

## INTERPRETING POST-SOCIALIST ICONS: FROM PRIDE AND HATE TOWARDS DISAPPEARANCE AND/OR ASSIMILATION

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**Abstract:** Cultural landscape, as compilation of forms, functions and meanings, always reflexes the relationship of power and control out of which it has emerged. Major landscape transformations follow principal social revolutions. One of the recent major political transformations had been started in Central Europe in 1989 with the collapse of the communist regimes. Cultural landscape of Central and Eastern Europe has been carrying many communism related features, structures and procedures, represented by variety of landscape icons. The former symbols of the regimes and Soviet dominance had been undergoing liminal transformations since then. Some icons had been forgotten and disappeared, while some others have been incorporated into contemporary cultural landscape, usually thanks to transformed function and/or meaning. The former icons are left between oblivion and assimilation and can represent the application of the post-socialist memory policy, and readiness to accept or deny the traumatic past. The liminal societies of Central and Eastern Europe choose, sometimes unconsciously, what to remember and what to forget. Transformation of the former communist icons represents the cultural interaction of the place, time and society and can be seen as a litmus paper of the transformations.

**Key words:** Post-socialism, Central Europe, Cultural landscape, Icons, Transformation

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### Icons as cultural presentations of thoughts

Cultural landscape, as social construction, is a form of spatial and cultural negotiation between representation of the past and imagination of the future. Past is mainly facilitated by histories and memories, whereas future is conditioned by contemporary managing powers. Interpretations of history, together with past and present depictions are integral part of landscape discourse (Czepczyński 2008, Black 2003). The landscape idea represents way of seeing in which people have 'represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their

relationship with it, and through which they have commented on social relations' (Cosgrove 1998, 1). Landscape, similarly to language, can operate as a representational system – signs, places and icons can be read and interpreted as geosymbols or icons. Landscape is one of the most visible and communicative media through which thoughts, ideas and feelings, as well as powers and social constructions are represented in a space. Representations through landscapes are therefore central to the process by which the meaning of space is produced. Members of the same culture share same values and meanings and must reveal same or similar system of communication, based on mutually understood codes and signs. Cultural urban landscape is a system of representation, by which all sorts of objects, buildings, features,

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people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representation we carry in our heads (Ashworth 1998, Robertson and Richards 2003).

One of the main methodologies of cultural landscape research is, besides textuality, iconography. Iconographical interpretation of landscape, as highlighted by Cosgrove (1998) gives specific attention to the development of the study of landscape as a way of seeing or representing the world. Through their iconography, groups share the same values and visions of the world and unite them within common space of belief. Icons carry meanings, which they bestow on places where they provide roots to people. Icons offer an image of the world as much as they make of the individual self in the world: they are a worldview from a particular standpoint (Bonnemaison 2005). Iconography can be also a way to contextualize cultural landscape, as it is always based on identification, description and the interpretation of the content of images with an important significance to a particular culture (Cosgrove, Daniels 2004). The iconography shares aspects with an iconic object, and the philosophical definition of an icon, as a sign with some factor common with the thing it represents.

Powers, as one of the most important concept of social sciences, are usually defined as relation between groups or individuals, where one can influence or / and control behaviour of the other. Foucault (1975) analyses structures of powers and instead of focusing on localizable, dominant, repressive, legal centres, he turned it to bear on technical machinery and procedures, those 'minor instrumentalities', that, through a mere organization of 'details', can transform 'diverseness' of humanity into a 'disciplined' society, and manage, differentiate, classify and fit into a hierarchy every deviancy that can affect training, health, justice, and the army of labour (Foucault 1975). 'The tiny plots of discipline', the 'minor but flawless' machinery that colonised and made uniform the institutions of the state, derive their effectiveness from a relationship between procedures and the space they redistribute to create an 'operator'. Those micro-, mezzo- and sometimes macro-practices are often

visualized and literally petrified in landscape icons, as products and media of cultures and powers. Icons become then most visible and most spectacular symbols of powers, and, if they are very good icons, deeply connected with ideas they represent, and the same time they share all the fortunes and misfortunes of their creators. The radical change of structures of powers results than in similarly radical transformations of their products, especially symbolic representations such as icons. Landscape iconoclasm has followed many of the conflicts and wars, when destroying important symbol was aimed to break the spirit and changed representations, but the destroyed icon were not images of 'our', but 'their' gods (Jencks 2005).

### **What to remember, how to forget**

If cultures are socially constructed, so too is the past, manifested in memory practises of commemoration and rejection. The past has influenced contemporary identities and, to a further extend, future opportunities and developments. Historically conditioned cultural codings do not remain stable; they can and must be continuously reflected upon and negotiated. Landscapes contain the traces of past activities, and people select the stories they tell, the memories and histories they evoke, the interpretative narratives they weave, to facilitate their activities in the present and future. The process of selection of memories is conditioned or determined by several factors, most of which related to the past or circumstances. For Ortega y Gasset (1996) individuals and societies are never detached from their past, while history and reason should not focus on what is static but on what becomes dynamic.

Power over historical memory can be an important tool of historical policy, used to legitimise present actions. Orwell (1949) summarise the role of historical policy pointing that he who controls the past commands the future; he who commands the future controls the past. This statement can be exemplified by many cases of totalitarian and post-totalitarian landscapes re-interpretations. There is a historical tendency to discuss about

the supremacy of one track of memory over the other, what is most often done, but recently many researchers rather try to find and understand the differentiations between the tracks and understand them (Massey 2006). History is being transferred and transformed by memory practices. There are two main traditions in memory research: one is focused on 'who' remembers, the other is more concerned on 'what' is to be remembered. Both of the attitudes are closely connected and are essential to understand and interpret processes of memorising and recalling of the past (Ricoeur 2004, 3-4). 'Present is being overcasted by otherness of the past. This is why a memory becomes representation in double sense of prefix 're-', as something backwards and new' (Ricoeur 2004, 38). Reminiscence is not simply based on evoking of the past, but more on realization of the learnt knowledge, deposit in mental space. This memory is exercised, nursed, trained, and created. Command to recall can be understood as an encouragement to simplify the history (Czepczyński 2008).

A society can be analysed as a community connected by memories and obliviousness (Renan 1995). Every community needs some emotional binders, incorporated into its institutions, symbols and narrations. Interpretations of the past are always politically conditioned, and they often become political battlefields. Landscape icons anchor national, regional and local traditions of patriotism and commemoration, particularly during periods of political change. Each nation and social group has developed traditions and rituals, aimed to define sense of group identity. These traditions revolved around actions, places and persons and they came to be celebrated in literature, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture (Foote, Tóth and Arvay 2000). Memory is materialised and hardened in forms and meanings of heritage. History and heritage – that what we opt to select from the past – are used everywhere to shape emblematic place identities and support particular political ideologies (Graham 1998). Landscape of the times of structural transformations represents social and cultural trends. The transformation or liminal state is characterised by ambiguity, openness, and

indeterminacy. One's sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality is a period of transition, during which our normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to something new. The threefold structure of liminal rites consists of a pre-liminal phase (separation), a liminal phase (transition), and a post-liminal phase (reincorporation). Turner (1975) noted that in liminality, individuals were 'betwixt and between': they did not belong to the society that they previously were a part of and they were not yet reincorporated into that society (Turner 1975). Those liminal times can be branded by liminal landscapes: the landscapes not any more typical for the previous regime and planning, but the same time quite different from the aspired ones.

### Communist landscape iconography

Landscape always shows the basic temper of the times, and judges its character (de Botton 2007). Ideology and urbanism have been closely entangled in every political system and landscape. Landscape we can see now is the result of present and past ideologies superimposed on urban tissue, and additionally modified by cultures, economies and societies. There is a strong tendency to demonstrate and perform the power over people and landscapes. The tendency appears in every political system, but becomes remarkably strong in totalitarian regimes, like in every recent communist country of Central Eastern Europe. Power over practically any aspect of social and economic life has to be materialised and visualised, so nobody could doubt who is in power. The only and omnipotent communist parties ruled not only over economic, social, cultural life of a society, but also over the visualised and aesthetic expressions of everyday existence. Communist linguistic discourses and philosophical debates over the role of means of communication, including landscape icons, as communicative combination of form and meaning, created the significance of landscaping in its intensely philosophical context (Czepczyński 2008). Centralist

despotism was based on connection of masses atomisation techniques with techniques of forced and multilateral organization of the masses under strict control of the state. There was a specific paradox of social consciousness: simultaneous approval and refusal of the system by many of the ordinary citizens (Hirsizowicz 1980). Communist states oscillated between despotic, authoritarian pluralism, bureaucratic paternalism and other intrusive forms, visualised in cultural landscape features.

Socialism, as ideological system, was to some extent based on various myths, connected with rites, shrines and icons (Łukasiewicz 1996). Socialist rites required objects of celebrations and particular spaces of celebrations. Both of them were created in socialist cities: the socialist 'gods' had been produced, together with all pantheon of socialist heroes, celebrated according to ritualized cult (Satjukow, Gries 2002, Rembowska 1998). Revolution was considered as the prime 'god' and divided the universe into bad, before it, and good, which came after the Revolution. Many monuments and sanctuaries had been erected to worship Revolution, often of a dominate position in urban structure, located on the main squares or exposed on the border of green areas. The other category of celebrated icons included mainly the 'establishing fathers' of the communist system – Marx, Engles, Lenin, Stalin. Their cult was hierarchic, changing in times and supplemented by dozens of the others, lesser heroes, including military commanders, local martyrs and communist leaders. Many schools, streets, and factories were named after them, their official portraits decorated streets and offices, and monuments were erected in numerous squares and boulevards.

Socialist myth made mythic icons, representing their space and time was associated with building new, better world, work for advancement and the Party (Łukasiewicz 1996). It was the space of grand socialist designs and constructions, industrial, infrastructural, and housing. The iconic palces were best seen during celebrations of many, newly established feasts. The celebration required usually large, open spaces, playing

important ideological functions. Marches, manifestations, meetings, speeches and parades were crucial part of socialist ritual and ideological celebrations (Czepczyński 2008). Those celebrations created new sacrum in socialist cities, where the cult to the abstract or personal 'gods' was ritualised (Rembowska 1998, Satjukow and Gries 2002). Making socialist landscape significant and control that significance was one of the important tasks of the new communist regimes. Ideological features of cultural landscape can be implemented on many different levels, incarnations and manifestations.

Among the most important places of the communist city was its centre of political power – the central committee of the communist party. The Party was the other abstract 'god', present in socialist landscapes in 'houses of the Party' as its local headquarters had been often ephemerally called. The committees were sometimes located in the same building as municipalities, but in larger cities the Party had a separate, usually newly constructed building. Communist Party's quarters, both on national, regional or very local level were clearly icons of powers. In every country of Central and Eastern Europe, Central Committees of the ruling parties had been located in representational buildings in most prestigious locations (Czepczyński 2008). Most of them are classicistic constructions from the 1950s and often located on the river, as in Prague and Budapest. Rather modest, but stabile and substantial constructions looked always as solid as the system itself.

Celebration of the heroes and 'sacred' events was enforced by significant names and episodes answered the growing demand for new names of factories, streets, and new towns. In search for 'proper' names and codes, communists sized technically all leftist, social democratic, socialist, workers' rights traditions, heroes and heritages. They assimilated all the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century protagonists and activists as theirs. Their graves were turned into shrines, like the Lenin Mausoleum and the alley of graves under the Kremlin Wall on Moscow's Red Square or 'The Monument of the Socialists' at the Central Cemetery Berlin-Friedrichsfelde. Hundreds of

memorials and monuments had been raised, not only to the great leaders, like Lenin or Stalin, but also to numerous national heroes and idols. Additional coding was connected with monuments of the liberating Red Army. Since Soviet troops captured almost all of Central Europe; the communist powers followed the Army and thousands of war graves and memorials had been erected to commemorate the dead soldiers, as well as to strengthen the 'eternal friendship' between the Soviet nation and the nations of the brotherhood democratic republics.

The stylistic 'innovations' were accompanied by number of monumental icons, aimed to become focal points of the new urban establishments, by adding comprehensible texts to the settings. The grandest monuments had been raised to Stalin while he was still alive. Hundreds of other important figures were raised into 'altars' and shrines, often released by pre-communist 'dimensioned' heroes. The same time personality cult was spread around the region, even grander than Hitler's. The burdensome meaning of communism was usually left deeply coded into both external and internal structure of urban landscapes. The communist landscape had become very iconic, especially in urban centres; practically every town and city had been marked and stigmatised by iconic names, buildings, monuments and meanings. The official ideological and iconographical propaganda was to some extent ignored or marginalised in everyday practices, but it was, nevertheless, boldly visually present at almost every street corner or square.

### **Separation and elimination of unacceptable icons**

Problem of dealing with meanings and forms of the post-socialist leftovers was one of the most significant issues of post-socialist landscape management. Since the early 1990s communist ideological aspect of post-socialist landscapes had began to disappear. The opening landscape transformation tactic had been based on reflective or mimetic approach

of representation (Hall 2002), derived from believes that meaning remains in the icons, objects, places, buildings in the real world, while language functions like a mirror to reflect or imitate the true sense as it already exists. Elimination of structures and objects thought to be mimetic was most spectacular, theatrical and often most remarkable. Process of purging can be material or mental, and always follows the liminal separation of good / acceptable from the offensive / undesirable / unwanted. Separation is the first phase of liminality, which began just after first free elections in 1989 and 1990. Political iconoclasm has been typical revolutionary behaviour aimed to reconstruct and reinterpret the past by eliminating unwanted icons, strongly representing old system. The process had involved renegotiating meaning of historical events and persons and affected the way these events have been represented and commemorated in the landscape. After four decades of iconoclastic strategies implemented by the communist parties, new post-communist iconoclasm has been activated by local governments, associations, political parties, and individuals (Foote, Tóth and Arvay 2000).

Liminal transformation of Central and Eastern European cultural landscape consists of multiple separations, transitions and reincorporation, expresses in political statements and everyday practices and living spaces. Radical changes in landscape management resulted in spatial confusion and a certain level of anarchy. Newly elected self-governments had to cope with repeatedly changing regulations, as well as high expectations of the local communities. Personal taste of new decision-makers, as well as national history, heritage and financial recourses were mirrored in the features of the emancipated urban landscape of the early 1990s (Leach 1999; Sármany-Parsons 1998). What to keep and what not to keep is an indicator of social aspirations desired cultural identities. This re-formulation was aimed on both local societies, as well as toward investors and tourists to show both where are we coming from, or rather – where we would love to see us coming from – and where are we going. This selection of particular

historical events, myths and their political utilisation is typical for many transitional societies. Cultural and political history of nation, society and city has been constantly negotiated in landscape as an identity, based on what is remembered or rather recalled. Elimination of unwanted attributes of cultural landscape has been one of the initial steps of the post-socialist iconoclasm, which went through all Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s (Czepczyński 2008). The cities and regions have been cleansed from unsolicited features, to make places more habitable and acceptable for the liberalised societies. Many of the unwanted icons had been eliminated by physical destruction, followed by elimination from social practices and memories. Removal, renaming, rededication or just reuse of the symbolic heritage of a discredited regime was, in itself, simple enough, 'a new onomatology of places' (Węclawowicz 1997). The act of destruction of a monument, a mimetic symbol of the past and reviled power, was a particular act of catharsis, a way to start from the 'new beginning'.

Changing and eliminating unwanted features or residua was among the major demanded and sometimes risky tasks of the political landscapes decision-makers and managers. The drive of de-communization of public space was particularly strong in Poland, Romania and Hungary, as well as in the Czech and Baltic Republics. The key role was played by the new right wing, nationalistic and anti-communist parties and governments, which usually anchored their identities in anti-socialist, anti-Soviet and often anti-Russian narrations (Leach 1999, Sármany-Parsons 1998). Landscape features considered as reflecting communist ideas had to be eliminated from public spaces. Changes and removals made after 1989 were always selective. The question was not whether to remove all the statues put up during the communist regime, but to eliminate worst and physically unacceptable icons and oppressive signs of the fallen regimes. Some statues were removed, others were modified, or restored and reconstructed (Foote, Tóth and Arvay 2000). One of the first aspects of elimination of unwanted meanings was process of selection and purge of iconic emblems and

logos. Since 1989 each of the post-communist country has modified its national emblems and formal representational symbols. Red stars, together with hammers and sickles disappeared, to be replaced by crowns and historical symbols. Sometimes, like in Hungary, East Germany or Romania, the national flag with hole in a place of the socialist logo symbolised the 1989 revolution. The socialist iconic symbols and slogans swiftly vanished from shop windows, streets, train stations, houses, factories and even farms.

The fate of iconographical monuments of socialist heroes illustrates political and social transformation of the liminal societies. One of the most common practice in 1989 or very early 1990s includes elimination of objects impossible to reinterpret, like most iconic and often much hated monuments. The statues represented the fallen regime and humiliations, forged history and enforced supremacy of the communist party. In some cases, the process of icons' removal became a fiesta and symbolic gesture of liberation. The removal of Warsaw's Felix Dzierżyński statue was accompanied by cheered enthusiastic crowds, celebrating symbolic 'breaking the chains' in autumn 1989. The remains of the monument are stored by the municipal gardening company in the outskirts of the city (Dudek 2005). Several of the old icons in bronze were melted to make material for new statues, or were sold to private collectors, like the ones from Kraków and Berlin. Some other seems to be 'disappeared and forgotten'; including Sofia's Lenin statue removed in the late 1990s due to a road reconstruction and never returned to its former place or the Bucharest Lenin's monument, moved from its high pedestal in front of the 'House of Free Press' and laid down by the kitchen wall of suburban palace of Mogoşoaia, visited mainly by foreign tourists equipped with the Rough Guide (Czepczyński 2008). In some case, icons not eliminated in during early 1990s, might cause severe problems 20 years later, as it was clear by the case of the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn.

Despite of very loudly and theatrically performed, especially in the early 1990s, iconoclastic eliminations of the communist

monuments, relatively few statues and monuments were actually destroyed after 1989. In every country of the region many statues were literally re-positioned, de-pedestaled and removed to peripheral locations, but the Hungarian cases are best documented and analysed (Foote, Tóth and Arvay 2000). The most famous and the biggest 'cemetery of the monuments of the recent past' is located at Szobor Park in Budapest. Other 'de-pedestaled' iconic statues assembly is located in Kozłówka, Eastern Poland and become much modest congregation of Marxist memorabilia, based mostly on unwanted icons storage established during de-Stalinization times just after 1956. Sometimes, the creation of monuments' parks can be rather accidental and facilitated by local entrepreneurs, like in Lithuanian Grūto, where local businessman, enriched by exporting mushrooms and berries collected more than 80 various monuments and communist memorials from all Lithuania. The other congregations of iconoclasted icons include Bucharest Park of Totalitarianism and Socialist Realism and the Sculpture Park in Moscow's Gorky Park. Those specific theme parks are mostly visited by tourists, and become just another interesting attraction, but rather seldom a history lesson. De-sacralization and de-pedestalization of old icons brought them down to be merely a tourist attraction, often funny, sometimes funky and rarely reflective.

The same time, very pragmatically, only a few iconic constructions and buildings were mimetically communist enough to be destroyed, in course of cultural landscape cleanings in post-communist Europe. Since buildings can be much easier re-defined and reused, only most important ones had to be devastated. The Berlin Wall became the most popular icon reflecting division of Europe, as well as communist supremacy and isolation. The Wall became a symbol of the post-war division of Europe and as such had been destroyed and sold by pieces shortly after 1990. Only in 1999 the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov, Bulgarian communist leader, was torn down in downtown Sofia by the right wing royalist government. For many, the other victim of revenge and purge is Berlin's Palace of the Republic, by some vicious commentators

called the 'Balast der Republik'. The demolishing has begun in 2006, officially due to asbestos structure of the building, but for most of the East Germans the reason was clearly political, as eliminating prominent symbol of the late German Democratic Republic.

Another unacceptable function was connected with the revolutionary cult and shines of the system. There were hundreds of larger or smaller museums, which were established to educate, indoctrinate and propagate communist ideas all around the communist Central and Eastern Europe. Most of them had hardly any historical artefacts, but were popular destinations of organized and not fully voluntary tourism of the communist era. Museum of revolutionary or / and workers' movement was probably the most popular type of those ideological shines. Every major city in Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania and East Germany had to have one of those. None of the old museum exists anymore, almost nobody remembers the locations. The smaller buildings were by and large returned to the former owners, while some of the larger ones are still public edifice, including museums, but definitely not communism related. Some of them had changed names and some of their exhibitions, like probably the most famous of them, St. Petersburg's Museum of the Revolution, renamed in the early 1990s as the Museum of Political History.

### **From icons to almost unidentified objects or lost in oblivion**

Human memory, facilitated by processes of remembering and oblivion has a tendency to keep and treasure positive aspects of the past and forget as much as possible any traumatic and negative experiences. This memory strategy has been practiced by practically every liminal society, while forgetting former icons and its harmful connotations turned out to be one of the most important and often relatively easy tasks. Former icons had been removed, renamed; their functions drastically changed and in consequence eliminated form

everyday practices and memory. Sometimes post-traumatic societies block parts of their collective memory as a remedy to deal with distressing and hurtful past (Ricoeur 2004). This practice employs mainly omnipotent mercy of oblivion: features forgotten are not important any more. Since most of humans are inclined to keep positive memories and forget the traumatic ones, a hefty part of the former communist landscapes and icons are more than less forgotten by now. Many old icons simply disappeared from public view and people's mind.

Functional transformations were doubtless most significant in disappearance of the former icons. New roles, often contrary to the old ideological ones, cover the former meaning, while frequently leaving the form unchanged. The left-over landscapes of emptiness or silence, such as empty pedestals, can be meaningful only for those who dare or care to remember. The process of transforming objectives by fixing new intentions to the old icons can be best exemplified by the former communist party buildings in almost every Central and Eastern European town. Regional or municipal communist party quarters almost everywhere lost their primary intentions and significance. The former centres of power and supremacy were turned into much less dominant, but locally important public buildings like schools, offices, banks or culture centres. One of the classiest examples of the alteration of function and meaning is the former headquarter of the Polish United Workers Party in Warsaw. The 1950s structure, locally known as the 'White House', was reassigned in 1991 into one of the first and the biggest in the region Warsaw Stock Exchange and later to Warsaw Financial Centre. From the icon of the workers' power the building became merely an office building (Czepczyński 2008). Most of the other communist parties' headquarters faced similar de-classification, from the main source of power to an office building of secondary administration (Berlin, Budapest, Prague, Riga, Vilnius, Kiev and Bratislava), and in consequence less and less people still remember the locations of the former centres of powers.

Red Army memorials were usually monumental structures and played significant political function during communist era, as symbol of dependence of the Soviet Empire. Tanks, obelisks, grand sculptures of victorious soldiers have evoked many bad memories. Those monuments were often located in central parts of the cities, major crossroads or hills, so the local society was reminded every day, whom they should be thankful. Many of the Soviet war memorials were removed from the most exposed and central locations after 1989, but only in Central European countries and Baltic Republics, while in Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine the myth and sacrum of the WW2 seems to be still very important. Those cemeteries were maintained and protected according to the international conventions and treaties governing war graves. Most spectacular Soviet Army monuments and memorial were usually in the capital cities, like grand complex in Berlin Treptow. Some monuments had been relocated, many stayed at the same locations, but their roles and mental value for local societies had been radically changed. The icons of Soviet dominance, as they were for hefty parts of the Central European societies, had been transformed into not much more than cemeteries, usually relatively well kept. There are fewer and fewer people who, 55 years after the Second World War, still treasure the historical heroes, and their formerly iconic graveyards and memorials become just burial grounds.

After the initial purges of the early 1990s, there is still certain demand for a 'refuge' or 'asylum' for the old monuments. The process of statues separation and elimination has not been completed in Central and Eastern Europe. Some quite recently very powerful emblems of the communist period remain in public view, albeit somewhat off the beaten track. Some of them, even if stayed in their original locations, like the copy of the balcony, from which Karl Liebknecht declared the socialist republic in Berlin in 1918, attached to the façade of one of the governmental buildings in central Berlin, lost practically all its iconic meanings and became merely a strange neo-baroque decoration on the modernist building. Many smaller

memorials were raised since the 1960s till the 1980s, and most of them which remained on their former locations, simply had their inscriptions removed, what can be seen in many cities and towns. Monuments without signatures became insignificant and practically forgotten relict of the past. Left over and text-less monument become merely a curious sculpture, often hidden in unkempt green, like the small statue group on Corvin Street in Miskolc, Hungary. Probably sooner or later those derelict monuments will disappear from public view.

Communist monuments are still remaining in some of the East German cities, like popular with tourists Marx and Engels monument in central Berlin, but also in many Russian, Ukrainian (except for Lviv), and Belorussian cities, although many of them looks abandoned and sometimes removed to a less exposed location, like in Kaliningrad. Similar fate is shared by dozens of less political icons of the previous system, like the monuments of 1300 years of Bulgaria, erected by the late leader of communist party Todor Zhivkov. The monumental structures are in general in very poor technical conditions, including the one in central Sofia, are facing unknown future, and possible demolition. Similarly indefinite prospects are for the uncompleted iconic buildings at central Bucharest, like House of Radio or the National Library. All of those former icons are somewhere between memory and oblivion, between further existence through reinterpretation and possible eradication. Empty pedestals and former sites of the monuments, like the one left after world's largest Stalin monument in Prague, holes left after memorable plates, vast squares and broad avenues designed for grand marches and meetings, silently speak of 'the recent past'. The message of these landscapes of silence is only understood by those who still remember. Usually, many of the early transformed icons are well forgotten. Fewer and fewer people can remember the old, socialist street names, exact locations of the monuments or the sites of former communist party buildings, not even mentioning meanings and texts officially attached to those icons.

### **Accommodated icons: few roles of old features**

Changing context might not be enough to transform all aspects of the liminal landscape, but can symbolise social and cultural transformation. Complexity of the reinterpretation practices is mirrored in various attitudes and contextualization of different social groups. Frequently groups of youngsters use distinct system of representation than the older generation, so places and icons have separate constructivist meanings for them. Re-construction is usually related to re-incorporation of de-constructed features, where ideological significance has been reduced to its current market appeal. Reincorporation, according to Turner (1975) is the final rite, when the division between 'old' and 'new' becomes insignificant and eventually disappears or is used in new social roles. That phase have begun in Central and Eastern Europe, and most likely will be implemented by the following generation. Numerous cultural groups create their own systems of representations, based on distinctive construction which results from particular experiences and expectations.

One of the first recognised and accommodated icons became the Berlin Wall. The Wall was initially almost all destroyed, and partially sold as symbol of the collapse of state communism, while later, since the mid 1990s, the process of 'museumification' of the Berlin Wall has began, including its protection and even partial reconstruction, like on the Potsdamer Sq. or on Bernauer St. Other commendable example of quite disputable but rather popular assimilation and re-construction of the former communist icon is the largest and the tallest building in Poland, completed in 1955 and presented as a 'gift from the Soviet nation to the Polish nation'. Initially, and only for a year, the building was officially called 'Joseph Stalin Palace of Culture and Science', and still houses Polish Academy of Sciences, libraries, museums, theatres, cinema, congress hall, bars, restaurants, viewing platform and many other cultural and scientific entities. After long deliberations, since February 2007, the Palace of Culture and Science has been listed as historical heritage

and is legally protected from any reconstruction or transformation of form (Passnet 2004). For many the Palace is still a symbol of Soviet domination and communist tyranny. The same time, especially for younger generation, the Palace, actually older than Warsaw's Old Town, is the coolest and most funky symbol of the Polish capital city.

Due to the limited connection with the outside world, the socialist landscape had resisted, to some extent, the globalization flows until the early 1990s. There is a growing demand for grandeur and symbolism in the post-modern world which can be found in many features of socialist cultural landscape. Growing tourist demand and often limited local attractions strained local societies to re-interpret old icons to meet contemporary requirements and pressures of competitive tourist markets. The reinterpretation is based on preserving mainly 1950s features, as symbolic, museum-like objects, forgetting and stripping off any negative meanings. Old communist era landscape icons can re-packed and reinterpreted to meet contemporary place marketing demands. Historical patina has made the pompous Stalinist buildings and urban settings quite an attraction, which appeals to many tourists. Some of the grand designs are preserved as architectural and cultural representations of the past times. One of the most popular post-Stalinist urban arrangements includes the 1950s new town of Nowa Huta in Kraków, designed in neo-renaissance and classicistic style, known as soc-realism. Similarly, many public buildings in Moscow, Minsk or Kiev, Poruba district in Ostrava in Czech Republic, towns' centres of Eisenhüttenstadt in Germany or Hungarian Dunaújváros meet tourist demand for 50 years old and distinctive features. The Berlin triumphalist former Stalin Alley found favour with postmodernists, with Philip Johnson describing it as 'true city planning on the grand scale', while Aldo Rossi called it 'Europe's last great street'. The characteristic and recently renovated tiled buildings are also scene of the TV advertisements, films and music video clips (Kopleck 2006). New social context of nationalist pride has been attached to the Civic Centre of Bucharest, and especially to the Palace of the Parliament.

Travel guides and brochures proudly concentrate on magnificence and opulence of the building, constructed by Romanians, using Romanian raw materials, while the infamous initiator is practically nonexistent in local texts or contexts. All of these urban establishments are listed and are present in city sightseeing programmes, as well as guide books and tourist maps (Czepczyński 2008).

One of the classiest example of reconstruction of the cultural codification and re-negotiation is the grand head of Karl Marx in Chemnitz (former Karl-Marx-Stadt), Germany. The huge head stands on pedestal in front of a tall administration building on central crossroad of Chemnitz. 3 meters high pedestal still keeps the distance and almost still keeps some respect. The monument has been constructed in 1971 and has been a historical monument since 1994. According to Weiske (2002), 70% of questioned inhabitants see it as a symbol of the city, but in everyday practices the flat surfaces around it are only used by teenage skater, attracted by empty, unutilised, a bit isolated but good quality granite plates.

Other new but stylish use of the old iconic features appears in dozen of post-communist theme pubs and bars, located in many cities around the region. The bars, like Committee in Lublin, People's Republic of Poland in Wrocław, Under Red Hog in Warsaw, or exclusive CCCP in Kiev are focused on both local clientele and the tourists, searching for something familiar and funky. The interior design, full of communist propaganda and icons, as well as the names recalls the communist past, but only in funny, amusing, odd, curious or comical way. Those places are being promoted as 'the last secrets of the Communists', while styled pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin and other icons complete the interior design. Some of the exhibits are original communist features, while some others are recent copies. Many of those places are not only full of tourists, but usually also local students, for whom looking for post-socialist past is the way to self-identify in globalising and amalgamated world. For most of the young tourist visiting socialist theme pubs, the trip to the communist times is as exotic, and often evens more, as travelling to the other continent.

## Conclusions

Cultural landscape can be seen as a particular living laboratory of transforming societies and cities through functions, meanings and forms. Central and Eastern European cities carry different types on imprints of at least half a century of socialism. Production of new layers of meaning and different interpretation of post-socialist icons is an ongoing process. Cultural coding does not remain stable; it is a subject to change in time and space. It can or must be continuously reflected upon and negotiated. Each mentioned above icons is loaded with layers of meanings, texts and connotations, attached to it by various social groups of decoders (Czeczynski 2008). The chosen exemplifications of liminal landscape transformation are related to the selected feature or aspect of the icon, not the whole, usually complex, compound social constructions of the building or statue. It might be possible to illustrate all the liminal phases and approaches to representation by multiaspect detail analysis of just one grand icon, investigate transformations of various textures and meanings of that symbol. Each of the existing processes of social and urban conversions is facilitated by local and national powers and memories. The old and new semantic rulers transform the old icons via media, law and money, but despite their intentions and ambitions, the meaning of cultural landscape is always verified by everyday users, who give the real significance. After the rapid conversions of the early 1990s, the process of reinterpretation has settled down recently or entered another phase. Despite of Turner's (1975) chronological order, it seems that that sequence of the three phases might not always happens as it was shown above. Sometimes a number of the aspects of the pre-liminal structure are incorporated by some of social groups, while other features are simultaneously separated by other groups. De-communisation and transformations of meanings are always connected with cultural background of society, as well with aspirations and hopes. Cultural landscapes, as mélange of forms, meanings and functions, project and represent the contemporary matrix of powers, needs and values of the society.

The attitude towards post-socialist landscapes mirrors precedent humiliations and dictatorships, as well as present acceptance and reconciliation with own history and can be seen as explicit indicator of political and cultural transformations. The same time fate of old communist symbols represent attitudes towards the 'recent past' and can be seen as a 'litmus paper' indicating position in the liminal transformation. Memory, as the representation of the past, is an important political resource (Foucault 1980). The past manifested in memory practises of commemoration and rejection influences contemporary identities and, to a further extend, future opportunities and developments.

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