Nikolovska analysed the project of rebuilding Skopje. On top of that, Olga Niutenko dealt with the changes in Chisinau and Tiraspol. Albeit the cities were in a variety of situations and perspectives, the authors share a constructivist approach to identification processes, and curiosity about the different identification strategies and their wider impact. The role of actors in promoting the changes in question and of the wider public on the receiving end was, in particular, the focus of the authors. When we read the chapters carefully, we perceive a common vocabulary, understanding of identification, and materiality concepts related to the cities under scrutiny. Materialisation of identities is an issue inviting for a comparative and entangled perspective in research and discussions. We sincerely hope that our volume will become a valuable contribution in this regard.

The authors were trained together, discussed a common reader of theoretical and methodological texts during their studies and research in the field. They were trained through the international and interdisciplinary workshop ambiance of TEMA, while they were benefiting from the Erasmus Mundus mobility support to circulate between Università degli Studi di Catania, Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, and Charles University in Prague. The volume's editors were their lecturers, supervisors and, last but by no means least, consultants. The authors are grateful to the TEMA Master Programme generously supported by the EACEA under contract number 512013-1-2010-1-HU-ERA MUNDUS-EMMC, while the research was linked to and supported by the Research Framework of Charles University PROGRES Q09 – History – Key for the Understanding of the Global World.

We would like to express our thanks to everybody who helped with the production of the volume, notably to the two reviewers, prof. Olga Zinovieva and prof. Zdeněk Uherek for providing us with invaluable remarks to each chapter and to the volume as a whole, to PhDr. Kathleen Geaney for the English revision of the whole manuscript, and to Mgr. Iva Sokolová who carefully reviewed the manuscript with respect to the formal aspects. We would also like to thank PhDr. Ondřej Vojtěchovský, Ph.D. and Mgr. Stephen White for their help with particular chapters.

Materializing Identities in Socialist and Post-Socialist Cities

Jiří Janáč – Jaroslav Ira

Introduction

When red tractors paraded on the main avenue of post-war Minsk in the early 1950s, it was not a simple demonstration of achievements by the local manufacturer. The scene was loaded with meanings – the products of a brand new factory, red tractors carried the name Belarus, thus symbolizing the modernization of the Belorussian nation. The parade was staged on a street built in the architectural style of socialist realism and named after Stalin, thus passing on the message that it was Soviet power that fuelled the uplifting of the Belorussian nation as part of the happy community of Soviet/socialist people. The parade in a way crowned the post-war reconstruction of the city destroyed during the Second World War. The former provincial centre had been transformed into the capital of a Soviet republic, modelled after other Soviet cities. Red tractors represented the transformation of the merchant town into a socialist industrial city – a tractor factory and housing for its workers occupied the central position in the new, Sovietised Minsk. In the eyes of observers, the parade blended socialism, the nation and the cityscape of the new Minsk into a symbolic fulfilment of a Sovietised version of Belorussian national aspirations.[4] Red Belarus tractors rolling along Stalin Avenue symbolized the materialization of the Sovietised Belorussian national identity in the built-up environment of Minsk, following exactly the famous principle of Stalin's imperial policy: "national in form, socialist in content."[5]

4 See the chapter on post-war reconstruction of Minsk by Natallia Linitskaya in this volume.

5 Martin Mevius, *The Communist Quest for National Legitimacy in Europe, 1918–1989*, London: Routledge 2010, p. 125.

However, from the perspective of this volume, the story of post-war Minsk represents merely an overture, a prelude to another, more recent transformation – the reconfiguration of the complex dynamics between nation-building, communism, and the urban-built environment which took place in the formerly socialist countries after 1989. The identity and meanings inscribed by socialist planners into the urban forms and structures of socialist cities, the messages embedded in the design and memory of Minsk's Stalin Avenue, were suddenly seen as obsolete and obtrusive under the changed circumstances of the political, social and economic context.

The collapse of the Soviet communist project was marked by a wave of nationalism which resulted in the disintegration not only of the USSR, but also of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. After 1989, socialist monuments were taken down and replaced with statues representing the new national narrative – for instance, a new monument celebrating the nomadic traditions of the Kazakh nation complemented the otherwise socialist architecture of the former Brezhnev Square in the Kazakh capital, Almaty, in 1997. Almaty, and virtually every city in the region, experienced a vast re-naming of streets, which, instead of the heroes of international communism, celebrated important figures from Kazakh national history.

Figure 1.1 Main entrance of the Minsk Tractor Plant, 2015.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

However, the nationalization of the urban fabric was not a simple straightforward process – material structures resisted blunt re-interpretation. Meanings, memories and identities inscribed in the material fabric of the city could not be easily erased and re-written. Despite the complex reconstruction of its main square (including the installation of the national memorial) in the first half of the 1990s, Almaty lost its status as national capital in favour of Astana in 1997. Undoubtedly, the identity of Almaty as the socialist centre of the Kazakh Soviet Republic, firmly encoded in the urban built environment, contributed to the decision to build a brand new capital, detached from history – in a way not dissimilar to the socialist construction of Minsk some half a century earlier.[6]

These two stories represent the main theme of this volume (and both are described in great detail in its empirical chapters), which examines the interactions between the parallel processes of the (re-)articulation of the national myth and the transformation of the urban space in the wake of the transition to global (neo)liberal capitalism. We focus on one specific facet of such post transformation – the materialization of national identities in the urban fabric – or, in other words, perhaps more in compliance with urban studies vocabulary, on the nationalization of post-socialist urban space.

While many if not all cities in the former eastern bloc struggled to reconfigure their urban memory after 1989, we decided to focus solely on capital cities which represent privileged sites of change. Not only that the "post-socialist landscape-swap" was "most clearly visible in large cities and metropolises,"[7] as the national governments could arguably afford far-reaching reconstructions of urban built environments, far beyond the means of a mere municipality, but centres of former Soviet (or Yugoslav) republics also turned into fully-fledged national metropolis overnight, historically, and above all mythically, central places of the new nations and nation states. They underwent massive reconstruction both on the physical and the symbolic level, becoming simultaneously globalized and nationalized. The dynamics behind such transformation was framed by the nationalist discourse which aspired to turn the whole city into a national symbol.

Starting from the assumption that the engineering (planning and development) of the new, modern, globalized national centres intertwined with rearticulating the national narrative, we argue that the urban space

6 See the chapter on post-socialist Kazakh capitals by Nari Shelekpayev in this volume.

7 Mariusz Czepczyński, *Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities: Representation of Powers and Needs*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2008, p. 109.

of post-socialist capitals can be seen as an arena in which often differing and uncertain (fluid) ideas and visions of the (imagined) nation have been negotiated in close interaction with the memory and the identity of its constructed environment. In doing so, we built on, but also go beyond the traditional culturalist perspective which has dominated the field of urban studies since the cultural turn.

Such an approach treats urban experiences and forms as more or less a passive stage, as dematerialized symbols and texts, and tends to understand their physical form as an expression of political values. Indeed, at least since Schorske's classic account of the proliferation of liberal ideas into the architecture of *fin de siècle* Vienna it is generally accepted that a built environment is, even unintentionally, a physical materialization of the values, ideas and power relations of the given era, and that architecture conveys meanings that designers, set within the broader network of power relations, inscribed in the physical structures.[8] Thus, the materiality of the city is discursively interpreted and imagined rather than "physically experienced"[9] and the city remains "the state of mind" and its material features function as hardly more than "background, arena, outcome, medium, obstacle, text or symbols."[10]

From such a perspective, "post-socialist urban transformation" has been described in literature from various angles as a major discontinuity. For instance Molnár has recently argued that central European socialist cities were "politically mobilized in the service of social change, first in socialist modernization and then in the post-socialist transition."[11] However, without denying the profound impact of such transformation, it seems that rather than an abrupt change, it should be described in terms of a contested and continuous process with specific internal dynamics. Rendering architecture and the built environment as a cultural practice whereby the state is "both materially produced and represented?"[12], as Molnár did, obscures various path-dependencies and continuities. As it seems, urban structures sometimes retain their specific ideological content in spite of regime change and act as carriers of memory and alterna-

8 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, New York: Knopf 1979.

9 Chris Otter, "Locating Matter: The Place of Materiality in Urban History," *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn*, Tony Bennett – Patrick Joyce (eds.), London – New York: Routledge 2010, pp. 38–59, here pp. 39–43.

10 Ibid., p. 43.

11 Virág Molnár, *Building the State: Architecture, Politics, and State Formation in Postwar Central Europe*, London – New York: Routledge 2013, p. 3.

12 Ibid., p. 9.

tive identity narratives. Are not the state and its official interpretation of history simultaneously opposed and contested by material urban space?

We think that the urban space of post-socialist capitals can be seen as an arena in which often differing and uncertain (fluid) ideas and visions of the (imagined) nation have been negotiated in close interaction with the memory and the identity of its constructed environment. While many cities struggled to reconfigure their urban memory after 1989 – some turned to medieval times, etc.,[13] capital cities adopted the identity of the national centre – and, in reaction, the official national history narrative was re-formulated (at least partly) in line with the material memory of the capital.

In this respect, it is important to note that the post-socialist (or rather post-Soviet) nation building seems to contradict, at least to a certain extent, the traditional vision of "eastern" nation-to-state nationalism as the opposite to the western state-to-nation trajectory.[14] The development in (post-)socialist capitals discussed in the volume seems to follow the western example – in the cases of Transnistria, Moldova, Kazakhstan and, to a lesser extent, also Belarus and Macedonia. The persisting urban memory of the capital apparently played an important part in the re-articulation of the national myth in such state-to-nation legitimation processes – either as a straw man, or as a symbol of national modernization. The resulting materialization of national identity in the urban space and its actual content thus reflected meanings and memories imbued in pre-existing physical structures. In the history of technology, this is often described as mutual co-construction of the material and the social.[15]

To conclude, this volume intends to create a small contribution to the growing literature on post-socialist urban transformation and examines the contested process of inscription of the national narrative in the urban environment. Contributors focused on a specific dynamic between socialist urban forms and national identity, thus overcoming the reductive understanding of nationalization of urban space in terms of a one-way imposition of the ready-made national narrative. Before such an examination is developed, the task of this introduction is to provide a basic

13 John Czaplicka – Gelazis Nida – A. Ruble Blair (eds.), *Cities after the Fall of Communism: Reshaping Cultural Landscapes and European Identity*, Washington, DC, Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Johns Hopkins University Press 2009.

14 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, London: Routledge 1998, p. 74.

15 Mikael Hård – Thomas J. Misa (eds.), *Urban Machinery: Inside Modern European Cities*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 2010.

conceptual framework for the study of post-socialist urban space, memory and national identity.

Materialized Memory of Socialism

Post-socialist transitions (under various names) have been studied from different perspectives on a variety of objects. The intensely dramatic alteration of political, economic and social relations has inspired scholarly interest across disciplines. Having been analysed from various angles, the transformation has been repeatedly described as an extremely complex phenomenon that comprised several mutually interwoven processes of economic, political, social and cultural change.

Urban areas became a privileged site for inquiry. Since 1989, sociologists, geographers and anthropologists have compiled an extensive body of knowledge about the complex transformations of urban space in Eastern European and Central Asian countries after the collapse of communism in 1989. The massive and to a certain extent uniform impact of globalization and capitalism on cityscapes (suburbanization, but also skyscrapers) across the former socialist Eurasia served as an invitation for researchers to study such "transition-zones" in more detail, focusing on the dynamic between the transnational forces of capitalism and globalization on the one hand and the local social, cultural and economic context on the other hand. During a complex and often contested transition, urban areas remained centres of economic activity and economic growth, cultural hubs and critical sites for the implementation of innovations. On the other hand, they also witnessed rising social segregation and increasing poverty. The bulk of the literature has been dominated by investigation and analyses of patterns of spatial transformation of urban forms and their economic context.[16]

This wide interest was motivated by the premise that socialist cities were different from western ones. As Czepczyński argues, "Post-socialist cities are post-socialist not because they are better or worse than other cities; they are post-socialist in the sense that they are different from

16 Kubeš offers a summary of major articles on European post-socialist cities published between 1990–2012 (over 180 in the high-profile journals). Jan Kubeš, "European post-socialist cities and their near hinterland in intra-urban geography literature," *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series 19*, Daniela Szymańska – Jadwiga Biegańska (eds.), Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press 2013, p. 19–43.

other cities."[17] From a cultural geographic perspective, such uniqueness resides in five historically developed attributes of the socialist urban landscape: overall spatial articulation (socialist cities are more compact), spatial scale (the grand scale of civic/public spaces, etc.), spatial organization (large public spaces), land-use balance (lack of functional diversity), and aesthetic ambiance (repetitive and bleak modernist buildings). The post-socialist change, then, is evident "(a) in spatial articulation – suburban growth and blurring of the urban edge; (b) in spatial scale – decreased development marked by diminished spatial and building scale; (c) in spatial organization – privatization of space; (d) in land-use balance – commercialization; and (e) in aesthetic character – pluralization of styles."[18]

As Natallia Linitskaya shows in her chapter, these unique characteristics have been recently studied also from a historical, rather than a geographical perspective. As she concludes, the modernist conception of housing and urbanism inspired urban planning on both sides of the iron curtain to a similar extent, but economic incentives (state-owned land) and the dysfunctional institutional set-up of the command-economy together with ideological imperatives created a unique socialist cityscape. Socialist planners embraced modernist thought about the ordering of space and people through the physical transformation of the constructed environment and aspired at establishing new form of social relations which would in turn "produce a new consciousness."[19] Thus, urbanization could be seen as a key factor in the production of the new, socialist society. In effect, socialist urban forms, even if seemingly stripped of all symbolic content, retain political meaning and significance embedded in their physical, material structure.

Over the years, socialist urbanism, a material expression of the ideas and values of socialism, became an integral part of the urban memory of the city. The city, through its various architectural styles, urbanist vision, etc., forms a specific site of memory in itself. It seems appropriate to argue that a "city remembers" through its buildings, its material development, which to a certain extent recorded the past and materialized the

17 Czepczyński 2008, p. 181.

18 Sonia Hirt, "Post-Socialist Urban Forms: Notes From Sofia," *Urban Geography* 27, no. 5 (2006), pp. 464–488, here p. 465.

19 David Crowley – Susan E. Reid, "Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc," *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, David Crowley – Susan E. Reid (eds.), Oxford – New York: Berg 2002, pp. 1–22, here p. 15.

memory of the succession of events.[20] The concept of urban memory is not an anthropomorphism here but indicates a "city as a physical landscape and collection of objects and practices that enable the recollections of the past and that embody the past through traces of the city's sequential building and rebuilding."[21]

Central to such urban memory are, of course, symbolic places, which Pierre Nora calls "lieux de mémoire." Nora argues that the collective memory of communities living in continuity with their past has been eradicated in the context of modernization – and substituted by "lieux de mémoire" – sites of memory: objects (both material and immaterial), which deliberately or not, have become symbolic representations of the collective memory of a given community (local, national, etc.).[22] In an urban context, these reminders, the purpose of which is "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting"[23] take the shape of places of memory (memorials, but also historical buildings and historical institutions such as museums), performative practices (commemorations and rituals) and, last but not least, individual objects, notably commemorative monuments.[24] In socialist cities, these took the shape of memorials devoted to the leaders and heroes of communism, and also of monumental architectural ensembles designed to display the successes and achievements of communism. However, other structures, too, less visible but imbued with meaning and memories acted as carriers of memory in an urban space – the above mentioned urban forms, created deliberately to influence the behaviour of a city's inhabitants. Representative socialist spaces changed in character over time, but retain their ideological content – the centrally positioned government centres and prestigious apartment blocks of the Stalinist period had been replaced since the 1960s with pre-fabricated residential blocks situated on the periphery.

The re-naming of streets and other urban place names, or toponyms, is another way of modifying space and conveying meaning through it – as well as specific architectural style and urban forms and the erection of monuments and memorials, discussed above, the renaming of public spaces forms a third major strategy in the materialization of identity in

20 Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, New York: MIT Press 1982.

21 Mark Crinson, *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City*, London: Routledge 2005, p. xii.

22 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 7–25.

23 Ibid., p. 19.

24 Ibid., p. 7.

urban structure. As Alderman claims, "place names create a material and symbolic order that allows dominant groups to impose certain meanings into the landscape and hence control the attachment of symbolic identity to people and places."[25] Scholars ranging from linguists to geographers to anthropologists have recently refocused their research on the political and identity-making power of toponymy.[26] In this volume, the issue is studied especially in the case of Kazakh capitals and Transnistria.

Nationalizing Post-Socialist Capitals

A relatively significant share of literature on post-socialist cities addressed the problem from the cultural perspective, focusing on the changing meaning of place and space.[27] The reconfiguration of urban space in conjunction with a reimagining of identity has become a popular topic in studies of post-socialist urbanism.[28] The change of meaning, in terms of semiotics we can speak of it as re-signification, took the shape of the renaming of streets and buildings, and also of pulling down socialist statues, etc.[29] It has been recognized that spatial transformations were accompanied by corresponding changes on the symbolic and representative level, characterized in the Eastern European context most notably by the so-called *Post-Communist Landscape Cleansing*, i.e., efforts aimed at the complete eradication of the memory of socialism from urban space – which concerned various symbolic signifiers and sites of memory, such as street names, statues and memorials, and also public spaces and individual buildings and blocks.[30]

25 Derek Alderman, "Place, Naming, and the Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Brian Graham – Peter Howard (eds.), Burlington: Ashgate 2008, p. 208.

26 Reuben Rose-Redwood – Derek Alderman – Maoz Azaryahu, "Geographies of Toponymic Inscription: New Directions in Critical Place-Name Studies," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 4 (2010), pp. 453–470.

27 See for instance the special issue of *The Geographical Journal* 165, no. 2, *The Changing Meaning of Place in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe: Commodification, Perception and Environment* (1999).

28 See for instance: Kiril Stanilov, *The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism*, Dordrecht: Springer Verlag 2007; Czaplicka et al. 2009; and the special issue of *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 4, *From Socialist to Postsocialist Cities* (2013).

29 Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, New York: Columbia University Press 1999, p. 39–40.

30 Czepczyński 2008, p. 109.

The memory of socialism has been replaced by a new narrative, predominantly shaped by discourses of national identity. Some authors even argue that the eradication of the socialist past was a result of the nationalization of urban space, rather than a consequence of the transition to capitalism.[31] Naturally, such developments have been most pronounced and visible in capitals, and especially in the capitals of new independent states, the successors of former Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and above all the USSR. There were, of course, important differences reflecting different stages and forms of development of national identities and their representation in urban space prior to the collapse of communism. Furthermore, different paths of political development created more (authoritative) or less (democratic) favourable environments for reassertions of national identity in the urban landscape. Despite such differences, which influenced its shape (architectural style, etc.) and dimension, the general pattern of nationalization of urban space in the wake of the collapse of communism can be observed across the post-socialist world.

However, certain parts of the material fabric of the city prove hard to integrate and re-interpret in line with the overarching national identity project. The most illustrative example of such conflict (or tension) can be identified in attempts to assign a new meaning to urban forms which embody the principles and values of socialist (Soviet) urbanism. Sometimes socialist identity cannot be easily erased – the best examples have been found in Poland in such cases as the former "new socialist cities" such as Nowa Huta, which had hardly any other symbolic recourse available;[32] some authors examined the struggles over the future of symbolic structures such as the infamous Warsaw Palace of Science.[33] Light and Young stress the persistence of the constructed environment, the cultural landscape, of socialist cities and its resistance to reinterpretation (both symbolic and functional) in the new socio-political context which results in their status of so-called "left-over" liminal spaces – the spaces "in between."[34] The practice of de-communization has been studied in detail by Czepczyński, who identified four basic strategies on how the

31 Alexander C. Diener – Joshua Hagen, "From Socialist to Post-Socialist Cities: Narrating the Nation through Urban Space," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 4 (2013), pp. 487–514, here p. 489.

32 Rasa Balockaite, "Coping with the Unwanted Past in Planned Socialist Towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta," *Slovo* 24, no. 1 (2012), pp. 41–57.

33 Andrew H. Dawson, "From Glittering Icon to...," *Geographical Journal* 165, no. 2 (1999), pp. 154–160.

34 Duncan Light – Craig Young, "Reconfiguring Socialist Urban Landscapes: The 'Left-Over' Spaces of State-Socialism in Bucharest," *Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography* 4, no. 1 (2010), pp. 5–16.