PROGRAMA DE DOCTORADO EN ARQUITECTURA

TESIS DOCTORAL:

TOURISM AND BEYOND: COMMODIFICATION OF COMMUNIST MEMORYSCAPES IN CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPE

Presentada por Jovana JANINOVIĆ para optar al grado
de Doctor por la Universidad de Valladolid

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PAVOL JOZEF ŠAFÁRIK UNIVERSITY IN KOŠICE

FACULTY OF ARTS

DOCTORAL THESIS

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CESTOVNÝ RUCH A ĎALŠIE: KOMODIFIKÁCIA KOMUNISTICKÝCH MESTSKÝCH ODKAZOV V STREDNEJ A VÝCHODNEJ EURÓPE

Study programme:	Slovak History
Study branch:	Historical Sciences
Department:	Department of History
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Košice 2022   **Mgr. Jovana JANINOVIĆ**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgment

Doing a PhD is an individual exercise – of perseverance, self-discipline and conscientiousness. Actually finishing a PhD is a collaborative project, requiring strong commitment and unconditional support of many people. Throughout my academic journey, I had a privilege to work alongside the scholars whose pedagogical and intellectual skills and expertise are only met by their extraordinary human qualities. Hence, my thesis supervisor, prof. PaedDr Štefan Šutaj remains a source of admiration, not only for his knowledgeability, kindness and compassion, but also for his bravery to embark on this journey with someone coming from the completely different linguistic and disciplinary background. With the subtle and sophisticated approach that only an extremely experienced academics can demonstrate, prof. Šutaj skilfully navigated between encouragement, criticism and support, allowing me to work at my own pace and grow as an independent academic, yet providing invaluable advice when needed. Equally fruitful was the cooperation with my second supervisor, prof. dr. Luis Santos y Ganges, whose inclination towards interdisciplinarity, methodological exigence and openness towards unconventional scientific endeavours enabled me to grow and sharpen my intellectual skills. Besides my supervisors', I also need to acknowledge intellectual, logistic and emotional support of professor Martin Pekar, whose enthusiasm and leadership supported me throughout the process and Katka Hajdukova, who besides being the world's most competent, engaged and helpful project administrator is also a truly amazing human being and most compassionate friend one may have. Thank you all for never losing faith in me, even when life circumstances seemed rather unfavourable to the achievement of this project. I also extend my gratitude to all of the urbanHIST community, for stimulating debates which sparked my intellectual curiosity and mutual support and encouragement. I wish you all success in your personal and professional projects, regardless of where you are at this moment.

As much as I owe to my fellow academics, I am also indebted to my family and friends. To my husband Nikola, first and foremost, for being the most hardworking, most determined and most brilliant person I know, and also the most dedicated parent to our 3 sons. I will probably never fully grasp his secret superpower for surviving the PhD-obsessed partner and three babies in the house. To my beloved mother-in-law Djina, for providing me hours of uninterrupted work and unconditional support in this process. I am eternally grateful for the quality time, love and compassion you and Dragana provided to

Univerzita P. J. Šafárika v Košiciach
Filozofická fakulta

ZADANIE ZÁVEREČNEJ PRÁCE

Meno a priezvisko študenta: Mgr. Jovana Janinovič, M.A.
Študijný program: slovenské dejiny (jednoodborové štúdium, doktorandské III. st., denná forma)
Študijný odbor: Historické vedy
Typ záverečnej práce: Dizertačná
Jazyk záverečnej práce: anglický
Sekundárny jazyk: slovenský

Názov: TOURISM AND BEYOND: COMMODIFICATION OF COMMUNIST MEMORYSCAPES IN CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPE

Názov SK: CESTOVNÝ RUCH A ĎALŠIE: KOMODIFIKÁCIA KOMUNISTICKÝCH MESTSKÝCH ODKAZOV V STREDNEJ A VÝCHODNEJ EURÓPE

Cieľ: The aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the phenomenon of commodification of communist memoryscapes in Europe, exploring the main strategies and forms of urban and mnemonic re-branding of post-socialist capitals. The thesis aims to enhance our understanding of actors, processes and dynamics framing the contemporary engagement with communist urban heritage, explore patterns of convergence in spatial, mnemonic and narrative organisations of communist urban experiences.

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CZEPCZYNSKI, Mariusz. 2008. Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities. Aldershot: Ashgate.

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Školiteľ: Prof. Dr. Luis Santos y Ganges
Katedra: KH - Katedra histórie
Vedúci katedry: prof. PaedDr. Martin Pekár, PhD.

Dátum schválenia: 11.11.2016

Abstract (English)

The aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the phenomenon of commodification of communist memoryscapes in Europe, exploring the main strategies and forms of urban and mnemonic re-branding of post-socialist capitals. Illuminating the variety of commercial solutions for dealing with "difficult" legacies of communism in Europe, the thesis aims to enhance our understanding of actors, processes and dynamics framing the contemporary engagement with communist urban heritage. Relying on grounded theory method, triangulated through multiple case study, participatory observation and netnography, the study examines patterns of convergence in spatial, mnemonic and narrative organisations of communist urban experiences. Elaborating commodification of (1) communist landmarks (iconic buildings), (2) suburban heritage (statues, parks), (3) underground spaces (communist bunkers) (4) cultural objects (museums of communism), (5) urban discourses (guided city tours) and (6) urban hospitality (communist restaurants), the analysis thus reveals different urban and narrative "commercial interventions" in post-communist urban landscape.

Through the in-depth analysis of major communist museums, tours, landmarks, bunkers, peripheries and hospitality spaces across Central and East Europe, the dissertation accentuates similarities and divergences in contemporary discursive, spatial and commercial treatment of communism. It reveals particular mechanisms and outcomes of commodification, which emerges both as a strategy to "contain" communism and "re-pack" it for tourist consumption. Ultimately, the thesis argues that commodification of communism is the essential aspect of contemporary tourist narratives, curatorial practices and urban organisation of communist memoryscapes. It identifies and interprets urban, mnemonic, discursive and experiential manifestations of commodification, arguing that commercial engagement with communism fundamentally challenges the prevailing mechanisms for "coming to terms with the past." It demonstrates that both suppliers and consumers of communist memoryscapes (co)produce and (co)participate in commodification process, most often through the interplay of tourism and entertainment industry. Finally, the study claims that commodification is reinforced through glocalisation, disneyfication and orientalisation of difficult heritage of communism, which further contribute to (re)locating specific urban context, (re)imagining particular urban history and generally changing the ways in which contemporary society values, exhibits and sources communism in urban space.

Keywords: post-socialist city; heritage tourism; commodification; communist heritage

Abstract (Slovak)

Cieľom tejto dizertačnej práce je objasniť fenomén komodifikácie komunistických miest pamäti v Európe a preskúmať hlavné stratégie a formy mestského a mnemotechnického rebrandingu postsocialistických hlavných miest. Osvetľujúc rozmanitosť komerčných riešení, ako sa vysporiadať s „ťažkým" dedičstvom komunizmu v Európe, si práca kladie za cieľ zlepšiť naše chápanie aktérov, procesov a dynamiky, ktoré rámcujú súčasnú angažovanosť v oblasti komunistického mestského dedičstva. Pomocou metódy zakotvenej teórie, triangulovanej prostredníctvom viacnásobnej prípadovej štúdie, zúčastneného pozorovania a netnografie práca skúma vzory konvergencie v priestorových, mnemotechnických a naratívnych podobách komunistických mestských skúseností. Rozpracovaním komodifikácie (1) komunistických pamiatok (ikonické budovy), (2) suburbánneho dedičstva (sochy, parky), (3) podzemných priestorov (komunistické bunkre), (4) kultúrnych objektov (múzeá komunizmu), (5) mestských diskurzov (prehliadky mesta so sprievodcom) a (6) mestskej pohostinnosti (komunistické reštaurácie) tak analýza odhaľuje rôzne mestské a naratívne „komerčné intervencie" v postkomunistickej mestskej krajine.

Prostredníctvom hĺbkovej analýzy významných komunistických múzeí, prehliadok, pamiatok, bunkrov, periférií a miest pohostinnosti v strednej a východnej Európe dizertačná práca akcentuje podobnosti a rozdiely v súčasnom diskurzívnom, priestorovom a komerčnom zaobchádzaní s komunizmom. Odhaľuje konkrétne mechanizmy a výsledky komodifikácie, ktorá sa objavuje ako stratégia „udržiavania" komunizmu a jeho „prebalenia" pre turistickú spotrebu. Práca napokon tvrdí, že komodifikácia komunizmu je podstatným aspektom súčasných turistických naratívov, kurátorských praktík a urbánnej organizácie miest komunistickej pamäti. Identifikuje a interpretuje urbánne, mnemotechnické, diskurzívne a zážitkové prejavy komodifikácie, pričom tvrdí, že komerčná angažovanosť v súvislosti s komunizmom zásadne spochybňuje prevládajúce mechanizmy „vyrovnávania sa s minulosťou". Ukazuje, že dodávatelia aj konzumenti miest komunistickej pamäti (spolu)vytvárajú proces komodifikácie a (spolu)podieľajú sa na ňom, najčastejšie prostredníctvom interakcie cestovného ruchu a zábavného priemyslu. Napokon práca tvrdí, že komodifikácia sa posilňuje prostredníctvom glokalizácie, disneyfikácie a orientalizácie ťažkého dedičstva komunizmu, ktoré ďalej prispievajú k(re)lokalizácii špecifického mestského kontextu, (re)imaginácii konkrétnej mestskej histórie a vo

všeobecnosti menia spôsoby, akými súčasná spoločnosť ohodnocuje, vystavuje a získava zdroje komunizmu v mestskom priestore.

Kľúčové slová: postsocialistické mesto; pamiatkový turizmus; komodifikácia; komunistické dedičstvo

Abstract (Spanish)

El objetivo de esta disertación es arrojar luz sobre el fenómeno de la mercantilización de los paisajes de memoria comunistas en Europa, explorando las principales estrategias y formas de cambio de marca urbana y mnemotécnica de las capitales postsocialistas. Iluminando la variedad de soluciones comerciales para lidiar con los legados "difíciles" del comunismo en Europa, la tesis tiene como objetivo mejorar nuestra comprensión de los actores, procesos y dinámicas que enmarcan el compromiso contemporáneo con el patrimonio urbano comunista. Basándose en el método de la teoría fundamentada, triangulado a través del estudio de casos múltiples, la observación participativa y la netnografía, el estudio examina los patrones de convergencia en las organizaciones espaciales, mnemotécnicas y narrativas de las experiencias urbanas comunistas. Elaborando la mercantilización de (1) hitos comunistas (edificios icónicos), (2) patrimonio suburbano (estatuas, parques), (3) espacios subterráneos (bunkers comunistas) (4) objetos culturales (museos del comunismo), (5) discursos urbanos (visitas guiadas por la ciudad) y (6) hospitalidad urbana (restaurantes comunistas), el análisis revela así diferentes "intervenciones comerciales" urbanas y narrativas en el paisaje urbano poscomunista.

A través del análisis en profundidad de los principales museos, recorridos, puntos de referencia, búnkeres, periferias y espacios de hospitalidad comunistas en Europa Central y Oriental, la disertación acentúa las similitudes y divergencias en el tratamiento discursivo, espacial y comercial contemporáneo del comunismo. Revela mecanismos y resultados particulares de la mercantilización, que surge tanto como una estrategia para "contener" el comunismo como para "reempaquetarlo" para el consumo turístico. En última instancia, la tesis argumenta que la mercantilización del comunismo es el aspecto esencial de las narrativas turísticas contemporáneas, las practicas curatoriales y la organización urbana de los paisajes de memoria comunistas. Identifica e interpreta las manifestaciones urbanas, mnemotécnicas, discursivas y experienciales de la mercantilización, argumentando que el compromiso comercial con el comunismo desafía fundamentalmente los mecanismos predominantes para "llegar a un acuerdo con el pasado". Demuestra que tanto los proveedores como los consumidores de paisajes de memoria comunistas (co)producen y (co)participan en el proceso de mercantilización, con mayor frecuencia a través de la interacción de la industria del turismo y elentretenimiento. Finalmente, argumento que la mercantilización se refuerza a través de la glocalización, disneyficación y orientalización

de la difícil herencia del comunismo, lo que contribuye aún más a (re)ubicar un contexto urbano específico, (re)imaginar una historia urbana particular y, en general, cambiar las formas en las que la Sociedad contemporánea valora, exhibe y origina comunismo en el espacio urbano.

Palabras clave: ciudad post-socialista; turismo patrimonial; mercantilización; patrimonio comunista

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1 Introduction

On the vast field at the outskirts of Budapest, groups of tourists pose for pictures climbing and imitating communist statues displaced, mismatched and de-pedestaled at the Memento Park. In Belgrade's railway station, Playboy organizes its birthday party in Tito's Blue Train, the symbol of communist Yugoslavia, while in Croatian national park Brijuni Russian oligarchs rent Tito's villas for their luxury coastal holidays. The cover of Polish Vogue juxtaposes fashion models to the modernist aesthetics of the infamous Palace of Culture, clashing style, representation and identity of communist and capitalist symbols. In the heart of Berlin's tourist-filled district of Mitte, the fake soldiers charge 10 euros for a (fake) passport stamp and 3 euros for a picture in front of the (fake) Checkpoint Charlie, surrounded by the original remnants of the Berlin Wall, McDonalds and souvenir shops selling kitschy communist memorabilia. In central Warsaw, the former headquarters of the communist party have been turned into a Banking-finance centre renting under slogan "Together we are creating the future" premises of the communist iconic landmark to luxury retailers and fancy bars, while The Pyramid of Tirana, former Enver Hodza's mausoleum, has been transformed in a technology hub for Albanian teenagers. Krakow's "Crazy Guides" offer a "Communism deluxe" tour of Nowa Huta featuring lunch in a communist-era Milk bar, and number of tourist companies offer post-communist tours in retro Skodas, Trabants, Fiats and Yugos. Ceausescu's "House of people" in Bucharest hosts Miss World and Top Gear races, and wedding celebrations are occasionally organized in Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science and Žižkov TV tower. Former Honneker's bunker now hosts one of Berlin's most avant-garde rave festivals, while Prague's Museum of communism brands and sells matryoshkas with vampire teeth as utterly de-contextualized and trivialized pop-culture symbol of the period.

As diverse as they are in nature, institutional organization, economic mechanism and social relevance, these examples shed light on myriad of different ways in which urban or mnemonic spaces of communism have been brought back into contemporary life. Since state socialism collapsed in 1989, its representations in public discourse, urban space, cultural production and media showed great diversity of forms and approaches, varying from condemnation of communist crimes to nostalgia of every-day life under communism. Besides number of political, social and cultural objectives of engagement with communist past, communism increasingly serves as a background for number of commercial projects and processes. Development of mass tourism, open market, democratization of cultural,

urban and history production, and the unleashed forces of capitalist transition jointly contributed to commodification of communist history, memory and urban space. Scholars extensively analysed different cases, causes and consequences of commodification, revealing their implications for the authenticity, legitimacy and ethics of urban discourses and heritage production. Yet, even decades after the concept entered humanities, the field remains fragmented and vague, dominated by single-case studies which while highly relevant for tracing particular local processes, fail to provide broader framework for studying commodification of communism as a new analytical tool in post-communist studies. Indeed, albeit often portrayed as a peculiar cohabitation of 'serious' history and trivial commerce, commodification is more far-reaching and more acute indicator of societal relevance, treatment and curation of communist history – or any history at all. It stipulates possible, acceptable and desirable levels of commercial valorisation of "difficult" heritage, which indirectly shape our relationship with history, remembrance patterns and urban consciousness. In that sense, study of commodification of socialist urban memoryscapes throughout CEE, aimed at mapping different types, categories, modes and actors, seems like a long overdue task, essential for shedding light on the contemporary historical production, space management and social organization of communist legacies.

Should commodification be understood as an "avoidance strategy", used to neutralize difficult heritage and transcend ambiguous histories, or as a regular outcome of "democratization" and consequent commercialisation of cultural production, urban development and memory management? Are there particular actors, mechanisms and outcomes of commodification of communism which are common to the post-socialist capitals? How the urban and mnemonic spaces of communism have been re-designed to fulfill commercial function? The thesis aims to bridge this gap in literature and provide a new perspective on commodification by categorizing major commercial processes related to socialist memoryscapes in capital cities of the CEE region. As repositories of power and careers of identity construction, cultural production and economic development, capital cities articulate history, memory and urban values of the state. Consequently, they provide the most representative, most comprehensive and most reliable environment for studying the interactions between mnemonic, urban and commercial in management of communism. Through ethnographic observations of commodified memoryscapes, interviews with both careers and consumers of commercial processes and extensive netnographic analysis, the thesis aims to highlight which particular types of commodification, through which actors

and means, navigate the contemporary perception and representations of communism, and what are their consequences for contemporary urban heritage (and memory) management.

In the first part of the introduction, I will outline some of the major debates in the field of post-socialist studies, in order to situate the research and provide a broad framework for understanding the concept of "post-socialism". This is followed by the discussion of major contemporary urban and mnemonic challenges in the region, stemming from the (unfinished) post-socialist transition. In the subsequent section, I confer the research questions, aims and objectives, moving the discussion towards the commodification phenomenon. In this part, commodification is conceptualized as a broad analytical framework for studying the challenges of contemporary engagement. After outlining the limits of the previous scholarship in the field, the Chapter proceeds with elaboration of research hypotheses, research design and methods used in the analysis. The final part of the introduction highlights research rationale and contribution, but also the limitations and policy implications of the study, outlining the structure of the thesis and organization of the information within the following chapters.

1.1 Research Framework: Eternal "post" of "post-socialism"

Very few events changed political, social and urban landscape of Europe as strikingly as the collapse of communism and the subsequent capitalist transition of the Central and Eastern Europe in last decade of XX century. Radical transformations of political, socio-economic and spatial frameworks provided an unprecedent opportunity to study, in "real-time", the challenges of historical rupture and profound societal re-organization. In that sense, over the last 30 years, "post-socialist" societies became a "testing ground" for studying trajectories of change and various "hybrid" economic practices, spatial formations and social relations emerging in the process. Despite the common general adherence to the Marxist political philosophy, communist societies were extremely diverse in their nature and socio-economic organization. Consequently, their transformations to democracy and neoliberal economy on macro, and adjustment of every-day social practices on micro-level varied greatly across the region. In a situation of such general uncertainty, diversity and hybridity of processes and practices, when "each action is both the unmaking of a previous way of life and a step toward a new, unknown one" (Humphrey 2002, p. xx), the region of Central and Eastern Europe became an "immense social laboratory" for the Western scholars (Whitley and Czaban 1998).

The relationship between transformations in Eastern Europe and the 'Western gaze' on them was undoubtedly manifold, somewhat controversial and often overwhelming. The failure of post-communist states to efficiently manage profound economic and societal transition placed the region on the political margins, as the Europe's "younger" sibling which required constant "western" mentorship, assistance and expertise. Paradoxically, the post-communist "return to Europe" only reinforced "orientalization" and "stereotypisation" of the countries on the eastern side of Iron Curtain as the "Europe's periphery". While this "patronizing" discourse was particularly evident throughout the EU accession of the post-socialist states (still, unfinished for many amongst them), it can be also observed in other spheres, such as intellectual production, where the prevalence of the 'Western' scholarship clearly shaped the understanding of the complex processes taking place in the region. Thus, not only the political, social and economic models which needed to be adopted in post-socialist Europe were Western, but their inception into an ideological framework shaped by the legacies of half-a-decade of communism was also supported (and sometimes even governed) by the West. Finally, these multiple transformations were dominantly analysed by the Western scholars, who undoubtedly further filtered such processes through their own cultural framework, resulting in overwhelmingly Western-centred perspective of the "Eastern" challenges. Noteworthy, there are recent albeit slow changes in this regard, as scholars from the region started contributing to the field and providing the 'local' interpretations of transitional processes and their impact on the post-communist societies. This pluralization of voices and actors of knowledge generation has been indispensable for moving beyond the established epistemological hierarchies and providing theoretical and conceptual advances in the field of post-socialist studies. In that sense, this dissertation provides a modest contribution towards "challenging" these East-West dichotomies by juxtaposing the Western-centred frameworks of engagement with communism and the local mentality patterns, institutional legacies and mnemonic traditions. Such analysis, coming from the author raised in the East and educated in the West, can be useful for de-tangling subtle nuances in nature, character and origin of actions, pre-conceptions and manipulations of communist past.

More than thirty years after the dissolution of communism, it is clear that 1989 did not bring "the end of history" as predicted in the Francis Fukuyama's landmark essay, which argued that failure of communist ideology brings universalization and convergence of political and societal organization modes ("the ultimate triumph of Western liberal

democracy"). Decades later, on European continent one may find myriad of political, economic and social frameworks co-existing under the umbrella of "capitalist democracy," yet showing striking variety in degree of market and individual freedoms, structural and institutional characteristics, ideological and cultural properties and socio-economic organisation. Even within the "post-socialist" framework, used as the analytical lens for interpreting institutional path-dependency of the Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the transformation of 1989 (see for example: Machala and Koelemaji 2019, Sykora and Bouzarovski 2012), there is a staggering diversity of urban and social landscapes and transition outcomes. Consequently, scholars started raising questions about pertinence of such concept, arguing that post-socialism is not only reductive, but also outdated, as other processes – such as neoliberalism, nationalism, consumption, Europeanisation and globalization shape the contemporary reality of the region (Muller 2019, Diener and Hagen 2013, Humphrey 2002). Indeed, the notion of post-socialism served for the last three decades as a "spatio-temporal container" (Tuvikene 2016) highlighting socialism as a dominant contextual paradigm shaping the outcomes of transitional processes across the region. The new tendency in scholarship aiming to move beyond such polarization between Europe and post-socialist Europe could be understood as a saturation with the ideas of "catching up, "return to Europe" and inevitable orientalization of the region which such denominations provoked. In that sense, Muller (2019, p. 545) highlights that the choice to disregard post-socialism does not entail "the end of difference, but that the difference we see is no longer owing to a socialist past and we need to look for more meaningful ways of framing it."

The calls to discard "post-socialism" as analytical category, albeit according to Stenning and Horschelmann (2008) "premature and misplaced", resonated with scholars in the field of urban history, who further expanded the critique, arguing it is necessary to move beyond the concept of post-socialist city. Number of critics of such urban framework emerged throughout the years, questioning scholarly relevance and practical usefulness of the term, its generalizing nature, emphasis on rupture rather than continuity, overarching essentialism and geographical "peripherialization" (Muller 2019, Ferencuhova and Gentile 2016, Hirt 2013, Gentile 2018). If, as argued by Sykora (2009) post-socialist city is indeed a transitional category, the "in-between" concept, how can we explain its resilience in both urban theory and practice? If the category is bound to disappear once the transition is completed (Humphrey 2001, p. 13), why the socialist city hasn't been absorbed by the new

(European) urban reality? If, on the other hand, post-socialist city is not transitional, but rather deviant, anomalous and liminal (Czepczyński 2008; Ferencuhova and Gentile 2016), when and how can we bring it back into the mainstream urban framework? And if we are to continue using the term, how to justify such choice, how to "put it in a good use" and avoid the common pitfalls?

I argue that it is not the concept *per se* which is problematic, but the relative "clumsiness" in its scholarly application, as scholars were seldom prone to explain way too many theoretically 'unfit' urban processes as "post-socialist" deviations, contributing thus to the "orientalization" of the field. Consequently, in the thesis we will try to escape such epistemological challenges by adopting Tuvikene's (2016) "de-territorialized" model of post-socialist city, where "post-socialist" analytical lens is only applied on certain aspects and urban developments of the otherwise 'ordinary' city. While aware of the limitations, drawbacks and challenges of the use of the concept, I believe that when regarded "as partial and hybrid" (Stenning & Horschelmmann 2008) and not necessarily as a defining urban and historic experience of the region, post-socialism might be a useful tool for addressing, contextualizing and conceptualizing certain patterns and contingencies. Arguing that every such conceptualisation has to be reserved for the dully justified cases and acknowledge the potential tensions and limitations, I outline in the following paragraphs three main motives for adopting such approach.

The first reason to engage with cities of CEE as 'post-socialist' could be best illustrated through Sykora's (2009) questioning of what makes a city post-socialist? If we consider that legacies of socialism make cities post-socialist, does it mean that Ottoman past makes cities such as Ankara or Belgrade post-Ottoman, traces of imperial past cities such as London post-imperial, and the immanent experience of war locks cities like Sarajevo in post-war perspective? I argue that multiple, overlapping and hybrid "posts" frame urban trajectory of each city and determine its identity through mutual interactions and confrontations. Consequently, even if post-socialism could not be generalized as the defining experience for all of the CEE, the emphasize on the urban legacies of state socialism, rather than any other historical period or influence justifies the use of post-socialist conceptual lens in this paper. Indeed, de-communization of urban landscape remained an unfinished, incomplete and inconclusive project (Light and Young 2013), making urban development in the region limited by and contingent on the urban traces of communism. In that sense, post-socialist paradigm serves neither as a temporal nor

geographical marker, but as a signal of the "continued presence of elements of socialism" (Ferencuhova and Gentile 2016). In words of Benko and Kissfazekas (2019, p. 9), the cities of the region share "a common 'language', a societal and environmental semiotics, which is easily comprehended by the inhabitants, but no one else". While questioning such self-essentialization is out of the scope of this research, the common urban imprint of socialism is undoubtedly one of the central characteristics of the "post-socialist" city. Consequently, the use of the post-socialist conceptualization is due to its greater explanatory power compared to the other social theories of change in this particular research.

The second key feature of the post-socialist framework aims to highlight the centrality of the transition paradigm in urban research of the CEE. In that, it is important to note that it would be extremely reductive to consider post-communist transition and the '1989' paradigm as a universal "one-size-fits-all" denominator, since there were as many transformation paths as the political contexts in CEE states emerging from the dissolution of communist regime. For countries such as Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, 1989 was seen as 'a return to Europe', for Germany it meant re-unification with families and friends, in Yugoslavia it brought an economic crisis and political upheaval leading to the violent dissolution of the state. Thus, not only the ways in which different "projects of communism" have been dismantled varied greatly across the region (Pickles 2010), but even the same transitional processes (such as democratisation, privatization, marketization) were institutionally managed through diverse mechanisms, at different paces and with various levels of success. Nonetheless, despite the local diversities in the practical management of change, the nature and challenges of major political, economic, social and urban transformation processes were rather similar. Thus, the notion of post-socialism, as "a project of catching up, of reducing the imagined distance in both time and space with the West" (Ferencuhova and Gentile 2016, p. 2) allows us to explore some of the central features of economic, political and cultural transformations and their influence on urban identities in the region.

Third, the post-socialist framework in the thesis sheds light not only on urban traces of socialism and shared trajectories of change in the aftermath of the regime collapse, but also on the persistence of socialist legacies in societal organisation, mentality patterns, urban planning, relationship with history, attitudes towards consumptions, expectations from the state, and so on. Indeed, patterns of socialist urban development, mnemonic culture and social framework still exercise strong influence on the contemporary Central and East European cities and their urban identity, organisation and dynamics. In evaluating changes in treatment of communist

heritage thesis relies precisely on concepts of identity, memory culture, value systems and social preferences, which at least partially mirror social and cultural practices of communist time and transition. Consequently, the use of the "post-socialism" should signal that "the socialist experience and its legacies have remained powerful contextual forces influencing urban form, identity, and discourse" (Diener and Hagen 2013). In a time of unprecedented structural changes, "post-socialist" city sheds light on significant continuities in everyday practices, which frame contemporary development in general, and urban landscape in particular. As such, post-socialist framework serves both to depart and to retrieve the socialist past, signaling both continuity and rupture – the period following the demise of communism, yet highly dependent on its legacies.

Rather than adopting post-socialist paradigm as a universal all-encompassing consequence of a sudden change, the research is designed to reflect on post-socialism as part of the puzzle, which put into a wider spatio-temporal perspective gives cues for analyzing urban identity transformations. Thus, for each of the phenomena analysed in the thesis, we provide a broader understanding of additional influences, alternative approaches and broader processes, allowing to identify patterns and convergences, but also plurality and diversity of changes and continuities which go beyond the post-socialist container. By doing so, we aim not only to de-territorialize and de-orientalize the term, but also to move beyond the idea that post-socialist cities are somehow anomalous, hybrid and deviant from the 'mainstream' urban development theory, which placed them on the periphery of urban theory and practice. As a very particular research framework in which theories are actually derived from the empirical analysis (Soulsby and Clark 2007), post-socialist cities were often overlooked in urban theory and deemed unfit to be extended and explanatory of the "western" urban development. I argue that, as opposed to scholarly marginalization, post-socialism represents an inspiring setting for studying how societies in general accept radical change, how they cope with it and make sense of it. Furthermore, such analysis also sheds light on our relationship with capital and its potential to transform societal relations, urban dynamics and everyday practices. Finally, studying such phenomena gives us a chance to deduce number of conclusions related to traits of human nature, which is all generative of new theoretical knowledge and applicable in wide array of geographical and social contexts. In that, finding a fine balance between phenomenology and generalization, difference and deviation, between specificities and otherness, trends and patterns, remains one of the most challenging tasks of post-socialist studies.

1.2 Research Background: On post-socialist memoryscapes

Urban semiotics and spatial organisation of the post-socialist city articulate and mediate its ideological capital, relationship with history and everyday practices. A notion of "cultural landscape" became an influential and useful tool for conceptualizing such urban and mnemonic interactions in the contemporary post-socialist Europe. Mariusz Czepczyński (2008) defines cultural landscape as "a form of spatial and cultural negotiation between representation of the past and imagination of the future". As a sub-category of urban historic landscapes, cultural landscapes navigate and communicate changes in political, socio-economic, cultural, architectural, legal and historical practices. Mirroring multi-levelled and multi-layered transformations, 'cultural landscape' became an important conceptual framework for analysing post-socialist changes and their urban consequences. In that sense, it has been often described as "palimpsest", a metaphor describing the perpetual "re-writing" over the already inscribed fabric. Palimpsestic cultural landscapes refer to the co-existence of different historical, architectural, social and cultural structures, information, meanings and interpretations within a particular urban site or area. Such "cacophony" of influences makes cultural landscape difficult to read, imbued with contradictions and inherently dissonant.

Post-socialism, as an indicator of the existence and influence of the socialist past "somewhere in the background" (Gentile 2018) frames much of the contemporary scholarly interest for engagements with history and memory in the contemporary city. The abrupt collapse of the regime and the subsequent transitional impermanence undoubtedly contributed to the prevalence of memory in both scholarship and practice, as a way of restoring historical continuity and finding sources of stability. The "obsession with the past" in post-socialist context has been epitomized in two major analytical streams – the continuous revisions, re-evaluations and re-interpretations of the past and the memory of the state socialism (Brunnbauer 2012). Throughout the region, new elites have been charged with the complex task of promoting the nationalistic vision of the past, which meant the return to the pre-War heroes and commemorations which consolidate sovereign identity and disavow communism as a "deviation" from the nationhood path. In that sense, official re-interpretations of the past mostly excluded, marginalized or vilified narratives of communist past, privileging instead to focus on national memory. While the diversity of mechanisms and strategies of 'nationalizing' memories in order to stabilize the identity remains out of the scope of the paper, it is important to note that official memory of communism was mostly normatively structured and often

organized through state-sponsored anti-communist memory institutes, commissions and museums, seeking restoration and retribution for the communist crimes. In that sense, memories of every-day life, popular culture, arts and architecture, societal relations and consumption emerged as a category "from bellow", through scholarly endeavours, civil society initiatives, individual agency and private ventures. Thus, the post-socialism could be defined through the two opposed memory frameworks – the normatively structured, 'political' memory of oppression, violence and suffering and the "alternative", public memory of everyday life under communism. This is not to say that all of the "official" historical memory was about ideology, crimes and victimhood, nor that all of the public recollections were related to the popular culture and every-day experiences. Yet, memory of communism which did not centre on martyrdom and political oppression, but on the societal organization, cultural patterns and various aspects of life under communism remained surprisingly absent from the official mnemonic discourses in most of the post—socialist Europe for years following the collapse of the regime.

The polarization between official anti-communist memory politics, marked by lustrations and truth-seeking, and the unofficial practices of memory and nostalgia was even further exacerbated through the EU accession of post-communist countries. In order to bridge the marginalization of East European memory culture in the "shared" European memory and identity, it became important to shed light on the common experience of communism as one of the constitutive elements of European remembrance culture. Yet, subsequent efforts in the field, such as the establishment of the European Day of Remembrance of Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, or the inauguration of House of European History in Brussels, only further officialized the political history and narratives of violence and victimhood as central pillars of communist memory. Yet, unlike the mostly monolithic memory of the Holocaust, centralized on the narrative of victimhood, the memory of communism, as the second pillar of the "shared European memory" turned to be much more fluid, transgressive and multi-directional. Nostalgia and tourism expansion are frequently seen as the main driving forces behind the growing interest in communism not as a political project but as a particular societal organization, a repository of distinctive production modes, urban practices and cultural products, a way of living and a behavioural pattern. Yet, it would be simplistic to reduce the expanding presence of socialist historical memory in variety of agencies and forms to these two factors. The increasing dissatisfaction with capitalism and its contemporary crises, the inevitable passage of time and the arrival of new generations who reject the contemporary rise

of the right-wing politics are only some of the factors which further exacerbated the popularity of communism, as a "utopian" construct of cultural imagination. In that sense, political lustrations, rehabilitations of victims, museums and memorials, exhibitions and books, artistic interventions, monuments and commemorations all jointly co-produce a complex mnemonic patchwork of European post-socialism.

This peculiar interaction of two "memories" of communism continued through most of the last three decades. At the same time there would be political lustrations and exhibitions of communist past, removals of communist statues and openings of communist museums, destructions of communist buildings in one place and restorations of communist heritage in another. As framed by Hatherley (2018) "with every intense wave of Decommunisation, where one 'totalitarianism' is denounced, a parallel rehabilitation of another is taking place." Consequently, the legacies of socialism fluctuated for years between memory and oblivion, nostalgia and tourist gaze, between ignorance and dissonance, hatred and fascination. As the most tangible, most visible and most prominent traces of the communist past, communist urban heritage represents a constitutive element of the contemporary post-socialist memory landscape. As defined by Stanciugelu, Taranu and Rusu (2013), socialist heritage relates to historically defined, ideologically loaded cultural elements of urban landscape which make a clear reference to the communist period. In contemporary scholarship, it was mostly explored in relation to tourism, on a case-based rather than a theory-generating level. Yet, understanding different categories of communist heritage, their management strategies and stakeholders somehow remained out of the scope of scholarly work on the topic. According to Sima (2017, p.211), this could be explained by "[t]he lack of agreement on terminology, the wide geographical distribution of communist heritage, the complexity and diversity of the heritage itself, the sensitive nature of communism as a political ideology, the traumatic events that led to and surrounded the fall of communism in some countries, the societal and personal emotional baggage associated with communism, or the negative legacies of communism."

Indeed, the heritage of communism, due to its highly ambivalent nature remains a category which somehow escapes wide scholarly consensus on both meaning and scope of the term. Hence, while throughout the thesis I often use the term heritage of communism to refer to urban structures, monuments, artefacts and spaces which make a clear reference to the communist past, I use them in the context closer to the notion of "memoryscapes". This is because, while widely used in scholarly literature, the concept of "heritage of communism" is more narrow and more limiting than that of the "communist memoryscape", which could be

understood as a multiplicity of memory sites, commemoration forms and mnemonic practices related to communism. In scholarly work, memoryscapes are defined as "material and symbolic space, in which social memory is expressed" (Muzaini and Yeoh 2005), or even as the "particular clusters of spaces and locales which have a particular significance in the ways in which people relate to and narrate the past" (Kappler 2016). In that sense, memoryscapes represent more narrative-oriented, more integrative and immersive, and more comprehensive approach to sites of memory, than the concept of heritage. What more, it is through their capacity to re-contextualise heritage assets that memoryscapes re-frame and reactivate public spaces, turning them into culturally-charged destinations (Rogage et al. 2021, p. 2). Consequently, while in the thesis, I often use the term "communist heritage", in order to remain faithful to the contemporary scholarly debates in the field which use that denominator for addressing the themes, sites and phenomena explored in this work, this remains a "choice of convenience", as I consider "memoryscapes" to reflect better the nature of urban and other physical realities in which memories of socialism materialize themselves.

1.3 Research question, aims and objectives: Commodifying communism

As a "posh" word in social sciences academic literature, commodification became an important contextual framework for exploring post-socialist transitional outcomes. In broadest terms, commodification refers to the process of assigning and (over)exploiting the market value to goods and services which were not previously commercially used (Hermann 2021; Jackson 1999). Over the last two decades, scholars used the 'commodification' paradigm to address commercialization of variety of post-socialist phenomena, such as social relationships in Russia and East Germany (Swader 2009), labour in Poland (Spieser 2007), housing in Hungary (Olt and Csizmady 2020), urban space in Albania (Triantis 2020), collective memory in post-Yugoslav space (Vukčević 2014), popular culture in Czech Republic (Reifova 2009), communist nostalgia in Poland (Jezinski and Wojtkowski 2016), Romania (Bardan 2018), or former Yugoslavia (Chushak 2013), etc. As particularly rewarding field, debates on commodification of communist heritage (Balcerzak 2021, Caušević 2019, Stach 2021) mostly focused on tourism as a most staggering example of commercial exploitation of urban, mnemonic and cultural objects. Following the dominant paradigm in scholarly literature taking a critical stance on "commodification of everything", the commodification of communism is also "demonized" as a factor of "salience" and even "vulgarization" of history, contributing to the loss of authenticity, homogeneization of culture and deterioration of place identity

(Čepaitiene 2013). Despite the fact that growing body of literature calls for more nuanced and less normative analyses of commodification, as also a tool for ensuring preservation and sustainability of heritage that would otherwise be lost, forgotten or destroyed (Prideaux 2003), in post-socialist research commodification is almost without exception addressed as pejorative element of superficial nostalgia, contributing to "kitschification" (Pope Fischer 2016), orientalization (Kulić 2018, Herrschel 1999) and disneyfication (Porebska et al. 2021, Caraba 2011, Frank 2015), corrupting the urban landscape, distorting identity and disempowering history.

While legitimate and often justified, the centrality of the "touristification" concerns in academic discourse obscured and marginalized whole range of important subjects in the field. Consequently, there is disproportionally large body of case-based illustrations of communist heritage tourism, yet almost not a single comprehensive study of the different commodification mechanisms, actors and processes which frame the contemporary socialist memoryscapes. Notwithstanding, the 'commodification' framework still lacks a typology and conceptual organisation, particularly in the post-socialist context. Which different forms and degrees of commodification frame contemporary post-socialist urban memoryscapes? What is the "acceptable" level of commodification for different aspects of the communist past (urban heritage, urban discourse, urban identity, urban communities)? Despite becoming significant concept in studies of post-socialism, commodification remains an unclear, speculative and frequently superficial term, lacking clear epistemological boundaries and contextual situatedness. Particularly, our knowledge of commodification of "difficult" heritage of state socialism is limited to fragmented and descriptive case studies, which fail to take into account the global entanglements and wider implications, leaving the paradigm in a liminal position.

With expansion of cities, global rise of memory culture, re-emergence of right-wing populism, rampant commercialisation and unstoppable tourism development, it is likely that in the years to come commodification will coalesce as an increasingly relevant paradigm in urban heritage conservation and management. Consequently, mapping, analyzing and categorizing different forms, mechanisms and actors of commodification, as well as their role in coming to terms with the 'difficult' past of European totalitarianism, represents one of the fundamental tasks of the contemporary post-socialist urban management. In that sense, moving beyond descriptive into analytical and categorizational exploration of commodification should provide a useful framework for understanding contemporary engagement with communist past and its impact on post-socialist urban landscape. In light of the recent calls to decolonize heritage, de-

orientalize post-socialist spaces, de-commodify culture and create spaces of urban commonning, this study suggests taking a new look on interactions between difficult histories, popular memories, urban spaces and commercial practices.

Practices of urban commodification undoubtedly led to the manifold and historically contingent outcomes, inviting to re-think governmental, market and societal mechanisms for establishing and maintaining control over discursive and spatial organization of the "difficult" urban memoryscapes. Who "owns" socialist urban legacies, who can commodify and who shall consume them? How many different "commodifications" can be identified in post-socialist cities? The aim of the study is no way to create a repository of commodification practices and uncritically add cases into a general "commodification container". Rather, the thesis seeks to unpack and deconstruct normative and monolithical reading of commodification as a fraudulent, refractory and degenerative intruder of socialist urban memoryscapes. It examines if and under which conditions, commodifications can be classified and categorized and whether there is distinctively "post-socialist" style of commodification, which obscures the lines between commodities and commons. What makes these commodified post-socialist memoryscapes different or similar to each other? Is there anything distinctive about the post-socialist patterns and results of urban commodification – in what they diverge from similar processes in the West? The thesis attempts to fill these gaps in literature by addressing (1) different agents and processes of commodification, which frame (2) urban and mnemonic changes of post-socialist memoryscapes, and subsequently identify (3) convergence or divergence of causes and consequences of such activities in post-socialist cities. These three broad topics, discussed through the 4 major theoretical categories (memory, heritage, post-socialism and commodification) represent a general conceptual framework (see *Figure 1*) for operationalizing set of research questions, hypothesis and methods which I employ in the analysis.
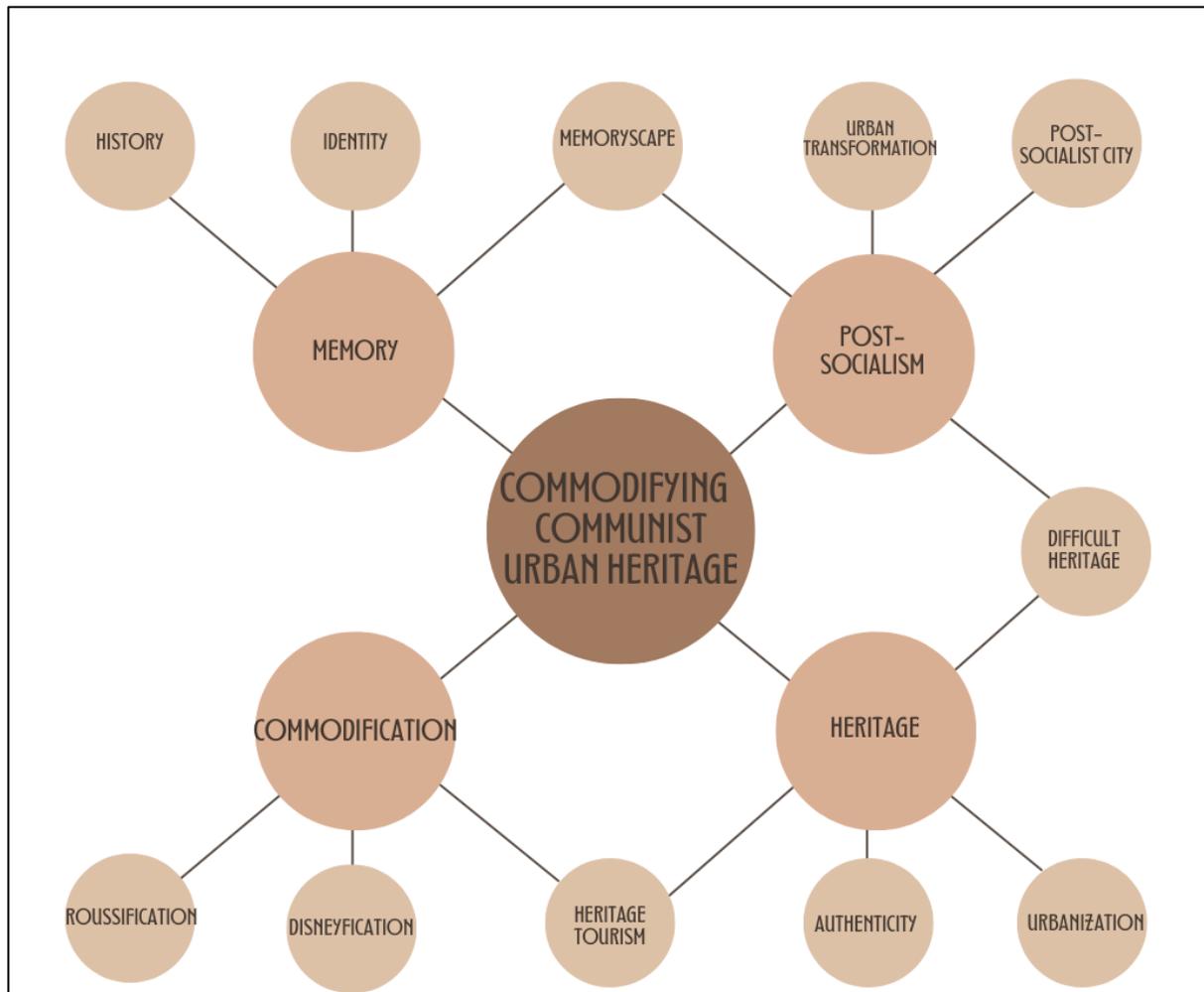
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Research

1.4 Research hypotheses: Operationalizing assumptions

In practical terms, the thesis takes a new look on the interaction of urban, mnemonic and commercial fabric of the post-socialist cities, questioning if and how they chose to conserve, commemorate and commodify their socialist past. Thus, structuring the urban memoryscapes of communism within 6 distinct categories (guided tours, urban undergrounds, urban landmarks, heritage of suburbs, museums, urban hospitality), the thesis aims to:

(1) identify cases of commodification, their nature and form

(2) measure different degrees of commodification (as compared to institutionalization and conservation)

(3) identify agents of commodification, their roles, agency and dependence on social norms

(4) classify mechanisms, causes and outcomes of commodification

(5) compare commodification strategies across post-socialist CEE

Within this framework, we formulate 5 broad hypothesis which should guide the research process. First, it is expected that socialist urban memoryscapes will be selectively commodified across the region. In relation to that, the hypothesis holds that communist sites with important, yet contested historical legacy, attractive position, practical usability and resolved property ownership will be more likely to become commodified than remote, decaying, historically marginal urban memoryscapes (1a). Furthermore, the commodification might show more severe and more violent nature in places with high urban deregulation, strong capital-orientation and low levels of public funding, important tourist activities and less pronounced anti-communist sentiment (1b).

Second, different types of urban memoryscapes and even particular sites will be commodified to a different degree. Consequently, the cultural institutions, funded from the public budget, will be less likely to undertake wide-scale commercialization activities, disneify urban space and pursue marketable and entertaining content, compared to the profit-driven ventures, where consumer satisfaction is the only source of revenues. In that light, the hypothesis contends that degree of commodification will depend not only on type of the commodified memoryscape, but also on the role of different actors, such as public institutions, private ventures, civil society, media in the process of commercial valorization (2).

Third, it is important to note that the different actors frame the commodification processes in different contexts (curators, tour guides, urban planners, journalists, street vendors, company managers). Depending on their place in "commodification chain" their motives, actions and narratives will be significantly divergent. Thus, it is expected that in institutionally managed spaces of commodification, the agents will show higher sensitivity towards education and preservation, while in the commercial ventures the emphasize will be on marketing and entertainment (3a). Furthermore, we hypothesize that the extent to which the activities of commodification agents will be driven by their agency (capacity to act individually) or the underlying structure (institutional rules, social norms, cultural patterns, political framework, official history) will depend on the type of commodification (institutional, public, private), category of site (its significance, visibility, urban identity) and the complexity of historical narrative (degree of contestation, contemporary memory regime) (3b). Thus, it may be expected that, for example, curators of the private museum exhibitions or independent guides interpreting relatively remote and abandoned socialist site will clearly show greater level of

independence over the discourse and consequently also larger degree of entertaining, un-historical and commodified content.

Commodification has many faces simply because it is motivated by different reasons, and consequently organized in completely different ways. Could a dinner at the restaurant of the Žižkov Tower in Prague with the 360 view over the city be understood as a commodification of socialism? Or it is a commodification of socialist landmark with 'socialist' history amputated? The hypothesis contends that what is commodified in socialist heritage is often not socialism at all – but the architectural uniqueness, artistic value, attractiveness of the position or usability of the space (4). Thus, commodification of socialism (as in selling kitsch communist souvenirs, organizing communist tours and opening 'communist-style' bars) is in many ways disparate from commodification of socialist spaces (which may, or may not, stem from its "socialist" nature). In that context, commodification of historic structures is often driven by purely aesthetic, morphologic or practical characteristics of the building and not its historical significance and mnemonic capital. Consequently, some commodifications will have stronger impact on urban ethics and mnemonic culture than the others.

The final hypothesis is that rather than a sum of random, isolated phenomena, commodification of socialist memoryscapes is a highly "contagious" process, where city dwellers, private ventures and citizens mirror and reproduce the successful commercialization practices (5). Thus, the analysis should reveal for which aspects of urban memoryscapes (public spaces, monuments, museum narratives, tourist practices, etc.) there is a convergence within post-socialist space and where local specificities shaped distinctively different commodified environment. Consequently, we focus on both urban language of commodification (morphology, urban iconography, spatial arrangement and alterations, building decorations and ornamentations, deployment and positioning of commercial facilities, architectural congruence, semiotics of space) and reification of urban memories (historical narratives, cultural meanings, discursive shifts, spatial organization of historical content, participative mechanisms, representations of 'difficult' past, agency/structure dichotomy).

1.5 Research Design and Methods: Interpretive phenomenological study

In broadest terms, this research has been designed using a constructivist grounded theory method, where different urban commodification theories emerged through the collection of data. Given the scope and diversity of the commodification phenomenon, constructivist approach appeared as the most appropriate for capturing different modes, mechanisms and

practices of mnemonic and spatial commercialization of communism. Grounded theory suggests departing from data collection and analysis, continuously coding, comparing and inductively reasoning in order to identify and conceptualise underlying social patterns and develop a theoretical explanatory model (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Tie, Birks and Francis 2019; Charmaz 2012). Consequently, the preliminary data was collected through the initial fieldwork, designed as the researcher's introductory exploration of the commodified forms of urban heritage and architecture of post-socialist Europe through over 40 journeys to 19 post-socialist cities (Zagreb, Belgrade, Kosice, Bratislava, Budapest, Sarajevo, Skopje, Wroclaw, Dresden, Warsaw, Ljubljana, Podgorica, Berlin, Leipzig, Krakow, Bucharest, Prague, Sofia, Tirana) in 2017-2019. The preliminary fieldwork, consisting not only of personal observations of the post-socialist landscape, but also of interactions with locals, conversations with academic peers and informal interviews with relevant stakeholders, revealed variety of commercialization patterns, which were subsequently classified in order to be further codified. Thus, rather than comparing national cultures of remembrance and commodification strategies, the initial fieldwork highlighted the importance of considering commodification in relation with 6 distinctive types of heritage assets differentiated by their scale and spatial significance. Consequently, the thesis explores commodification of (1) communist landmarks (iconic buildings), (2) underground spaces (communist bunkers), (3) heritage of suburbs (communist memorials), (4) cultural objects (museums of communism), (5) urban discourses (guided city tours) and (6) urban hospitality (communist restaurants). Such analytical framework served to enhance clarity, provide more structured, more manageable and more comparable units of analysis, and enable more in-depth investigation by adopting different research design for each category. As large amounts of (unstructured) data obtained through initial fieldwork required additional interpretation, systematization and empirical verification, subsequent analysis included 3 additional methodological tools:

1) second round of the ethnographic analysis, including personal observation of the most relevant examples within each of the category (exploration of urban morphology, mnemonic infrastructure, commercialization mechanisms), semiotic landscape analysis, on-site comparisons, participation in guided city tours and exploration of museum collections and discourses;

2) case study approach - online content analysis of textual and visual destination materials produced by government, media and industry; 13 semi-structured interviews with key informants of different urban commodification processes (tour guides, museum

employees, site managers, architects, curators); semiotic analysis of media discourse and important public debates on the case;

3) netnography – content analysis of user-generated content (TripAdvisor reviews, geotagged Instagram posts), focusing on the descriptions of tourist urban experience, descriptive interpretation of the historic narratives and visual representation of spatial symbols.

The second round of fieldwork was organized to provide in-depth exploration of different strategies of commercialization of communist past in post-socialist European cities. The analysis focused on capitals of Visegrad countries and South-east Europe (former Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania and Bulgaria), including Germany, excluding the former Soviet states, due to sheer pragmatism – as it would be impossible to conduct such a wide-scale research in timely manner, especially taken in considerations the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemics. Furthermore, while the countries of Visegrad and SEE share commitment towards EU values (with most of them being already integrated in the European Union), most of the post-Soviet states harbor more ambivalent relationship with the "West" and as such belong to a different realm of "post-Soviet" studies. In contrast, countries of the CEE are often understood as a part of the common geo-political research unit, with converging post-socialist aspirations and common transitional challenges. While different in size and scope of urban development, capital cities of these countries represent economic, cultural and social hubs of their respective nations, and as such occupy particular position within the urban hierarchy. Furthermore, the selected capitals show striking urban expansion and growth of tourism activities in the last decade, signalling the request to negotiate spatial agenda and diversify cultural offer. Yet, such wide approach, which included 8 major capitals, was necessary in order to grasp differences in commercial communist representations within each spatio-structural category. Consequently, different tools were applied in analysing most prominent communist sites, buildings, districts and attractions and their different actors, processes and "degrees" of commodification within each city. This included methods as varied as participant observation of the Belgrade communist tour in Yugo-car, interviews with Prague communist souvenir shop workers and visual ethnography of Budapest's Memento park. For each of the sites, observed parameters included both spatial and mnemonic elements: position of the monument/site/district within wider urban fabric; accessibility (availability of transportation, infrastructure on site); urban iconography; spatial organization of historical/mnemonic content; commercial urban surrounding; contemporary (commercial and non-commercial) uses of the

site; availability of historic information, their display and clarity; commercialization of urban narrative; availability of commercial memorabilia and tourism-related activities.

Contextualization of commercial urban and mnemonic developments related to communist heritage has been ensured by adopting the multiple case study approach, which is considered to be particularly rewarding when used simultaneously with the grounded theory method (Halaweh, Fidler and McRobb 2008, Alzaanin 2020). Within this framework, case selection method departed from the hypothesis that contemporary city's identity is increasingly displayed and shaped in online space, as most of the visitors inform themselves about the "must see attractions" using search engines such as google. Consequently, in identifying most relevant local cases for the analysis, I used Google search engine, using terms such as "communist heritage", "communist tour", "communist architecture", "communist memorial", "communist building", "communist monument". This allowed to create, along with the date from the preliminary fieldwork, a list of spatial and mnemonic manifestations of communism, which was further expanded in interaction with local stakeholders and field-work activities within each city. The cases were subsequently scrutinized through, on one side, discourse analysis of related newspaper articles, web pages, official promotional material, planning documentation and popular culture products, and, on the other, participatory observation and semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders aiming to reveal the patterns of commodification of urban spaces and discourses. This enabled to grasp inner contradictions, public debates, urban conflicts, competing interests, (de)regulated urban commercial activities and (un)achieved re-development projects. The prolonged and repeated exposure to the studied phenomenon at selected sites enabled to grasp multiple perspectives and establish connections with various informants, which mitigates the risk of confirmation bias and social desirability interview responses (Krefting 1991).

Finally, the analysis of tourism-based commodification practices (museums of communism and guided city tours) was designed to include interaction with tourism stakeholders and observation of the tourist engagement with objects and places, which allowed to interpret both spatial and discursive mediation of communist history. The obtained data was further triangulated using the unobtrusive netnographic approach (Kozinets 2010, 2015), consisting in semiotic analysis of the tourists' review of communist museums and free guided tours on TripAdvisor. As a leading tourism online platform, TripAdvisor aggregates user generated content (UCG) rating and describing their experience in hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions, including guided tours (Valdivia et al. 2019). Due to extremely large data a

cut-off date was set and only reviews from 1st January 2017 onwards were taken in consideration. The analysis only included reviews in English in order to avoid inaccurate translations and mis-interpretation of the comments. Since TripAdvisor reviews are publicly posted, we assumed that there are no ethical issues in quoting them in the paper, as participants willingly shared their comments and images without restricting the access and use of them. The overall data collection methodology has been illustrated in the diagram bellow (*Figure 2*) and methodological choices and research design further elaborated in Chapter 7 of the thesis.
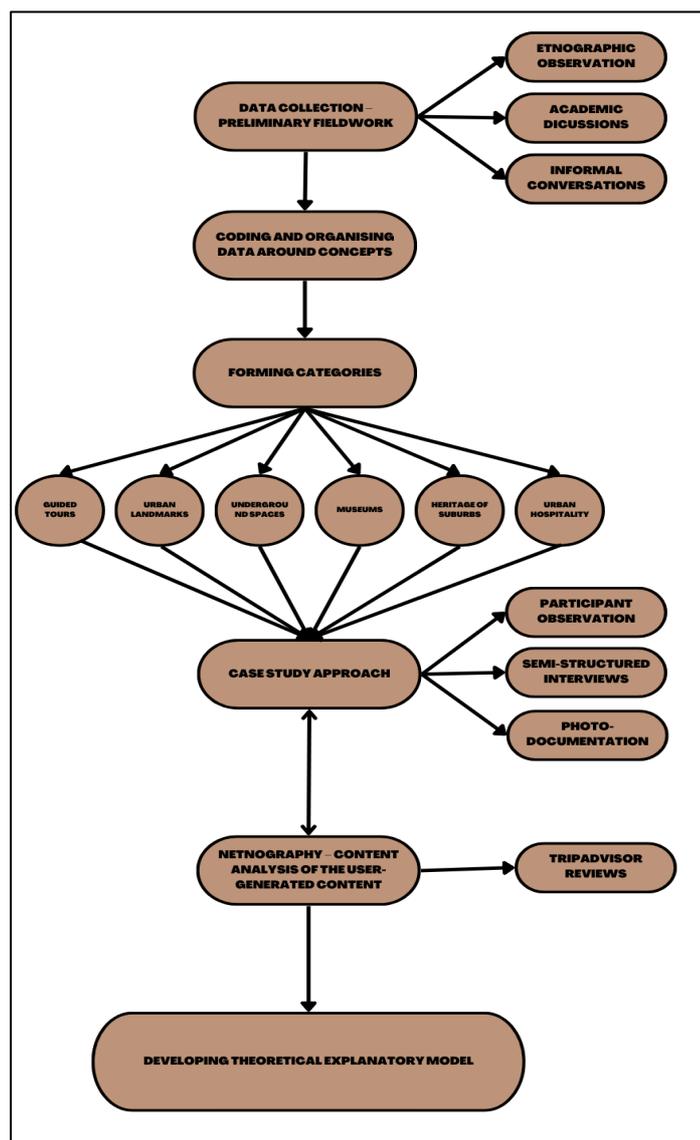
Figure 2 General overview - Research methods

1.6 Research Limitations and Policy Implications: Future directions for research in the field

First, and probably the most significant limitation of the study stems from its interdisciplinary character, making it extremely complicated to create a coherent yet comprehensive research design and operationalize research methodology. In that sense, methods used in the research resonate with the ones used in the field of human geography and historical anthropology, yet their contextualization is conducted through the prism of cultural studies and urban sociology. While the general idea was to counteract drawbacks of one method by the strengths of the other, we are fully aware that such methodological pluralism may provide contradicting results and incompatibility of research design and results. Second, long-standing interest in the topic and years of exposure to the traces of communist past and their commercial uses potentially caused the author to develop certain 'confirmation bias', which might have consequently led to expressing some pre-conceived opinions and ideas in ethnographic research and conducted interviews. Yet, such risk was mitigated by adopting a wide approach, including vast number of case studies, rigorous contextualization of obtained results, and critical re-evaluation of pre-existing assumptions and hypotheses. Third, as much of the data used in the study is self-reported (collected through interviews), reliability of the results is contingent on the honesty, objectivity and introspective ability of the respondents, which is certainly limiting. Forth, limited language capacities in some of the local languages (Polish, German, Slovak, etc.) might have had biased the data collection, as many interviews were conducted in English. Despite their fluency in English, respondents might have had been more comfortable speaking in their native tongue, which might have allowed them to express themselves more precisely and sincerely. Fifth, the study focused on urban commodification in "post-socialist" context, obscuring thus whether similar developments could be observed in other parts of Europe or world. In that sense, it is difficult to make generalization without considering to which extent difficult urban memoryscapes in different parts of the world have been subjected to similar forms of commodification. Sixth, even within the post-socialist space, the research addressed only the capital cities and as such might not be representative of the developments in the smaller, peripheral environments. Indeed, most of the cultural, urban and tourism development is centralized in the capital cities, and consequently urban and mnemonic design will reflect these conditions. Thus, management of communist heritage and commercial mechanisms applied to it will certainly take different forms in political, economic and tourist peripheries. Seventh, between the initial fieldwork and second round of the "in-

depth" ethnographic observations and interviews almost three years have passed, marked by the rampant COVID-19 pandemics. Consequently, the world and its urban, social and commercial rules and organization changed significantly (with tourism industry being particularly impacted) thus potentially distorting the results of the study. Furthermore, the pandemics limited the scope and time available for data collection, which is why further investigation in the years following the stabilization of the pandemics would certainly reveal more nuanced and more elaborate patterns of commodification.

Despite these shortcomings, the analysis of contemporary engagement with socialist history in light of "commodification of everything" remains highly relevant for understanding how "difficult" memoryscapes communicate with the environment. In the world which increasingly relies on memory for legitimizing contemporary political system and societal organization, identifying and conceptualizing different strategies, channels and agents which facilitate extrapolation, de-contextualisation and commercial manipulation of the past represents an important task. Comprehending these processes should provide a more accurate picture of (changing) relevance, legitimacy and treatment of communist history (and heritage) 30 years after the major transition in the region. In that sense, commodification of communism offers a unique opportunity to increase our understanding of how commercial forces shape not only the every-day life, but also our history, urban spaces and memory and thus, indirectly, also our identity. By doing so, the thesis should enhance our capacity to recognize, categorize and interpret commercial manifestations of communism and critically evaluate their urban and mnemonic consequences. These are all important tasks of the contemporary heritage management, urban policy and history education.

Noteworthy, the results of this analysis might provide a useful roadmap for the policy makers about implications of different commodification strategies for (national) culture of remembrance and urban landscape. In that sense, it may shed light on the necessity to formulate some specific heritage policies, create additional protection mechanisms or engage in public-private partnerships aimed at valorizing heritage of communism. Furthermore, urban developers, heritage practitioners and tourism agents might potentially benefit from this research as it could give them deeper understanding of each other's interests and ways of engaging with communist memoryscapes. Finally, the results can serve as a practical guide on how to exhibit, brand and "sell" communist (or any other) history, which traps to avoid and which reservations to hold. While it would be illusionary to expect commercial operators to de-commodify, visitors to critically engage without exception, or governments to fully regulate

communist memoryscapes, the thesis should at least serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of bringing these actors into closer dialogue on causes, consequences and wider implications of each other's actions.

1.7 Research Structure: Thesis outline

In the Chapter One, I provide a theoretical overview for studying urban history and memory, focusing on the dichotomy between history and memory and its relevance for the urban research. The aim of this section is to highlight the role of collective memories in negotiating meaning and identity of urban spaces. In that sense, the chapter advances and justifies the use of the term 'urban memoryscape' as one of the central concepts of the thesis, able to grasp complex and transgressive interactions of memory and place, as well as the fluidity and transformability of both mnemonic narratives and spatial practices in times of (and after) radical socio-economic changes.

The Chapter Two explores post-socialist urban memoryscapes, and the changing role of place, memory and heritage after the collapse of state socialism in Europe. It starts by situating post-socialism as a de-territorialized concept and a useful framework for studying urban transformations in the CEE region. It proceeds with the short overview of the concept of post-socialist city as a locus of urban mnemonic processes, and the major challenges of their spatial organization in the aftermath of 1989. The section concludes with the discussion of the (post)socialist urban development and the political, mnemonic, spatial and economic interactions shaping the contemporary urban landscape of the region.

The Chapter Three sheds light on the concept of heritage, as a main constitutive unit of urban memoryscapes, and its interactions with the place identity, urban narratives and contemporary tourism. The chapter outlines main debates within the heritage scholarship, related to the questions of authenticity, discourse, identity and dissonance, as well as the important policies which govern and regulate the field of urban heritage management. By introducing the complex processes of urban conservation, development and destruction, as well as the ambiguous relationships of heritage, capital and tourism, this section provides a framework for understanding commodification of urban memoryscapes.

The concept of 'difficult' heritage as an analytical platform for analyzing the challenges of contemporary engagement with communist past is central to the Chapter Four. The

discussion in this section theorizes the different motives, actors and challenges of production and consumption of difficult urban heritage in post-socialist city. The Chapter underlines the complex processes framing the management of communist heritage and various strategies for coming to terms with the difficult urban legacies. Situating communist memoryscapes within the broader paradigm of "legacies of dictatorship" provides a platform for studying to which extent the "difficult" character of communist urban traces acts as a limitation and/or facilitator of heritage commodification.

Chapter Five contributes to the emerging scholarly debates on commodification of communist heritage, exploring how memory, culture and urban space have been commercialized in contemporary CEE. Shedding light on different actors, narratives and discourses of commodification, this section suggests a concept of "multiple commodifications" as a framework for understanding various forms of commercial exploitation of post-socialist urban memoryscapes, ranging from tourism to global entertainment industry, from retro branding to commercial musealisation. In that sense, the chapter also engages with political, cultural and social purposes and outcomes of commodification of difficult socialist heritage and different factors which contribute to particular socio-economic context of commercial urban memoryscapes.

Chapter Six summarizes findings of the fieldwork conducted between 2017 and 2021 in the region, analysing commodification processes and strategies within 6 distinct categories of communist urban memoryscapes. Consequently, commodification of urban narratives at the level of the city has been approached through the analyses of guided communist tours of major CEE capitals (Belgrade, Berlin, Prague, Bratislava, Warsaw, Tirana, Budapest), revealing patterns in strategies and challenges of tourist engagement with communist memoryscapes. The analysis of commodification of urban undergrounds presents spatial and mnemonic organization of exhibitions situated in communist bunkers, as well as their additional commercial adaptive re-uses and public controversies stemming from such choices. The sub-chapter dealing with communist iconic buildings analyses variety of commercial strategies for valorizing, sanitizing, re-branding or revitalizing communist palaces, hotels, high-rises and other major landmarks, while commercial exploitation of communist artefacts in museums highlights various levels, mechanisms and degrees of commodification depending on the institutions' nature (public-owned or privately-held). The section on commodification of suburban heritage explores two particular examples of commercialisation of communist sites and objects in urban peripheries, and the final discussion sheds light on diverse mechanisms

for "staging" communism in urban hospitality industry, studying communist historic and theme bars.

In Conclusion, the thesis draws on major modes, mechanisms and practices of mnemonic and spatial commercialization of communism, questioning whether differences in engagement with difficult past own to the national (political) framework, relationship with capital or the presence of international (EU forces), or there is a convergence revealing similar pattern within each of the commodification categories across the region. Schematic structure of the thesis is given in the Figure bellow (see *Figure 3*).
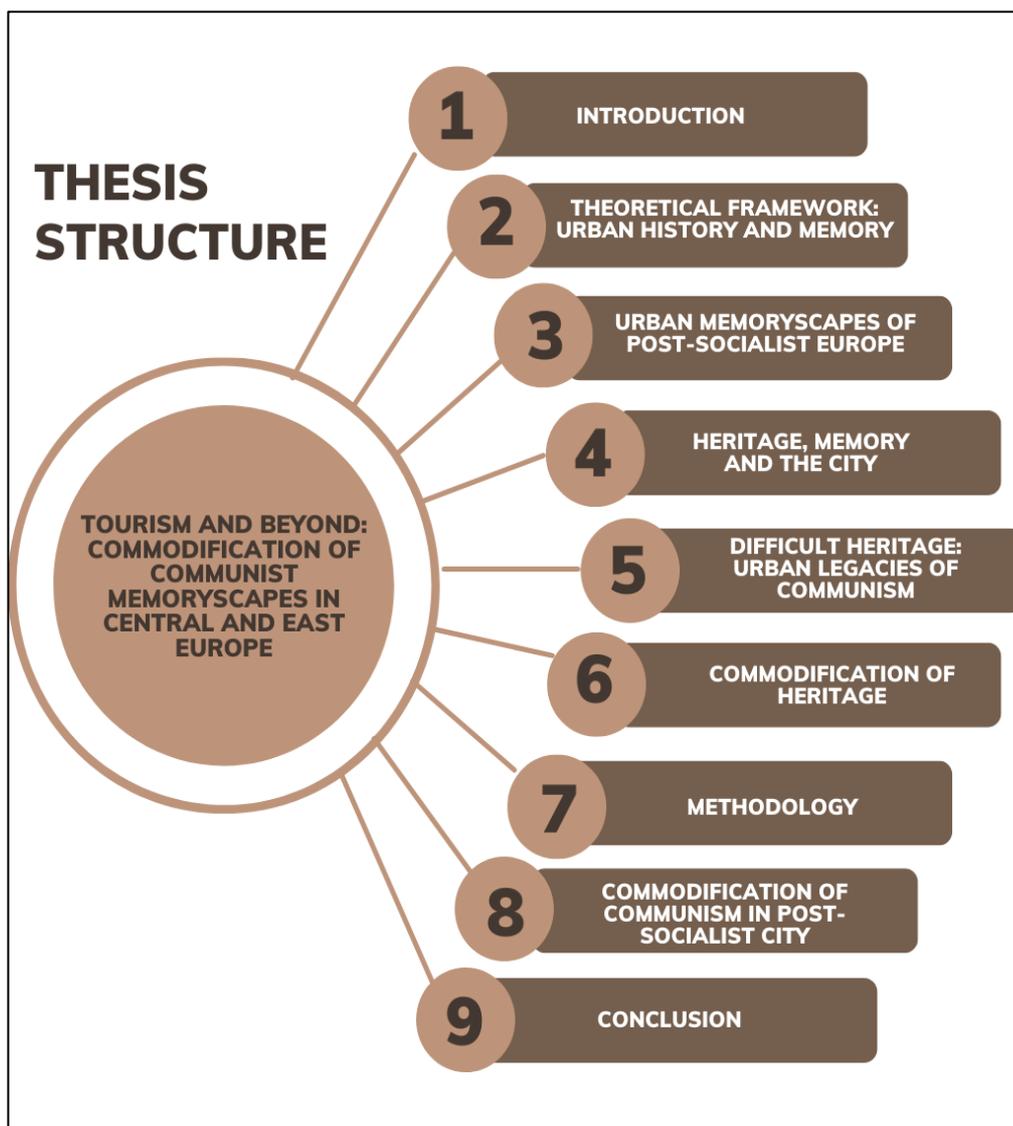
Figure 3 Thesis Structure

2 Theoretical framework: Urban history and memory

"We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left," argued French scholar Pierre Nora in his monumental *"Lieux de mémoire"* in 1989 (Nora 1993, p.7). Indeed, the concept of memory became one of the most prominent contemporary phenomena, encompassing wide array of processes, mechanisms, strategies and activities of engagement with the past. The variety of mnemonic actors, commemorative practices and forms of remembrance turned Europe into a "memoryland" (Macdonald 2013), where remnants of the turbulent past overfill and govern urban landscapes and cultural identities. Attempts to organize, regulate, institutionalise, transnationalize and even commercialise memory emerge as the framing processes of the contemporary society, reflecting diversity of challenges and approaches to contemporary engagement with past. As one of defining features of urban landscape, memories represent a powerful mediator of urban identity and place attachment. It is thus impossible to analyse XX century urban or heritage development without considering the ways in which memory symbolically occupies the space and acknowledging the changing forms of production and institutionalisation of urban memory landscapes.

The analysis of any heritage-related phenomenon should start with a comprehensive discussion of politics of memory and history and the ways in which their interactions frame urban, social and cultural processes. Hence, the review of existing theories and scholarly contributions relevant for the topic starts by referencing some of the seminal ideas related to collective memory and challenges of its spatial embodiment. The Chapter thus starts with the overview of scholarly development of the concept of collective memory, including the origins of the contemporary mnemo-obsession and major processes framing the interplay between history and memory. Then, the Chapter advances important scholarly ideas related to the complex interactions between remembering, forgetting and narrating as the essential forms of engaging with memory. The following sections advance the concepts of "landscapes of memory" and "memoryscapes", as forms of urban inception of memories, which frame place identity, place attachment and semiotics of space. The aim of the Chapter is to make a critical review of contemporary scholarly interpretations of memory and different ways in which it inhabits and transforms urban spaces.

2.1 On collective memory and history

As argued in the (ever)growing body of scholarly literature in the field, contemporary preoccupation with memory turned in recent years into an unhealthy obsession with everything mnemonic – heritage, museums, legacy, commemoration, tradition, nostalgia, historical consciousness, preservation and number of connected phenomena entered the mainstream academic and public debates. Furthermore, the concept of memory expanded to include number of connected socio-economic processes, so that the focus is no longer on dichotomy between social and collective – nowadays, the attention shifted towards disputed, commodified, reconciliatory, historical, conflicting, uneasy, relentless, commercial, unsettled, legal, disturbing or resilient memory, to name only few. Either the memory phenomenon is becoming increasingly multi-layered, complex, ambiguous and volatile, or the contemporary societies grew more curious, self-reflecting, more inventive and resourceful in exhibiting the memory derivatives and their implications for the analyses of everything from our purchasing habits to environmental sustainability.

Understanding the causes of this "memory boom" became an important task of modern scholarly literature, with number of useful interpretations emerging in recent years. Thus, the contemporary relevance of memory in our societies is frequently explained in reference to the World Wars and the Holocaust, as with the disappearance of generation that witnessed those events, it became even more important to remember and transmit the past experiences (De Cesari and Rigney 2014). According to Saunders (2018), another important factor refers to the significant migratory movements of the last decades, which proliferated and entangled different ethnicities, traditions, cultures and religions. In order to counteract such cultural and historical blending, it became essential to acknowledge, preserve and retrieve different histories and competing versions of the past. For social anthropologist Paul Connerton (2009, p.1), "the modernity has a particular problem with forgetting" and the main cause of the current preoccupation with memory is the fear of "cultural amnesia." Indeed, public spaces became overloaded with mnemonic institutions, memorials, heritage sites and historical artworks ensuring preservation of the past which might otherwise be lost forever.

In Aleida Assmann's (2008) reading of memory, the main motives for this increasing interest in the topic include, amongst the others, the access to archives of the post-communist East Europe, trauma of Holocaust and the World Wars and postcolonial recovery of forgotten narratives and memories. Other scholars, such as Huyssen (1995, p.7), argued that the memory boom is an attempt to "slow down" and find a source of stability in the fast-paced, information

overloaded, ever-changing world. Similarly, French scholar Francois Hartog (2003) speaks of the "acceleration of history" as the main cause of the contemporary obsession with memory. Similarly, in Nora's words, the "age of commemoration" can be understood as a response to, on one hand, the acceleration of history, and on the other, the democratization of it (Nora, 2002). The acceleration of history led to unprecedent interest for preserving the past and proliferation of mnemonic institutions and commemorative practices, as well as the quest for historical and temporal continuity in the increasingly unstable fast-paced world. The democratization refers not only to emergence of the new actors in the historical arena, such as the minority groups, but also to the increased participation in historical interpretation and transmission (Nora 2002).

Sharon Macdonald (2013) argues that the present became overloaded with memory due to the proliferation of mnemonic institutions and commemorative events. In the introduction to *"The Collective Memory Reader,"* Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy (2011) explain the memory craze of the last decades as a consequence of nation-states increasingly turning to their past as a way to legitimize collective identity and claim common history. Blight (2009) argues that we live in "an age of diminished expectations" where gazing into future does not provide comfort and confidence, causing people to turn towards nostalgia, heritage and memory. Technological progress also accounts for the rise of memory culture, as it enabled to store, preserve and easily retrieve large amount of historical data (Winter 2007). Finally, as postmodernism challenged the historical discipline by questioning the notion of "historical truth", scholars seemed to turn to studying the representations of history and memory. Furthermore, memory turned to be an important political instrument and according to Jeffrey Olick (2003), scholarly interest in memory should be regarded inseparable from the contemporary obsession with identity politics, political willingness to accept past wrongdoings and the collapse of totalitarian regimes.

As seen in the discussion above, while scholars agree that Holocaust significantly contributed to the memory boom, there are number of other political, social, cultural and technological sources of the paradigmatic change in the way we address the topic of memory. But one possible explanation seems to be absent from literature on memory overload – the mnemonic commercial potential, since the memory culture fuelled the contemporary tourism and heritage industry, appearing as a marketable resource. Thus, it is possible to argue that its proneness to commodification can be one of the sources of memory's rise to prominence in contemporary political, social and cultural life. Indeed, the economic growth and the

development of the service sector caused the unprecedented expansion of tourism, which become one of the biggest and fastest growing industries in the world. The democratization of travel and accessibility of remote places sparked the interest in city and its cultural capital, including local identities, traditions and histories – all of which relate to its mnemonic framework.

In line with the previous argument, Erll (2011) suggests that global media culture also plays an important role in the current fascination with memory, as products of the popular culture such as movies, books, television series and documentaries with historical thematic seem to gain prominence. The media and entertainment industry certainly significantly contributed to popularization of historical topics and interest in preserving traces of the past, in cultural or commercial form. Indeed, one needs to acknowledge the role of contemporary media in promoting memory culture, but also in producing, displaying and managing certain memories in hegemonic ways (Belanger 2002). Significantly impacting accessibility of memories and transforming the framework for engaging with the past, media contributed both to proliferation of memory culture and to 'de-sacralization' of memory production processes.

Finally, it is important to note that while perhaps not all of the arguments addressed in this introduction impacted the current memory expansion (and certainly not all to the same extent), it is an essential task of every scholarly endeavour to reflect on variety of political, social, economic, cultural and academic debates framing the studied phenomenon. Thus, contextualizing the developments which challenged our relationship with the past provides an important step in understanding the new modes of representing, exhibiting and advertising the past in contemporary cities. In line with that, the following discussion attempts to detangle two important concepts used throughout the dissertation – history and memory, by first exploring the historical expansion of the concept of memory and then moving towards the analysis of porous, transgressive and fluid line between the two notions.

2.1.1 History of memory scholarship

Probably the most cited and the most influential memory scholar, often credited for establishing the new discipline of 'memory studies', the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1994) started the academic debate on the topic as early as in 1925, with his seminal work *"Social Frameworks of Memory"* (*"Les cadres sociaux de la memoire"*). While his contemporaries such as Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud insisted on the individual character of memory, Halbwachs (1994) suggested that no memory can be observed isolated from the

wider social context. For him, memory is a "collective" product, deeply embedded in group social dynamics. As such, it serves as a tool for strengthening self-awareness and self-identification - to belong (to certain group) and differentiate oneself (from the other). In his acclaimed publication *"On collective memory"* (*"La memoire collective,"* first published in French in 1950) Halbwachs (1992) thus distinguishes between the collective memory, as a socially constructed phenomenon, and the historical memory, as the act of the past reconstruction through the work of historians. While admitting that the work of remembrance and recollection is undoubtedly the work of individuals, Halbwachs argues that individual mnemonic labour is contingent on the specific social context in which the remembering happens. Therefore, a reconstruction of the past events occurs through the process of collective retrieval, interpretation and often instrumentalization for the present-day purposes.

Halbwachs' ideas were further developed by the members of the Annales school in France (notably Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Jacques Le Goff) and French historian Pierre Nora, who provided one of the most important contributions to the field - a collection of seven volumes entitled *"Les lieux de memoire."* Published between 1984 and 1992, the volumes extensively addressed French history and identity using memory as a main tool in the analysis. Few concepts changed so drastically the way we understand collective memory as Nora's *lieu de mémoire*, referring to the physical traces of the past which through the work of time or people become symbolic element of the community's memorial landscape. Emphasizing not only social but also spatial aspect of collective memories, Nora presents *lieux de mémoire* as realms of memory which are supposed to preserve, enhance or codify the remains of history. Central to his argument about *lieux de mémoire* as sites where history and memory interact is the idea of "intentional remembrance", as without the willingness to remember, *lieux de mémoire* would be the same as *lieux d'histoire* (Nora,1989).

Another stream of reflections on Halbwachs' ideas could be traced in the work of Jewish historian Amos Funkenstein (1989), who conceptualized the "historical consciousness," as a "degree of creative freedom in the use and interpretation of the collective memory". According to Funkenstein (1989), historical consciousness is not only about creating and fostering collective identity, but also about making sense of the past, about the self-reflection and awareness of one's historical space and time. Another important concept that memory scholars adopted and developed is Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) "invention of tradition." In his influential introduction to the volume edited with Terrence Ranger, *"The Invention of tradition,"* Hobsbawm (1983) argues that this concept refers to the "process of formalization

and ritualization", resulting in creation of new "traditions", appearing closer to the past than they really are. The invented traditions are deliberately designed symbolic practices which anchor in present but promise contact with the past and historical continuity through the repetitive behaviour (Hobsbawm 1983). According to this paradigm, with the abrupt political and societal transformation, new "invented traditions" emerge to replace the old ones, which do not correspond with the new societal values, beliefs and aspirations (Hobsbawm 1983).

Eviatar Zerubavel (1997), another sociologist who dealt extensively with the question of memory, conveyed that memories are interpreted, framed and transformed within a particular social environment. As such, they represent a "model of society", since memories respond to the values, interests, challenges and inclinations of the contemporary communities (Schwartz 2010). Whatmore, Schwartz (2018) argues that memories present also a "model for society" as they organize social framework through which people legitimize the present. Social organization provides thus a framework for storing, retrieving, developing and transmitting "imaginative reconstruction called memory" (Bartlett 1932).

In *"The Sociological Problem of Generations"* Karl Manheim (1952) distinguishes between personally acquired memories and appropriated memories, which are "borrowed" from other people. Memory is one of the determining pillars of both personal and collective identity, as the pictures from the past constitute who we are, where we belong and what we believe in. Unsurprisingly, in the unstable world of multiple overlapping identities, we use our memories as an anchor, so that Megill (2007, p.43) even frames an argument that "when identity becomes uncertain, memory rises in value." Indeed, as will be discussed throughout the thesis, memories undergo major revision when social framework transforms and new values replace the old (Schwartz 2000). This is because the discourse of the past is inherently political, and the relationship of power is always inscribed in the mnemonic experience (Confino 1997). Consequently, the collective memory often becomes a tool for strengthening particular political objectives (Wertsch 2009). Indeed, an important capacity of the collective memory is to systematize past events and make sense of them, creating a bridge between the past and the present which reinforces current ideological orientation (Zerubavel 1995).

As opposed to the traditional dichotomy of individual and collective, Aleida Assmann (2008) suggests another useful framework for studying memory, highlighting four distinct memory formats – individual, social, political and cultural memory. According to this categorization the individual memory is perspectival, fragmentary, subjective and volatile, with memories of others serving to legitimize, challenge or correct individual recollection. Social

memory is close to the Halbwachs' idea of "collective memory", as it refers mostly to the orally transmitted generational memory, which creates a framework for social cohesion and shared values, beliefs and attitudes. Political memory is organised, elaborated, transgenerational form of memory, such as the national memory, which is displayed and transmitted through the official institutions, public discourse, commemorative practices and public education. Cultural memory, as a mode of interaction between remembering and forgetting, includes both the "active" memory, the one publicly displayed and institutionally organized, and the vast amount of unused material preserved in archives and libraries, available for professionals to maintain and retrieve upon request. One of its main features is its transformability and permeability, as certain parts of "archival" material can be recovered and brought into the "mainstream" memory at certain point in time, while some "active" memories can become irrelevant and fall into oblivion, remaining accessible in libraries and archives. This "fluidity" of cultural memory will be later elaborated as a useful analytical tool for studying 'selective' use of the past in post-socialist Europe.

In conclusion to this passage, it is useful to remind of the Wertsch's (2009) argument that the collective memory is widely discussed, but poorly understood phenomenon, scrutinized and disputed across disciplines. This short overview of some of the main concepts and scholars from the field demonstrate precisely the vastness of the field and diversity of approaches, methods and frameworks for studying the collective memory. This is the result of both staggering advancement of intellectual work in the field, and the involvement of variety of disciplines in the memory debates, including (but not limited to) history, sociology, psychology, political sciences, literature, cultural studies, anthropology and philosophy (Wertsch and Roediger 2008). Such diversity of perspectives and contributions to the field makes memory scholarship volatile, versatile and challenging, yet also inspiring for transversal and cross-disciplinary analyses such as this one.

2.1.2 History and memory

The analysis of the interplay between history and memory has become one of the most inspiring intellectual challenges of the last decades. One may find some of the first traces of the debate on history and memory in Marx's (1978) theory, which argues that the history is men-made, in reference with the circumstances retrieved and transmitted from the past. Yet, the concrete observations and comparisons of the two temporal phenomena were first explicitly addressed by Halbawachs (1980), who insisted on dichotomy between history and memory, which in his works appear as opposed, irreconcilable and mutually exclusive forms of the past.

For Halbwachs (1980), history is interested in differences, while memory favours resemblances and similarities in historical periods. History is analytical, comprehensive and chronological, while memory selects "usable" histories and synthetize them into emotionally charged narratives. History is objective and thus unitary and universal, while collective memories are due to their subjective nature multiple and mutually incompatible. Indeed, memory has been long understood as a "history seen through affect" (Winter 2010, p.12) and history as memory limited and rectified by the archival documents and official records. According to that perspective, history relies on verifiable data and facts, unlike memory which is fluid and negotiated through different social and cultural frameworks. History is full of contradictions and ruptures, while memory is about continuity and chronology; history is anchored in the past and memory resides in the present, responding to contemporary societal demands (Erll 2011). Seen through the lens of this dichotomy, memory emerges as the product of our own knowledge of the past, while history draws on the memories, experiences and knowledge of other people (Lowenthal 2015).

Number of scholars throughout the years re-iterated this sharp distinction between history and memory, often referring to memory as the inferior form of dealing with the past (Olick 2007). In most of these scholarly theorizations, history supersedes memory, which is subjective, porous and distorting (Falasca Zamponi 2003). History is thus mostly seen as comprehensive and multi-perspectival way of understanding the past, unlike simplifying, archetypal and unambiguous memory (Novick 1988). Strongly opposing these two concepts, Nora (1989, p. 8) conceives history as a critical reflection and memory as spontaneous activity "vulnerable to manipulation". Yet, mutual dependence of the two frameworks should not be omitted – according to Jay Winter (2006) memory needs history, as in order to reconstruct the memory of the past, the work of historian on setting "the boundary conditions of possibility" is essential. Indeed, while memory gives meaning to the past, the history gives memory a critical dimension (Ricoeur 1996). By establishing facts, questioning narratives and searching for the explanations, history consolidates, contests and corrects collective memory. As Karin Winter (2010) framed it - memory is a faculty and history a discipline. For decades, indeed, this paradigm of dichotomy was dominant, where memory appeared as a representation, construction and interpretation and history as a knowledge, objective account and consciousness (Falasca Zamponi 2003).

In recent years, however, the scholars attempted to move beyond this hierarchization of history and memory, arguing that instead of being super-imposed, the two phenomena are

extremely interconnected and mutually dependent. According to that approach, memory includes larger framework of the past – history and history relies on the personal accounts and remembering (Lowenthal 2015). Hence, the two concepts are entangled and intertwined, with the main difference between memory and history lying actually in the way in which they acquire, reproduce, preserve, communicate and transform the accounts of the past events (Lowenthal 2015). In *"History, Memory and Politics in Central Eastern Europe,"* Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (2013) attempt to avoid the traditional dichotomy by conceptualizing memory as a process entailing contemporary political uses of history and collective modes of past remembrance. This inter-relatedness prompted scholars to suggest forms merging history and memory, such as Jan Assmann's (1997, p. 9) concept of "mnemohistory," or Jay Winter's (2006, p. 9) "historical remembrance", designating the perpetual negotiations and interactions between history and memory. Indeed, in spite of exhaustive debates in the field, the history and memory seem to be "condemned to a forced cohabitation" (Ricoeur 2004, p. 397), and as such should be only nuanced and benchmarked against each other.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge one of the oldest, yet very contemporary and relevant conceptualization of the relationship between history and memory. As early as in 1931, in his address to the American Historical Association entitled *"Everyman His Own Historian"* Carl Becker (1932) highlighted the "imaginary" character of not only memory, but the history as well, seen as the "artificial extension of the social memory", combining facts and interpretations. In a similar vein, Peter Burke (1989) referred to history as to a social memory, arguing that both memories and histories are not objective, since they rely on social selection and interpretation, often getting distorted in the process. Indeed, memory transformed not only the social framework for understanding the present and the past, but also the ways in which we "do" the history as a discipline. At the same time, it brought new insights to history and challenged its reliability and monopoly in interpreting the past. In that sense, memory undoubtedly changed the way we reflect on the past and its contemporary traces and meanings. Shedding light on its relationship with history is thus an important exercise for understanding complexity of past management and challenges of 'coming to terms with the past' and its urban and social capital.

2.2 Collective memory: Remembering, forgetting and narrating as social processes

Most scholars agree that memory plays a significant role in transmitting and legitimising political and social messages (McDowell 2008) and that the artefacts from the past occupy a crucial place in the maintenance, construction and reformation of the contemporary cultural identities (Rampley 2012). In the increasingly dynamic, fast-paced and discontinued world the memory is supposed to provide a sense of continuity and a stable source of meaning and value. As a result of group social dynamics and interactions, the memory is often seen as a "collective" product. In that sense, what we "remember" is more often a result of generational transmission, shared cultural patterns, social values and oral traditions, than the individual experience and personal recollection. Or, even the most personal remembrances are filtered through certain cultural frameworks which are collectively (re)produced. Consequently, memory could be understood as the shared social macrostructure through which one tries to make sense of its past, history and identity. Central to this social framework are the processes of remembering, forgetting and narrating.

The contemporary obsession with memory, as discussed earlier in this Chapter, could be attributed to the growing fear of amnesia, what Huyssen (2003, p. 17) calls the "intense public panic of oblivion." Indeed, the society overloaded with information becomes increasingly concerned about forgetting, encouraging instead the accumulation, storage and preservation of as many memories as possible. The growing interest in memory, heritage and musealization can be thus at least partially accounted to human ever-existing quest for immortality and continuity, in Huyssen's (2003, p. 23) words the attempt "to counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever-shrinking horizons of time and space." For Erll (2011, p. 9), "memories are small islands in a sea of forgetting," while Assmann (2008b) claims that forgetting is the normality and remembering the exception. Indeed, it appears that the major issue with memory is the limited storage capacity of our minds, requiring that in order to memorize something, one needs to forget many things. Some scholars even argued that every act of memory represents a betrayal of some other experiences, which remain abandoned and obsolete (Huyssen 2003).

The concept of forgetting is essential for understanding memory and its cultural, political and social features. For the memory work in general, forgetting is as important as remembering (Brockmeier 2002). In his influential speech *"What is a nation"* Ernest Renan (1882) argued that forgetting and "getting wrong" historical facts is one of the constituting factors in nation

building. But just as memory has many faces and may take many different forms and contexts, there are various types and purposes of forgetting. Consequently, it is possible to distinguish between active and passive forgetting (Assmann 2008b). When the forgetting includes intentional destruction of the previous mnemonic patterns and cultural products we speak of the active forgetting. The passive forgetting happens when remnants of the certain past are not purposefully destroyed, but simply lost, neglected or discontinued. This form is close to what Gross (2000, p. 141) calls "noncontemporaneous" remembrance, when certain parts of the active history fall out of the public attention into oblivion, yet remain available in archives and depots and may be retrieved and brought back to life at some other point in time (Assmann 2008b).

The capacity to retrieve and depart from certain periods or past events is essential for re-framing and solidifying identity in times of change. The abrupt shifts in history are often followed by strategic removal of remnants of the past ideology, suggesting instead alternative narratives, references to some glorious distant past or simply a historical void. Zerubavel (1997, p.85) addresses this collective amnesia as "mnemonic decapitation", where discontinued memory meets new political, social and spatial dynamics. Social consequences of this "memory repression" have been discussed by number of scholars (Lewicka 2008; Ugresic 1998), but in contemporary societies it seems that certain degree of the "artfully selective oblivion" is a necessary pre-condition of socio-political stability (Lowenthal 1999, p. xi). What is defined by Ricoeur as the — "active and freeing oblivion", is this strategic capacity to "bracket one's own past and feel unhistorical for a while" (Ferrari 2015, p.157). Thus, the collective memory is always constructed in the interplay of anamnesis and amnesia (Tolliday 2020), between strategic remembering and deliberate forgetting (Küchler and Melion 1991). Hence, it is important to acknowledge the intention to remember or to forget, and the degree of alteration of historical narratives can tell us a lot about social needs and identity patterns of the contemporary community.

Historical narratives are the essential part of social construction of the past, the "tools for reconstructing, moralizing and domesticating historical past in a credible and understandable way" (Bresco de Luna and Rosa 2012, p.302). Since "memory community is built around a shared set of textual means, especially narratives" (Wertsch 2009, p.132), the narratives overfill our everyday lives, public spaces and social organisation. Both history and memory negotiate the past through different narrative strategies, in order to enhance collective identity and facilitate communication and cooperation within the society. In that sense, narratives are

essential for constructing histories with social consensus, giving meaning to the collective past and consolidating shared identity (Vygotsky 1978). The process of narrating relies on the reconstruction of memory, yet it is at the same the source of major alterations and (more or less) subtle manipulations of memory. Remembering as a cultural practice is conceptualized, performed, communicated and transmitted through narratives. Hence, since continuity of history and ability to tell a coherent story based on memories represent the main feature of individual and collective identities, narratives frame our self-identification and sense of belonging.

Narratives in general represent the major part of our identity, as stories that we tell ourselves and each other frame our perception of self and the others (King 2000). They are supposed to provide a sense of continuity, consistency and coherence and give meaning and value to our past, present and future. As such, they are products of memory as much as its creators, since narratives continuously transform, overwrite and add new layers of meaning to memories of the past (Brockmeier 2002). Narratives reinforce identity and organize mnemonic material in local cultural framework. But as much as remembrance always implies proportion of forgetting, the concept of narrative cannot be discussed isolated from the notion of counter-narrative, as the alternative perspective which challenges and contests the dominant discourse (master narrative) (Brockmeier 2002). Narratives and counter-narratives shape the mnemonic process through discursive dimension, providing meaning to remembrances and contextualizing the past. In a way, history is constantly re-negotiated through the interplay of narratives and counter- or alternative narratives, which creates space for tensions, revisions and contestations in historical interpretations.

The work of memory involves a constant interaction of remembrance, forgetting and narrating, which all constitute a mnemonic framework embodied in public discourse and public space (see *Figure 4*). Individuals articulate and capture memories in interaction with their social environment and base their identities on common remembrances and narratives. As argued in this sub-chapter, new political and social circumstances find its legitimation in new selection of what and how shall be remembered and what should be excluded from the mnemonic life. Nowhere are these rewritings as visible and as tangible as in urban landscape, where memories are displayed, negotiated and performed. These "urban" memory traces are central to our analysis and will be subject of much of the forthcoming discussion.
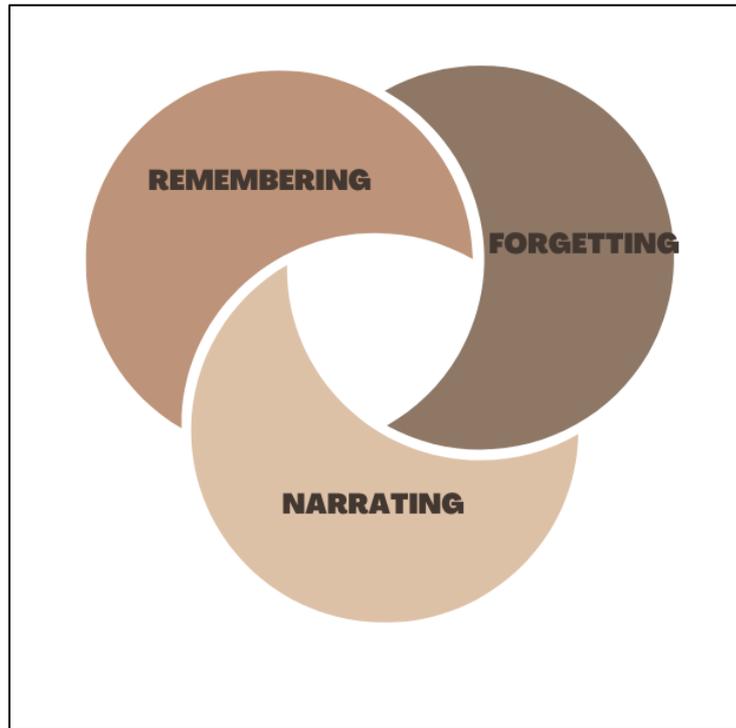
Figure 4 Interplay of mnemonic processes

2.3 Landscapes of memory: Representation of space, place identity and place attachment

The relationship between urban space and collective memory has been one of the central concerns of social sciences, aggregating intellectual endeavours from variety of fields, including cultural geography, urban history, architecture, social psychology, and historical anthropology (see for example: Dwyer and Alderman 2008; Rosenberg 2012; Hayden 1995; Till 2005). While memory is a temporal phenomenon, it is deeply anchored in spatial dynamics (Staiger and Steiner 2009). Cities serve as repositories of memory (Ladd 1997) and provide a physical environment for the encounters with the past. The concept of spatiality was central to Halbwachs' (1980) notion of collective memory, as he claimed that memory exists within spatial frameworks. Places indeed serve as the mediators of collective memory and public history, as they display, perform and transmit the images from the past. Mnemonic traces displayed in the public space serve as a bridge to certain past events and mirror the ideological capital, cultural heritage and collective identity of the society in question. Urban landscape of every city is filled with places of memory such as museums, monuments, cemeteries, squares, historical buildings, plaques and memorials, which provide a spatial embodiment of memory and imbue places with meaning and value. Their role is to communicate particular history and

give legitimacy to certain memories, strengthening thus the collective identity and turning places in tourist destinations and repositories of societal cohesion.

Since memories are produced, transformed, consumed, interpreted and transmitted through public space, the spatial mnemonic interactions will reflect the changing relations with the past. For Rosenberg (2012, p.131), the sites which preserve and give access to the past, the "commemorative landscapes", exist within a network of urban relationships which question both past and present practices. Namely, the meaning, presence and significance of *lieux de memorie* is not stable in time or space. It is fluid and subject to changes which follow and reflect political and societal transformations (Till 2003). When the ideological framework changes, so does the politics of memory and preferences towards certain memories, places and narratives, which results in often staggering transformations of urban mnemonic landscape. But the inverse processes also occur - the physical changes in urban landscape, often driven by economic factors, natural disasters or cultural restauration projects, instigate changes in the inhabitants' mnemonic patterns and identity frameworks (Staiger and Steiner 2009). Furthermore, places of memory are not only unstable in time, but also in space, as mnemonic inscriptions in urban landscape are not necessarily interpreted in the same way by different groups and their meaning is often contested and disputed amongst various actors in the memory arena. Thus, *lieux de memoire* are both bastions of the stability and continuity, and the fluidity and porosity of memory and mnemonic practices.

Places of memory are never neutral - they are actively produced, contested, appropriated, forgotten or transformed by the society (Lefebvre 1991), to accommodate changing historical narratives, social values, economic needs or ideological frameworks. Political instrumentalization of *lieux de mémoire* has been widely discussed by range of historians, political scientists, anthropologists, geographers and sociologists. This is because sites of memory are, often more than other urban spaces, deeply emotionally charged, becoming important landmarks of the collective identities. This development of emotional bonds with places is known in scholarly circles as the place attachment. According to Felasari and colleagues (2017), place attachment might be defined as the emotional bond between individual and the location charged with symbolical meaning. It is created through interactions between people and places and as such it gives value to urban structures, monuments and districts, investing them with memories, rituals, narratives and meanings. Indeed, it is historical capital and value of the places that facilitates place attachment and enhances the place identity

(Lewicka 2005, 2008). In that sense, every analysis of contemporary urban processes requires thorough understanding of the underlying mnemonic dynamics and challenges.

Urban landscapes serve as a collective reminder of the constitutive elements of the societal past. Spatial context of memories - their location in space, visibility, accessibility and interaction with the surrounding environment significantly influence the social importance, meaning and value attributed to the certain past (Dwyer and Alderman 2008). However, this relationship between place and memory is constantly (re)created, negotiated, transformed and performed, disrupting the existing commemorative frameworks and challenging the ways in which we engage with the past (Rosenberg 2012). As a response to the increasing complexity of memory processes framing the turbulent XX century, and the memory boom of late 1980s and 1990s, new forms of inscribing, displaying and communicating past in public space emerged, stemming both from the official mnemo-politics and the public initiatives and civil activities. Indeed, while cities are filled with different, often conflicting and opposing mnemonic traces belonging to different social groups, there is usually one particular stream of memories which has the hegemony over others (Belanger 2002). By mobilizing public interest and legitimacy and promoting certain version and interpretation of the past, such memories exercise important political power and control. Hence, for decades, it was mostly the official politics of memory which was imbedded in most of the memory sites, commemoration practices and cultural institutions. In that sense, political elites historically exercised control over the version of the past displayed in urban landscape, which was supposed to reflect social cohesion, national identity and ideological inclinations. However, in recent years, there are number of mnemonic actors with capacity to deploy and install persuasive memory projects, narratives and spaces, employing mnemonic capital and aesthetics of the place to pursue their own political, commercial, social or cultural interests and goals. These new processes frame the contemporary engagement with urban memories and deploy cultural identity and development of modern cities.

2.4 Urban memoryscapes: Concept and semiotics

The spatiality of memory has been addressed through number of concepts, including urban memory, *lieux de memoire*, and most recently – urban memoryscapes. While often used interchangeably, these notions are each conceptualized to frame subtle differences in understanding and treatment of memories in space. Hence, while urban memories could be understood as objects, narratives and practices imbedded in the physical landscape (Crinson

2005), memoryscapes are seen as sites of "concentrated cultural practice" (Sewell 2005, p. 172) which not only "express and convey memories" (Kapralski 2011, p.180) but also actively challenge, negotiate and organize mnemonic content within particular space. In that sense, for Kapralski (2011, p. 180) memoryscapes have a particular cultural function – "to impose order and coherence on the meanings attributed to the past–present relationship, including the domestication of difference so that it is not subversive." Rooted in social history and charged with emotional capital, memoryscapes make the past visible, tangible and legitimate, continuously framing and re-shaping active history and memory of the city.

While the concept of 'memoryscape' only recently entered the mainstream academic debates and even nowadays remains largely under-theorized in terms of both its conceptual and semantic framework, the term was used already in 1990s, when Lisa Yoneyama (1994, 1999) spoke of "taming the memoryscape". While failing to define and profoundly engage with the term, Yoneyama (1994, 1999) already at the time emphasizes the power struggles imbedded in the idea of memoryscapes, as places where memories are politically territorialized and spatially contained in an attempt to impose mnemonic order and coherence. In more recent readings of memoryscapes, Kappler (2016, p.3) defines them as "particular clusters of spaces and locales which have a particular significance in the ways in which people relate to and narrate the past", while for Phillips and Reyes (2011) memoryscapes act as global framework within which memories emerge, fluctuate, get contested, interact with other memories, transform and multiply. Making an argument for adding 'memoryscapes' to the other 'scapes' which Ajrun Appadurai (1990) defined in his seminal analysis of disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy (such as ethnoscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes), anthropologist Paul Basu (2013) theorizes memoryscape as the multiplicity and fluidity of memory sites, social frameworks and regimes of remembering. In that sense, memoryscapes are not the objectively given realities, but personal and perspectival constructs which are negotiated, transgressed and improvised (Basu, 2013).

Memoryscapes include not only spatial embodiments of memory, but also mnemonic practices, hybridized forms of commemoration, cultural imaginings and dialectic narratives. As such, they are a mirror through which one may grasp the myriad of ways in which people shape and are shaped by memory spaces, how they interact, communicate and negotiate its meaning and inconsistencies, and how socio-cultural contexts frame mnemonic consciousness (Basu, 2013). Indeed, "memoryscapes contain many memories" (Kapralski 2015, p. 150),

which are often conflicting, opposed or mutually exclusive, reflecting the attitudes, values and histories of communities who organize and nurture them. As sites of cultural practices and historic battlefields, memoryscapes are "constantly engaged in efforts not only to normalize or homogenize but also to hierarchize, encapsulate, exclude, criminalize, hegemonize, or marginalize practices and populations that diverge from the sanctioned ideal" (Sewell 2005, p. 56). Hence, for Kapralski (2015), the aim of memoryscapes is to provide an enclosed space enabling to organize mnemonic differences, contain subversiveness, and legitimize group's claims to history and territory.

As wide, integrative and immersive approach to memory and their human geography, memoryscapes respond to the contemporary demand for encompassing broader range of practices into the process of doing (public) history, heritage and memory. For Toby Butler (2006, 2008) memoryscapes integrate oral history, memory and landscape and can be defined as the "landscape interpreted and imagined using the memories of other". Consequently, in an attempt to understand and map cultural landscapes in a more immersive way, he uses oral history recordings to curate a riverside walking trail that he dubs "memoryscapes". While the concept was significantly expanded in the years following Butler's discussion, his idea of memoryscapes as sites aggregating memory, space and narrative remains both important and influential. Or, memoryscapes, despite the tendency to encapsulate them into bounded territorial and hegemonic narrative framework, are always highly dependent on surrounding discourses, stories and personal oral histories. In words of Jennifer Cole (2001), memoryscape refers to a range of forms in which people remember and different socio-historical conditions which operationalize these forms and frame them into narrative constructs. Hence, memoryscapes undoubtedly encapsulate public narratives, while also providing a dialectical space, where hegemonic memories are challenged, antagonistic narratives negotiated, and multiple discursive layers attached to and detached from (Kapralski 2015).

In an experimental study combining heritage tourism, urban renewal and computer science, Rogage et al. (2021) define memoryscapes as "multi-sensory, immersive, participatory experiences, utilizing re-contextualized heritage assets, that take place in public spaces, intended to re-imagine and reinvigorate public spaces as destinations." Indeed, memoryscapes represent a synesthetic aggregation of politically charged symbolic spaces, ambivalent mnemonic practices, antagonistic narratives, re-contextualised heritages and immersive urban experiences. While their conceptual determination fluctuates among disciplines and reflects

the diversity of approaches to and scholarly utilizations of the term, memoryscapes have been often used in conjuncture with ideas of intertwined memories, palimpsestic meanings, ambivalent narratives and contested heritage (see for example: Polynczuk-Alenius 2022, Kappler 2016, Rowlands and de Jong 2007, Hola and Bouwknegt 2022, Van de Putte 2019). Hence, in the thesis memoryscapes are addressed as palimpsestic spaces of coexistence of competing visions of the past, within which symbolic conflicts, contested meanings and memory disputes are negotiated and mediated. Much more than spatial repository of memories, memoryscapes as addressed in this research encompass range of not only existing, but also possible attitudes towards the past (Kapralski 2017) which can be activated or intensified by particular socio-cultural dynamics and processes.

As a repository of concepts, seminal scholarly works and state-of-art ideas, this Chapter aimed at highlighting complexity of the collective memory phenomenon and its inceptions in urban landscape. In order to do so, the Chapter addressed the multifaceted nature of the concept, the interconnectedness of history and memory and their joint interplay with urban spaces (see *Figure 5*). One of the main arguments emerging from the scholarly debates presented in the Chapter is undoubtedly the fluidity and transformability of urban memoryscapes, whose social organization and meaning radically changes in times of significant political turmoil. Memoryscapes, as bastions of power and control, mediate changing social circumstances, memory politics and urban development. As such, they represent a laboratory for exploring how societies come to terms with urban legacies of previous regime in the aftermath of profound changes. Following on that argument, the next chapter will focus on post-socialist context and explore how major urban structures and memories have been deeply affected by post-socialist political, economic and institutional transformation.
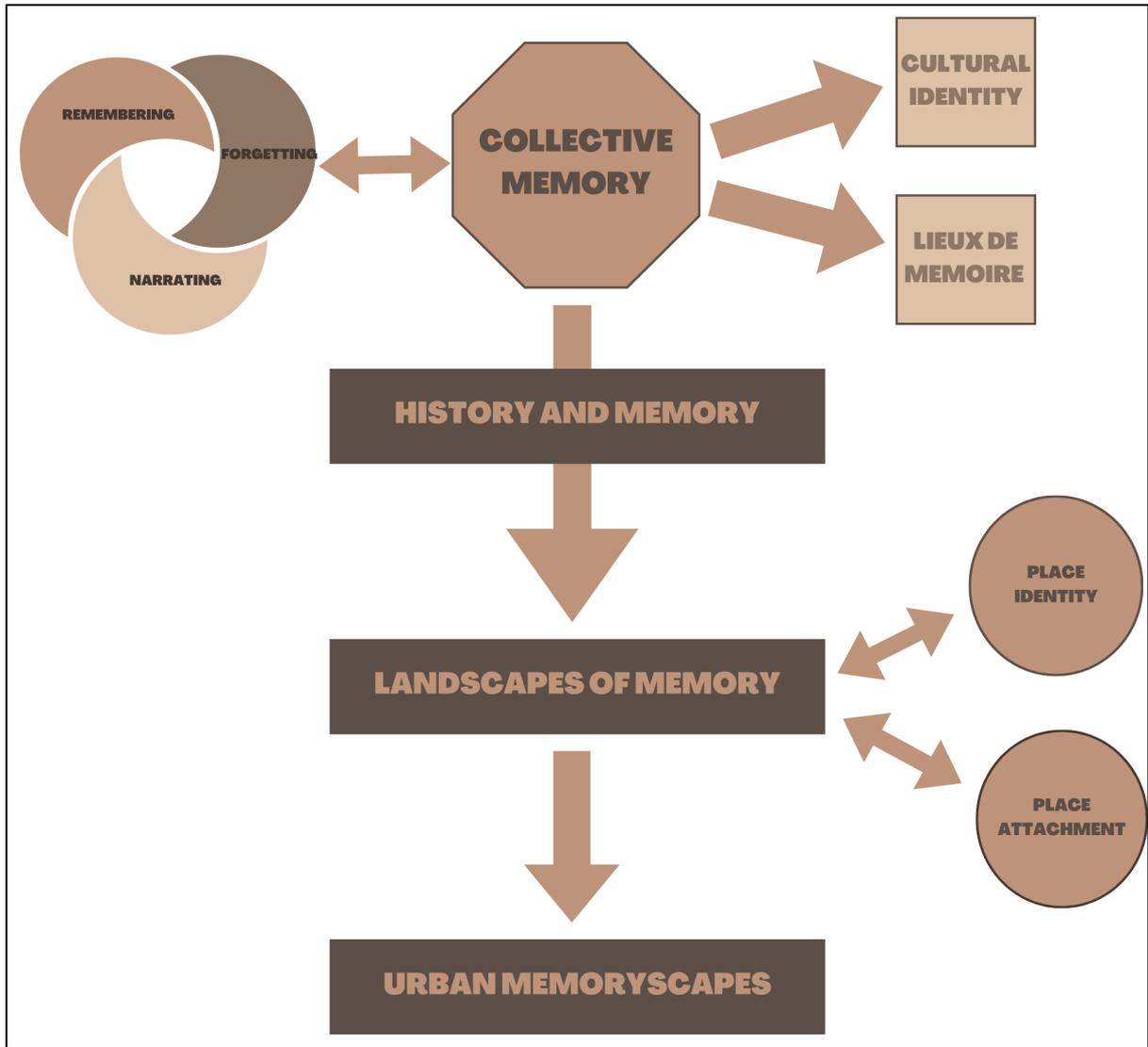
Figure 5 Conceptual Framework of Chapter 2

3 Urban memoryscapes of post-socialist Europe

The analyses in this Chapter extend the discussion of memoryscapes by elaborating insightful ideas, influential theories and critical approaches towards post-socialist urban landscape and the ways in which memory overwhelms and transforms the space in the aftermath of transition. In the first part, I outline some of the major scholarly debates related to the concept of post-socialism, in order to highlight the contemporary controversies surrounding the term, yet also the rationale for using it in the study. Then, I reflect on 'post-socialist city', by briefly outlining the researcher's positionality towards the term and correlation with the main features of its precedent – the socialist city. Following on discussion of path dependency and multiple transformation dynamics as crucial concepts for understanding contemporary post-socialist city, I move towards exploring the spatial transformations in the aftermath of communism, mostly in relation with urban policies, urban planning and urban development. Finally, I conclude the Chapter by opening the debate on how the interactions of memory, heritage and identity frame the contemporary urban landscape of post-socialist cities.

3.1 Negotiating post-socialism: Theories, approaches, limitations

Few concepts acquired such extensive scholarly relevance and entered mainstream discourse as the notion of "post-socialism." Over the last thirty years, societies that have emerged from the collapse of communist states in Europe and different kinds of processes taking place in the aftermath of transition have been repeatedly labelled as "post-socialist". While these countries undoubtedly had divergent paths in terms of political, economic and societal development (both pre-, during and post- state socialism), this generalization continues to act as one of the defining historical denominators for most of the Central and Eastern Europe. According to Kotkin and Beissinger (2014), this is because historical experience of communism still significantly influences trajectories of development in these countries. Yet, after decades of "transition", one may ask when shall the "post-socialism" finish and Central and Eastern Europe enter a new stage? Scholars from variety of disciplines (see for example: Stenning and Horschelmann 2008; Czepczyński 2008; Hann, Humphrey and Verdery 2002) repeatedly questioned whether it still makes sense to refer to the region and its contemporary development as "post-socialist" so many years after the collapse of regime. While part of this discussion has been already addressed in the Introduction, I start this Chapter by briefly outlining the most significant debates in the field, in order to make more consistent argument

that despite the justified criticism, the denomination remains highly relevant for addressing number of transformations and processes in cities of Central, East and Southeast Europe.

First, important question regarding the concept of post-socialism relates to the limits, scope and main characteristics of the term. In an article summarizing contemporary approaches to post-socialist framework, Tuvikene (2016, p.2) argued that post-socialism in literature has been seen mostly as a "spatio-temporal container", defined by regional (CEE), temporal (after 1989) and dimension of change (political, economic, societal, urban transition). This dominant framework has been recently challenged by number of scholars who criticized this monolithic and simplistic usage of "post- socialist" paradigm, linking it instead with broader concepts such as post-colonialism, globalization or post-modernism. This contemporary reading, which considers post-socialism not as a "container" but as a "condition" (Tuvikene, 2016), provides a more comprehensive approach for analysing the city, taking into account number of other influences, experiences, transformations and interactions - not limited to a particular timeframe, region or constitutive event. But even this expanded framework does not seem broad enough to encompass the complexity of the "post-socialist" condition, and Tuvikene (2016) calls for post-socialism "as a de-territorialized concept", which theorizes each city on its own terms, applying post- socialism to the specific aspects of the city and its development. This approach acknowledges post-socialist continuities in particular urban processes, practices and policies, such as housing development, industrialization, informality or suburbanization, but not as defining characteristics of the entire city or region (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008).

Second issue with "post-socialist" paradigm refers to its tendency to generalize and offer instant, "one-size-fits-all" socio-political framework, without acknowledging number of additional influences and divergent paths. Indeed, post-socialist experience shapes the urban reality of contemporary East European cities as much as the post-modern, post-war, post-colonial, multicultural or post-industrial paradigm, or processes such as globalization, technological advancement, migrations, etc. (Wilson 2013). According to this perspective, each city is an amalgam of different experiences, transformations and flows of people, ideas and interactions, making it impossible to acknowledge post-socialism as a defining experience, dominant pattern or developmental path of the region as a whole. While decades of communist influence on political, economic, cultural, social and urban life certainly shaped aesthetics and certain patterns of spatial development in Central and Eastern Europe, it would be unjust to restrict cities as diverse as Tirana, Prague and Ljubljana to a single "post-socialist"

denominator. Firstly, because, as previously discussed, socialism was only one of the processes defining spatial patterns of cities across Central and Eastern Europe and number of other influences need to be considered. As argued by Hann, researchers must not be blindsided by the common legacies of socialism so much to omit urban features and trends shared with other periods, societies and regions (Hann, Humphrey and Verdery 2002). Indeed, while historical experience of communism certainly shaped some urban pathways in most of the CEE, how could one claim that the civil war in Sarajevo, Euromaidan protests in Kiev, mass tourism in Dubrovnik, digital revolution in Tallinn, Montenegrin independence in Podgorica or artistic and cultural migration in Berlin were "less constitutive" elements of urban development than the socialist and post-socialist experience? Each of these cities went through a number of local challenges and individual transformations and it is certainly justified to question whether the "umbrella" term "post-socialist" still makes sense. Second, this assumption would mean that socialism was the same everywhere and that socialist urban development was uniform and consistent across time and space. This cannot be further from truth – in cities such as Split, Krakow, Tirana and Leipzig socialism had completely different context, nature and intensity. Thus, spatial organization and urban processes in these environments could not be addressed as "post-socialist" of the same kind.

Third, an influential criticism of the concept of "post-socialism" relates to the methodological issues – as the field was for years dominated by Western scholars, who arguably might have been biased by "western" perspective in urban development. Furthermore, most of the time they also encountered a language barrier, making it even more difficult to grasp the complexities and specificities of Eastern urban choices. Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008) also pointed out that in certain ways, the "post-socialist" discourse of urban transition labelled patterns of urbanization in Eastern Europe as inferior to the western ones, putting the whole region in the state of "upgrade" towards Europe, which should ultimately result in its arrival to the Western urban "normality" (Robinson 2004, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008). One may argue that almost entire generation of scholars assumed that the ultimate objective of Eastern European cities was to "cleanse" the landscape of socialist legacies and bring it closer to the capitalist urban habitus (Ferencuhova and Gentile 2017; Ferencuhova 2016). Socialist past has been seen as a "deviation" from the European course and liberating East European cities of the unwanted or "unsolicited elements and qualities" (Czepczyński 2008, p.114) was supposed to enable them to "catch up" with their Western counterparts. This approach is highly controversial, as it barely ever challenges concepts such as "democracy", "market" and

"globalization", which are taken as "morally superior", universal and dogmatic (Hann 1998). Most of the theoreticians of post-socialist urban development thus unwillingly set the capitalist city as a model and the end-goal towards which the democratic transition should bring entire urban fabrics of Eastern Europe, without critically reflecting on specificities of Eastern urban needs and traditions, or potential limits of the Western approach to urbanization.

Fourth, it is important to note that in terms of urban organization, "post-socialist" framework tends to overestimate the importance of socialist legacies, often ending up in "Orientalizing" discourse. Indeed, while studies of post-socialist urbanization often focus on destroyed, removed, replaced and transformed socialist buildings, they too often omit new structures which emerge in response to societal and urban restructuring. Several recent publications called for more nuanced and more critical approach to studies of post-socialist urban development, as there seems to be a growing tendency to exaggerate the importance and distinctiveness of post-socialist features in cities of Central and Eastern Europe (Wilson 2013). This contributed to essentialization and as argued by Kulić (2018) even orientalization of socialist architecture and urban landscapes. However, urban traces of socialist past, albeit often culturally appropriated, touristified and mediatized as peculiar, extraterrestrial and bizarre, shall not be seen as isolated from wider architectural perspective and global urban developments. Re-discovery of socialist urban remnants inevitably provoked certain "orientalization", however, it would be extremely short-sighted to use it as a framework for generalizing and encapsulating totality of urban experiences and outcomes of the whole region.

Despite the addressed limitations of the concept, in our analysis, the decision to use the concept of "post-socialism" (used without quotation marks from this point in text) is motivated by three major reasons. First, the thesis addresses socialist legacies and as such draws on particular patterns anchored in socialist history rather than any other historical period, influence or perspective. Second, we assume that despite significant differences and limitations of the approach, notion of post-socialism still allows us to explore some of the central features of economic, political and cultural transformations and their influence on urban identities in the region. Or, patterns of socialist urban development, mnemonic culture and social framework have strong impact on contemporary Central and Eastern European cities at least on discursive level. Third, in order to address patterns of urban development thesis relies on concepts of identity, memory culture, value systems and social preferences which at least partially mirror social and cultural practices of communist time and transition. But rather than adopting post-socialist paradigm as a universal all-encompassing consequence of a sudden change, we use it

only as part of the puzzle, which put into a wider spatio-temporal perspective gives cues for analyzing urban identity transformations. Thus, for each of the cases analysed in the thesis, we provide a broader understanding of additional influences, alternative approaches and broader processes, allowing to identify patterns and convergences, but also plurality and diversity of changes and continuities which go beyond the post-socialist container.

3.2 Post-socialist city: From path dependency to multiple transformation dynamics

Even 30 years after the collapse of communism, one cannot address post-socialist cities without contextualizing socio-political, economic and cultural changes in the aftermath of the regime failure of 1989. One of the major transformations which significantly determined the future of Central and Eastern Europe was the abrupt shift from communism to democracy and from centrally planned economy to the market economy. Institutional changes, privatization of property, increased global competition and market liberalization significantly challenged socio-political reality of these countries. At the same time, competing victimhood, accusations, historical responsibility, retribution, allegations of complicity and restorative justice emerged as important socio-cultural processes framing the aftermath of dictatorship (Lim and Lambert 2014). In this particular sub-chapter, the emphasize will be on structural, functional and symbolic transformations of urban landscape which occurred as a response to changing socio-political and economic environment in post-'89 Europe. New societal organization requested new forms of housing, urban production and infrastructure, new organization of commercial spaces and new urban interactions. Although the idea is to avoid generalization, it is indispensable to draw on certain processes which to a large extent shaped post-socialist urban development in the region and (converging) patterns of spatial restructuring which followed the collapse of communism.

In explaining the urban transformations in post-socialist cities, the concept of path dependency emerged as a dominant theoretical perspective. Path dependency theory starts from the premise that 'history matters' and that the behaviours of individual actors and organizations are bound to follow institutionally established paths. According to this framework, historical events trigger certain institutional patterns, structures and chains of events which further influence future decision-making and development (Mahoney 2000). In terms of urban development, path dependency is used to illustrate how historical development of the city is

defined by the past institutional legacies and social patterns, channelling the fate of the city towards a particular outcome (Bontje and Musterd 2008; Stanilov 2007). This means that in order to understand post-socialist urban landscapes, one has to reflect on the socialist spatial organization and urban conjunctures. Throughout the second half of XX century countries separated by the Iron Curtain nurtured significantly different urban policies and urban identities, different spatial organization and different architectural standards and aesthetics, compared to their counterparts on West. This created a gap between the "socialist city" and the western urban models which were afterwards applied to "cleanse" Eastern cities from their "socialist" nature. Hence, in following passages we provide a condensed and certainly very reductive and deficient overview of major characteristics of socialist urbanity – yet, the exercise is necessary for setting ground for the forthcoming discussions of socialist legacies and their contemporary uses.

First, one of the defining traits of the socialist city was its mode of production, which determined organization of social and urban life and governance. Due to the state ownership and focus on industry, communist urban policies undermined the value of land, neglecting the role of urban rent. The outcome was a common "waste" of land as a resource in the inner cities, disproportionally high share of industrial and residential districts, and lower level of socio-spatial segregation compared to the market-oriented Western regions. Second important characteristics of socialist urbanization was a strong focus on industrial activities and provision of housing in its immediate vicinity, which needed to be reflected in urban design of the socialist cities. Industrial areas were often located in central districts in order to remain close to the large housing estates, occupying vast amounts of land which in market-oriented Western Europe would be commercialized as the exclusive property (Stanilov 2007b). Third, socialist city favoured state ownership, equality, efficiency and functionality rather than aesthetics, with the imperative of providing access to housing, goods and services. Monumental size of its architectural features was supposed to reflect the grandiosity of socialism and "larger-than-life" ideology, while residential ensembles were built in a uniform, monotonous style supposed to provide functional housing, rather than to display national identity, history or architectural tradition.

As demonstrated in previous passage, the patterns of urbanization and spatial development under socialism were substantially different from the Western post-war urban growth. Cities in Western Europe were already during 1960s and 1970s marked by strong deindustrialization, increasing connectivity, market liberalization, growing leisure economy,

internationalization and commercialization of urban fabrics, soon followed by environmental upgrading and inner-city regeneration. These factors significantly influenced urban life and development which followed slow and steady pattern of "organic growth", compared to the organization of Central and Eastern European cities which was entirely based on the state-made decisions and followed the needs of the communist ideology (Stanilov 2007a). While cities in Western Europe had decades to readjust to the diminished role of state, reliance on foreign capital, privatization and land rent, the countries East of the Iron Curtain were subjected to much more violent and fast-paced transformation. The abrupt ideological shift in post-socialist cities was followed by the over-night hasty and reckless change of the pattern of urban development. Thus, in the aftermath of communist collapse, most countries failed to closely monitor urban transition and install mechanisms for correcting negative effects of capitalist spatial exploitation, giving unlimited power to the free market and international capital and unconditionally embracing the neo-liberal reality.

While number of post-socialist cities share the similar pattern of transitional urban development, the pace of the transformation and its outcomes varied across Europe. This does not come as a surprise, since urban policies and urban fabrics largely depend on the political trajectories, economic conditions and legal frameworks. Thus, in the countries where the presence of state in urban planning remained relatively strong after the collapse of communism, this influence continued to be reflected in landscape occupation and preservation (Diener and Hagen 2013). In countries which quickly transitioned to democracy and neo-liberal economic paradigm, the urban development was predominantly de-regulated and shaped by commercial forces (Diener and Hagen 2013). Regardless of that, the main drivers of urban change in post-socialist cities were mostly the same processes of globalization, commercialization, de-industrialization, social differentiation, cultural transformation and gentrification.

Finally, it is important to highlight (and challenge) Sykora and Bouzarovski's (201) paradigm of "multiple transformation dynamics", or the three major changes through which legacies of socialism were negotiated in the aftermath of the collapse of the regime. The first major transformation, according to this framework, is the institutional one, which changed the patterns of economic and political organization, creating structural conditions for the second, societal change. The societal change thus occurred as people adapted their economic and socio-cultural activities, behaviours, expectations and every-day life to the new institutional framework. Finally, in the long-term, consequences of this social restructuring become visible in the urban life, as new urban structures and urban dynamics emerged to respond to new habits,

needs and activities. Although this model might seem logically coherent and plausible, it can certainly be challenged as too simplistic and generalizing. Indeed, while certain political and societal processes undoubtedly preceded urban transformation, it is difficult to accept such a "linear" reading of post-socialist changes. Thus, while acknowledging the importance of keeping in mind number of socio-political conditions which triggered spatial restructuration, I argue that the abrupt transition in Central and Eastern Europe was rather characterized by "overlapping" than "multiple" transformation dynamics. In the following section, hence, I provide a brief outline of most relevant "overlapping" urban and social transformations by tackling the changes in urban development, urban planning, urban policies and public space in the aftermath of communist collapse.

3.3 Spatial transformations in the aftermath of communism

Nothing changed as strikingly the pattern of urban development in Central and Eastern Europe as the economic liberalization of post-'89. After decades of state dominance, centralization and regulation of all economic activities, transition to the free market significantly transformed not only political, economic, social and cultural relations, but also the rules governing the organization of urban space. Deregulation and transfer of resource ownership sparked foreign investments and rampant commercialization, which had strong impact on urban reality of post- socialist cities. Previously closed societies of Central and Eastern Europe emerged as lucrative new markets for international companies, promising at the same time lower costs of land use, operation and living. Thus, new business districts and commercial facilities started invading urban centres of major post-socialist capitals, raising the land prices and displacing residents from the urban core (Stanilov 2007b). As the properties in proximity of urban centres and commercial districts saw sharp increase in price, residential properties started to move towards urban periphery, displacing households further of their occupants' workplaces and requiring intensive development of transportation networks (Kostinskyi 2001). Different approach to housing, driven by demand and shaped by neoliberal economic paradigm and deregulation triggered significant socio-spatial segregation based on income, ethnicity, social status, etc.

Post-socialist urban development was strongly influenced by the changing role of capital and attitudes towards consumption. New mechanisms such as privatization, commercialization, financialization, marketization and revalorization of urban assets re-shaped both physical features of urban space and its social role and function (Golubchikov 2016).

Through the post-socialist spatial restructuration new urban centres and commercial districts emerged, filled with corporative office buildings, commercial facilities, high-end residential complexes and shopping centres. Urban centres became mirrors of the new culture of consumption and importance of international capital (Czepczyński 2008). Furthermore, as Eastern Europeans embraced new commercial urban landscape and consumption-based lifestyle, the social identity also needed to be expanded to accommodate capitalist mentality patterns, social status and class struggles. These changes were also reflected in spatial organization, which according to Diener and Hagen (2013) acted "as a medium to transform income inequalities into social status." New class segregation quickly became visible in urban fabrics – with high-end luxury real estates in popular neighbourhoods and "ghettoization" of minority and impoverished communities. Thus, previously uniform and monotonous landscape and quest for "egalitarian" spatial organization was in post-socialist years turned into a highly polarized urban environment displaying growing economic inequalities and social segregation.

The peculiar cohabitation of western spatial commercialization and socialist legacies transformed not only the overall urban organisation, but also the nature, role and meaning of public space. While public space in Western cities was a product of the attentive spatial planning, aimed at facilitating and containing social interactions and cultural activities in the inner centre, in the socialist cities public space was everywhere – in industrial, residential and institutional districts, creating thus a dysfunctional and dispersed socio-spatial framework. As Eastern Europeans dived into consumerism, public space quickly became invaded with commercial and corporative symbols. Privatization and commercialization of public space, steadily reduced in order to accommodate private urban initiatives, significantly decreased the role, utility and social relevance of these places. Public infrastructure could not follow the expansion of commercial urban development and the governments mostly failed to provide necessary urban services, affecting the ways in which people interact and move around. Finally, the public space in the aftermath of communism was quickly cleansed of ideology, creating mnemonic "voids" and spaces emptied of meaning.

Finally, it is important to briefly reflect on the urban policies, which were in post-socialist years both scarce and de-centralized, as governments not only de-regulated urban market but also delegated responsibilities to local authorities (Stanilov 2007c). Governmental disengagement and transfer of responsibilities related to the issues of preservation of public resources, cultural heritage, housing renovation and infrastructural improvement significantly contributed to the physical deterioration of urban life and decreased sustainability of post-

socialist urban fabrics. According to Sykora (1999) lack of policies and regulations opened doors to uncontrolled, politicized, corrupt and volatile urban development of post-socialist Europe. New socio-political reality of late XX century required specific transformation of spatial conditions in order to meet new needs for housing, transportation and public space, but most cities failed to deliver it. Instead, the unconditional focus on economic development unleashed the forces of foreign capital, which directed urban development towards most profitable, rather than most societally optimal outcomes. In such environment, memoryscapes turned to be particularly vulnerable, as both repositories of identity and often commercially attractive assets. The following sub-chapter sheds light on the complexities and controversies of managing memory-imbued urban spaces in the aftermath of profound transition.

3.4 Post-socialist urban mosaic: Memory, identity, heritage

Staggering socio-political transformations in the aftermath of communism resulted not only in changes of urban governance, spatial organisation, commercial land use and urban planning, but also in dramatic re-framing of cultural and spatial identity. As mirror of ideological framework and cultural capital of the society, urban landscape undoubtedly reflects, moderates and communicates changes in identity patterns. Hence, post-socialist identity transformations needed to be inscribed in urban landscape and mirror new geo-political and economic reality of the region. Post-socialist urbanism was thus used not only to support new political paradigm and economic growth, but also to distance new regime from former ideology and its legacies (Golubchikov 2016). Instead of reminders of socialist heroes, values and narratives, urban landscapes throughout the region were re-designed to reflect revised national history, identity and social cohesion. This interplay between urban landscape, urban memory and urban identity became one of the central topics of the vast field of post-socialist studies. In this section, we particularly address some of the major challenges emerging in the process of appropriating, manipulating and re-arranging memoryscapes to display new identity frameworks.

One of the dominant paradigms in contemporary research on post-socialist city refers to the challenging process of spatial identity (re)construction, requiring political disqualification of history and memory of communism (Balockaite 2012; Ivanova 2017; Light 2000; Young and Kaczmarek 2008). After the fall of regime, public spaces were supposed to be "cleansed" of architectural, mnemonic and symbolic legacies of communism and transformed into the postcards of the new, Westward-looking political orientation and modern societies (Light and

Young 2015). This process has been often addressed as "de-communisation" of urban space (Domic and Goulding, 2009; Camprag 2018; Young and Kaczmarek 2008), aiming to enable the political elites to regain control over the official historical discourse and the societies to catch up with new ideological agenda. This is what Danzer (2009) addresses as 'symbolic appropriation of space', aiming to put an end to the previous regime and highlight new political agenda. All around the region, the political choice to discredit communist legacy resulted in removal, displacement, destruction and demolition of most of the sites and objects related to the former regime. What used to be the communist legacy, for years was a mnemonic limbo, whose every architectural, cultural or historical value was silenced or denied.

Post-socialist urban development, seen through the lens of spatial identity re-framing, could be addressed in terms of three major tendencies suggested by Diener and Hagen (2013). According to this paradigm, first and most dominant trend of identity re-construction through space was reflected in removal, marginalization or re-packaging of socialist iconography, in order to represent it as a deviation from national trajectory. Departure from ambiguous, unwanted and burdensome socialist symbols was thus a necessary condition of the nationalist revival and legitimation of Western-oriented socio-political transformation. Second tendency in this framework could be understood as a process through which multitude of alternative voices, practices, memories and narratives create the urban palimpsests of dissonant, ambiguous and incongruous nature. Finally, the third common characteristic according to Diener and Hagen (2013) is the hybrid urban synaesthesia of national architectural tradition and ultra-modern iconography of global cities, featuring skyscrapers, office buildings and shopping malls. Urban landscape becomes dissonant and mis-matched collage of architectural styles, symbols and blueprints.

While useful as an overview of major processes framing the renewal of spatial markers of identity, Diener and Hagen's (2013) framework does not provide any evidence of the actors and their involvement in the process. In general, identity formation and re-negotiation in transitional times are understood as "top-down" processes, directed and executed through official institutions and actions of political elites. However, re-shaping identity is a complex, ambiguous and comprehensive task, where number of informal actors appear as co-creators in the process. Besides the state, civil society, businesses and media often actively participate in activities enhancing, problematizing or moderating identity processes related to space. What more, by engaging in myriad of every-day practices, situations and interactions, consciously or not ordinary people also significantly influence shaping, re-framing and settling of identity in

transition periods (Polese et al. 2017a). Indeed, even the most basic decisions such as purchasing habits, cultural choices, activities and hobby reproduce certain identity patterns (Polese et al. 2017b). Thus, the establishment, the reinforcement and the transmission of identities are collective processes as much as the memory work, since both phenomena are socially constructed and interpreted.

Inscribing new identity patterns into urban space is never straightforward and consensual. Moreover, such processes could never be actually finished, since some of the legacies of former ideology escape the removal, re-interpretation and replacement, and certain symbolic reminders always remain to disrupt new urban identities. In the post-socialist context, despite the drastic proliferation of new landmarks and narratives aimed to support socio-political transformation, the remnants of socialist iconography, spatial practices and urban patterns of every-day life often remained present and visible in space. This phenomenon of "unfinished" ideological 'cleansing' of space was elaborated by Czepczyński (2008), for whom Central and Eastern Europe remains filled with "liminal landscapes" – the unachieved cultural products, half way from what they used to be, but still substantially far from what they are supposed to represent. The post-socialist urban "limbo", according to this paradigm, is epitomized through three distinct phases– separation, where new codes and symbols were defined; transition, where meanings and representations are intertwined; and reincorporation, where division between old and new disappears, and the landscape reinterpretation is successfully completed (Czepczyński 2008). It may be argued that most of the post- socialist cities are still in the second, "transitional" phase, where different and changeable groups, interests and actions constantly redefine meaning, purpose and interpretation of socialist memory sites. In the process, new forms of urban memory work appeared, characterized by increasing ambiguity, commercialisation, historical detachment, participatory practices, leisure and entertainment industry.

Theorizing complex relationship between memories and identities in urban life of post-socialist cities, scholars particularly focused on diverse strategies for removing and replacing communist heritage, reconciling old and new urban identity and negotiating narratives, interpretations and discourses surrounding these interactions (Mrozik and Holubec 2018; Mink and Neumayer 2013; Saunders and Pinfold 2013). For Czepczyński (2008), the only reason for preserving communist legacies and incorporating them into contemporary mnemonic framework was to keep memory of the past atrocities and wrongdoings alive – and thus also creating powerful reminders of mistakes which should not be repeated. According to

Balockaite (2012), in order to redefine their place identities, post-socialist cities adopted number of different strategies, such as the active forgetting of the socialist past; commercialisation through tourism; ironic imitation of Western "green and young" towns; and silent agreement on private remembrance and public forgetting of the socialist past. But throughout the thesis, we will argue that mnemonic interactions in urban space were much more complex, varying not only across countries and stages of urban development, but also depending on the local political context, socio-economic circumstances and cultural inclinations. This is what makes studies of post-socialist cities exciting and controversial at the same time, as despite the similar resilience of post-socialist structures, memory politics in different states and different agencies and interests shaped various urban mnemonic outcomes.

In this Chapter, I outlined some of the main theories and discussions framing the concept of post-socialism, including post-socialist transformation and post-socialist city as the "umbrella terms" for encompassing different urban and social dynamics emerging in the aftermath of communism (schematic summary of the Chapter given in *Figure 6*). In the following chapters, we will explore those interactions using communist heritage as a lens through which one may observe transition of memoryscapes in the aftermath of major political changes. We argue that most of the heritage sites and objects in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe are still in constant flux, oscillating between contestation and appropriation, history and memory, tourism and identity, preservation and commodification. Their fate depended on many factors, such as the socio-political moment of (re)discovery, type of initiators and main actors involved (government, civil society, national institutes, entrepreneurs), targeted audience, local memory culture, degree of (financial) independence, tourist attractiveness, stage in the process of "coming to terms with the past", etc. Thus, entangling those dynamics is essential for understanding how post-socialism transformed ideological, social, cultural and urban capital of Europe and how communism eventually re-emerged as a commodity.
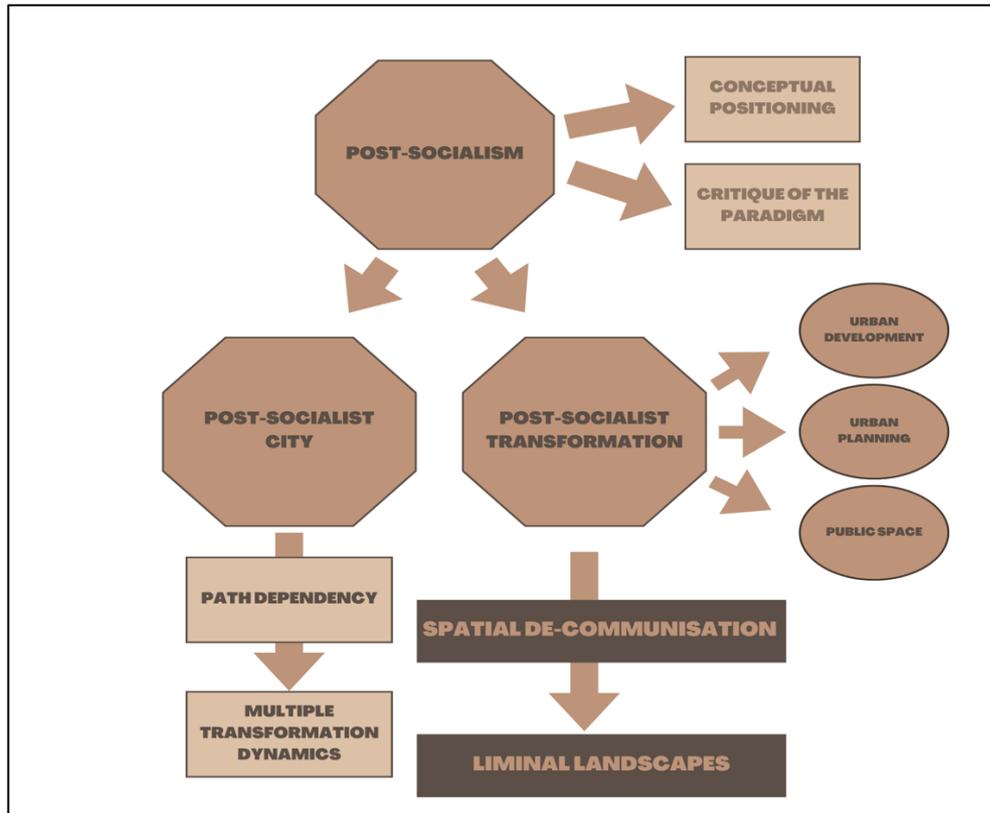
Figure 6 Conceptual Framework of Chapter 3

4 Heritage, memory and the city

It seems if not impossible, then at least tremendously complex to provide a holistic, unambiguous and consensual definition of heritage. Both semantic and conceptual ambiguities of the term represent a major challenge for scholars from variety of disciplines, who throughout the decades attempted to provide a theoretical framework and build a methodology for dealing with heritage. While there might be no "universal", there are however some "official" definitions of heritage, amongst which probably the most influential one is given in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention from 1972, referring to the cultural heritage as the monuments, groups of buildings and sites "which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science" (UNESCO 1972, p.10). As the main authority in the field, UNESCO further acknowledges that outstanding universal value represents "cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity" (UNESCO 1972). Yet, instead of clarifying the definition, as we will see further in the Chapter, the notion of value additionally complicates the issue, remaining one of the most controversial paradigms in heritage studies and animating debates of scholars, practitioners and citizens for decades. Nonetheless, it remains probably the most influential conceptualization in the field, thus representing an important framework to keep in mind while progressing with the critical, semiotic and content analysis of the heritage scholarship, policy and practice.

Over the years, heritage became a dominant paradigm for engaging with the past. This expansion of heritage was certainly at the expense of many other forms of relating with the past, such as history education, memory, myths, or traditions (Holtorf 2018). It profoundly transformed the relationship societies hold with their past and number of authors tried to explain this "heritage crusade" (Lowenthal 1998) as the contemporary obsession with heritage in both scholarly circles and society in general (Cowell 2008). The origins of these concerns can be traced back to the influential works of Hewison (1987), Wright (1985) and Urry (1990), who were all interested in the rise of heritage consciousness. In general, there is an agreement that number of societal, political, urban and economic transformations provided conditions for hyper-development of the heritage industry. More precisely, according to French urban historian Francoise Choay (1992, p.163), the democratization of knowledge, the development of *"societe de loisir"* and the expansion of cultural tourism contributed to the growing public interest in heritage. For others, such as political geographer Sara McDowell (2008), reasons for this expansion can be found on individual level – in order to legitimize contemporary

agenda and future prospects, individuals and societies turn to the past to obtain support and evidence of the righteousness of their course of action and encourage societal bonding and affirmation. Finally, the contemporary "obsession with deterioration" (Bortolotto 2007) and the attractiveness and easiness of consuming history through heritage invigorated expansion of the heritage phenomenon.

In this Chapter, we explore the notion of heritage and different scholarly, policy and practical conceptualizations which shed light on the dissonant nature of the term. The Chapter continues with the discussion of heritage policies, their historic development and inherent contradictions, addressing subsequently the development of scholarly work within the field of heritage studies. The historicization of both political and academic conceptual framework sheds light on the mutual interdependence of heritage studies and heritage politics, which have informed and influenced each other for years, filling in theoretical gaps and practical challenges of heritage production, management and consumption. Within these debates, the chapter particularly focuses on the questions of identity, authenticity, discourse and dissonance in heritage theory and practice, as they provide an initial framework for dealing with heritage management. After discussing the complex relationship of heritage with space and its implications for urban development, the chapter proceeds by analysing different aspects of heritage making and un-making – such as selection, conservation and destruction of heritage places. Finally, we conclude by opening the chapter towards major form of heritage consumption – the heritage tourism and its principal challenges and pitfalls.

4.1 Heritage: concept, meaning, significance

The origin of the term 'heritage' relates to the French concept of *patrimoine*, as the inheritance which implies high aesthetic value and responsibility for preserving assets from the past. The idea of inheritance suggests there is a 'duty' of present to protect the past. But if we have certain cultural responsibility to protect heritage, where does it come from? To whom we owe to preserve traces of the past? Common response is that we have an ethical obligation to preserve heritage in order to cherish our ancestors, but even more so to provide benefits for the future generations. This is reflected in the discourse of international organizations, such as the European Commission which defines heritage as "mosaic of cultural and creative expressions, our inheritance from previous generations of Europeans and our legacy for those to come" (European Commission 2018). Thus, concepts of inheritance and legacy are central to the discussion of heritage. Legacy, according to historian Maria Todorova (2005, p.68), refers to

"everything that is handed down from the past, whether one likes it or not." In the thesis, we refer to legacies in the way Kotkin and Beissinger (2014) defined them, as consequences of exceptional historical circumstances bringing past into present. In that sense, heritage is a rather similar concept, since objects, sites and practices designated as heritage need to be anchored in the past and capable of carrying and transmitting shared accumulated experiences of the community from the present into the future. Yet, heritage, as argued by Todorova (2005), also has a slightly more "legal" connotation and involves an intentional selection of certain parts of the past which will be displayed, conserved and exploited for contemporary political, social, economic or cultural purposes (see for example also: Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007).

Heritage, in general, could be understood as a cultural process which highlights social, political, cultural and economic legacies and reproduces their meaning in urban or cultural space. It refers to particular ways in which we identify historical objects, sites and cultural practices, bring them to life and valorise (Byrne 2009). For Geismar (2015, p.71), heritage represents "a tangle of ideology and expectation; an analytic term and a tool of governance; a category that allows us to understand the power dynamics involved in the selective recognition of identity, often in material form." Indeed, "heritage is about the regulation and negotiation of the multiplicity of meaning of the past, and it is about the arbitration and mediation of the cultural and social politics of identity, belonging and exclusion" (Smith and Waterton 2009, p. 295). Thus, rather than a fixed reality or materialization of history, heritage represent practices, movements, social interactions and assemblage of subjects and objects engaging in negotiations over history, power and ideology. As such, heritage represents a repository of historical and cultural values whose preservations remains important for the well-being, identity and prosperity of the society. French art historian Andre Chastel suggested that we can identify heritage when its loss represents a sacrifice and its conservation also entails sacrifices (Babelon and Chastel 1994). Indeed, heritage is often a double-edged sword, as its destruction is considered as an irrecoverable loss for the humankind. Its preservation, however, requires concessions of a different kind – number of urban adjustments, historical compromises and restrained development opportunities, to name only a few. Yet, contemporary society favours the latter condition, thus setting conservation as dominant paradigm and highest priority of the heritage management (Holtorf and Hogberg 2014).

Other stream of conceptualisations theorizes heritage not in terms of processes, interactions and implications, but based on its intrinsic characteristics and selection criteria. Lorusso and colleagues, for instance, define heritage as the "artefact of historical-artistic

interest" which has 5 distinct characteristics: scarcity, usefulness, durability, meritoriousness and value storage (Lorusso, Cogo and Natali 2017). Similarly, Choay (1992) argues that for any remnant of history to be considered as heritage, it needs to possess 4 major values – historicity, exemplarity, beauty and identity. Yet, as we will discuss in the chapter, there is another criterion to be added to these lists - the economic value, which is often an indispensable condition of heritage-making. Indeed, in order to transform any object, site or practice into heritage, it has to be either relatable or marketable, but most of the time - both. If heritage does not raise interest, engagement and funds, its purpose and sustainability become highly questionable. According to Veschambre (2007), other than scientific legitimation and appropriation by the community, heritage needs to acquire an economic value too. Even ICOMOS (1976) stated in the Cultural Tourism Charter that there is not only cultural, but also economic value of the sites and monuments. Accordingly, past remnants need to respond to the number of historical, aesthetic, social and economic criteria in order to become heritage. Nonetheless, even when all these criteria are fulfilled, and values identified, heritage may never come into life without political support. For that reason, it would be incomplete to consider pillars of heritage without acknowledging the role of politics and the scope of its dependence on the contemporary political framework.

Another important framework which sheds light on the concept of heritage refers to personal and collective identity, self-realization and collective self-esteem. Indeed, as a truly global phenomenon, heritage informs decision making, encourages economic development, empowers previously dominated groups and fosters sense of national pride and identity (Kuutma 2009). For Lowenthal (1994, p.43), heritage connects us "with our own earlier selves, and with promised successors." By presenting to others certain conception of ourselves, heritage becomes the exercise of self-promotion and we manage it in order to communicate its significance to the visitors. Heritage, thus, could be understood as a reflection of our previous selves, our competences, artistic mastery, social cohesion, intellectual and architectural achievements. In that sense, heritage also has a role in protecting us from our sins - it embellishes our pasts and provides a space to polish our wrongdoings and cherish our accomplishments. Thus, we might extrapolate a certain narcistic function of heritage. It is sufficient to address inscription in the World Heritage List as a source of immense national pride and the 'prestige' which comes with it (Choay 1992). As such, heritage represents a framework for fostering positive association, collective satisfaction and self-actualization.

Heritage is given meaning through interpretations, discourses and performances. For Graham and Howard (2008), 'value' is not inherent to heritage, it is created through its interactions with people. Isolated from the social interactions and political context, heritage has no importance – what gives "life" to heritage are the voices, memories and debates it sparks and wider socio- political environment within which it is practiced. Thus, heritage is not the physical remnant of the past, but a complex construction of historic legacies, cultural meanings and social interactions (Barrere 2014). As such, heritage shall not be reduced to tangible (or intangible) asset, as its implications are much wider, in terms of negotiations of identity, values and place attachments (Smith and Waterton 2009). These concepts will be discussed in the next passage, as despite the lack of universally accepted definition, literature review reveals that most of the heritage frameworks share these similar ideas. Thus, it might be possible to summarize main conceptualizations of heritage which consistently appear in the literature throughout the years.

a) Heritage as something of value for a community

Heritage definitions mostly emphasize concepts of value, conservation, property, power, material culture and tourism (Neal 2015). According to the 'value' framework, heritage refers to shared cultural values, memories and events which are inherited from the past and transmitted through objects, sites or cultural performances (Peckham 2003). For Smith (2006), heritage is a cultural practice of producing, negotiating and regulating social and cultural values and meanings. As previously discussed, the UNESCO concept of heritage is also value-based and the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, first developed in 1979, stipulates that the heritage management should be organized in relation to the significance of heritage object or place, according to its aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual value (ICOMOS, 1979). However, the centrality of value as a universally accepted heritage attribute is problematic for many reasons. First and foremost, the very concept of value in heritage studies is dissonant. The Burra Charter, for example, defines value in relation to political, cultural, moral, religious, spiritual beliefs, while scholars often explain heritage value "as a positive quality attributed by stakeholders" (Avrami et al. 2019). This dichotomy creates much of the semantic and semiotic frictions in heritage arena, as the way in which value is understood significantly transforms the basic concept of heritage. Indeed, if we consider value as beliefs or meanings there is a strong ethical component attached to the process of heritage production, while value as a feature of stakeholders' perception allows for a broader understanding of heritage, and subsequently different implications for heritage selection, interpretation and management. Another problem

with value-based heritage approach is the underlying assumption that values remain stable in time. Value systems are determined by geo-political structure, collective and individual historic legacies, accumulated communal experiences and ethical frameworks. As such, they keep changing and so does the interest and engagement with particular heritage. Despite these conceptual drawbacks of the term, for heritage to be acknowledged, categorized and preserved, it is necessary that society or political elites invest it with value and meaning.

b) Heritage as a contemporary critical engagement with past

Another important understanding of heritage is heritage as the "social work" of transferring past into present (Harrison 2013). As early as in 1987, British historian Robert Hewison (1987, p. 85) argued that heritage aims to assign meaning to the present and "locate contemporary society in relation to the previous tradition." Heritage does not equal past, it is rather a particular version of the past, transmitted through objects, places, memories and events, which facilitates its cultural consumption (Waterton and Watson 2015). It is through heritage that past becomes "alive" in the present (see for example: Silverman, Waterton and Watson 2017). Thus, if conceptualized as a temporal phenomenon, heritage should be seen as a "creative engagement with the past" (Harrison 2013, p.4), formed and experienced in the present (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Emerick 2014; Waterton and Watson 2015) in order to be safeguarded for the future (Holtorf and Hogberg 2014). But the relationship between heritage and the past is also not the straightforward one. Quoting Bella Dicks' paper read at the conference at Glasgow Caledonian University, Marmion, Wilkes and Calver (2019) remind that people relate to past in variety of different ways, hence the experience of heritage will also vary significantly. Furthermore, there is a multiplicity of versions of the past which are negotiated in the process of selecting, producing and assigning meaning to heritage sites and objects (Smith and Waterton 2009). Thus, translating past into present through heritage is a continuous activity of framing, re-framing, filtering and mediating historical narratives through the contemporary perspective.

c) Heritage as a set of practices of recognition, preservation and conservation of historic assets

In a society obsessed with collecting, heritage could be seen as a tool for coping with the fear of loss (Peckham 2003). Indeed, the notion of heritage is intrinsically tied with the idea of threats and dangers to its survival, which have to be mediated through recognition, preservation and conservation (Bendix 2009). For Harrison (2010), the formal recognition of the place,

object or practice is a core feature of the official heritage process. By acknowledging significance and value of the past relics, we give them additional historic, scientific or socio-cultural relevance and make them exclusive, scarce and worth of preservation (Harrison 2013). Thus, heritage can be also understood as a mechanism for preserving the past for the future (Lowenthal 2005). But preservation necessarily entails the selection, because not everything can be saved (Peckham 2003) and the fabrication, as restoration requires new elements to be added to the existing remnants of the past in order to make them meaningful and complete (Samuel, 1994). Finally, conservation of heritage sites is "not an event but a process" (Samuel 1994) and many actors, circumstances and interactions shape its outcome. Nonetheless, these processes (recognition, preservation, conservation) capture a willingness to engage with certain past and make a statement about which past is valued, by whom and in which way. In a way, the decision to 'work' with heritage itself represents 'a performative utterance of having an identity' (Macdonald 2003, p.3).

d) Heritage as a framework for categorizing value, culture and history

While heritage takes many forms and shapes, and by its scope and complexity certainly largely exceeds the official classifications, it is often referred in context of the UNESCO World Heritage List, as probably the best-known global cultural policy tool. While discussion of the structural, conceptual and organizational issues of the WHL is out of scope of this Chapter, it is important to note that heritage values are often expressed through lists and classifications. In that sense, heritage could be understood as a way of establishing hierarchies and categorizing historical and aesthetic values of places. Decision to recognize certain object or site as a 'heritage' imbues place with additional meaning, cultural value and social relevance. It establishes the "exceptionality" of the place, setting it apart from the ordinary and changing the relationship people have with the place (Harrison 2010). Categorization and listing are seen as ways of preserving and institutionalizing places or object which might be under threat of destruction, either in the present or at some point in the future (Harrison 2010). Major critique of this approach concerns the fact it imposes particular way of acknowledging, listing and preserving heritage, giving little (if any) voice to the non-Western cultural frameworks and alternative modes of past management. Indeed, according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006) World Heritage categorization could be understood as a response to the increasing cultural homogenization and globalization which entailed significant transformations of economy and tourism. But the category, as argued by Sun Hua (2010), is defined by their relative value and not the intrinsic characteristics of heritage. Thus, while UNESCO's World

Heritage categorization scheme represents the highest level of value according to their set of criteria, there are number of other "heritages" – such as the national heritage, regional heritage or local heritage, which are assessed by other entities and benchmarked against different indicators. Nonetheless, lists and categories remain a dominant framework for assessing, managing and consuming heritage sites.

4.2 History and critique of heritage policies

While the concepts of heritage conservation and preservation are often attributed to UNESCO, the efforts to protect, valorise and transmit to future generations physical remnants of the past existed long before UNESCO and other international organizations and conventions. History of conservation can be traced back to the ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece (Wienberg 2021) and first Charts were drafted already in XIX century. The Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877) was amongst the first documents which suggested that ancient buildings should be safeguarded for the future generations. But it was throughout the XX century that the concept of heritage was extensively framed through policy documents and international charts, regulations and recommendations. As a result of the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, the Athens Charter (ICOMOS 1931) recommends the steps to establish urban order through, amongst other things, protection, conservation and restauration of historic sites and monuments of public interest. It is in this document that for the first time the concept of "artistic and archaeological property of mankind" has been put forward, setting the framework for the forthcoming idea of "common heritage of mankind" and ethical obligation of local stakeholders to be a custodian of cultural assets belonging to the whole world. These ideas have been further advanced in the European Cultural Convention (COE 1954), which engaged member states to "take appropriate measures to safeguard and to encourage the development of its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe." While the idea of common European heritage remains controversial decades after the treaty (Calligaro 2014), the Convention was an important step in acknowledging the universal value of heritage and presenting the states with the task to cooperate and preserve their heritage not only for their nation but also for the wider community.

One of the most influential documents in the field of heritage conservation remains The Venice Charter: International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 1964). In the Venice Charter, adopted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) after the Second International Congress of Architects and

Technicians of Historic Monuments, there is a clear continuation of the ideas put forward in the Athens Charter (ICOMOS 1931), with the emphasize on preservation of monuments both as works of art and historical evidences. In that, important development is the centrality of the historical, architectural and aesthetic context which should be respected in excavation, conservation and restoration of monuments. The Charter encourages the use of modern techniques and exploitation of monuments for a "socially useful purpose," but only with the strict adherence to preservation of its authentic appearance and harmonious balance with surrounding environment.

As a response to increasing number of threats of destruction and disappearance of heritage sites, which was first brought forward in the Athens Charter (ICOMOS 1931), the UNESCO adopted in 1972 the influential Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO 1972), aiming to elevate heritage protection from national to international context. In the Convention, UNESCO notes the limited capacity of states to act in due to the lack of economic, scientific and technological resources. Since heritage elements are "of outstanding interest" for the "mankind as a whole", the international community as a whole should be mobilized in protecting cultural and natural assets of "outstanding value". It is within that framework that the Convention stipulates the establishment of the so-called "World Heritage Committee", the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value, aiming to establish, publish and manage the World Heritage List. Imagined as mechanism for ensuring international protection and preservation, the World Heritage Site evolved into a strong marketing tool employed for attracting tourists and branding a destination (Ryan and Silvanto, 2010). As a register of the particular sites, objects and traditions recognized for their 'outstanding value' by the wider community, World Heritage List gathers only a fraction of the cultural and natural valuable historical resources, which correspond to the set of the explicitly pre-determined criteria. In that, World Heritage Programme has been severely criticized for politicized and elitist nature (Di Giovine 2015), imbalanced distribution of sites (Frey and Steiner 2011), failure to protect heritage sites throughout the world (Keough 2011), heritage destruction due to excessive tourism (Frey and Steiner 2011) and Western hegemony (Meskell 2013). Consequently, the Convention has also received number of similar critiques throughout the years (see for example: Francioni 2008; Meskell 2013), mostly for its vagueness, Western-centeredness of the discourse, bureaucratical complexity or the use of culture to advance political and economic objectives. While it remains the most important instrument of the international heritage

conservation and cultural diplomacy, it is nonetheless important to take in consideration that 'The World Heritage' tool addresses just a fraction of heritage sites, only several related issues and challenges and thus represents only one particular aspect of dealing with heritage.

In 1976, UNESCO (1976) acknowledged the importance of widening the scope of heritage protection from cultural and natural sites to the historic urban areas and necessity to ensure their identification, maintenance and revitalization (Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas, 1976). It stipulated initial steps to be undertaken in order to safeguard historic areas, taking in consideration social, economic, cultural and wider urban context. These influences are important since historic areas, much more than particular heritage objects or sites, remain closely intertwined with the economic life, social and cultural activities, urban development and communal identity of the place. This was further expanded in the Washington Charter (ICOMOS, 1987) which suggested that conservation of historic urban areas needs to become an integral part of the socio-economic development policies and urban plans. The main idea of the Washington Charter was to ensure "a harmonious relationship between the historic urban areas and the town as a whole." This became one of the major tasks for urban planners, urban historians and architects throughout the world, and the idea that heritage expands beyond single objects and sites to areas and even entire cities will guide management of urban heritage for the next several decades. In line with this, UNESCO further expanded the concept of heritage in the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, recognizing the importance of historic urban landscape as "the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes." As a holistic approach, HUL considers the built environment, infrastructure, topography and urban structures along with the economic processes, social values, identity and diversity, and cultural practices in the city (Sonkoly 2017). As such, it codifies the protection of urban cultural heritage through the interplay of "place, local community, local practices and local identities" (Sonkoly 2012). In the thesis, we will often refer to this particular concept, as a spatial container for different aspects surrounding identification, assessment, conservation and management of contemporary urban memoryscapes.

Another important development in the field of heritage policy represents the expansion of heritage to include the intangible cultural assets. While World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972) makes distinction between cultural and natural heritage, it was only in 2003 that UNESCO (2003) acknowledged the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003). Intangible

heritage refers to nonphysical historically valuable assets – the cultural expressions and practices such as rituals, language, traditions, dances, etc. The recognition of intangible heritage re-defined the concept of heritage in terms of the 'sense of the place' by extracting it into non-physical cultural spaces (Smith and Akagawa 2009). Thus, while previously, heritage was limited to physical embodiments of the past, the notion expanded to include practices, rituals, etc. This new category significantly increased the corpus of heritage, expanding the World Heritage list and entrusting heritage practitioners around the world with the task of identifying, codifying, conserving and promoting these new heritage manifestations.

While previously heritage was considered to be the "task" of professionals, experts and governments, throughout the last years heritage policies started advocating for more participative and more inclusive approach to heritage. Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, known as the Faro Convention (COE 2005) stipulated that "everyone...has the right to benefit from the cultural heritage and to contribute towards its enrichment." According to this framework, "heritage-led" and "people-centred" initiatives are given the highest priority and communities given an active role in shaping heritage activities, interpretation and governance. But is there a hierarchy of who should have the most important role in producing, displaying, negotiating and consuming heritage? While these charts mostly address governments and use the appropriate language of international diplomacy, they consistently emphasize the importance of involving other parties, particularly residents in conservation programs. This was addressed by ICOMOS already in the Washington Charter (ICOMOS 1987), which stipulates that residents are the first and the most important stakeholders and need to be taken in account when pursuing heritage conservation projects (see also ICOMOS Charter on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, ICOMOS 2008). Yet, it is only since Faro Convention that people and communities are put in the centre of heritage making and involved in decision related to the heritage valorization (Cerreta et al. 2020). Thus, democratization, citizen participation, community engagement and social innovation become a pervasive framework for engaging with heritage.

Finally, while initial ideas of heritage protection emphasized the importance of transmission to future generations, charters and policies of the last decades systematically highlight the 'presentist' role of heritage, 'reducing' it often to a tool for consolidating identities and creating sense of belonging. Supra-national entities such as EU have been particularly vocal in that sense, aiming for decades to create and promote shared heritage of

Europe as a tool for strengthening European identity (see for example: European Landscape Convention, COE 2000). Thus, we may argue that throughout the last several decades, international organizations at the same time advocated for more balanced, inclusive and cooperative approach, but also increasingly instrumental zed heritage to pursue their own political objectives.

This brief passage on the history of international heritage policies demonstrates how heritage and its related concepts were expanded over time. They emphasize the evolution of values, ideas and approaches related to heritage and its spatial and temporal conceptualization. What these documents have in common is the unconditional request to safeguard and valorise tangible (and/or intangible) legacies of the past, protect them against natural disasters and adapt to serve contemporary urban and social life, respecting their historical character. Another point of convergence is the centrality of the conservation paradigm in heritage management, which is seen as a mean to enhance the understanding, accessibility and appreciation of heritage values. Furthermore, they repeatedly address authenticity, sustainability and participation (inclusiveness) as major tasks of the contemporary engagement with heritage. In a way, as will be explored further in the chapter, the issues addressed through policies were significantly different from the topics which pre-occupied heritage scholarship. While policies centred on the mechanisms of protection, conservation and overall engagement with heritage, scholarly work mostly focused on the questions of political, societal, cultural and economic implications of heritage-making, and notions of identity, power, discourse, memory and interpretation.

While scholarly work focused more on "why" than "how" to protect heritage, the expansion of international policies in the field of heritage was accompanied by growing body of scholarly critique and advances of critical heritage studies. In that sense, scholars have been for years calling for more accurate formulations (Keough 2011), more rigorous logic (Hua 2010) and less Euro-centric standards and conceptualizations (Willems 2014). According to some authors (Hua 2010), much of the scholarly and managerial dissonance and confusion related to heritage stems from the vagueness of the international conventions and charts. This is particularly true for the notion of 'universal values' - since there are very few 'universal' values, and certainly no universal culture, different countries, societies and groups will assign importance to different sets of places and objects. Moreover, Byrne (1991) and other critics of the 'World Convention' hegemony emphasize similar issues, such as the idea that all humans share interest in past remnants and aim to conserve it, or the principle that citizens of one

country will be interested in preserving heritage of other countries and societies, which are typically 'western' ideas.

In a similar manner, UNESCO has been extensively criticized for imposing the "Western" conception of heritage and concern for preservation of the past to the societies that might not have the same interest in it or the same way of interpreting and dealing with the past. The 'one-size-fits-all" approach has been rather controversial and for Harrison (2013, p.94) the insistence on applying universal heritage definition and model to communities with distinctively different understanding of the concept of heritage triggered number of "creative frictions" (p. 94) which ultimately led to numerous re-definitions of the term. Smith (2006) argues that the UNESCO principle of universality serves as a legitimation of the hegemonic AHD – authorized heritage discourse to which we refer later in this chapter. What more, the idea of 'protecting' heritage through listing, hierarchization and classification has been criticized as hegemonic, path-dependent and self-referential mechanism leading to homogenization of culture (Harrison 2013; Waterton and Watson 2013). Additionally, the claim of heritage universality deprives local stakeholders of involvement in decision-making and managing those sites (Byrne 1991), centralizing thus the power over historical and cultural production.

Another important set of criticism of heritage is the very scope of the term, which is tremendously vague and can be used to describe anything from architectural ensembles to folklore events, culinary practices, lakes, dances and governing systems. This exacerbates the problem as new categories are continuously added creating confusion about type, scope and value of heritage in local, national and international classification and protection. Nonetheless, if UNESCO has not been so ambiguous and disputatious in defining the term, it is unlikely that so many scholars would suggest their perspectives, ideas and interpretations of heritage, contributing to better understanding of the concept and its implications for heritage practice and management of the past. Thus, although often incomplete, vague and flawed, the UNESCO conventions and policies were important impetus for mapping and organizing the heritage field and incentivizing both societies and scholars to engage in heritage work. In the following section, we will reflect on the advancement of heritage as scientific discipline and see how policy charts and scholarly interest mutually influenced each other's ideas and conceptualizations.

4.3 History and critique of heritage discourse

"Conventhal ambiguity" of the concept of heritage (Lowenthal 1998) gave rise to the new interdisciplinary academic field, the critical heritage studies, at the turn of millennium, but whose emerging topics have been already addressed in 80s and 90s. Even before that, the academic discourse on heritage was first developing in the area of conservation and preservation, focusing on its technical aspects. However, we start encountering critical scholarly reflections and debates on social value, political and economic function and public uses of heritage from mid-80s. Three influential publications "*The Past is a Foreign Country*" by David Lowenthal (1985), "*On Living in an Old Country*" by Patrick Wright (1985) and "*The Heritage Industry*" by Robert Hewison (1987) introduced critical heritage discourse and different societal, cultural, political and economic implications of contemporary heritage regime.

David Lowenthal's (1985) seminal analyses in "*The Past is a Foreign Country*", on how societies deal and interpret the past, represents one of the core issues of critical heritage debates. However, despite the fact that his publication became the most-heavily cited book on heritage ever published, some authors argue it should not be considered foundational of the critical heritage studies (see for example: Gentry and Smith 2019). For them, the two address fundamentally different set of questions, with CHS insisting on power relations and political uses of the past and Lowenthal (1985) focusing on relationship between history and heritage. Other scholars criticized Lowenthal for compiling quotations and examples without making a sound argument and critically engaging with the topic (Wittenberg 2021). Nonetheless, his essay was seminal for introducing questions of nostalgia, identity, ideology, manipulations of the past and their social consequences, crucial for understanding the heritage framework. For Lowenthal (1985), although past is "a foreign country," it still informs and permeates our present ideas and actions. Furthermore, he was amongst the first to suggest that past becomes increasingly fabricated and manipulated through nostalgia, tourism and other traits of modernity. These ideas will be further expanded in 1987, when Hewison (1987) coined the term 'heritage industry' referring to the sanitization and commercialization of the British cultural capital as a response to the general economic decline in the post-war UK. Hewison criticizes this process not only for distorting the past, but also for depriving the contemporary society of the capacity to engage with critical culture and make creative changes due to the unhealthy obsession for the past. Similar critiques emerge in the writing of Patrick Wright (1985) whose "*On Living in an Old Country*" deals with the causes and consequences of the

rise of heritage in Britain. Wright's argument is that heritage is a distraction, created and manipulated by political elites in order to prevent the society to engage with the present-day issues.

Three historians shared a vision of nostalgia and growing interest in the past as major causes of the dramatic increase of museums and heritage sites throughout the 1980s, when the consumer society engaged in what Andreas Huyssen (1995, p.14) later described as "relentless museummania." The main critique of heritage refers to the faulty use of history in heritage and the lack of dialogue between the past and the present in heritage work. But while Lowenthal (1985), Wright (1985) and Hewison (1987) insisted on importance of the role of historian and criticized heritage for sanitizing and commercializing the past, another British historian, Raphael Samuel, suggested a radically different perspective. In *"Theatres of memory,"* Samuel (1994) praised the democratization of history through heritage, which he saw as a carrier of societal changes and cultural diversity. He argued that heritage is a social process taking place in the public sphere, since visitors actively engage with heritage and negotiate, re-create and interpret the underlying history and memory.

This interest in public uses of the past in UK was an impetus for development of the field of critical heritage studies. Throughout the 1990s, new topics emerged in scholarly heritage debates, notably concerning the heritage implications for tourism and the ways in which leisure industry transforms the relationship with the past in general. In 1990, sociologist John Urry (1990) published the influential monograph *"The tourist gaze"* in which he explored the impact of tourist consumption on the ways in which heritage is produced, experienced and transmitted. Urry (1990) was among the first scholars to suggest that consumers have power and capacity to transform heritage through tourism practices. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (1995, 1998) work in the field further emphasized mutual dependence of tourism and heritage – while heritage gives *purpose* to tourism, transforming locations into culturally-charged destinations, tourism provides heritage with *resources* and ensures their sustainability.

At the end of the century, heritage critique turned towards more anthropological approach, with notably John Tunbridge, Gregory Ashworth, Regina Bendix, Bella Dicks and Sharon Macdonald setting the new agenda for the field. In 1996, Tunbridge and Aswhorth (1996) shifted the heritage discourse towards exploring the inner conflicts, dissonances and contestations surrounding the heritage processes – including heritage management, heritage interpretation and heritage tourism. The temporality of heritage is another topic emerging in those years, notably with the David Harvey's (2001) critique of the 'presentness' of heritage

conceptualization and the urge to anchor heritage more profoundly into the past. Other groups of scholars engaged with heritage representations (Hall, 2005), performances (Crouch, 2010) and discourses (Smith 2006). In *"Uses of Heritage"* archeologist Laurajane Smith (2006) developed an influential theory of AHD (authorized heritage discourse), arguing that heritage exists only through discourse. What more, the discourse of heritage is inherently political, hegemonic and self-referential and as such exercises the absolute power over conceptualization, conservation and consumption of heritage (Dicks 2007).

Throughout the last decade, much of the heritage debate centered on its economic potential, commercial uses and commodified forms. In 2010, Rodney Harrison edited a volume *"Understanding politics of heritage"* arguing in the introduction that heritage is undoubtedly an economic activity (Harrison 2010b). According to him, political decisions related to heritage and main motives of state and other organisations to engage with heritage are closely related to its commercial potential and attractiveness for tourist exploitation (Harrison 2010). Similarly, Waterton and Watson (2010) immersed into debate over the mechanisms of heritage consumption and transmission of cultural, political and identity frameworks. Throughout the years, Waterton and Watson provided comprehensive analyses of the role of representation and participation (2010), community engagement (2011), semiotics of heritage tourism (2014) and power relations, democratic forms and discourses of heritage (Silverman, Waterton and Watson 2017). Heritage tourism was also central to the work of cultural geographers Craig Young and Duncan Light (see for example: Light, Young and Czepczyński 2009; Light and Young 2013, 2015a, 2015b; Light 2000). Focusing on the negotiations of the Nazi past in Nurnberg, Sharon Macdonald (2008) enriched the debate with the concept of difficult heritage, as the places associated with contested, violent and disturbing histories. The explorations of difficult heritage expanded to include its historical and identity repercussions, cultural motivations and political negotiations, as well as the different innovative political, commercial, cultural and artistic practices for engaging with it (Logan and Reeves 2008; Merill and Schmidt 2010; Samuels 2015; Wollentz 2020).

While this section notes development of scholarly thought in heritage studies, it is in no way a comprehensive list of topics or categorization of authors and influential works. There are many scholars who deserved to be mentioned and even more heritage conceptualizations and debates which have not been mentioned in this brief introduction (see for example: Walsh 1992; Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000; Byrne, 2014; Silverman, Waterton and Watson 2017). Some of these will be discussed later in this or some of the following chapters. The

purpose of this brief history of critical heritage studies is to shed light on some major tendencies and scholarly interests which dominated the discourse through the last decades. In the following sections, we will address some of the main concepts related to heritage - identity, authenticity, discourse and dissonance, which represent pillars of the scholarly heritage work and framework for understanding contemporary challenges of heritage practice, including heritage management and heritage tourism (see *Figure 7*).
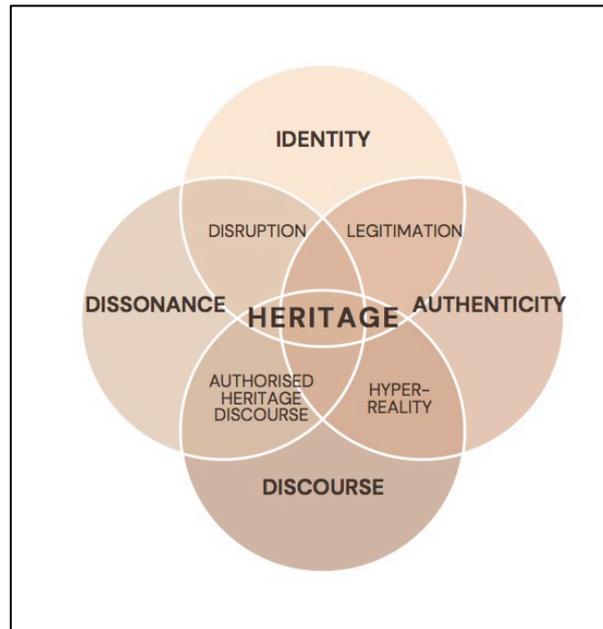
Figure 7 Four Pillars of Heritage Theory

4.3.1 Heritage and Identity

Identity, in widest sense, could be understood as a category through which communities define their sense of belonging, sameness, unification and coherence (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007). Identity is defined in opposition to 'the Other', as it always stipulates who is 'in' and who is 'out' and in which ways the two are differentiated (Said 1978). Discourses of inclusion and exclusion are thus central to the conceptualization of identity, and past is a powerful source of societal segregation and creation of the sense of unity and community. Thus, symbolic traces of history represent a pillar of both personal and collective identity, since pictures from the past constitute who we are, where we belong and what we believe in. Consequently, heritage, as a spatial realization of identities provides a material (or immaterial) manifestation of political, social and cultural narratives, of shared history and cohesion, continuity and togetherness.

Heritage sites serve as a collective reminder of the constitutive elements of the society's past. Their role is to communicate certain history and give legitimacy to particular memories, strengthening collective identity and serving as tourist destinations and repositories of societal cohesion. As such, heritage could be understood as a place for displaying and practicing collective identity and consolidating power (Belanger 2002). However, there is an ongoing debate on the type of the relationship between heritage and identity. For some scholars, heritage should be viewed as a project of 'standardizing identity industry' (Macdonald 2013), eradicating the cultural diversity and strengthening one particular historical discourse. In that sense, heritage is understood as a tool for uniformization of discursive practices and identity patterns, encouraging one single mode of identification and socio-historical appropriation. Others, however, consider heritage as a product of pluralized pasts and identities, with 'diverse and hybrid representations' (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007). According to them, heritage and identity are fluid and unstable categories, whose production, interpretation and relationship with the past is perpetually contested by different social groups.

Heritage and identity are often discussed in relation to the ideas of ownership, control and power. The recurrent questions "who owns the past" and "who controls heritage discourse" are deeply politically charged and reflect social organization of power and legitimacy to select, exclude and interpret heritage assets (Kuutma 2009). But while heritage has been undoubtedly used as a political tool for strengthening, legitimizing or reframing identity, it can also become a mechanism for contesting and discarding dominant identity patterns. Actually, as explained in previous chapters, memories serve as repositories of social cohesion and shared values which constitute the communal identity. Since past is understood, negotiated and interpreted in various ways, certain "dissonant" memories can contest and disrupt authorized heritage discourse. In this way, memories and heritage narratives which differ from the "official" one may come to hamper and distort the identity. This is further exacerbated by tourism industry, which profoundly reshapes the patterns of consumption of history, heritage and identity, in three major ways. First, the tourism industry enables to recover previously abandoned sites, but also to manufacture new heritage places (often at the expense of the old ones which fall into decay and oblivion), transforming the mnemonic and identity landscape. Second, it provides a space for encounters of many actors which would not otherwise interact, and whose different perspective on particular heritage or history may create cultural conflicts and clashes of identity. Third, tourism invests heritage with new set of objectives (such as consumption and profit-making), which require different kinds of narratives and historical engagement, thus

often disrupting the prevailing identity patterns. Thus, the relationship between heritage and identity is the one of mutual interdependence, self-reinforcement and social, political and cultural negotiation of history.

4.3.2 Heritage and authenticity

Although widely discussed in heritage studies, the concept of authenticity remains difficult to define. In broadest sense, the authenticity refers to sincerity, honesty and confidence that certain objects, representations and experiences are genuine, truthful to their previous self and not corrupted from the original. The quest for authenticity, according to Rosaldo (1993) is thus a form of "imperialist nostalgia", where people long for the past which they deliberately transformed and abandoned, for the sake of progress and development. In general terms, authenticity in heritage serves as a promise of cultural, historical and educational value of heritage experience. Yet, without a reliable definition, criteria and measurement scale, it remains a highly contestable concept. Thus, instead of clarifying and categorizing heritage, it often becomes either a burden or a tool for imposing particular perception and version of heritage.

Previously considered as a stable source of heritage value, authenticity is now increasingly understood as an unstable, malleable and dynamic feature of heritage (Silverman 2015). Scholars even argue that there are multiple conceptions and varieties of authenticity and that instead of seeking consensus on its definition, one should strive to understand what it means for a particular site, social group or experience (Wood 2020). Contemporary phenomena such as globalization, technological development, commercialization, media and tourism create new contexts of production and re-production which do not necessarily bring original structures and meanings from the past into present in an accurate and veracious way (Silverman 2015). Indeed, while one would suggest that in order to be authentic, heritage needs to be faithful to the original, the concept of authenticity was expanded already in 1977 to acknowledge and recognize alterations of high artistic and historical value as a feature of authenticity (UNESCO, 1977). Furthermore, the authenticity means many things to many people and different groups perceive it differently – the authenticity that academics are interested in is rather divergent from the one that tourists seek. Thus, authenticity is negotiated and creatively interpreted in all aspects of postmodern life and in particular heritage interactions create new forms and different degrees of authenticity.

Due to the complexity of the concept, Matthiew Rampley (2012) argued that the very question of authenticity is becoming redundant, and instead of dealing with authenticity we shall try to understand the ideological, social and political implications of heritagization processes. In this thesis we will, however, present other arguments, favoring the idea that authenticity in heritage matters. It is through the past that we develop, strengthen and transmit the vision of society and the sense of self. If heritage is the witness of the past, we need to be assured that the witness is reliable (Barrere 2014). Questioning authenticity is thus about taking control over the version of the past displayed through heritage and re-claiming personal construction of the collective identity. In that sense, the search for authenticity is a pursuit for legitimation of identity, a quest for confirmation that what we cherish and believe in is not "fake" (Wood, 2020). If we accept that what constitutes heritage is selected, produced, biased and authorized, wouldn't that also entail that our identities are "externally" created, shaped and formalized? And if that is the case, what is such identity good for? Authenticity thus certainly matters, but according to some authors the "illusion of authenticity" matters even more (Byrne 2009). As heritage is mostly consumed through visits, the reliability of the site will be conditioned upon the visitors' perceived authenticity. Thus, heritage makers are often driven to "simulate" more "authentic" experience and thus enhance the illusion. This is how "hyper-reality" is constructed (Baudrillard 1981), with heritage places seeking to be more "authentic" version of themselves – to appear more authentic and mimic the aesthetics and experience that consumers ought to feel authentic, to satisfy their longing for genuine historic relevance. Tourism industry thus turns authenticity into simulacrum, where discourse, time and space are negotiated and displaced to accommodate visitors' needs.

4.3.3 Heritage and discourse

Heritage is constructed, experienced and interpreted through discursive practices. One of the well-known theories of discourse, the Foucauldian theory (Foucault 1972) explains the discourse as a mechanism for producing knowledge, assigning meaning and disrupting power relations. Critical discourse analysis, as a relatively recent methodological approach, emphasizes the importance of language and the ways we use it to interpret, codify and transform societal, cultural and historical realms (Wu and Hou, 2015). The main concern of the CDA is to grasp the complexity of social relationships and practices through the analysis of the underlying discourses, their socio-political context and effects (Smith 2006). Through CDA we seek to discern power struggles and ideological stances imbedded in particular language use. As a tool for studying heritage, discourse analysis can reveal both dominant

heritage narratives and alternative, marginalized and neglected heritage features and interpretations (Wu and Hou, 2015).

Building on the theory of CDA in her seminal work *"Uses of Heritage,"* Laurajane Smith (2006) argues that discourses establish a wide range of heritage-related processes, such as the power structures (who has duty and right to speak of the past), cultural values, meaning-making and social relations. What more there is a particular heritage discourse, the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" (AHD) which refers to a set of established western ideas that stipulate who, when and in which way should decode and display historical value of heritage (Smith 2006). Thus, the AHD establishes a hierarchy of who is entitled to interpret the past. According to AHD, heritage is not a process – it is a passive site which visitors may visit without further engagement or alteration. Creation of the discourse is thus "work" of the heritage professionals and visitors are only "passive consumers" (Smith 2006) which cannot participate in creation or transformation of its meaning and value. According to this perspective, communities are served already pre-defined, pre-selected, 'pret-a-porter' heritage (Crouch 2010) and they have limited (if any) power of changing the established heritage reality.

As an authoritative, exclusionary and controlling discourse, the AHD is supposed to organize and impose heritage narrative according to the certain pattern. Theory of AHD suggests that heritage discourses are a self-reinforcing mechanism which in a way both reflect and strengthen particular set of ideas and social practices (Smith 2006). Thus, the analysis of the structure and semiotics of the AHD is a reliable indicator of dominant socio-political inclinations, power organization and interpretation of history. AHD sheds light on particular values, meanings and interpretations which are promoted and exhibited, as well as hierarchies, interests and interactions which take place within. Furthermore, Smith (2006) demonstrates that discourses also organize the practice, since how we talk about heritage will influence the ways in which we 'do' heritage. The AHD is particularly evident in the international conventions and charters, which further reinforce it through standards and requirements of conservation practice and heritage management.

The main objective of the AHD is to settle historic tensions and "standardize" narratives, practices and identities. As such, this paradigm received lots of criticism and one needs to ask if Smith's (2006) influential theory still makes sense, 15 years after it initially appeared? Is heritage still controlled by the same discourses and power structures, or the democratization of the field enabled new approaches, voices and interactions? Challenging the AHD paradigm does not mean neutralizing or cancelling the underlying historical narratives or doubting the

official versions of the past. Instead, it allows for plurality of histories, sometimes even conflicting, to find their way and compete in heritage arena (Gassner 2019). Negotiating heritage discourses beyond AHD is an attempt to take the control over one's own past and identity conception. Because, to re-iterate the already stated, what is the identity good for if it is produced, legitimized and authorized by someone else? We will return to these questions later in the thesis, arguing that heritage commodification challenges the concept of AHD, decentralizing the power over discourse and identity creation and destabilizing the dominant narrative frameworks. For now, it is sufficient to note that the elitist, Western hegemonic discourse might be dominant, but certainly not the only conceptual narrative which organizes and codifies heritage theory and practice.

4.3.4 Heritage and dissonance

The AHD paradigm assumes that visitors are only the passive consumers of heritage narratives and performances (Smith 2006). However, throughout the years, scholars (and even Smith herself) assumed that visitors play a much more important role - they actively participate in the assignment and interpretation of historical, social, cultural, political and commercial values of heritage sites and objects (Smith 2014). Each of these contributions will be shaped by individuals' political inclinations, social framework, cultural experiences, historical background and various other factors. Thus, there is no universal meaning, value or interpretation of the heritage site and each visitor will experience heritage in a different way (Light 2015). This is the main cause of the heritage "dissonance," which appears as variety of voices, influences and experiences produce and mediate heritage meanings. This perspective gave rise to the concept of "dissonant heritage", widely discussed in the seminal work of Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996). They argue that since heritage is constructed through interpretation, variety of different experiences and different ways of engaging with the past will provide different interpretations and create cultural dissonance. Indeed, different people engage with the past in different ways (Dicks 2007) and interpret heritage through different systems of value (Timothy and Boyd 2003), creating a palimpsest of meanings, narratives and performances.

In broadest sense, the dissonance can be described as the "discordance or the lack of agreement and consistency as to the meaning of heritage" (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007, p.37). The discordance may appear in the form of various cultural conflicts, identity negotiations, fluctuations of value and meaning and power struggles. Thus, other than dissonant cultural practices and historical narratives, contestations over ownership of the past

and multiple conceptualizations of identity exacerbate the issue of dissonance in heritage practices. As humans are inclined to seek settled, confirmed and stable narratives, palimpsest of dissonant meanings, interpretations and discourses disturb our orderly nature. This is why much of the practical and scholarly work in heritage field attempts to "resolve" dissonances and involuntarily reinforce the universal, authorized heritage discourse. Although it refers to the parallel existence of multiple voices, for Smith (2006), heritage dissonance is an attempt to keep dominant discourses and practices fixed. Indeed, dissonance in that sense could be understood as a refusal to accept heritage plurality and a preference towards certain privileged heritage framework (AHD).

Rather than characteristic of certain heritage sites or objects, dissonance is an inherent "quality" of each heritage place and process (Kisić 2016; Graham and Howard, 2008). The multiplicity of actors, interests and processes make it extremely unlikely to have a monolithic and universal heritage interpretation, meaning or experience. Thus, just like the absence of conflict does not equal peace, 'quietness' of heritage should not be understood as the lack of dissonance. Or, for a heritage to be dissonant, it does not have to be actively contested or considered difficult, dark or uncomfortable. While dissonance is most obvious when there is an active conflict and difficulty to come to terms with the past, it remains the intrinsic value of heritage even when the visible disputes settle, and one discourse stabilizes as dominant. This is because at every moment there is a passively present, 'latent' dissonance which may be activated when some other influences arise to create tensions or disputes (Kisić 2016). Thus, the concept of dissonance is essential for addressing spatial and economic dimension of heritage and its commodification through heritage tourism, as a major source of competing interests, discordant narratives and conflicting processes.

4.4 History and critique of heritage practices

Not only that heritage discourse evolved over the last few decades, but also the 'practice' of heritage and its development were everything but straightforward. Throughout the years, heritage transformed and was transformed by many social, political, cultural and economic paradigm shifts. At first, the heritage was considered to be the "work" of experts, such as architects, historians, archeologists and curators. This elitist view positioned heritage as a highly professional field, outside the scope of understanding of ordinary citizens, who might only admire but certainly not participate in creation of meaning, interpretation and preservation of heritage. But the transformation of the relationship with the past, significant technological

changes and rapid growth of tourism industry led to the increasing public use of the past and popularization of heritage (Harrison 2012). Unsurprisingly, public interest subsequently shifted heritage from "expert" to "people-centred" approach (Jameson 2019), which further opened the possibilities for 'exporting' heritage into the arena of economy and its widespread commercialization. The quest for the "profitable past" pushed heritage processes towards tourism and leisure economy, transforming thus the objects and sites displayed and advertised to satisfy different set of criteria. Heritage ceased to be exclusive feature of the 'high culture' and became an object of mass consumption, redefining thus the nature of selected and exhibited past (Harrison 2012).

Another set of contextual circumstances which profoundly re-shaped heritage practice relates to the contemporary challenges of the city and urban development. As a locus of social, economic and cultural life, cities serve as repositories of memories displayed through heritage sites, objects and practices. These places enable materialization of history and identity, imbuing cities with sense of continuity and stability. Just as heritage, the city is also in perpetual transformation, accommodating different social, economic, political and cultural interactions. In that sense, globalisation strikingly changed the urban conditions and movements, opening doors for new opportunities, but also for the new challenges and struggles. New modes of production, creative industries, environmental sustainability, smart growth, renewable energy sources and ICT innovations define contemporary urban development (Ibrahim, Adams and El-Zaart 2015). Therefore, the identity of modern cities is constructed not only through symbols, rituals and historical traces, but also through the interplay of capital, innovation, knowledge economy and social activism. This is precisely what Sterling (2020) understand as "the heritage city", which encompasses all these different urban dynamics and interactions between urban development and preservation of historic legacies.

Conservation, as the dominant paradigm in heritage practice puts a tremendous pressure on urban design and urban life of the contemporary city. Ideally, the objective would be to ensure conservation and preservation which further enhance infrastructural development, cultural revitalization of districts and increases employment. However, these two goals are often in conflict, since conservation efforts usually interfere with the urban development agenda. On the one hand, there is a growing need to preserve urban heritage and legacies of the past. But the choice to preserve historic district often comes at the expense of modernization of the urban housing, infrastructure and commerce, thus hampering the urban economic growth. On the other hand, heritage is also profoundly affected by the urban planning and

design. Global changes amplified the demand for new residential and commercial districts, urban services and better infrastructure, which required parts of old landscape to be permanently destroyed. Inadequate urban planning, speculative urban development, capitalist urbanization, gentrification and lack of urban legislation all contributed to decay, destruction and loss of number of important heritage sites. Thus, the need to preserve historic fabric and at the same time enable dynamic economic and demographic development requiring new infrastructure, housing and commercial facilities creates one of the major challenges for urban planners around the world. The 'deadlock' of preservation against development will be often addressed in the thesis, as it profoundly influences processes of selection, conservation, valorisation, destruction and overall management of urban heritage.

4.4.1 Heritage conservation, management and destruction

People are inclined to long for the (real or imagined) past and unconditionally conserve and preserve its traces. Contemporary society often appears as obsessed with history, frenetically compiling legacies of the past and creating "abundance" of heritage (Harrison 2012; Bendix 2009). Cornelius Holtorf (2014) explained society's preference towards conservation rather than destruction using the "loss aversion" paradigm borrowed from behavioural economics. The influential concept of loss aversion was first suggested by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who used it to demonstrate people's preference to avoid losing compared to gaining the exact same amount. It refers to a cognitive bias which describes how the pain of losing something is psychologically more powerful than the pleasure of gaining the same thing. For Holtorf (2014), the dominant conservation paradigm in heritage management is a direct consequence of "loss aversion" mechanism, as the preservation and maintenance of heritage elements are considered superior to the loss and substitution of these elements. It might be counter-intuitive that people seem to favour the 'status quo' state and value more the past legacies than the future prospects of the same nature, yet, numerous studies confirmed this paradigm in number of areas. Thus, the contemporary "obsession" with memory and heritage can be explained as a preference towards the past compared to the engagement with the future. Furthermore, we particularly value something when it is under immediate threat of disappearing and thus give the exceptional value to heritage when it is at risk (Lowenthal 1996).

The decades of intentional and unintentional destruction of cultural heritage certainly additionally contributed to the societal "loss aversion" and obsession with conservation as a dominant paradigm in heritage management. Our preference towards preserving rather than replacing or destroying created the "abundance" of the contemporary heritage and the

"persistent and pervasive" 'heritagisation' of society (Bendix 2009; Harrison 2012). Indeed, we keep adding new "heritages" to our lists as new cultural values replace the old ones, without reconsidering whether with the change of values and criteria some of the previously listed objects and places "ceased" to be relevant according to the new framework. This leads to the uncritical stockpiling of heritage which blurs the relationship with the past and disrupts sense of value and meaning which should be imbued into the heritage concept. Harrison (2012, p.166) speaks of the "crisis of accumulation", warning that this approach might interfere with the process of production of collective memory through heritage, as the abundance of places is "overwhelming societies with disparate traces of heterogenous pasts" (Harrison, p.168). As societies become aware of the fact that both mnemonic and urban life is getting disrupted by the inordinate hoarding of historical sites and objects, the issue of heritage destruction emerges as the new paradigm in the field of heritage management.

The debate over which past should be preserved and which destroyed, abandoned or transformed nowadays represents one of the major topics of the urban heritage discipline. Connerton (2009) argued that the destruction of the built environment is one of the principal causes of the contemporary memory loss of the society. As previously explained, one of the main issues of urban development is how to reconcile these two opposing tendencies – the struggle to preserve the existing and the urge to build new urban landscapes. This is because protecting the value of old often means preventing a change which is needed in order to ensure economic and societal progress. Indeed, while conservation is an attempt to prevent transformation and disappearance of the past, Holtorf (2018) reminds us that change and transformation are the most natural historic processes which drove much of the progress and development of human civilization. Thus, replacement, removal and re-building of historic areas might be as important as reconstruction and restoration for the advancement of contemporary urban life.

Despite the dominance of the conservation paradigm in the contemporary heritage discourse and practice, even the ICOMOS guidelines stipulate that certain parts of historic buildings might be "under quite exceptional circumstances" expendable (Washington Charter – ICOMOS 1987). Similarly, International Tourism Charter (ICOMOS 1999) suggests establishing the "appropriate limits of acceptable change" due to tourism impact on heritage places, thus legitimizing alterations of various kind. In line with this, Harrison (2013) highlights the importance of disposing of certain heritage objects, places and practices which are no longer relevant for the society in order to renew value systems and urban spaces. Thus,

sustainable heritage management should also include making the brave decisions on de-heritagising, de-listing or destroying objects and sites which no longer seem culturally relevant, economically viable or socially useful. According to this new paradigm, which addresses destruction as an intrinsic part of conservation, the processes of transformation, removal and replacement of heritage sites and objects are legitimate forms of heritage management, which is a mechanism for managing and not for preventing the change (Holtorf 2014).

While on the opposite sides of the spectrum, conservation and destruction are certainly not the only forms of dealing with heritage. Wienberg (2021) suggests there is "a third way", where we neither engage in conserving nor actively destroy heritage. Instead, one may simply abandon heritage and let the decay take its course. But Wienberg (2021, p.187) reminds this disengagement is also a choice – "It means giving priority to the narrative about and reflection on impermanence, rather than to the possibility of gaining new knowledge or to the physical preservation of evidence." Other forms of dealing with heritage, such as commodification, touristification and disneyfication will be more extensively analysed in the following chapters. For now, it is important to note that there are other forms of valorisation of heritage, which might either foster the conservation, or the decay and the destruction.

Another important set of questions related to the practices of heritage management addresses the decision-making actors – namely who is entitled and whose responsibility is to decide on conservation, restauration, destruction or replacement of urban heritage. Historically, urban planners, urban developers and other city dwellers were in charge of incorporating sites which states and international authorities proclaimed heritage into the urban tissue of the city. This process was challenged by the expansion of corporate capitalism, which in XXI century exercises important influence on urban development and symbolic or economic occupation (or destruction) of heritage spaces. Yet, to this elitist corporate view of urban heritage making, Harvey (2003) opposes the concept of "right to the city". According to this framing, the right to the city is right of the members of each society to reshape their environment and public space, leaving as many (or as little) references to the past they deem necessary. As Harvey (2003, p.939) explains, it "is not merely a right of access to what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image." Thus, people should be given the opportunity to decide on creation, destruction and transformation of the urban fabrics – even more so when it comes to the cultural heritage. While city dwellers should provide a framework for the city's growth, this stream of thoughts argues for more inclusive

and more sustainable management of cultural heritage by giving people more access to the decision-making process (Apaydin 2020).

Within this framework, which emphasizes democratization and social inclusion of urban heritage-making process, highest importance has been given to the heritage for the future generations (Van Den Dries 2015). It is an argument which repeatedly appears as a legitimation of political and social implication in conservation and valorisation of heritage, that humankind has a responsibility to preserve sites of value for the future generation. But if we engage with heritage in order to enable future generations to enjoy it, we should conserve it in a way that will benefit those generations the most. If heritage is indeed for the future, why do we tailor it according to our present needs and concepts? Shouldn't we rather consider what, how and why people in the future would appreciate having or seeing? And how can we be sure their will share our values, our obsession with past and conservation or way of preserving and transmitting heritage? Indeed, as values change over time what previous generations considered to be important is not necessarily a priority for the contemporary society, even less what future generations would consider worthy of preserving. Thus, if we are indeed preserving heritage for the sake of the future generation – we have to do better. If, however, we do it to satisfy the needs of our own society, we should reconsider what previous generations valued as heritage and double-check it against the contemporary criteria (Harrison 2013). In a way, the alternative approach to heritage would entail moving beyond what past considered valuable and dismissing the concerns of what the future generations would need, focusing - instead on what we as a society value the most. Furthermore, the ways in which heritage has been valorised are undoubtedly changing, thus inviting us to re-consider the mentality frameworks and institutional legacies which frame our preferences towards particular forms of valuation and management of heritage and memoryscapes.

4.4.2 Heritage and capitalist urbanization

According to Bandarin and van Oers (2012), some of the major challenges which profoundly transformed the urban heritage practices include the global increase of urbanization, sustainability concerns, climate change, development of tourism industry and market liberalization, decentralization and privatization brought by capitalism. These urban reconfigurations and different actors with competing interests make it increasingly difficult to reconcile urban preservation and economic development. For number of scholars, capital and capitalism in urban development stand in direct opposition with heritage preservation (Harvey 2012). According to that reading of urban change, heritage becomes a victim of contemporary

urbanization processes and "hostage" to capitalist exploitation. Indeed, the dichotomy between symbolic capital and capital as the economic form dominated urban heritage discourses for over two decades, raising concerns about destruction and loss of heritage under the argument of capitalist progress.

Harvey (2012) reveals that heritage cannot be regarded only as a casualty of capitalist urbanization – in number of ways it also participates in these processes and contributes to the new landscape practices. This influence is reflected particularly in two sets of practices. First, heritage is increasingly adopting 'capitalist' mechanisms in terms of production, promotion and consumption of cultural and historic sites. One of the best-known modes of interaction of urban heritage with capitalist market rules is the commodification paradigm, according to which heritage becomes a commodity, focusing more on profit-making and tourist-attracting activities than the critical engagement with the past. The second way capitalism permeates heritage-making is through the model of "monopoly rent", which in Harvey's (2012, p.90) words arises when "social actors can realise an enhanced income stream" due to the heritage potential of the urban fabric. In practical terms, this means that heritage can be often used to enhance certain areas and their uniqueness and attractiveness, either due to its material (architecture, design) or symbolic (narratives, memories, interpretations) capital. Thus, for Sterling (2020, p.75), the capitalist urbanization cannot be addressed only in terms of its "destructive" potential for cultural heritage – it should be also considered as a mirror of "appropriative, exclusionary and exploitative dimensions of heritage change."

Despite different capitalist urban pressures, there is a new approach which sees heritage not as a factor limiting urban development, but as a tool for creating more resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities (Udeaja et al. 2020). Indeed, heritage is becoming increasingly important in urban planning, although its impact and scope on harmonizing urban development agendas remains limited. Yet, in order to plan for the urban infrastructure, density regulations, commercial facilities and public resources, authorities need to take in consideration heritage dynamics and integrate them into strategies of urban maintenance and development (Bandarin and Van Oers 2012). The challenge is not only to incorporate heritage into urban life, but to ensure integration of historic and contemporary environment, traditional and modern facilities and their cohabitation. In that sense, city becomes an amalgam of various urban forms, relying on the art of successful integration of nodes of urbanity. This is the core of the contemporary urban approaches, such as the one argued by the influential Spanish urban planner Joan

Busquets (2006) which puts emphasize on cohabitation of multiplicity of urban dimensions and multi-dimensional urban design.

Another influential approach adopts a holistic idea, in which heritage is regarded as an integral part of the city, participating in the processes of urban regeneration and spatial development. Urban regeneration, as a planning approach emerging in 1990s, refers to urban transformations based on sustainable development, taking in consideration social, economic, environmental and cultural influences. Similarly, new tendency in urban heritage management is to democratize heritage and foster the bottom-up approach through community engagement, inclusive management and participative social practices (Vecco 2010). Thus, both urban regeneration and urban heritage preservation share the commitment towards reconciling economic interests, cultural sustainability and community involvement (Flores de Leon, Babere and Swai 2020). Central to this new paradigm is wider community participation in decision-making and citizens' engagement in the process of possessing, listing, conserving, managing, visiting and interpreting heritage for the sustainable development of the city (Smith 2006; Macdonald 2003).

4.4.3 Heritage tourism

Few phenomena challenged the practices of heritage as much as the expansion of tourism, travel and leisure industry and the focus on "experience" rather than the material acquisition of goods. Tourism, as one of the major economic activities of the XXI century transformed the way we experience, appropriate and transmit the past, notably through heritage tourism. It provides tourists the opportunity to demonstrate their interests and inclinations, to make statement about themselves and showcase consumption patterns. Thus, heritage tourism serves to legitimize one's cultural capital and publicly express particular interests, values or appetencies. As such, it could be understood as a form of elitist consumption (Timothy and Boyd 2003), in which only the most cultivated participate. While Smith (2011) argues that people visit heritage sites not to learn something new, but to reinforce what they already know, the heritage consumption is arguably motivated by eagerness to enhance personal intellectual or cultural capital (Choay 1992). Even for those who engage in heritage tourism as a form of leisure and distraction, it is an act of enhancing one's cultural, artistic, social or historical background and knowledge. Indeed, lot of the success of heritage stems from the industry selling the illusion that visitor will become better informed, wiser and more cultivated. Whether that is the case or not, heritage is increasingly tailored to make visitors feel better about themselves, and that is certainly not the only way tourism influences heritage making.

As tourism turned into 'mass tourism', the transformations of heritage industry became more visible, more prominent and more pronounced in scholarly critiques and heritage practice. Thus, already in 1980s scholars started criticizing the negative impact of tourism, marketing and consumption on heritage (Wright 1985; Hewison 1987). Around the same time, international charters, conventions and national policy makers started highlighting the challenges and opportunities that tourism brings into heritage arena. In that regard, probably the most influential is the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance (ICOMOS 1999) which advocates for tourism that respects and enhances heritage. The Charter (1999) stipulates that tourism should "minimize adverse impacts on the heritage", while at the same time fulfilling the needs and expectations of visitors. Much like the other similar policy documents, it remains declarative and asserts "general ideas" without providing clear guidelines on how to achieve those requests. Thus, most of the critical intellectual advancement in the field was made by scholars which extensively analysed benefits and threats of heritage tourism and its implications for heritage management.

While tourism expansion did not involve the transfer of ownership over the material heritage resource (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007), it certainly added new actors into the process of heritage production and management. These new influences are often critiqued for turning heritage into a tourist entertainment, with a tendency to simplify and falsify historical messages, thus producing sanitization of history and cultural decline (Hewison 1987). Indeed, tourism promotes certain type of aesthetics which is valued by visitors and favours particular version of the past and particular experiences which appeal to tourists. Thus, heritage sites, narratives and experiences will likely be distorted to appear as more consumable version of themselves, challenging thus their own authenticity, historical value and cultural meaning. Furthermore, tourism becomes an important economic argument for selecting particular heritage attraction and engaging in its conservation, marketing and exploitation. It favours certain types of heritage attractions, narratives and experiences and as such profoundly influences the decisions about which heritage will be brought forward and in which way.

The presence of tourists at the heritage sites changes not only the criteria for selection, construction and conservation of heritage, but also the mechanisms of transmission and maintenance of social and cultural meanings. For Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge (2007) "tourism is parasitic upon culture" and may not only deform and banalise history and culture, but also ultimately destroy the very heritage resource that was centred on. Thus, relationship

between heritage and tourism is perpetually self-destructive and binary. On one hand, for any heritage to fulfil its role it is necessary that it attracts visitors and engages interests, debates and interactions. On the other hand, mass tourism and over-exploitation of heritage are considered to be a main cause of heritage decay. Thus, the main problem which instigated the emergence and institutionalization of heritage (threat of destruction or decay) appears again as a consequence of mass tourism. In that sense, tourism brings both money and decay to heritage.

Heritage tourism brings together heritage, regeneration and economic development, creating an amalgam of mutually dependent, sometimes beneficial but often 'parasitic' processes. More than any other engagement with the past, heritage tourism created the interaction of capitalist paradigm in production, consumption and management of heritage with socio-cultural and historic preoccupations (such as identity, discourse, memory). Thus, already in 1987, Hewison (1987) made distinction between pure historical engagement with past and the practices of 'heritage industry' which commodify the past, making it a consumable good. In line with that, heritage economy can be understood as a commercial activity which aims to reconcile universal heritage value "with the commercial compromises necessary for its survival." (Watson and Gonzales-Rodriguez 2015, p.460). As a new form of capital accumulation in post-industrial societies, heritage economy is considered a healthy urban arrangement which allows at a time the conservation of values from the past and economic development and growth. By providing employment and financial resources, it shall ensure successful revitalization and re- valorisation of heritage and its long-term sustainability. Yet, as we will argue in the following chapters, it also profoundly challenges the historic, artistic and aesthetic values of heritage, as well as the urban and mnemonic interactions taking place at the heritage sites.

The brief discussion of heritage management, urbanization and tourism showcased some of the major contemporary challenges and transformations of the relationship with space and history (see *Figure 8*). These influences keep heritage in constant movement so that rather than a fixed reality, heritage has been increasingly seen as a process, as "the continuous manifestation of change over time" (Holtorf 2014, p.13). It is perpetually transformed, re-valued and re-interpreted by different agents in different periods (Harrison 2012). New heritage models aim to embrace these creative transformations and re-negotiations of heritage practices not as the factor of heritage decay, commodification or loss of authenticity, but as a source of new value, innovation and productive engagement. In line with this, for scholars such as Sterling (2020) what matters is not as much the change as the different agents of change and

their roles in reframing heritage. In the following chapters, we will further explore these conceptual changes through discussion of commodification of heritage and its consequences for the mnemonic and urban landscapes of contemporary European cities.
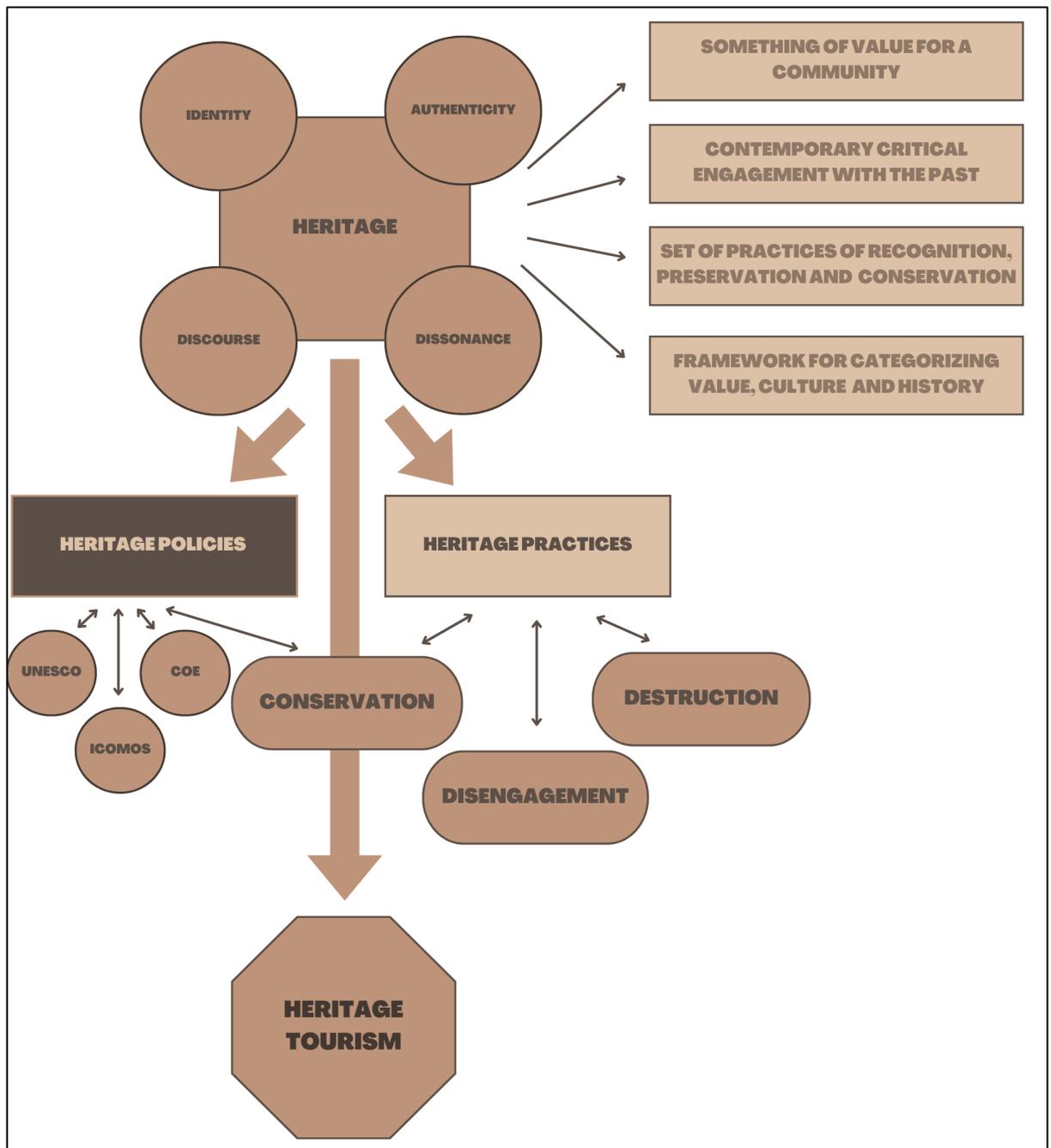
Figure 8 Conceptual Framework of Chapter 4

5 Difficult heritage: Urban legacies of communism

Over the last several decades, heritage profoundly transformed the relationship societies hold with history and gave rise to the new economic and cultural mechanisms of past management. As a testimony of our previous selves and bridge to our promised successors (Lowenthal 1994), heritage represents a transfer of values from the past. It provides a space for embellishing our histories, consolidating identities and reinforcing positive associations. Yet, late XX century saw dramatic shift in our culture of remembrance and consequently, the notion of heritage expanded to include variety of spaces and practices which do not necessarily fit into the 'narcissistic' framework of heritage as a repository of self-affirmation, national pride and social cohesion. Amongst these new heritage paradigms, as one of the most influential in both heritage scholarship and practice emerged the concept of difficult heritage, as spaces of cultural importance which at the same time carry burdensome, contested or uncomfortable emotions, unsettled narratives and unpopular memories. This Chapter provides an overview of the concept and its implications for the study of contemporary heritage management practices, focusing on difficult heritage of communism as a laboratory for studying regional challenges of coming to terms with the (unpopular) past.

The analysis in this Chapter draws on the extensive discussion of secondary literature on the topic of difficult heritage. The established scholarly notions are elaborated and extended using the post-structuralist approach aiming to challenge and re-interpret defined cultural concepts by juxtaposing them to the more contemporary interpretations and perspectives. Furthermore, the review was complemented with personal observations stemming from the conducted fieldwork, including both ethnographic and semiotic analyses of the sites and processes. The Chapter is structured to follow a similar pattern as the previous ones – using deductive method and starting from the broader discussions of the concept and moving towards particular, case-illustrated examples of processes studied in the thesis. Thus, the first section deals sheds light on the notion of difficult heritage and some of the major questions and challenges framing the engagement with this phenomenon as an analytical category. Then, the discussion moves towards elaborating legacies of dictatorships, as a particular form of difficult heritage, focusing on the reasons for which societies preserve their uncomfortable past. In the third section, we deal with patterns and circumstances of difficult heritage-making in post-communist cities, highlighting the complex interactions between political, societal and urban transformations on one hand, and heritagization of contested communist memoryscapes on the other. Finally, the Chapter briefly re-states the arguments framing urban development of post-

socialist city from the perspective of "difficult" heritage, presenting some of the major processes and mechanisms used in coming to terms with communist urban legacies.

5.1. Dealing with difficult heritage: Contested past, contested present

Conceptualized first by Sharon Macdonald in 2009, difficult heritage refers to the legacies of the past which are considered valuable for the contemporary society, but also contested, troublesome and potentially disruptive for the social identities, pride and cohesion (Macdonald 2009). Such heritage is not only inherently dissonant (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996), but also profoundly disturbing, controversial and often divisive. Throughout the years number of similar concepts emerged to explain the phenomena and its subtle varieties, such as dissonant heritage (Banaszkiewicz 2016; Battilani, Bernini and Mariotti 2018; Goulding and Domic, 2009; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Banaszkiewicz and Semik 2019), contested heritage (Naef and Ploner 2016; Silverman 2011), unwanted heritage (Light 2000; Strahl, 2017), negative (Meskell, 2002), undesirable (Macdonald 2006) or uncomfortable heritage (Merrill and Schmidt 2010; Pendlebury, Wang and Law 2018). While there are subtle semantic differences between each of these concepts, they are all used to describe heritage which deals with the burdensome past, and they are often used inter-changeably. The decision to use the term 'difficult' in this dissertation is a deliberate choice, aimed to mitigate rhetorical and methodological ambiguities and nuance the normativity and 'negativity' of the concept as much as possible. This is an approach which was advocated by Samuels (2015), because 'difficult heritage', rather than other similar notions, recognizes the potential ambivalence and problematic character, without giving dramatic, negative and violent connotation to historical sites.

Recent years saw the dramatic expansion of places and practices associated with difficult history of war atrocities and dictatorships, of human suffering, pain and shame (Williams 2007; Logan and Reeves 2009). Given the centrality of history to the individual and collective sense of identity, self-representation and self-perception, encounters with the unpopular past of violence and wrongdoings represent a morally challenging exercise. Such places disrupt 'affirmative' history and positive identity, causing discomfort, sadness, shame and various difficult emotions. Yet, they also represent a powerful reminder of the turbulent past which shall not be repeated. Thus, their visibility and usage are constantly negotiated between different actors and social circumstances, with periods of neglect and social oblivion alternating with times of increasing relevance and strong engagement. Rather than addressing

meaning or interpretation of such sites in a particular moment, it is then important to reflect on wider societal relationship with difficult past and its transformations in time. Different communities in different periods will have diverse societal requirements, different cultural policies and economic needs, and thus also different approaches to history and understandings of the past. Consequently, over the time, difficult heritage transforms its meaning, societal relevance, visibility and function, always reflecting (changing) political and social climate.

While straightforward and simple in nature, the notion of "difficulty" in relation with heritage may be anchored in number of roots and causes. Indeed, the defining traits of 'difficulty' in difficult heritage may stem from a myriad of different historical, cultural, political and social circumstances. This includes variety of painful memories, violent events and complex emotions, as well as different identity disruptions, unresolved tensions, cracks, cultural conflicts, dissonances and contingencies (Geismar 2015). This cultural, social and emotional complexity surrounding difficult heritage makes the process of coming to terms with the past particularly challenging. Who decides how difficult memories will be organized, stored, curated and consumed? How difficult memories are spatially arranged to communicate certain messages and ensure balanced, peaceful and reliable transmission of the painful past? When will such processes lead to reconciliation and social transformation, and when to the additional divisions or conflict re-activation (Verovsek, 2016)? Why some difficult sites remain unacknowledged, while others become pillars of identity through official commemorations and institutionalization of memories, and some even turn into tourist attractions? While attempting to provide answers to all these questions by far exceeds the scope of this dissertation, it is still important to acknowledge some of the major concerns framing the operationalization of difficult heritage and the contemporary engagement with it.

Moving beyond traditional scholarly debates on character and function of difficult heritage, in this brief introduction to the topic we outline several major considerations one must take into account when advancing the concept. These concerns challenge the idea of universality of the phenomenon and 'one-size-fits-all' approach, highlighting instead the subtle differences in interpretation, transmission and exhibition of difficult memoryscapes. First, the 'degree' and even the 'presence' of difficulty in 'difficult' heritage is subjectively determined. That is, what might be extremely uncomfortable and unpleasant for one group or individual, may seem neutral or at least burden-less for others. In that sense, the ways in which individuals or groups who perceive site as difficult engage with it will be significantly different. Consequently, performances and interactions of those who address site in terms of its cultural

and aesthetic value without finding it difficult may be considered inappropriate and even disturbing for the groups that attach an aura of 'darkness' to it. But even when there is a consensus on the general 'difficulty' of the site, actors may adopt different strategies for coping with it. Sometimes, governments and heritage institutions may encourage forgetting of heritage due to its 'difficult' connotation, yet people continue engaging in commemorations and tourism industry starts exploiting the place and its "darkness" (Wollentz 2020). In other instances, local communities may actually refuse to get 'victimized' and identified with the difficult history of the place, imposed to them by the authorities and institutions, codified through the official memory politics and consumed through mass tourism. Similarly, the temporality of memorialization of difficult past is also highly unpredictable and contingent on various political, social, economic and cultural processes. For some places and events, the process of 'designation and sanctification' (Hartmann 2014) may occur almost instantly (such as 9/11 memorial, for example), while for others it took years or even decades to turn difficult memory into a heritage site (Holocaust memorial in Berlin, The Wall of Truth in New Delhi or Londres 28 in Santiago de Chile). These subtle distinctions are important to retain as we continue exploring the mechanisms, functions and characteristics of difficult heritage of dictatorship in Europe.

5.2 Urban legacies of dictatorships: Unbearable attractiveness of the unwanted

In "Ghosts of Berlin: confronting German history in the *urban* landscape" Brian Ladd (1997) suggested a framework for addressing political and societal controversies surrounding historically charged urban landscape of Berlin. While criticized for the lack of coherent in-depth argumentation (Berger 1999), Ladd's work remains important for untangling a palimpsest of difficult urban heritage and conflicting interactions of architecture, national identity, contested memories, urban planning and complex history of XX century Europe. Indeed, difficult heritage is particularly troublesome in its most tangible forms, as monuments and buildings as repositories of painful memories are much more permanent and difficult to remove, abandon and forget than other, less "physical" and less "robust" legacies. As places of pain, shame or suffering, they often disrupt the socio-historical coherence, positive self-identity and urban image of the city. Thus, one of the main challenges of the contemporary urban planning is to appropriate the contested meanings and sanitize layers of unwanted history inscribed in the built environment. Contemporary cities need to ensure peaceful cohabitation

of unsettling histories and come to terms with the urban traces of uncomfortable pasts, while at the same time providing the infrastructure for economic development and affirmative self-representation. In that sense, city becomes an amalgam of various urban forms, relying on the art of successful integration of both pleasant and difficult nodes of urbanity.

The urban positioning of European cities is particularly challenged through the encounters with the remnants of the turbulent XX century, framed by the history of violence, oppression and conflicts. Temporal proximity of totalitarian past and abundance of historical and architectural traces of failed regimes create a pressure on contemporary societies to address the 'elephant in the room.' Thus, omni-present legacies of Nazism, Fascism and communism in Europe represent a particularly inspiring laboratory for studying urban negotiations of difficult heritage. Societies emerging from decades of dictatorial regimes have been faced with burdensome task of reconciling former and present ideological, social, cultural and urban capital, while at the same time reinforcing national identities and dealing with shame, guilt and suffering. The dominant paradigm in heritage scholarship is that, as a particularly troublesome and vivid testimony of past atrocities, heritage of totalitarian regimes has been silenced and neglected for most of the XX century (Tucker 2015). Yet, as argued by Harald Bodenschatz (2020), we are currently witnessing an important transformation of the memory culture in Europe, as urban heritage of dictatorships becomes increasingly re-assessed, restored and rebranded. This revival often disrupts and destabilizes established historical narratives, social relations and cultural patterns, confronting them with the undesirable memory and uncomfortable architecture.

The re-emergence and re-evaluation of heritage of totalitarianism raises number of social conundrums and open-ended questions. If legacies of dictatorship are proven to be burdensome, painful and conflicting, what drives this growing interest in difficult heritage of totalitarianism? Why societies choose to preserve and valorize painful pasts with dubious aesthetic and cultural value? Indeed, scholarly engagement with the concept of difficult totalitarian legacies would seem incomplete without questioning the very roots and causes of this paradigm shift and major reasons framing the raising popularity of remnants of the previous regimes. One common argument, often elaborated in scholarly work, explains this re-emergence in relation with the disappearance of Holocaust generation that witnessed those events, thus making it increasingly important to remember in order to preserve and transmit the past experiences (De Cesari and Rigney 2014). Furthermore, major actors of these past atrocities are passing away, and new generations of scholars and politicians who are not

burdened with legacy of complicity are emerging. Hence, dealing with difficult pasts becomes less painful, less shameful and more abstract (Bodenshatz 2020). On the other hand, there are voices explaining this re-evaluation of disregarded heritage of dictatorship as a consequence mainly of the changing influence that past exercises over collective identity (Macdonald 2015). According to this paradigm, it became possible to accommodate violent pasts in a way which does not disrupt identity but signals moral superiority, accountability and openness. Thus, displaying pasts of one's own wrongdoings is seen as both a moral duty and an educational exercise, which shall ensure there is a powerful reminder of mistakes that should not be repeated (Czepczyński 2008).

While number of scholarly interpretations of the processes framing the (re)emergence of difficult heritage of dictatorship shed light on the complexity of the topic, this section attempts to move beyond these established discourses. Hence, the following paragraphs provide some critical reflection, hypothesizing several 'alternative' explanations of this paradox of societies preserving the legacies which disrupt and often 'corrupt' their identity and cohesion. First, the origins of the revival of difficult heritage of dictatorship can be traced to the recent expansion of memory and public commemorative practices, creating the 'abundance of heritage' (Harrison, 2012). This not only transformed the relationship societies hold with their past, but also made possible to add to the mnemonic mosaic objects and sites which do not fit into the affirmative and 'authorised' historical, cultural and discursive framework. Indeed, the proliferation of 'authorised' heritage, the one which enhances and celebrates outstanding achievements and glorious experiences, provided the opportunity to bring back some of the troublesome legacies without disrupting the overall mnemonic cohesion. As the majority of heritage sites and practices still belong to the affirmative and coherent stream, several places associated with pain and shame shall not 'label' a nation and overtake the narrative. Similarly, the expansion of the concept of 'pluralization' of memories facilitates the cohabitation of good and bad memories (Lim and Lambeert 2014). As different actors, voices and agents 'democratize' the politics of contemporary memory-making, difficult, dissonant and contested legacies appear not as a factor of fragmentation and ambivalence, but a sign of openness and inclusiveness.

However, while plausible, this explanation is certainly inadequate to grasp the developments in countries such as Germany, where the obsession with 'negative remembrance' (Schulze 2004) and 'heritage fetishism' (James 2012) branded the society as a paradigm for difficult memory work and outstanding capacity to incorporate heritage of shame and violence

into its national identity (Kattago 2001; Confino and Fritzsche 2002). Thus, the second important factor driving the expansion of difficult heritage is the moral and ethical obligation of societies, particularly the perpetrators, to confront their violent pasts (Sodaro 2018). According to this framework, coming to terms with the past becomes a priority of the contemporary society, which needs to demonstrate historical consciousness, accountability and honesty in order to 'move forward.' Such engagement with difficult pasts thus presupposes moral duty to remember and to do so in an ethical way, which is particularly ambiguous due to the emotional attachment with these sites. Yet, by displaying emotions, humility and vulnerability through difficult heritage societies make a step towards redemption and moral cleansing of history, preserving both their positive identity and historical legitimacy.

Third, the 'loss aversion' paradigm borrowed from behavioural economics could also be a useful tool to approach revival of difficult heritage. It refers to a cognitive bias according to which the pain of losing something is psychologically more powerful than the pleasure of gaining the same thing. Thus, in heritage scholarship, loss aversion concept has been used to explain the societal preference towards conservation rather than destruction (Holtorf 2014). Consequently, one may argue that societies chose to engage with their past and preserve it even when it is troublesome, since the 'cost' of losing it seems to even higher. Furthermore, the contemporary society has a clear preference towards preserving rather than replacing or destroying, do that the disappearance of even the darkest heritage is seen as an irretrievable loss for the community and humankind.

Finally, the emergence of difficult heritage of dictatorship is closely related with the expansion of tourism industry. As one of the major economic activities of the XXI century, tourism transformed the way in which we experience, appropriate and transmit both past and culture. Consequently, tourism has a capacity not only to bring forward marginalized and uneasy heritage (Lenon and Foley 2000) but also to sanitize, embellish and cleanse the landscape, history and narrative (Camprag 2018), thus making it more visible and more comfortable. Consequently, tourism facilitates encounters with difficult heritage, brings new actors in the arena of cultural negotiation of history, commodifies the space and the narrative, and purges totalitarian legacies from contested and burdensome. While tourist engagement with any heritage, and particularly the difficult one, should provide a space for dialogue with the past, it however often leads to generalization, banalization or 'authorization' of particular urban historical interpretation. However, by discharging both urban and mnemonic landscape from historic tensions and cultural dissonances through nostalgia, orientalization,

entertainment and marketing, tourism creates a framework for dealing with difficult legacies, albeit often on a superficial level. Yet, as I argued elsewhere, tourist commodification is often a first step towards acknowledging and accepting the difficult legacies (Janinović 2021). In that sense, following Chapters will empirically analyse these negotiations between contemporary tourism and difficult heritage and their socio-cultural implications.

Understanding the circumstances which created conditions for difficult heritage to emerge as a category for managing the past is undoubtedly an important scholarly task. While variety of reasons, activities and processes may frame the engagement with difficult heritage, it is important to note that, despite its strong political connotation, difficult heritage does not necessarily emerge in an organised, official or politicised manner. In fact, as argued by Wollentz (2020), it is often re-used "due to sheer pragmatism", as its darkness may come secondary to its commercial utility. Thus, the uncomfortable past is increasingly brought back to life through commercial mechanisms. Initiatives for its preservation often arise from various practical and financial reasons, rather than ideological ones (Carter and Martin, 2019). Consequently, political and societal engagement often comes only after the difficult legacy has already emerged. This 'unpreparedness' for the encounter with the difficult past may create dispersed, conflicting and impromptu official, institutional and communitarian responses. Yet, regardless of whether the official institutionalization precedes or succeeds public engagement with difficult pasts, managing such heritage represents a particularly challenging task, requiring subtle negotiations of competing interests, narratives, actions and timeframes.

Besides understanding the causes of growing interest in legacies of dictatorships, it is also highly relevant to address different ways in which societies respond and come to terms with difficult heritage. While there are as many different 'coping' mechanisms as places and communities, it is still important to shed light on some of the major mechanisms framing the engagement which difficult urban memoryscapes. In that sense, we may suggest a simplified, yet useful typology of main strategies for managing difficult past in the aftermath of dictatorship, focusing on the profound ideological changes in Europe after 1989. According to this framework, we may identify 4 fairly common processes aiming to ensure cohabitation of new ideologies and difficult heritage of dictatorship which emerged after the collapse of communism – *destruction*, *displacement*, *distraction* and *dark tourism*. In the initial phase the *'destruction'* was the dominant paradigm, and most of the objects and monuments reminding of the previous regimes were demolished, removed or dismantled in order to 'cleanse' both urban and mnemonic landscape (Czepczyński 2008; Mihelj 2017; Golubchikov 2016).

Probably the most emblematic example is the 'exorcism' of major communist icon, Lenin, whose statues were toppled in Bucharest, Berlin, Vilnius, Riga and most of the post-Soviet space. In a way, this was a common answer to the suffering and terror of dictatorships, by violently re-claiming space and demonstrating the power and dominance over history and identity. Subsequently, a strategy of *'displacement'* emerged, consisting in either physical removal or discursive re-branding of difficult heritage. Well known examples of such processes include Bronze Soldier of Talinn, or Memento Park in Budapest and Grutas Park at the outskirts of Vilnius, where communist monuments removed from the visible sites were randomly ditched. In such instances, the symbolic act of displacement and discharge of monuments 'cleared' them of their commemorative value, turning these sites in socially and historically neutral displays of totalitarian aesthetics. Third mechanism for dealing with difficult heritage could be addressed as *'distraction'*, as it consisted in putting the emphasize on the other parts of urban fabrics and obscuring totalitarian legacies by erecting larger structures or re-directing the tourist gaze towards alternative memoryscapes. Such developments may be traced in cities such as Budapest, where at the Szabadsag Ter (Liberty Square) the Red Army memorial (celebrating the Soviet 'liberation' of Budapest in 1945) was countered by erecting monuments to the hero of the Hungary's anti-Soviet 1956 uprising, Imre Nagy and American president Ronald Reagan. In a similar way, many memorials and buildings which could not be removed or re-branded were marginalized by producing new heritages and diverting the gaze towards less difficult stories. Hence, Bucharest's project of construction of the largest Orthodox church in the world (next to the monumental Palace of the Parliament) or Warsaw's craze for skyscrapers surrounding the Palace of Culture and Science could be both understood as the attempts to provide urban distraction and "tame" the difficult legacies by re-branding the surrounding landscape. Finally, the emergence of *'dark tourism'* as a category for dealing with totalitarian pasts provided a new framework for engaging, valorising, sanitizing and consuming difficult urban heritage. Tours of Nazi concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Dachau, socialist prison Hohenschonhausen, Cold war bunkers and Chernobyl nuclear reactor are the most obvious examples of such developments, yet, to a certain degree, most of the tourism activities related to the history of communism and Nazism could be addressed through the lenses of "dark tourism" paradigm.

While this genealogy of institutional, public and commercial engagement with urban legacies of violence and oppression is just a simplified sketch of the complex, multi-layered and multi-temporal heritage agencies, it is a useful model to keep in mind when addressing

diverse official and unofficial past management strategies. No two cases of 'difficult' heritagisation are the same, and the trajectories of re-appropriation and re-claiming of turbulent past are extremely diverse and discordant, yet many of the heritage processes related to difficult totalitarian past can be categorized into one of these 'containers'. In that, *destruction*, *displacement*, *distraction* and *dark tourism* will be used throughout the thesis as a fluid analytical frame for classifying different agencies, processes and negotiations of the difficult past. In the following sections, we will explore these processes, their sub-categories and successors in the context of difficult heritage of communism in Europe, as a category which, despite attracting considerable scholarly attention, still lacks the in-depth analysis of the after-life of communist legacies.

5.3 Legacies of communism: Patterns and circumstances of difficult heritage-making

While most of the critical heritage discussions before 1990s debated heritage issues in UK, US or France, the collapse of communism in Central Europe provided a fertile ground to engage with a new set of questions related to heritage and its political, societal and economic implications (Rampley 2012). The heritage of Central Europe brought to the field not only the completely new geographical area and new corpus of heritage sites, objects and practices, but also the distinct social, political and historical legacies, legislative frameworks and ways of protecting, narrating and interpreting. In practice, all these influences created a new realm of challenges for heritage management and new modes of engaging with it. Furthermore, in most of the Western world, there was some kind of continuity of heritagization process, as most of the objects, artefacts and practices were well-known as important long before they were officially recognized and protected. Thus, the heritage analyses in Western Europe were based on the 'a posteriori' knowledge, deducted from historical facts and past experiences. Contrary to this, in Central and Eastern Europe the fall of communism offered an unprecedented opportunity to manage 'contemporary' heritage and grasp in real time the complexities of the heritage processes and debates. Namely, the early post-communist years were the time when communist heritage was both made and unmade, as certain communist sites became heritage places, while some previously important 'heritages' were emptied, reduced, removed or re-branded. Sometimes, the critical analysis preceded the official heritage activities, with interactions and scholarly debates even serving to inform the decision-making. The 'contemporaneity' of communist heritage produced new social challenges, as actors and (even

more importantly) perpetrators of the histories narrated through heritage were often still alive, and memories still very 'fresh'. Consequently, the engagement with communist heritage is seen as a 'difficult' task, requiring comprehensive negotiations of social, political and economic resources and circumstances.

Another circumstance framing the engagement with communist past as a particularly difficult and painful process relates to the oppressive nature of the regime itself, as the violent communist crimes including political persecutions, forced deportations, ethnic cleansing, prison labor camps, torture and judicial executions represented particularly strong aspect of the system. Yet, while some of the difficult heritage sites are universally accepted as such, and despite their emotional loudness remain rather uncontroversial, the 'difficulty' of communist legacies is often disputed and negotiated. Often, there is no on the nature, value and interpretation of communist urban memoryscapes, and even whether they could be addressed as difficult heritage is often questioned. However, disruptive of identity and filled with socio-political ambiguity, in the aftermath of communism such heritage became a repository of 'unsettled' histories, dissonant narratives and disputing actors. As even three decades after the communism collapsed, managing urban legacies of communism still remains challenging at best and contradictory at least (Sima 2017), in the thesis we argue that communist heritage remains not only dissonant and contested, but also pervasively difficult.

In broadest terms, communist heritage could be defined as a set of cultural resources, both tangible and intangible which are clearly ideologically, historically and socially nested in communist past and often correlated with communist propaganda and personality cults (Stanciugelu, Taranu and Rusu 2013). In the arena of 'difficult' urban heritage making and unmaking in Central and Eastern Europe, heritage of communism represents a particularly inspiring category for several reasons. Most importantly, with lots of the historically valuable urban fabric destroyed in the WWII, socialist urban legacies were often the major preserved traces of the turbulent XX century. Yet, as previously explained, in the aftermath of collapse of the socialist regime, new national governments and international organization pervasively chose the strategy of removal, replacement and disengagement with the socialist past (Czepczyński 2008; Light and Young 2013; Balockaite 2012; Ivanova 2017; Light 2000). Instead, other actors, agencies and processes often instigated the recuperation and revival of socialist memoryscapes. Divorced from the official policies, regulations and expert-based activities, the valorisation of difficult heritage of socialism was often driven by a set of 'bottom-up' forces, such as international tourism and commodification. Yet, in order to comprehend

these processes and outcomes, it is important to first outline the main factors which explain the distinctiveness of heritage-making of the difficult legacies of communism in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe.

There are several major reasons which may explain the peculiar fate of socialist urban heritage in CEE compared to the Western pattern of 'heritagization'. First, as explained in previous chapters, post-socialist urban reality was particularly chaotic and multiple new mechanisms such as privatization, de-centralization, commercialization and marketization instigated general governmental disengagement, delegation of responsibilities and liberalization of urban development. Thus, the decade following the collapse of communism was characterized by general lack of national policies related to urban planning and heritage management (Stanilov 2007). Second, Central and Eastern European nation states emerging from the dissolution of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were for years preoccupied with the attempts to legitimize the new political paradigm and identity framework, which were to be reflected in urban landscape. Thus, the national (pre- war) heritage gained prominence and the legacies of XX century were mostly discarded in order to distance the new regime from former ideology and its legacies (Golubchikov 2016; Czepczyński 2008). Third, international organizations consistently ignored socialist heritage for decades, showing very little interest in artistic, aesthetic and historic value of socialist urban landscape (ICOMOS 2004). Up to this day, not a single site representing urban heritage of socialism has been inscribed in the World Heritage List and only since 2013 international authorities such as ICOMOS started discussing the (potential) value of socialist heritage and architecture from the period. Fourth, urban legacies of socialism deviate from the particular aesthetic which dominates contemporary heritage policy and practice. Thus, socialist architecture and memoryscapes are not only assumed to be emptied of meaning (Kulić 2018), but also aesthetically unpleasant and inherently unattractive according to the 'western' standards.

Yet, if socialist urban heritage was unacknowledged by international organisations and unwanted by national authorities, what were the drivers of its contemporary (re)valorisation? If indeed historically insignificant and aesthetically questionable, shouldn't it have already been forgotten and ditched to the dustbin of history? As one may observe, in both scholarly work and heritage practice, the interest for the socialist legacies has been growing and number of socialist sites, areas and cities are gaining international prominence. Scholars argued that the revival of socialist heritage can be most likely attributed to the tourism industry (Light 2000; Banaszkiewicz, Graburn and Owsianowska 2017), but the question of particular

heritage-making mechanisms and incentives driving the tourist interest for the legacies of socialism remains open. In the following sections, reflecting on the urban reality of post-socialist heritage tourism in the city, I outline different influences framing the process of coming to terms with the "difficult" communist past. The analysis of these influences sheds light on different patterns and mechanisms of heritage-making, providing an opportunity to better understand causes and processes related to the revival of socialist heritage.

5.4 Coming to terms with the difficult heritage of communist urbanity

After the re-organisation and democratisation of the state and the economic reforms which marked first years of the post-communist transition, dealing with the past emerged as a highest priority and unavoidable societal need (Szczerbowski and Piotowska 2010). Responses to that demand have been as diverse as the countries which produced them, ranging from denial to lustration, in both official and unofficial form. Yet, management of the communist past pervasively consisted in dissolution of institutional features of the old regime, rehabilitation of the victims of communism, opening the secret policy files passage of acts convicting communist crimes and persecutors, and arrangement of lustration and restitution. Such ideological and political confrontation with the unwanted past was followed by spatial cleansing, aiming to 'liberate' the landscape from communist memorials and buildings (Czepczyński 2008). Architectural legacies of communism generated the exposure to the past which was not only unpopular and marginalized, but also considered aesthetically worthless and emotionally disturbing. As such, they became redundant and harmful for solidification of the new identity pillars and settling of new ideological framework. Consequently, substantial efforts have been put into transforming socialist urban landscapes by removing those disruptive urban elements.

One of the most emblematic cases of post-socialist urban re-structuration is Berlin's removal of the DDR's Palace of the Republic (Palast der Republik), built as such in 1976, to replace it with the 'older', imperial version of the building, The Berlin Palace (Berliner Schloss). The project which took over 15 years and over 670 million euros to get completed, now hosting the Humboldt Forum, keeps raising controversies as a place where modern meets baroque, colonial the cosmopolitan, all by erasing the communist. Despite the ambiguous and highly contested nature of the re-generation project, this is one of the very few examples of the achieved removal of communist monumental structures. Not many other post-socialist countries could afford such an important budget, strong political determination and societal

consensus, which is why most of similar initiatives were doomed to fail, opening up the doors for the often rampant, uncontrolled, multi-stakeholder exploitation of socialist legacies. Consequently, the difficult and costly removal, re-construction and renewal of such monuments and districts created a myriad of unfinished regeneration projects, unachieved urban plans, uncontrolled developments and unsynchronized urban activities.

Light and Young (2013) extensively analysed the "unfinished project" of urban reconstruction of Bucharest's Centru Civic intended to counter socialist landscape. Even after decades of competitions, projects and plans, aiming to bring architectural 'healing' and ideological 'homecoming', the cityscape of Romanian capital still remains dominated by the socialist structures and urban legacy, notably the monumental dictatorial palace Palatul Parlamentului, standing in stark contrast with the city's contemporary pro-European, democratic identity. In a similar manner, the plans for Tirana's most emblematic communist structure, The Pyramid (Iacono and Kellici 2015), included demolition in order to build a new extravagant parliament building and the transformation into Opera house. While the later project has been officially approved and abandoned shortly after the construction began, the building constructed as a museum to Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha and occasionally used as a temporary NATO base, a nightclub, and a media outlet, has been currently re-habilitated to host a modern TUMO Center for Educational Technologies. Similarly, in Poland over thirty years of discussions about demolishing the emblematic communist skyscraper, the Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science, gave no conclusive solution and "Stalin's gift to the Polish people" still dominates the landscape of the city. Featured on the cover of the first issue of Vogue Poland, Palace became, as argued by Murawski (2019), at the same time "city-building" and "city-debilitating" factor. On the one hand, as a place hosting nowadays several theatres, cinema, university, library, pool, gym and museums, it became a place of every-day life and exchange, place of tourist gathering and mainstream culture. On the other hand, as a place of most anti-government protest, LGBT Pride Parades and other contestational movements, Palace remains a symbol of resistance and impossibility to find a universal frame for neutralizing traces of difficult past.

In Bulgaria, number of initiatives and campaigns for iconic communist Buzludzha monument failed, with structure remaining one of the most endangered heritage places in Europe, whose preservation started only few years ago due to the efforts of the ICOMOS Germany and grants from the Getty Foundation. Most recently, construction works aiming to transform Ukrainian emblematic modernist Kvity Ukrainy building into a modern glass-walled

office centre were suspended after only 24 hours due to the demonstration of Ukrainian activists, large mobilization on social networks and strong public pressure. In less than a month, authorities listed the building as a cultural heritage site, limiting thus the future commercial exploitation and architectural transformation of the building. Contrary, in Moscow, the destruction of Soviet-era housing blocks known as *Khrushchyovkas* started in 2017 as the "biggest urban demolition project ever", entailing removal of around 8000 buildings and displacing over 1.6 million people in order to conduct the controversial massive urban renewal project. Similar initiatives for the communist housing district of Petrzalka in Bratislava, which already in 1990 Vaclav Havel announced to be "slated for demolition", mostly failed, and very few of 'humanising' activities and several scattered commercial urban developments actually happened in over 30 years of planning and re-imagining communist residential area (Arzmi 2020). Emblematic communist Sakala Centre in Tallinn, known as the House of Political Education, despite public contestation was demolished and shopping mall made on its ashes, while in Riga Communist Party Headquarters became the World Trade Center.

This brief and certainly incomprehensive passage on various arbitrary, heterogenous and disputed plans and projects of 'cleansing', 'liberating' and 'healing' cities of former Eastern Bloc of its communist urban traces only aims at showcasing many of the different solutions, challenges and issues surrounding the management of difficult heritage (see ***Figure 9***). It is precisely those inherent controversies, disputes, unique challenges and peculiar outcomes of heritagisation, management and consumption of difficult urban legacies that frame the attractiveness of the post-socialist studies and inspire engagement with communist heritage. This is an inherent paradox, similar to the one explained in Alexai Yurchak's influential "Everything was forever until it was no more." Indeed, similar as Yurchak's explanation of the demise of communist regime being something totally unexpected (as it seemed like eternal state), and yet at the same time unsurprising when it actually happened, engagement with 'ugly' communist urban legacies is difficult and disturbing, yet more and more attractive and prominent. As *Deng Xiaoping said about Mao's Mausoleum "*it was inappropriate to build it, and it would also be inappropriate to demolish it" (Hatherley 2015). Too dissonant to be institutionally preserved, too atrophied to be re-used, but "too big to fail", difficult urban legacies of communism have been negotiated between nostalgia, tourism, urban development policies and official politics of memory. Thus, the following chapter explores how these negotiations were mediated through commodification of communist heritage in Central and Eastern Europe, and its role, purpose, actors and consequences on contemporary urban

landscape and memory culture. The analysis aims to highlight creative, commercial and adaptive re-use of urban legacies of communism as a tool for both restoring historical urban continuity and departing from the 'difficult' paradigm in managing historic landscape.
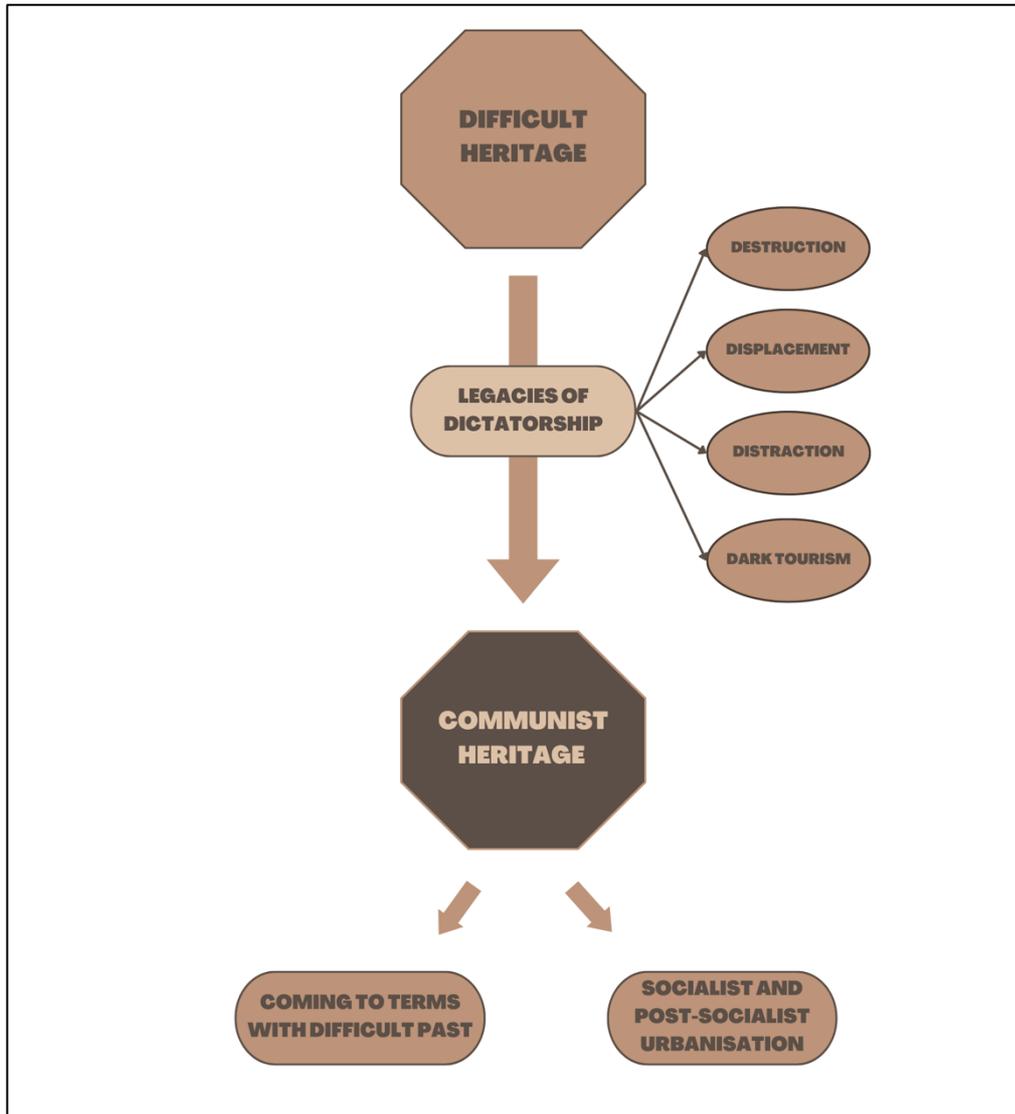
Figure 9 Conceptual Framework of Chapter 5

6 Commodification of heritage

Very few concepts in social sciences and humanities were as abruptly and as transversally adopted as the notion of commodification. Initially used to highlight "unwelcomed effects" of capitalism and profound transformations of social, cultural and urban organization of life (Hermann 2021), commodification grew to become an umbrella term for wide variety of strategies, practices and processes of market valuation of previously non-tradable goods. Penetrating all areas of contemporary life, 'commodification' paradigm quickly became an indispensable tool for understanding expansion of capitalist transactional mechanisms to the realm of previously non-commoditized phenomena, such as the cultural production, public places, social symbols, human capital, knowledge and information (Prodnik 2012). While traditionally, market and society were aimed to function based on different set of rules and harbor distinct relations with each other, neoliberal paradigm brought centrality of the market competition as the main denominator of the contemporary social life and organization of the world. Consequently, the boundary between market and non-market goods and services became blurred, hence making most aspects of societal organization and human existence tradable under market conditions.

This Chapter will provide an overview of major debates framing the commodification as the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted phenomenon. In the introductory section, the origins of the term and its major scholarly applications and conceptions are elaborated, shedding light on challenges, consequences, alternatives and limits of "commodification of everything" in capitalist societies. Then, the Chapter proceeds with the analysis of the commercial dimension on memory, providing an overview of different forms, processes and outcomes of memory commodification, in relation with the concepts of nostalgia, history and identity. Commodification of urban space has been addressed through discussion of capitalist development and its impact on urban design, public space and urban planning, providing a brief overview of disneyfication, Mcdonaldization and Roussification as major spatial consequences of consumerism. The section dealing with commodification of heritage highlights the ways in which commercial engagement with memory sites negotiates meanings and challenges authenticity and social identity. The discussion then shifts towards the interactions of heritage and tourism as one of the major forms of urban commodification, and various spatial and mnemonic adjustments made in the process. Finally, the Chapter concludes by challenging the dominant normative paradigm of commodification as the source of heritage salience, providing counter-critical perspective which might be useful to retain in order to provide more nuanced

and more comprehensive frame of reference in studying the practical manifestations and implications of commodification of communist memoryscapes in Europe.

6.1 Commodification of the world

The term 'commodification' has its origin in Marxist theories of political economy and resides in the distinction between the use-value (as a physical property of the object which can be put into use to satisfy certain human need) and the exchange-value (as the appreciation of certain good compared to the other products on the market (Marx, 1990 [1867]). Capitalism, undoubtedly, prioritizes the exchange value, and commodification, according to this paradigm, is a process in which exchange value comes to dominate the use value. What more, the value of such new commodities (cultural products, artistic programs, opinions, sights, spectacles, etc.) is not determined by the quantity of labour put in their production, but in terms of the quality of the experience they produce (MacCannell 1976). These paradigm shifts, accompanied with rampant privatization of previously public goods triggered profound changes in the ways in which formerly non-tradable items and phenomena came to be provided, used and exchanged.

While in Marxist reading commodification was anchored in welfare state debates, the concept of commodification already in '80s became essential for explaining the capitalist transition in general, and various transformations of social, cultural and artistic capital in postmodern societies. With the proliferation of neoliberal culture, commodification started reaching almost everything – experiences, memories, human bodies, identities, health, sex, etc. Scholarly interest for the phenomenon exponentially grew and recently the field became flooded with exploration commodification of rather unexpected "goods" such as location (Thatcher 2017), conspiracism (Birchall 2021), Covid-19 (Atal and Richey 2021), trust (Bodo, 2021), personality (Gaitan 2021) or motherhood (Krzyzanowska 2020). Growing awareness of the changing nature of certain goods and different rules of engagement with socio-cultural capital triggered significant critique of commercial expansion of the "spheres of life traditionally governed by altruism and social norms" (Clowney 2020, p.1006), the so-called "contested commodities" (Radin 1996). While the field has evolved throughout the years, contemporary authors summarize most of the problems with commodification in the three major bodies of critique (Hermann 2021) – moral, materialist and pragmatist. Moral critique, while supportive of the market exchange in general, highlights the problem of putting on market and trading certain goods and services, arguing that not everything could or should be

commodified. Markets are also seen as beneficial in pragmatist critique of commodification, yet, the problem is that markets might not be a suitable instrument for providing certain goods. Materialist critique, on the contrary, emphasizes problematic character of commodification in general, as market expansion transforms the nature and value of previously non-commodifed goods and services. Central to all these three streams of critique is the idea that commodification is not an appropriate mechanism for dealing with all aspects of contemporary life.

Indeed, as the consumerist ideology and commodification were gaining the momentum through the last two decades, the understanding of the repercussions, long-term consequences and challenges of such development widened the scope of the contemporary critiques, highlighting new issues and deconstructing the grounds upon which some previous criticism was built. For example, one of the major ideas leading the anti-commodification discourse is that there are particular characteristics of certain (cultural) products which make them special enough to be kept outside of the market of mass production – or, at least, treated differently from the ordinary commodities such as cars and groceries. In our mental maps, culture, memories, heritage, arts, architecture and traditions are endowed with particular values and meanings, which prevent their tradability and monetary valuation (Harvey 2002). Culture as the "elitist" product should thus escape the norms of the consumer/provider monetary transaction. Indeed, throughout the history the consumption of cultural services (including museum visits, heritage tours, concert attendances, art gallery visits, etc.), considered as "luxury goods", was reserved for the privileged classes and representatives of social elites (Čepaitiene 2013). Emergence of middle class and rise in purchasing power over the last several centuries democratized culture, making it accessible, yet, the aura of exclusivity still makes its' mass consumption highly controversial. But why is it so? The reasons are to be found in the central critique of these processes which posits that commodification somehow corrupts the value of goods traded, by favoring more profitable outcomes, at the expense of more socially relevant, more artistically original or culturally valuable. Instead, it is considered to foster standardization, uniformization and homogeneization of culture and society, whereas commercially successful products are perpetually reproduced and replicated in order to avoid profit-related risks (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, pp. 93– 95). Yet, as will be touched upon in the following sections, recent studies consistently challenged this underlying assumption that commodification changes the nature of goods traded, the selection process (profit-based) and the rules of engagement with certain phenomena.

Moving beyond commodification as problematic from the point of view of ethics, cultural standardization or degeneration of goods and services, recent scholarship suggested new directions for conceptualizing market-expansion of non-tradable commodities. Hence, commodification has been recently highly contested as a tool for excluding the non-profitable goods - by favouring commercially-friendly rather than socially relevant, and focusing on short-term profitability rather than long-term sustainability (Hermann 2021). What more, it fosters inequality, since by putting the price on certain, previously freely available goods, it excludes certain categories of consumers which are no longer able to afford it from consuming such products. Commodification is also increasingly recognized as a factor of speculative development, since it obscures the fundamental value and encourages profit-based investment, manipulation and dispossession. Taking in consideration the vast body of literature positioning commodification as the central concern of the contemporary capitalist society, one may rightfully question whether this normativity obscures potential contributions of these processes. While critiquing the nature of contemporary consumer society is certainly legitimate, we shall not succumb in the essentialist critique of capitalist hegemony. Rather, it is important to make critical efforts to nuance and recognize the benefits of the over-arching commodification (Gilbert 2008).

Indeed, are there any positive aspects to commodification of the world? This is certainly highly dependent on the type and degree of commodification and particularly nature of the goods commodified. In an article entitled "Saving Lives Is More Important Than Abstract Moral Concerns: Financial Incentives Should Be Used to Increase Organ Donation", Hippen, Friedman Ross and Sade (2008) posit that public policy failure to provide organs might be corrected by the market and Castro (2003) makes a case for compensated organ donation as a solution not necessarily incompatible with the idea of altruism. While further elaboration of the topic, as one of the major debates within the field of "commodification studies" remains out of the scope of this paper, it opens the ground for challenging the absolute "morality" and "superiority" of socially-regulated over market-based. Indeed, commodification may sometimes be used to rectify failures of public policy and deliver goods or services which society failed to provide. This is particularly frequent argument in cultural/heritage studies – where commodification is also observed as mechanism of cultural protection and conservation, since it ensures financial viability of the sites which would otherwise fall into decay and oblivion, or urban areas which would be lost to redevelopment (Prideaux 2003). Rather than causing standardization and uniformization, commodification is increasingly seen as a

contemporary phenomenon promoting choice, diversity, personalisation and heterogeneity (Gilbert 2008). Furthermore, by shedding light on certain goods through their market expansion, it contributes to the empowerment of marginalized groups and goods and ensures that local voices are also heard (Cole 2007).

While, arguably, the commodification brings many challenges, problems and malformations, before taking a normative position one shall ask what is the alternative to such process? Also, who, how and based on which criteria should establish limits to commodification, so that we don't end up in the world of "commodification of everything". Or, capitalism's inner mechanism and "natural tendency" to commodify everything is nothing surprising. Capitalism does not possess the internal blockers, nor moral, ethical and societal consciousness which would obstruct and limit commodification to certain forms of goods. Instead, it will uncritically and unselectively turn into commodity every aspect of human existence, if left unregulated and unsupervised by the government. Thus, degree and scope of commodification within each industry, sector or category will depend on particular public, official or societal interventions in the field and (de)regulation of particular markets, goods and services (Hermann 2021).

While recognizing the scope of the phenomenon is more or less simple and straightforward, understanding all the different traits, mechanisms and implications of commodification is a much more complex issue. This section aimed to present some of the general ideas framing the "commodification of everything" in the contemporary capitalist society. The objective was to shed light on the origins, development and critiques of the term, questioning the dominant normativity, but also the alternatives and limits to commodification. In the following sections, we reflect on commodification of memory, space, and heritage, going beyond mainstream scholarly debates and theories in order to highlight the complex inter-connectedness of the phenomena explored.

6.2 Commodification of memory: Consuming history, identity and nostalgia

The idea that "history sells" and can be sold is a well-documented and widely explored topic in both scholarship and practice. The expansion of "heritage industry" and explosion of television documentaries, retro-styled objects, museums and historical sites (to name only a few) changed the mode of interaction with the past. The power of history, the profound impact it has on communities and identity formation, the popular interest in one's own as much as the

other people's backgrounds, cultures, ideologies and societies made the past increasingly relevant, topical and usable. The over-increasing complexity of the world, the expansion of leisure time and the quest for 'meaning' all to a certain degree gave momentum to these processes. Consequently, the history entered the spheres of life from which it was previously absent, causing sharp de-professionalization of the discipline and proliferation of different strategies and mechanisms for historical knowledge production, dissemination and usage.

Commodification of history, in broadest sense, could be understood as an umbrella term for the various processes through which past, history and memory have been produced, marketed, commercialized and consumed by and for the global audience. It stands close to the terms such as "popular history", but also entails a strong commercial dimension, which in a way supposes that it is re-worked particularly in order to be market-exploitable. In practical terms, it refers to the numerous instances in which history is selectively portrayed, embellished or "handpicked" to provide the greatest amount of entertainment, satisfaction and consumption. These may be as diverse as historically-themed video games, historical re-enactments, historic guided tours and commercial museums. Designed to satisfy tastes of the contemporary consumers, such history is often simplified, sanitized and standardized and as such continuously targeted by the communities of professional historians and scholars standing as the gatekeepers of the professional past management practices. Commodified histories are considered to be "cosy" and comfortable, leaving little space for dissonance and conflict, and often even for the critical engagement with the past. As a consequence of commodification, history is sanitized to make heritage into, as argued by Slater (1995, p.8) "a ragbag of a hygienic and comfortable past ... tidily contained within theme parks and carefully mapped heritage walks".

Similarly, the commodification of memory represents an important feature of contemporary heritage processes. This is reflected in selective portrayal of events and stories, embellishment of narratives, distortions of recollections, "festivization" of commemorative practices, blurred lines between personal and collective - as well as authentic and fictional remembrances, etc. These practices created a new realm of memories where lines between institutionalization, commodification and commemoration are often blurred and mediated through different socio-economic processes. Due to its potential to mobilise strong emotional response, yet also its vagueness and fallibility, memory is even more easily and more frequently commodified than the history, but also quite often jointly with it. Within the vast field of memory studies, most of the commodification discourses address nostalgia as one of the

possible explanations, and at the same time major cause and main tool of memory commodification. While not all the commodification of memory spaces capitalizes on nostalgic emotions, these processes are often anchored in nostalgia, which is in nature predisposed for commercial exploitation and manipulation. Thus, in order to understand commodification of history and memory in heritage spaces and discourses, it is essential to address the nostalgia and its commercial proneness.

As a psychological tool for coping with ever-changing world, social alienation and inevitable passage of time, nostalgia represents a sentimental longing for the particular moments and events from the past (Sedikides and Wildschut 2018). Scholars extensively analysed how nostalgia has been commercialized to stage consumer experience (Hamilton and Wagner 2014), shape consumers' preferences (Holbrook 1993), enhance consumer-brand relationship (Kessous and Roux 2010; Kessous, Magnoni and Valette-Florence 2016), inform retro-marketing strategies (Holotova, Kadekova and Kosiciarova 2020), stimulate consumers loyalty (Chen, Huand and Zhang 2020), affect repurchase intention (Hidayati et al. 2021). Nostalgia has been commodified in wide variety of settings, products and phenomena, ranging from creating brand attachment for LEGO toys (Lubinski 2020) and retro gaming (Wulf et al. 2018) to strengthening the appeal of food items through nostalgic labels (Zhou et al. 2019). Due to its commercial potential, nostalgia rampantly outgrew the fields of history, psychology and sociology, transcending into the realm of marketing research, consumer behavior, economics and management.

The contemporary market of historic and mnemonic production, including artefacts, narratives and places certainly capitalizes on nostalgia, yet, many more feelings, behaviors, cultural patterns and social habits frame these processes. Undoubtedly, the objects from the past have the capacity to trigger sentimental response and positive emotions by transporting consumers to the times of their childhood and youth. Yet, historic commoditization relies as much on the "generations of nostalgia" as on the young consumers and tourists for whom the socio-cultural phenomena, buildings and objects from the past acquire value due to their "retro-chic" and distinctiveness from their contemporary counterparts they are used to (Plaziak 2020). Consequently, the market not only adopts objects, buildings and memories, and adapts them to meet the expectations of the consumers, but also creates new ones, designed to simulate objects from the past and trigger particular (real or fake) memories. Commodification of history and memory, in that sense, is a pastiche of commercial processes, interpretations and simulations,

aesthetic and discursive strategies aiming to trigger emotions, foster consumption and stimulate engagement with popular heritage.

6.3 Commodification of urban space: From Rousification to Disneyfication

Commodification of space could not be analysed isolated from the significant changes in urban planning policies and practices of the second half of XX century. De-regulation of urban development, privatization of land and unconditional focus on urban growth liberalized the field, encouraging public-private partnerships as the new paradigm of urban development. Local authorities throughout the world competed in offering most benefits to the potential investors in order to foster urban regeneration, generate employment, and remain relevant in global urban competition. Giving investors unprecedented power to control and regulate the development processes turned cities into "growth machines", relentlessly seeking to maximise the profit (Logan and Molotoch 2007). Prioritization of exchange value over the use value in production and distribution of space was the most visible in the built environment, as the ideas of "monopoly rent" and financial return on investment in property gained momentum as defining principles of the city commodification (Harvey 1989).

While vacant lands and real estate became major factors of the city commodification, other spatial forms, such as public spaces, also entered the realm of "tradable" goods. Public spaces, as urban forms traditionally characterized by their accessibility, societal relevance and public ownership, became increasingly privatized and commercialized. This changed not only their funding mechanism and ownership structure, but also the mode of production, design and management of such spaces (Bodnar 2015). Undoubtedly, such arrangements reduce accessibility, inclusiveness and interactivity of public spaces, perpetuating unequal distribution of resources, and fostering gentrification and segregation (Chan 2020). Commodified public spaces seldom lose its social function and public dynamism. Concerningly, the process changed not only the physical and social features of the public space, but also its intrinsic characteristics – its semiotic, urban discourses and 'linguistic landscape' became commercialized and sanitized as well.

Capitalist development and its impact on urban planning in the '70s and '80s caused the shift from 'urban managerialism' (city administered by state and local authorities) to 'urban entrepreneurialism' (city administered through the interaction of public authorities and private investors). In Harvey's (1989) seminal work the urban entrepreneurialism is seen as an emerging mechanism of urban governance, relying on public-private partnership to pursue

economic and investment goals and speculative development rather than enhancement of urban conditions for local population. As a response to the increasing capitalist inter-city competition, urban entrepreneurialism favors activities and projects with largest capacity to stimulate cash-flow, employment growth, property rents and tax revenues. It presupposes that urban landscape should be commodified to respond to the diverse needs of contemporary consumers (Su 2014) and consequently favors privatization, speculation, de-regulation and over-exploitation in space production. Hence, urban entrepreneurialism transforms urban spaces into "serial reproduction of science parks, gentrification, world trading centers, cultural and entertainment centers, large scale interior shopping malls with postmodern accoutrements" (Harvey 1989, p.11).

The framework of urban entrepreneurialism as analytical tool for studying commodification in the city significantly expanded over years, further suggesting concepts of urban intrapreneurship, urban innovation and urban diplomacy as key varieties which produce distinctive outcomes for the urban morphology of the contemporary city (Phelps and Miao 2019). Yet, the idea remained remarkably resilient, and in Peter Hall's influential "Cities of Tomorrow. An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880" the paradigm of the "city of enterprise" is used to shed light on retail, consumption and "festival marketplace" as the common features of the urban entrepreneurialism (Hall, 2014). Using the famous case of Baltimore, as a prime example of urban redevelopment through cooperation between public and private sector, Hall (2014) argues that "festival marketplace" and "imagineering" increasingly shape the city as a spectacle. These debates shed light on the postmodern landscape of visual consumption, and different contemporary processes which frame production, consumption and "spectacularization" of space.

While the radical reconstruction of Baltimore through new waterfront has been extensively analysed in Harvey's (2001) work too, it was Hall (2014) that conceptualized the creation of the "city as the stage" and festival malls as a tool of urban regeneration. In a nutshell, festival marketplaces which flourished throughout the US in 80s represent the common space for recreation, shopping, culture, entertainment and housing, usually placed in refurbished historical buildings. They are based on the "creative partnerships" between the local authorities and private companies and designed to exhibit a particular 'local' aesthetic and stimulate consumption of 'local' goods, arts and crafts, albeit usually recreated by artificial means. The phenomenon dubbed "Rousification" (after James Rouse's corporation which introduced such model of urban development) according to which urban landscapes are sanitized to resemble

an eternal "theatre" of consumption, spectacle and Disney-like imaginary gained significant prominence in scholarly literature on urban planning, becoming somewhat the successor of the debate on commodification of space. Indeed, Rousification and commodification appear as different sides of the same coin, where it becomes increasingly difficult to entangle where one stops and the other begins, as the conceptual boundaries between these phenomena appear both blurred and porous.

Another related concept, intrinsically tied to the emergence of festival marketplaces and urban 'Rousification', the 'disneyfication' of space has been prominent in urban scholarship for even longer. As another "derivative" of capitalist mode of urban production and commodification of space, disneyfication refers to the process through which places are designed to resemble Disney theme parks and developed through strategies of spectacle to stimulate consumption and maximise profit (Puente 2014). Relying on visual culture ("life as it should be", sanitized, theme-based spatial and discursive organization), private management (corporations exercising control over such spaces) and spatial control (exclusion of certain groups in order to create particular atmosphere), disneyfication represents an increasingly popular mechanism for managing public space and developing urban landscape through hyper-consumption (Zukin 1995). Similarly, Mcdonaldization in urban studies refers to the urban processes where efficiency, calculability, predictability and control govern the production of spaces, resulting in urban homogenization and standardization typical for the famous fast food chain (Kirchberg 2007).

While each of these concepts have been adopted and adapted from studies of culture and society to the realm of urban space, they all came to play important role in constructing and deconstructing spatial post-modern theories. They all share focus on spatial consequences of consumerism and capitalist urban management. The commodified city becomes a place of spectacle, attraction and festivities, hence profoundly transforming not only urban semiotics, but also the place identity, place authenticity and place attachment. While commodification may cause simulation, fragmentation, thematization and standardization of space, the scope and repercussions of such urban phenomena will remain contingent on the existing spatial arrangement and development capacity, level of control maintained and exercised by the authorities, strength and involvement of local community in the urban processes and availability of alternative regeneration solutions. Furthermore, the stronger the place identity and place attachment, the more commodification will have to be negotiated, mediated and unobtrusive. In that sense, amongst the different urban forms, commodification of urban

heritage and memoryscapes remains most controversial, most challenging and most multi-faceted, since it always engages places of special importance for the community, nation or humankind.

6.4 Commodification of heritage: The quest for authenticity and hyper-reality

Cultural heritage, as a "living history" and landmark of identity, represents one of the central and most controversial cultural phenomena of the commodification debate. Ever since Hewison's (1987) influential conceptualization of "heritage industry", rendering heritage as a commodity became the basis for much of the contemporary heritage discourse (Rampley 2012). Broadly defined, commodification of heritage could be understood as a strategy for exploiting cultural resources such as distinctiveness of places and landscapes, architectural styles, historical figures and events, local traditions and artefacts. In practical terms, commodification actually occurs when these "assets" exit the realm of universally accessible "public goods" and turn into products designed to attract visitors and generate profits. These processes are well documented in heritage scholarship, yet the vast majority of such analyses remains case-study based and analyses one particular phenomena (authenticity, tourism, preservation) in one particular heritage attraction. Thus, the field remains fragmented, lacking conceptual tools and more theoretically comprehensive framework for analysing the various types and degrees of commodification of heritage, and their common (and distinct) implications and challenges.

The main debate which animated the field for the last several decades is the idea of how representations and interpretations of the past in heritage attractions change under the market pressure. Indeed, the question of whether commodification of heritage comes at the price of sacrificing its authenticity became the dominant paradigm in commodification research (Prideaux 2003; Goulding 2000; Halewood and Hannam 2001; Wirth and Freestone 2003). The literature consistently emphasized commodification's detrimental effect on authenticity of heritage places and narratives. According to this idea, market expansion of mnemonic and spatial features of heritage causes replacement of original with commercial, negotiating reality and compromising the authenticity. The attempts to give sites and objects more commercial appeal often means removing, re-branding or replacing certain spatial-mnemonic properties and narratives by the more "marketable" ones, which are more likely to attract wide array of

consumers. Consequently, it is believed that some of their historical and architectural credibility might be lost in the process, thus tarnishing the "authenticity" of the site. Paradoxically, it often the authenticity, which remains the main asset of heritage sites and objects and the ultimate driver of their commercial exploitation, that gets lost in the process of that same consumption.

Harvey (2002) explains these processes using the paradigm of the "monopoly rent", which entails the special qualities allowing goods to be exploited and marketed. Since, as argued by Harvey (2002), qualities such as authenticity and uniqueness represent a base for seizing the monopoly rent, cultural artefacts and practices in general, and built heritage in particular represent a particularly vulnerable category for exploiting such capital. Even more so, since the value of such products stems not only from their material, aesthetic characteristics, but also from the discursive constructions, interpretations and social relevance which surround them. Consequently, their symbolic capital has the capacity to attract and retain monopoly rents, by providing marks of distinction which make such products more desirable, more profitable and more commodifiable. Hence, local differences, special characteristics and authentic discourses become a tool for capital accumulation. On the other hand, the commodification of such goods favours uniformization and homogenization, thus stripping them their major capitalist asset – their uniqueness. Or, the more marketable - the less authentic and special the heritage appears to be, thus providing less basis for the monopoly rent.

The concerns over commodification as a factor of heritage authenticity deterrence are most frequently voiced in contemporary tourism research. This is because tourism represents the most visible, the most prominent and the most impactful form of heritage commodification, profoundly transforming the processes of production, interpretation and consumption of heritage places. Because of its sheer size and influence, tourism is recognized as a main threat to heritage authenticity, not only due to the adaptation of places and discourses to become more commercial (and subsequently less authentic), but also due to its particular "imagineering" where places are increasingly tailored to meet tourists' expectations. Already in 1995, Marie-Francoise Lanfant (1995) revealed the problematic, mutually parasitic relationship between tourism and heritage places. Seeking authentic places, idealized identity and "imagined community", tourists create a demand for particular type of local culture, which does not necessarily correspond to its genuine form. Consequently, traditional cultural products, including heritage spaces and other places which strongly reflect memory and identity, are tailored to meet such unrealistic expectations of the tourists, thus distorting their authenticity.

This is what Lanfant (1995) calls the "reciprocal misconstruction". Much of what tourists seek is not the authentic, but the hyper-real representation of local culture, history and heritage. Authentic is sometimes blunt and boring, while the "tourist gaze" seeks the simulacra, more-authentic-than-the-real-thing type of cultural goods. Hence, tourism not only commodifies memories, places and cultures – it also turns them into a hyper-reality, where objects, sites and narratives are reproduced to "stage authenticity" (MacCannell 1973). Or, as argued by Shepherd (2002, p.192), "the most authentic cultural practices and objects appear to be those that not only faithfully imitate an inherited set of practices and objects, but also are reproduced in a specific locale, by a specific type of people, and for a specific purpose, one unconnected to the market process". In the process of heritage commercialization, cultural elements, objects and behaviours are thus tailored to satisfy tourists' expectations, stage authenticity and simulate hyper-reality – what Atkinson Wells (1994) named "fakelore".

The debate on authenticity and heritage commodification became extremely prominent in contemporary scholarship due to the profound impact these processes have on social dynamics, community engagement, place attachment and public identity. They open a range of issues related to the inclusion/exclusion of certain groups, changing nature of social interactions and engagement of locals in interpretation, evaluation and consumption of "staged" authenticity in heritage places. While sometimes it is the local community itself that advertises such "simulated" cultural experiences, very often representations and interpretations of cultural symbols are commercialized by those "from the outside" (Gill-Robinson 2007). Consequently, as "external" actors they often lack knowledge and/or interest in the authentic meanings, stories and traditions, focusing instead on the most commercially appealing cultural elements. This may have strong consequences not only on heritage places and sites, but also on local populations' relationship with such places, which represent a basis of their cultural and identity framework. Commercial distortion and mass consumption of heritage may alienate local people from their memory places, tradition and history (Kockel 2007). Thus, the bond between society and its heritage might get irretrievably broken in the process, changing social relevance and identity of the place.

Despite its wide applications in theory and practice, the concept of authenticity remains disputable. Heated scholarly debates on whether authenticity is "an objectively identifiable property" of objects, places and histories or "subjective, socially and individually constructed perception of them" still animate the field (Kolar and Zabkar 2010, p.653). In that sense, there may be as many forms, degrees and varieties of "authenticity" as the cultural frameworks of

the seeker (Spooner 1986) and what may count as authentic for one may not necessarily be the part of the other's conceptualization of the phenomena. Yet, for years there was a general idea that authenticity is always to be sought and found outside of the market, or that the exchange process somehow extorts, corrupts and degenerates authenticity as a feature of heritage places or objects. In that sense, the fact that most of the history and heritage has been nowadays consumed through some kind of the market framework, made it necessary to provide, accommodate and promote particular type of authenticity, which is to be exercised and digested through commercial processes.

The idea that commodification of heritage requires compromises with scholarly credibility, objectivity and authenticity in order to display and interpret fragments of history with the broadest market appeal has been widely accepted in literature ever since Hewison's (1987) seminal work on the topic. Parts of history related to gender, ethnicity, social class and similar topics which do not have a broad market appeal often remain omitted (Goulding 2000), while landscapes and stories of suffering, popular culture, espionage, immigration, and every day trivia with the potential to capture visitors' attention gain prominence. Since people are inclined to seek to depart from their routine and mundane experiences, hoping to find something extraordinary (Goulding 2000), the contemporary heritage industry is designed to offer the "overstated version of the real". Just as observed by MacCannell (1973), while relentlessly seeking for authenticity (and perhaps even precisely because of it), the modern tourist remains condemned to consume the "pseudo" experiences.

6.5 Heritage tourism and new patterns of cultural consumption

In heritage scholarship, the commodification paradigm has been almost exclusively addressed through the contemporary expansion of tourism. As probably the most dominant mode of commodification of memories, urban spaces and cultures, tourism became the leading factor of transformation of heritage processes and consequently also of the image of the contemporary city. In that sense, urban heritage tourism challenged the ways in which we produce, advertise and consume culture, history and urban spaces. The studies of the topic over the years gained momentum and suggested a considerable amount of critique of tourist practices as a factor "corrupting" heritage and memoryscapes, their identity and authenticity. As a particular form of commodification, heritage tourism re-invests urban places with new meanings and interpretations apt to attract visitors and stimulate consumption (Hannigan 1998). Such processes often rely on removing undesirable, 'inauthentic' or unattractive urban

cultural elements and "enhancing" urban fabrics to resemble a common pattern of consumable landscape (Wirth and Freestone 2003). These adjustments of space, whether locally-driven in an attempt to become more competitive on the global tourism market or imported by the international investors searching for the most profitable outcome, result in a myriad of different forms, processes and frameworks, which reflect individual specificities of commodification (Herrschel 1999).

As argued in the Chapter, there is a strange paradox framing tourist commodification of heritage. On the one hand, the commercial potential of heritage relies on the uniqueness of places, authenticity of memories and special character of culture. On the other, it is precisely tourist commodification that is considered to be leading to standardization of cultural products, predictability of tourist experience, uniformization of urban spaces and thematization of heritage sites. This particularly affects visual identity of the city – commodification favors simulation, standardization and reinterpretation, the so-called "catalogue heritagization" (Čepaitiene 2013). Indeed, Čepaitiene (2013) speaks of certain "predictability" and stereotypization of such experiences, since cityscapes are increasingly commodified to respond to tourist expectations in terms of vernacular architecture, consumer facilities, urban style and infrastructure. Consequently, commodification of urban heritage profoundly transforms the image of the city, its relationship with local past and community, and thus also the place identity and place attachment.

Transformative power of tourism to re-shape culture, re-interpret memories and reconfigure space remains one of the central concerns of the commodification scholars. Yet, the scholarly critique of commodification unjustly focused on corporations, cultural institutions, heritage managers and urban dwellers as "the usual suspect" of the process of commercialization and sanitizaton of heritage. It was only since Urry's (2002) influential conceptualization of the "tourist gaze," that social scientists started disucssing the role the consumers play in shaping the commodification process. Indeed, it would be extremely ignorant to minimize the effect of the demand side on conceptualization and interpretation of memoryscapes, since visitors' expectations and tourist imagination to a large extent shape heritage representation and the degree of their commercialization. More than "passive recipients" of culture, heritage and history, tourists are increasingly recognized as active stakeholders, since their expectations frame heritage representation, their interpretation co-produces heritage meanings and their experience impacts heritage organization. Or, the consumption habits and expectations of tourists undoubtedly have the capacity to shape urban,

cultural and mnemonic fabrics of heritage site, which is consequently adapted to become more tourist-attractive and stimulate tourist spending (Wirth and Freestone 2003). These critiques have been recently extended to address also the increasing "orientalization" which often represents a by-product of the encounters between tourists and heritage. According to Tzanelli (2008) the interaction of tourists with local culture "both celebrates and domesticates otherness". Consequently, through the agency of tourism, commodification both uses and produces the "otherness" and promotes cultural 'orientalization'.

6.6 Critique of the commodification critique

As seen in this Chapter, much of the discourse in the field represents a critique of commodification, where different processes and impacts of commercial valuation of the "special-character-goods" such as history, urban space and heritage are seen as ethically, socially and culturally problematic. Studies consistently emphasize how authenticity, identity and meaning of such narratives, places and objects become "hostage" to their commercial exploitation, somehow "corrupting" the nature and true value of commodified good. Yet, much of such criticism departs from the idea that there are indeed such normative "intrinsic" values, like objective history, authentic place or genuine heritage, which are fixed in time and independent of the conditions, observing lenses and available resources. Indeed, one of the main arguments is that commodification distorts history – but isn't the history often distorted even when non-commodified, due to availability and reliability of sources and artefacts, positionality and socio-cultural lenses of the researcher, modes of translation, interpretation and transmission? Thus, presupposing that the commodification jeopardizes historical accuracy, spatial recognizability or heritage authenticity entails that these categories are fixed and stable, or at least that their degree, scope and criteria for evaluation are undisputed and generalized. Yet, this is not always the case, and the vagueness of these analytical categories makes it extremely complicated to judge commodification effects on them.

Another problematic aspect of such normative approach to commodification as the factor of heritage salience is the fact that almost without exception it fails to acknowledge the alternatives to these processes (Prideaux 2003). Indeed, heritage is a costly venture, and substantial funds needed for its revitalization, restauration, maintenance and promotion could hardly been provided exclusively from the public budgets. In that sense, number of places, sites and histories could remain obfuscated and abandoned, due to the lack of financial revenues. Consequently, heritage places which benefit from generous government support might not be

pressured to commercialize, over-advertise or trivialize its offer. Stable source of income will ensure that such heritage, while might be subject to reinterpretation due to political reasons, remain relatively independent from the market rules and mass consumption. Contrary, heritage sites which are not state- or locally supported often need to provide funds for their everyday functioning, conservation and investment. Hence, in order to ensure financial viability such places may be more pressured to commodify, re-interpret and re-invent heritage for contemporary consumption (Prideaux 2003). Undoubtedly, for sites which rely on visitors, entrance fees and revenues from commercial activities rather than public funding, it will be more difficult to balance the need to generate profit and compete with other (generously supported from public money) heritage sites, while preserving place identity and authenticity (Prideaux 2003). Yet, despite these challenges, commodification could be seen as a useful complementary mechanism for such places, providing resources where state fails to do so and ensuring diversity and viability of heritage. What more, these processes could not only contribute towards preservation of heritage which would otherwise be lost, but also promote local experiences, articulate local identity and foster local communities.

In a similar vein, Saunders (2005) posits that the central concern of the architectural commodification is how designers can resist the appeal of commercial culture and offer the alternative. Indeed, in the profit-driven society, the memory dwellers, urban planners, heritage managers and cultural workers all share a difficult task of creating, conserving and developing goods that are becoming increasingly inseparable from their commercial utility. In that, it becomes challenging to escape commodification and imagine a different, yet sustainable way to provide and develop heritage places and narratives. Turning to the private sector for achieving public ends (Fainstein 1994) thus may be controversial, but before criticizing such practices one must ask oneself if any sustainable alternatives might be imagined and implemented.

Another argument which relativizes the detrimental effects of commodification refers to the scope of changes and degree of their relative importance. In that sense, alterations of heritage narratives, spaces and objects due to their market expansion might be less prominent, less visible and less perceptible than the commodification paradigm suggests. The critique of commodification posits that transforming heritage to a commercial venture and 'staging' authenticity entails irreversible damage to the urban and mnemonic fabrics, distorting the narration and interpretation, and thus changing the perception, satisfaction and engagement with such heritage. Yet, whether and to which extent visitors actually engage with heritage

meanings and narratives remain debatable. There is thus a legitimate question whether in contemporary tourism heritage is tailored according to the visitor expectations, or simply the external factors which frame tourist experience are managed in order to ensure their satisfaction. Indeed, there is an increasing awareness that visitor satisfaction may depend more on the availability and cleanliness of additional facilities (parking, toilets, coffee bars, museum shops), general customer service and aesthetic criteria, rather than the presentation and interpretation of heritage per se (Gill-Robinson 2007). According to this idea, tourists are often passive consumers of the heritage setting, interested more in taking pictures than in engaging with local culture and heritage interpretation (Kelly 2009; Hong Hai Nguyen and Cheung, 2014). Consequently, concerns about commodification of memory and culture might be redundant as visitors mostly care about external factors and hence do not cooperate in transmission of commodified narratives and meanings.

There is much more to the commodification than this Chapter may deliver. Yet, understanding most commonly debated processes and challenges related to commodification of history and memory, urban space and heritage provides a solid framework for engaging with the topic. The aim of this section was to stimulate critical engagement with commodification and its different mechanisms, strategies and outcomes, providing space for alternative meanings, interpretations and critiques (see *Figure 10*). In that sense, the following chapters provide empirical analysis of the commodification of communist heritage, as a specific case which allows to reflect on many neglected, obfuscated or disputable aspects of commodification process. The main question which led the study refers to how the history and heritage of communism in Europe have been commodified? By whom and for which purposes? What kind of strategies different actors (institutions, private ventures, freelance workers, consumers, etc.) deploy in exhibiting, interpreting and promoting communist memoryscapes? How they construct narratives, organize visual cues, evaluate authenticity and convey historical messages? The aim is to add to the moral and aesthetic discourse on urban commodification by providing serious socio-cultural analysis, relying on profound understanding of actors, motivations and strategies which frame these processes.
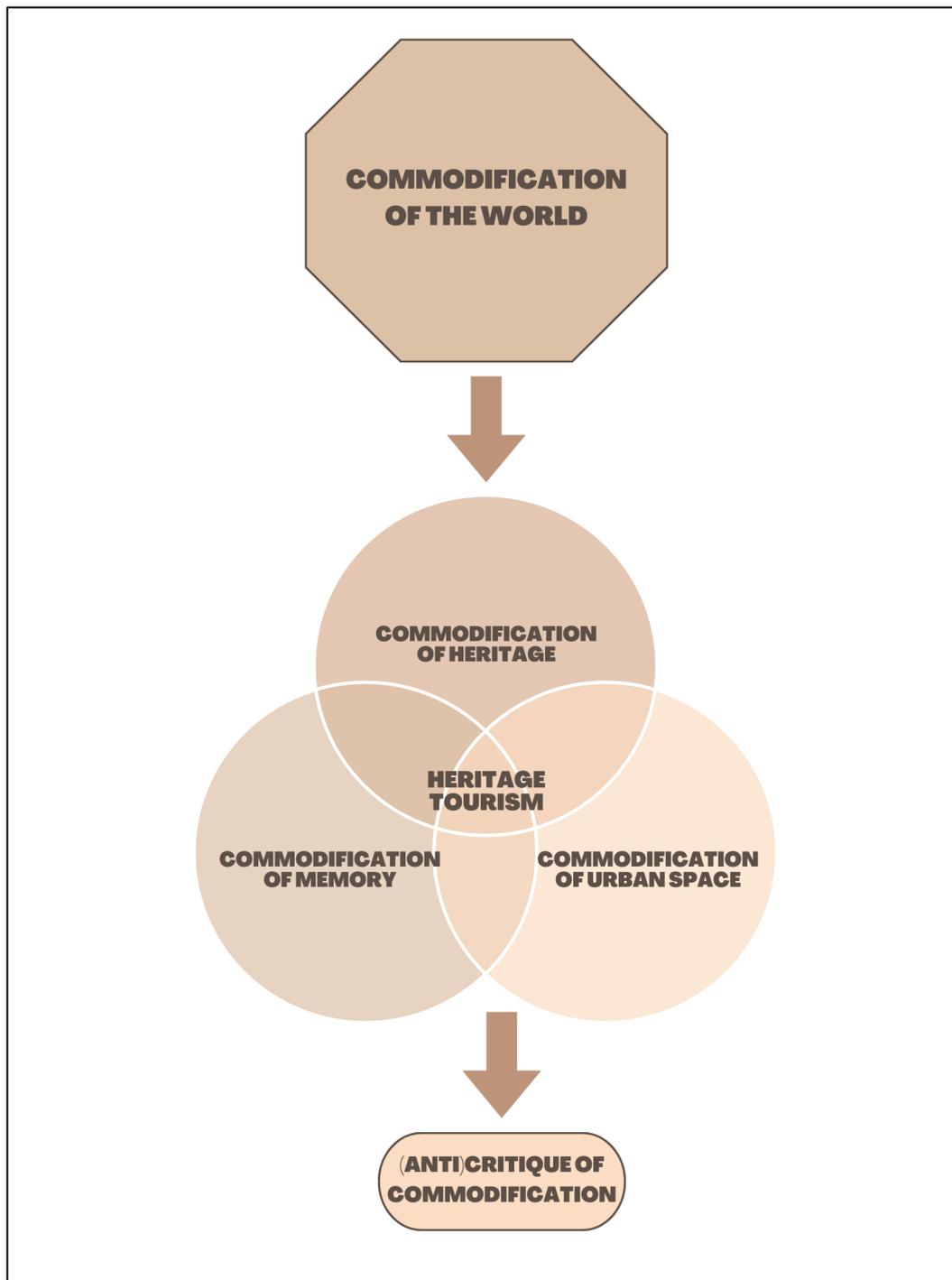
Figure 10   Conceptual Framework of Chapter 6

7 Research Methodology

Research methodology is a complex science delineating contextual framework of philosophical, ethical, analytical, theoretical and empirical choices made throughout the research – aiming to solve particular research problem. It could be understood as a set of steps, procedures and strategies of data collection and analysis. Methodology is concerned with wider research framework – it includes the discussion of philosophical and paradigmatical positions which frame the generation of new knowledge, critical analysis of research methods, ethical considerations and limitations, in relation with the research question. In this Chapter, I provide a comprehensive yet straightforward account of different methodological choices which frame the research process, addressing some of the major challenges encountered through the operationalization of research. As already stated in the introduction, the aim of the study is to find patterns in processes and agents of commodification of communist memoryscapes, including common strategies and consequent urban and mnemonic challenges. Hence, the character of research question largely influenced the overall design and methods used in the study.

The Chapter opens up with the discussion of philosophical underpinnings of the research, including research paradigm, perspective, ontology, epistemology and axiology, justifying the choices made by referring to their compatibility with the main research objectives. In the second part, I provide a comprehensive and honest account of the research design process, including challenges, dilemmas and even inconsistencies encountered in the process. Third section outlines the methods used in the research (grounded theory, case study, netnography), while the fourth lists and describes research instruments used in data collection (participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, photographic documentation, user-generated content analysis, document analysis), highlighting the limitations of each approach. Finally, the Chapter concludes by explaining the process of data analysis and archival, shedding light on major ethical concerns and methodological limitations of the study.

7.1 Research Philosophy

In most general terms, research philosophy refers to a set of assumptions about the ways in which knowledge is produced (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Hence, it is particularly important for any research to acknowledge the framework of these assumptions, since they shape the ways in which researcher defines its research questions, understand its research

environment, choses methods and interprets results. Defining research philosophy is thus a crucial self-reflection exercise for ensuring that the assumptions about the nature of truth and acquisition of knowledge which frame research design are acknowledged and communicated to the reader. In that sense, it includes the assumptions about the nature of knowledge (epistemology), nature of reality (ontology) and role of personal values in research process (axiology). Hence, in this section we provide an overview of some of the major philosophical assumptions which underpin the research design of this study.

7.1.1 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

As the philosophy framing the way of thinking about scientific processes and designing their implementation, research paradigm represents an essential framework for operationalizing any research project (Žukauskas, VVeinhardt and Andriukaitiene 2018). Throrough review of major research paradigms adopted by the scientific community, this research has been recognized as the interpretive. Based on philosophical idealism, the interpretive research paradigm supposes that social reality is always constructed and experienced through subjective cultural frameworks and social contexts. Rejecting research objectivism, interpretivism sees social reality as inseparable from the social setting. According to this paradigm, the aim of research process is not to provide specific answers and general truths, but to enhance understanding of complex and dynamic social processes and phenomena and their spatio-temporal evolution. Hence, the interpretation of reality is a "sense-making" rather than hypothesis testing process (Bhattacherjee 2012). While some initial hypotheses were defined to guide the study, this research in general adopts interpretive approach, as it is focused on meanings and interpretations, continuously questioning the established understandings and contexts. The following passage provides comprehensive justification of such philosophical positioning.

First, the centrality of the research's involvement in the process, typical for the interpretive approach, is highly visible in this study. Adopting interpretivist research paradigm, the thesis acknowledges the limitations of any research process, as it is always, to some degree, influenced by the subjective nature of the researcher and its interactions with researched objects and phenomena, as despite scientific rigor the research processes is always designed and filtered through researcher's own mental models and perceptions of reality and truth. Second, the choice of case studies and interviewees was conducted based on theoretical considerations, selecting cases which contain certain traits which make them compatible with the study framework, which corresponds to the theoretical sampling strategy employed in interpretive

research. Third, in contrast to statistical approaches aiming to provide rigorous, straightforward and universally applicable results, this research analyses symbols, meanings and perspectives, thus providing the understanding and interpretation, rather than dogmatic truths. Finally, as will be elaborated in the section on data handling and analysis, this research is consistent with interpretive framework as the analysis was conducted in simultaneous and iterative manner. Namely, the research design was not straightforward, but rather complex, volatile and synchronic, since data analysis was sometimes used to inform and adapt subsequent round of data collection.

7.1.2 Research Perspective: Phenomenology

Within the general interpretive research paradigm, there are several sociological perspectives, which frame different methods of the search for meaning and interpretation. In that sense, this research could be defined as phenomenological, since it assumes that knowledge is generated through interactions of researcher with studied phenomenon and participants. In broadest sense, phenomenology could be understood as the "rigorous, critical, systematic investigation of phenomena" (Streubert and Carpenter 1999, p.48), shedding light on the ways in which we experience things and make sense of them. Hence, the research is phenomenological since it attempts to "unpack" basic characteristics and assumptions framing the engagement with communist past, studying the phenomenon of commodification and the ways in which it is operationalized and experienced. Yet, while it does not study the perception of commodification process, it the study is phenomenological since in the process of data collection and interpretation it largely relies on the personal experiences, feelings, activities and assumptions, thus framing the interpretation of the phenomenon. Furthermore, as an increasingly popular research approach in the field of tourism (Pernecky and Jamal, 2010), phenomenology is a useful philosophical tool for approaching the interactions that frame commodification processes. In that sense, the study uses phenomenology as a broad contextual lens for grasping social construction of the studied phenomenon and centrality of personal and collective presumptions, perceptions and experiences in defining and categorizing studied processes.

According to Omery (1983, p.15), interpretive phenomenology is an approach which aims to interpret concealed meaning of the phenomenon which might initially be obscured and unclear. Thus, as the study of processes and experiences framing the emergence of communist heritage and their commodified forms, this research is phenomenological in both ontological and epistemological terms, as it presupposes that studied phenomenon, just like other

conceptual tools used in its analysis (memory, identity, heritage) is socially constructed and approachable only through human existence. Indeed, commodification does not exist isolated from human experience, as its operationalization requires conscious or unconscious involvement of people. What more, as a social construct it is not a physical reality, but an abstract idea which is framed through our cognitive processes and mental maps. Seeking to understand causes, actors, mechanisms and effects of commodification of memoryscapes, the research approach presupposes that most of the collected data is filtered (and thus biased) through myriad of personal experiences, perceptions, ideas and emotions. Even more, the interpretation of data is also undoubtedly influenced by the author's socio-cultural framework, ideological biases and subjective position. Yet, rather than claiming the research provides universal and unchallengeable results, the study consistently emphasizes the malleability and fluidity of derived assumptions and ideas, contingent on the perspective of the observer and interpreter. In that sense, scientific rigor is assured through systematic, multi-directional and transparent approach to data collection and analysis, rather than through statistical operational measures and corroborations.

7.1.3 Research Ontology

Each research approach is framed by three major dimensions – ontology, epistemology and axiology (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). In general terms, ontology is a theory about the nature of reality, which asserts particular personal assumptions about reality or truth. It could be understood as a theory of existence (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995) which frames our understanding of the process of "meaning-making". Is there a single reality, or they are multiple? Do things exist outside of our minds, or everything we know is constructed through our thoughts? Ontology is important as it leads researcher's framing of the studied phenomenon and the definition of research topic and question. In our research, we adopt the perspective that the truths are negotiated, and multiple interpretations frame multiple realities (Levers, 2013), hence approaching to ontological relativism. According to this idea, reality is constructed within human minds, 'relative' according to the individual interpretations and changeable in time and place. Hence, the commodification conceptualized in the study is an "artificial" social construct produced through variety of individual interpretations and perpetually revised according to changing cultural frameworks.

7.1.4 Research Epistemology

As the "study of knowledge", epistemology concerns the assumptions about validity, scope and methods of knowledge production (Moon and Blackman, 2014). It is interested in various ways in which knowledge is conceptualized, claimed, acquired and assessed. If the ontology frames the nature of our world, epistemology sets the boundaries, characteristics and methods of acquiring knowledge about such conceptualized world. In that sense, epistemological assumptions influence the way in which researchers design and operationalize their scientific endeavors attempting to answer particular questions. In line with phenomenological interpretivism, this research adopts constructionist epistemology, presupposing that knowledge is made through our own engagement with the world. In that sense, there is an underlying assumption that no phenomenon can exist outside of human activity and reality can thus never be perceived objectively, as it is always framed through individual's interpretations and experiences (Gomm 2008). Hence, phenomena such as memory, heritage and tourism which are all man-made constructions, can be only grasped through personal interpretations, which may differ from individual to individual (Grabenar 2018). This approach is thus particularly beneficial for these types of research as it situates commodification as a process and experience within "socially constructed reality" (ontology) whose meaning, and understanding are thus created through our own engagement with the phenomenon (epistemology).

7.1.5 Research Axiology

Axiology conceptualizes the role of ethics within the research process, assuming that researcher's personal values and beliefs frame the research process. Axiology, as a system of values and ethical stances influences the selection and formation of the studied topic, research questions and methods, data collection and interpretation and the ways in which findings are interpreted, communicated and transmitted. It is thus researcher's moral obligation to reflect and disclose which values frame (or interfere) with the research process and what he or she values in research in general. This is particularly important for studies conducted within the interpretive paradigm, since it acknowledges the value-laden nature of research processes, putting researcher within the realm of researched, as inseparable part of the phenomenon and its manifestation. Hence, this particular research might be biased through personal value framework which stems from the cultural background of researcher which stipulates 'appropriate' ways of dealing with past, heritage and memory. In that sense, researcher's perception of importance and value of past remnants and particular forms of engagement with the past might have interfered with the neutrality of data collection (case study selection,

interview questions) and interpretation. While such challenges were attempted to get mitigated by questioning and challenging one's own assumptions and preconceptions, juxtaposing alternative theoretical arguments and putting forward the opposing and sometimes even inconclusive results, it is still important to admit that researcher's interest and long-term engagement with the topic and the multitude of its form certainly mediated certain research choices and processes. Furthermore, the personal approach to research – as a process aimed at challenging prevalent but also one's own ideas and conceptions, enhancing our understanding of the world by revealing previously unexplored dynamics and patterns represents an important axiological feature which shaped the overall research design and process.

7.1.6 Research approach: Abductive reasoning

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the position regarding the process of data collection and analysis. In general, the research approach stipulates how we organize the research process to reach conclusions or generalizations. The research process in the thesis this followed the abductive approach. In general terms, unlike inductive (from specific to general) or deductive (from general to specific) reasoning, the abductive reasoning continuously moves between the two. According to this model, generation and evaluation of hypotheses are intertwined and generated conceptual models are subsequently tested through additional data collection processes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). In abductive approach, the researcher's encounter with the "puzzle" which cannot be explained through the existing body of theories frames the research questions and hypotheses. It is often used to make sense of highly ambivalent and contentious phenomena aiming to restore their logical coherence (Zelechowska, Zyluk and Urbanski 2020). Hence, abductive approach corresponds both with research object and chosen methodology. In terms of research topic, since commodification of heritage is a controversial process, use of the abductive approach enables to fill in the gaps in literature by providing lacking "bits" of information and interpretation. Considering the research methods, as already explained, data and theory were used iteratively and simultaneously, combining inductive and deductive inference. Thus, preliminary fieldwork was used to develop series of hypotheses explaining the nature of the phenomenon and design the case study analysis. The results of these analyses enabled to further refine conceptual models, while triangulation using the unobtrusive netnography additionally provided new data and revised the conclusions. In that sense, the abductive approach was employed to ensure multiple iterations of the conceptual models.

7.2 Research Design

While research philosophy gives a general framework of the assumptions framing the researcher's position towards nature of reality, knowledge production and value creation, research design is more concrete and more tangible manifestation, describing approach and steps taken in answering research questions. It could be understood as the general plan for translating conceptual research problems into adequate and achievable empirical research. As a roadmap through research process, research design reflects both more abstract (philosophy) and more practical (methods) features of research choices, dwelling on systematic triangulation of research concepts, instruments and results. Thus, it consists of concrete choices made throughout the research to meet research objectives and provide credible answers to the research questions. Three major research design forms are exploratory (aimed at gaining new insights and discovering new correlations), descriptive (aimed at accurately portraying certain phenomenon) and explanatory (aimed at understanding causes and consequences of certain occurrences). This particular research oscillates between exploratory and descriptive, as it both generates new ideas and describes the characteristics and varieties of the explored phenomenon. In that sense, the exploratory research design is used to inform and guide descriptive research. This is reflected in choice of methodology – grounded theory as an exploratory method was initially used to investigate commodification of communism as under-researched topic, further expanding the process using the case study instrument to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon. Yet, initial exploratory research was used to inform research process, reframe research questions, complement research methodology, add research instruments and guide research interpretation.

In practical terms, the research was designed using several complementary methods. In the first part, the wide and multi-perspectival analysis of various ways of engaging with communist heritage was conducted, through over 40 journeys to 19 post-socialist cities visited from 2017 to 2019 (Zagreb, Belgrade, Kosice, Bratislava, Budapest, Sarajevo, Skopje, Wroclaw, Dresden, Warsaw, Ljubljana, Podgorica, Berlin, Leipzig, Krakow, Bucharest, Prague, Sofia, Tirana). The selection of the cities was established in a way to include major capitals of Central and East Europe, while some other cities (Leipzig, Wroclaw, etc.) were visited in the framework of other professional and personal endeavours – yet, this occasion was also used to explore some of the ideas and engage in observations related to the topic. Due to availability of resources, time and travel logistics, the research did not include any of the Baltic states, or countries such as Ukraine, Russia, or Belarus, despite their communist legacy, as they

belong to the different geographic (and partially also political) realm. While engagement with some cities was purely tourist in nature, in other cities the researcher spent substantial amount of time, often returning several times, thus also experience the place from the 'locals' point of view. This preliminary fieldwork was purposefully unstructured, aiming to allow researcher to immerse in the research environment and observed unbiased by previous assumptions or theoretical knowledge. During the trips, researcher observed the landscape, visited cultural institutions and participated in city tours, but also engaged in conversations with locals, tourists and academic peers, aimed at understanding the contemporary identity of the city and degree of (commodified) communism participating in it. The permanence of communist traces in urban landscape and their pervasive tourist exploitation shifted the research towards exploration of these new forms of dealing with urban traces of communism.

While I stated that this initial fieldwork was not proceeded by the systematic analysis of knowledge in the field, it was not entirely true. Indeed, some of the first encounters with post-socialist cities were not framed by the theoretical knowledge, and thus were largely "open-ended", without a clear delineation of what particular places and activities constitute the core research object. This is both very liberating, and very dangerous as it allows researcher to "wonder" through research field, yet also may result in empirical "clutter", distracting researcher and misleading towards already well-elaborated, outdated or inconclusive topics. Hence, since the very first field visits in mid-2017, the researcher engaged in elaborate analysis of different forms of dealing with communist past, continuously shifting from theory to field, as they both influenced, informed and directed each other. Hence, following months of library work and field observations, where commodification emerged as the dominant paradigm around which the major questions were defined, it was concluded that the second round of in-depth fieldwork was to be conducted. This was determined as the large amounts of unstructured data allowed for some classification, yet, the research questions could not be anwered in rigorous and credible way without more profoundly engaging with particular commodification case studies. Subsequently, case studies were selected within each category (criteria and scientific techniques elaborated later in the Chapter), aiming to provide deeper understanding and facilitate description of the phenomenon and its manifestations.

Despite established timeframe and scope, global crises interfered with the research process, as the Covid-19 pandemics and related travel restrictions postponed for almost 2 years the second round of field work. During that period, alternative methods were used to research the phenomenon – including extensive analysis of major topics and debates framing the public

engagement with communist spaces in mainstream and online media. Sites were explored using the Google search engine and key words, including the name of the memoryscape, "communist heritage", "communist (name of the city)", thus exploring some of the most contemporary and most topical issues and challenges framing these "difficult" sites. This is undoubtedly highly biased and very reductive (even "superficial") way of doing the analysis, especially since the analyses were mostly done in English, with only some occasional overview of web pages and articles in local languages. Yet, it allowed to apprehend myriad of local and international debates which shed light on how contemporary societies deal with communist past and how they perceive and value such engagement. These analyses were certainly not aiming to provide conclusive results and fixed ideas. Rather, the objective was to gain valuable insight which will further enhance clarity of research questions and focus the forthcoming in-depth field work.

Second round of fieldwork was conducted from October 2021 to March 2022, including field visits to Tirana, Belgrade, Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Bratislava and Berlin. Each fieldwork was prepared in advance, in order to allow optimal combination of visual ethnography, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. At the end, a sample of 12 guided "communist" tours, 13 semi-structured interviews and visits of 56 communist "memoryscapes" documented through field notes, audio recordings and more than 3 000 photographs were obtained. After categorizing, systematizing, transcribing and visualizing data, the results were semi-codified, in order to reveal certain patterns. Additionally, the results were further triangulated through semiotic analysis of the user-generated content on Tripadvisor, seeking to reveal how commercial activities frame visitors experience and perception of communist memoryscapes. All these research instruments will be elaborated further in the Chapter. Finally, narrative semiotic analysis and photo-ethnography were used to derive conclusions and generate theories.

7.3 Research Methods

If methodology is the comprehensive structure of research study (Bowling, 2002), including philosophy, ethics, design, techniques and limitations of research process, then research methods represent specific techniques used to collect data. Within the vast field of social sciences, research methods are broadly split into quantitative and qualitative, based on the nature of research data they produce. Qualitative data are in general "textual", while quantitative are "numeric". Accordingly, quantitative methods deal with measurements and statistics, while qualitative relies on descriptions and interpretations. While quantitative

approach requires that procedures and hypotheses are fixed and established before the beginning of the study, qualitative approach allows more flexibility and hypothesis to emerge in course of analysis, through the interaction of theory and data. In that sense, qualitative methods are particularly useful for studying "unanticipated" phenomena and interactions, exploring causal relationships and describing processes and events (Maxwell, 1998). Consequently, studies that derive their results from the processes of observing, interviewing, investigating and documenting essentially employ the qualitative approach.

Assuming that reality is rather dynamic and negotiated, this research adopts qualitative approach, which is useful for providing broader and richer understanding of the phenomenon by observing and interacting with study objects and participants (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Use of the qualitative methods is particularly suitable for this research since qualitative methods allows the systemic collection and analysis of subjective data in a structured manner, aiming to reveal patterns, understand contexts and describe meanings. Hence, the research was designed using three main qualitative methods – grounded theory, case study and netnography, which will be explained in the Chapter, both in terms of their conceptual design and the practical use in the thesis. The combination of these particular methods was chosen to fit selected research question, design and philosophy, as their complementarity and interactions are supposed to provide more nuanced, more comprehensive and more multi-layered interpretation of the observed phenomenon.

7.3.1 Grounded Theory

As a wide and flexible interpretive approach aiming to generate or construct explanatory theories that unravel studies phenomena, grounded theory is rooted in works of Glaser and Strauss (1967). It is a method of conducting qualitative research through interplay between data collection and framing theories, in order to reveal causal factors and underlying patterns (Riley 1995). As such, it is particularly suitable for under-researched phenomena who require thorough investigation and categorization in order to develop theories and construct concepts. Throughout the years, number of methodological genres of grounded theory appeared, out of which the most relevant for this analysis is Charmaz' (2000) constructivist grounded theory, which acknowledges the "multiple social realities" and participants' and researchers' role in constructing the meaning of the investigated phenomena. A research design which suggests constructivist grounded theory complemented with case study analysis is adopted from Diaz Andrade (2009), as particularly useful in deriving theories and conclusions (grounded theory) delineated through defined boundaries and units of analysis (case study).

The research was designed according to the grounded theory approach, aimed to theorize based on the evidence provided from data. Thus, in the earliest stages of research process, comprehensive data were gathered from the preliminary fieldwork, complemented with initial theoretical framework. Yet, as advanced by Urquhart and Fernández (2006, p.5), the preliminary literature review needed to be substantially revised and revisited as the research progressed, since the 'incoming' data and emergent theories determine the relevance of literature. In that sense, fieldwork and data were persistently juxtaposed, informing and contesting each other. Using grounded theory to explore commodification is rather common in the field (for example Goulding (2000) on commodification of the past, or O'Mahoney, Heusinkveld and Wright (2013) on commodification of management knowledge), yet due to the very specific nature of examined phenomenon (difficult communist memoryscapes), the necessity to use such an open-ended data-driven method is even more pronounced. Hence, grounded theory is a useful method for approaching this research due to (a) overall philosophical positioning of the research; (b) complexity and multi-layerness of the observed phenomenon; (c) necessity to account for multiple perspectives, concepts and realities, through critical analysis and interpretation; and (d) immersion of researcher in the field, aiming to grasp diversity of influences, types, and situations which are filtered and benchmarked through (evolving) theoretical framework. In order to enhance understanding of the phenomenon and its different varieties, but also set the boundaries of what is not commodification, the grounded theory is used combinedly with case study method.

7.3.2 Case Study

As a comprehensive exploration of complex issues in their natural setting (Crowe et al. 2011), case study method emerged as one of the dominant research tools in social sciences. Similarly to the grounded theory approach, the case study method allows to formulate general principles, yet it uses accumulated case histories to deduce conclusions. According to one of the definitions, case study method "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). According to the seminal Yin's (2003) argumentation, case study method could be used for cases which are contemporary, which may be investigated in natural context, and which may be hardly discernible from their environment. Furthermore, as a

method it is particularly rewarding in cases when boundaries between context and phenomenon are blurred or porous (Yin, 2003). Case studies, in that sense, represent accurate and delimited manifestations of the researched phenomenon (Schwandt 2001). Their intensive examination sheds light on how contemporary phenomena are operationalized, stored, combined, and re-interpreted. While for Bryman (2008) case study is the comprehensive analysis of the "singular example", scholars extensively used the framework in which multiple cases have been studies simultaneously. This is because multiple case studies can be useful in benchmarking obtained results, and even forecasting similar results in studies (Yin 2003).

The rationale for choosing the case study method to complement grounded theory is, at least, threefold. First, both the phenomenological research approach and grounded theory are compatible with the case study method and have been widely used in combination throughout social sciences. Second, multiple case study approach seems particularly useful for grasping different ways in which communist memoryscapes have been commodified. In that sense, using multiple sources of enquiry enables to reflect on multiple variants of the phenomenon and their various manifestations, providing thus a more comprehensive image of the studied topic. Third, the case study method provides in-depth analysis of 'exemplifying cases' (Bryman 2008, p.56) which can be later transferred into different contexts to approach commodification of communism. Indeed, while many particularities of urban scale, local politics of memory or general socio-economic circumstances frame multiple scenarios of commodification of socialist heritage, cross-case analysis allows to identify presence of particular commodification patterns and mechanisms at many sites across the region. Hence, it is likely that the analyses deriving from "representative" cases may be transferred to other sites and contexts, or at least very useful for approaching and interpreting similar manifestations of the phenomenon throughout the post-socialist Europe. Finally, it is noteworthy that the analyses were conducted in the "natural" environment of the phenomenon, and focus on contemporary events, which are necessary pre-conditions for operationalising case study method.

The multiple case study method adopted in this research was however adapted to meet the needs of the chosen research philosophy and design. First, rather than comparative, the case study is intended to illuminate different varieties, nuances and shades of commodification of communism, approaching thus the realm of "interpretive" case studies (McDonough and McDonough, 1997). Hence, case studies serve not to compare and juxtapose, but to interpret by developing conceptual categories and revealing underlying patterns. Second, the cases are "contained" within different "spatial" categories, since heritage "products" as diverse as

communist guided tours, palaces and museums could be hardly cross-examined. Hence, finding regularities and patterns in data was only possible by analysing several case studies within each analytical category, as static image of one single case as representative of the category would fail to provide any point of conjuncture. Third, the cases were approached as "units of analysis", where each particular site or object was scrutinized according to the pre-established set of criteria, in order to ensure uniformity of the analysis and the data collected. Furthermore, data collection in each case was ensured through the same set of techniques – direct observation, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and photographic documentation. This data triangulation was used in a systematic way, for each of the cases analysed, in order to increase validity of evaluation and research findings. Uniformity and rigour were thus assured by following the same narrative structure in the analysis of each site within a category, exploring the set of pre-established particular features and filtering through existing (working) theoretical models.

7.3.2.1 Case study selection

Contrary to surveys and experiments that rely on statistical generalizations, case studies require a different set of tools for ensuring external validity of the research (Shakir 2002). In order to be scientifically sound, the findings obtained using the case study method need to be generalizable to and across other research contexts, which can be only ensured by applying meticulous and methodical case selection criteria. Indeed, as one of the most sensitive, most challenging and most crucial choices in research design, selection of case studies determines, to a large extent, viability, soundness and credibility of research. Consistent with the research paradigm, the study relies on the idea that "true" representativeness is unachievable, instead, it is essential to properly identify the cases of relevance to the research question. Yet, this is not to say that the selection criteria did not depart from the two established objectives – ensuring (1) representative sample and (2) useful variations (Seawright and Gerring 2008). However, these criteria were supplemented by focusing on sites and objects which are particularly relevant, either as well-known examples of commodification of heritage, either as most surprising or most revealing illustrations of the processes described.

Cases are selected using the 'most similar' method, where objects of analysis where determined according to the pre-established set of variables on which case they were matched. The aim of the method is to identify cases that share important similarities on general background conditions, yet divergent practical outcomes. Yet, the relatively wide approach enabled to integrate both "index" (the cases which appear as the first occurrences of the

investigated phenomenon) and "outcome" cases (those that reflect maximum variation in results), as both categories are useful for understanding the causes, evolutions and consequences of the investigated processes. In that sense, within each analytical category (city, urban undergrounds, landmark buildings, etc.) specific criteria were set, and all of the cases were selected based on their (a) location within one of the pre-determined post-socialist European capitals, (b) clear architectural, historical or ideological reference to communism, (c) accessibility, (d) availability of information in English, (e) existence of commercial activities in different form. Case studies were selected from a large pool of sites visited throughout the fieldwork, eliminating important number of communist memoryscapes which did not fit the determined case study framework. There are certainly limitations to this approach – some sites might have been inaccessible or unavailable at the time of the visit due to Covid-19 pandemics, some sites might have been engaged in profit-making activities that the researcher remained unaware of even after the extensive review of online presence and field visits, while some commodified memoryscapes might have remained unexplored due to the lack of content in English. However, the research never promised or aimed to conceptualise and describe each and every aspect of commodification of communism throughout Europe. Instead, it aims to provide a useful (but certainly not the only possible) typology and interpretation, based on limited number of case studies.

7.3.3 Netnography

Developed in the area of marketing and consumer research, netnography, as an applied research method has been pioneered by Robert Kozinets, already in 1995. Yet, as the 'online' adaptation of ethnography, it was adopted by wide range of scholars and disciplines only through the last decade, when the importance of online community for grasping the complexities of our contemporary world became particularly evident. In most basic terms, netnography is participant-observational method of studying cultural interactions in online world, using social networks and other online communication tools as the research environment, through which one may understand representation of different phenomena (Kozinets 2010). As demonstrated in meta-studies, netnography is often used combined with the 'mainstream' empirical methods such as case study, discourse analysis and grounded theory, aiming to illuminate specific aspects of the observed phenomenon or ensure the data triangulation.

In this study, netnography is used to complement main methods by shedding light on perceptions of commodified sites expressed in computer-mediated communication. The choice to use netnography alongside the determined methods, was more a consequence of the objective circumstances preventing to conduct ethnographic field research during 2019-2021, than a pre-mediated decision. However, when the alleviation of travel restrictions across Europe in late 2021 enabled to operationalize envisioned field-work, data gathered through netnographic analysis were used to enhance the richness of interpretation and deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. In terms of the technique employed, the analysis adopted unobtrusive netnographic approach, conducting a semiotic analysis of the tourists' reviews on Tripadvisor related to the pre-defined cases (Azer and Alexander 2018). These included the tourist attractions as diverse as museums, bunkers, guided tours and restaurants, which were present on Tripadvisor as a leading tourism online platform. Aggregating user generated content (UCG), including ratings and descriptions of experiences in hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions (Valdivia et al. 2019), Tripadvisor has been recently increasingly used to analyse urban tourist behavior (Van der Zee and Bertocchi 2018; Miguéns, Baggio and Costa 2008). Reviews were analysed using Tripadvisor's search engine, locating within particular profile page of the selected site reviews which mentioned key words "communism" ("communist", "socialism", "socialist"), "history", "heritage", "commercial", "authentic", "memory". Due to extremely large dataset, a cut-off date was established and only reviews from 1st January 2016 onwards were taken in consideration. The analysis only included reviews in English in order to avoid inaccurate translations and mis-interpretation of the comments. Since these reviews are publicly posted, we assumed that there are no ethical issues in quoting them in the study, as participants willingly shared their comments without restricting the access and use of them (Tuika, Nguyen and Kimppa 2017).

7.4 Research Instruments

If research methods refer to the broad strategies used to analyse the phenomenon, research instruments refer to the particular tools one uses to collect, measure and analyse data. Selection of research instruments for this study was framed by the chosen methodological framework, including research philosophy, research design and conceptual foundations of the thesis. Hence, both 'mainstream' research instruments such as participant observations and semi-structured interviews, and 'alternative' data collection tools such as photo-documentation and

user-generated content analysis were used, in order to provide large sample of data which would enhance and nuance the conceptualization of the investigated phenomenon.

7.4.1 Participant and non-participant observations

As one of the most diverse and most widely used methods in social sciences, observation includes a set of techniques and approaches which enable to gain insights and enhance understanding of social phenomena and human interactions by immersing into researched environment (Ciesielska, Bostrom and Ohlander 2018). In non-participant observation researcher collects the data without directly interacting with the other participants, while in participant observation the researcher becomes part of the group studied, and the group is aware of the research activity. In this study, both techniques were used, relying on unobtrusive non-participant observations of museum visitors' engagement with communist past, and participant observation when immersed in group city guided tours. The criteria for observation have been pre-determined before the data collection started, yet also revised throughout the research process. The observations were, in general, used to gain insight into organisation of space, architecture and design, physical objects, urban environment, presence of commercial activities and facilities, and participants' interaction with communist memoryscapes. During the observations, brief field notes were taken, which were usually expanded at the end of the day, in order to provide as detailed account of the site as possible. As narrative organisation of memoryscapes was as important as their physical features and cultural interactions, the narratives (as in guided tours, for example) were mostly recorded in order to be able to grasp and accurately interpret subtle meanings and inferences during the analysis. While permission to record the tours was requested and obtained, publishing full transcripts of such material would be deemed unethical, since making the tour narrative publicly available may hinder the commercial activities of the organisations involved. Hence, transcripts are available in the researcher's private archive, and available to interested researchers upon request. Finally, number of photographs were taken in order to document and record evidences which were later used in the analysis.

7.4.2 Photo-documentation

In broadest terms, photo-documentation refers to the processes in which researcher systematically takes photo of the observed phenomena, places and/or interactions, in order to provide data which is subsequently analysed in relation with the research questions. As a

research technique, photo-documentation relies on the assumption that photographs represent a trustworthy evidence of what was in front of the camera at the moment the picture was taken (Rose 2007). While terms such as 'visual sociology' and 'photographic etnography' depict a similar (or same) technique, the choice to use photo-documentation is deliberate, as it allows more flexibility, which was in necessary in order to engage in grounded theory research. In that sense, over 1000 photographs were taken across XX sites, and their overview and analysis at later stages coded according to the similar principles as interviews, observations and netnographic data. Hence, photographs are used in the thesis as more than illustration - they represent a major source of information about urban landscape and architecture, site's spatial and narrative organisation, curatorial practices, symbolic traces, interactions of space, memory and tourism, etc.

7.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Frequently used in qualitative research, semi-structure interviews are a technique in which researcher collects data by asking selected respondents a set of open-ended questions within a predetermined thematic framework. They are a useful tool for gathering data from key informants and providing multiple perspectives on the research phenomenon. In this analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with tour guides, museum curators and employees of the sites and/or companies managing the places analysed through fieldwork. Most of the interviews were scheduled and agreed in advance and conducted in person after the site visit. In the end, total of 13 in-depth interviews were conducted in English, face-to-face (with the exception of one), lasting each between 20 and 50 minutes. Where permission was given, participants were audio-recorded during the interview and the recordings later transcribed. To each of the respondents, the researcher presented seven major questions, while the rest of the questions emerged from the conversation and personal experience of the site visit. The selection of respondents was based using the "purposive" approach (Aldrige and Levine 2001) and participants were chosen as representatives or their institution, or as practicioners ('performers') of certain activities and occasionally even "gatekeepers" of commodification process.

The respondents given the informed consent to be interviewed and the obtained data used in the thesis, yet in order to achieve as honest and as transparent conversation, the researcher promised to anonymize data. Hence, as the interviewees did not agree on having the interview transcripts published, these data remain available in the author's archive. Prior to the interview, the respondents were informed of the researcher's role and research interest, yet, stating only

broadly that the research deals with "different forms of valorization of communist heritage in Europe". While it not entirely disclosing and elaborating commodification as the guiding idea in the thesis could be seen as violation (or at least limitation) of research ethics principles, such choice was deliberately made in order to avoid respondents' bias, as the notion of commodification would certainly raise different set of concerns and "justifications" of contemporary processes at place. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher, as verbatim transcriptions including every word, pauses, and filler words. The initial transcription was conducted using a transcription software (otter.ai), yet the text was later revised in three iteration by the researcher, correcting mistranscribed parts, editing grammar and cleaning up to increase readability. Transcripts were coded along with the field notes, netnographic results and photographs, using the axial coding technique.

7.4.4 Document analysis

Field-obtained data were triangulated using the document analysis, as the method relying on researcher's interpretation of various types of texts and documents which may enhance the understanding the phenomenon (Bowen 2009). Consequently, among the secondary sources of data, I mostly used online media content (official webpages, social media profiles, connected articles and interviews published on portals and online versions of 'mainstream' newspapers and magazines), obtained using the search engine inquiry of each case study selected. This allowed to trace a "genealogy" of the site, and multiple social, economic and political challenges and controversies related to the memoryscape in question. These documents were consistently collected and analysed throughout the research process and used both to inform fieldwork by providing background information on the chosen sites and to triangulate field-obtained data, by suggesting new perspective and interpretations. While these "ephemerid" sources are often contested by conservative researchers (Czepczyński 2008), their analysis and coding helped to enrich interpretations and corroborate the findings.

7.4.5 User-generated content analysis

User-generated content (UCG) refers to various forms of content created and publicly shared by the unpaid contributors based on their experiences, opinions, ideas or feedback. Hence, user-generated content analysis as a research tool is used to determine presence of certain words, themes and contexts within the online community observed. This type of data becomes increasingly relevant as major social interactions "move" to online spaces. As a major platform for rating, describing and booking tourist experiences, it aggregates over 8 billion

reviews (as in 2022) providing travel guidance to the interested visitors. Launched in 2000 by two American entrepreneurs, the site is based on the assumption that tourists' decisions related to facilities and attractions at the destination are influenced by the opinions of the fellow travellers (Miguens, Baggio and Costa 2008). While the platform has been often criticized as unreliable due to impossibility to decipher authentic from "fabricated" comments and reviews, lately it has been extensively used as a source of data in tourism research (Barbierato, Bernetti and Capecchi 2021; Minkwitz 2018; Tsujioka, Watanabe and Tsukamoto 2020). In this analysis, UCG was used to collect tourists' review of the major communist attractions selected as the case studies, in order to complement the field observations. For each of the attractions, recent reviews were read and coded, providing a source of information about how tourist perceive communist memoryscapes and whether commodification appears in their comments. While the aim of the study was not to analyse the perceptions of commodification, the review of the travellers' opinions was approached as a useful tool for benchmarking obtained results. In fact, the UCG served to triangulate data and verify researcher's interpretations, by analysing whether commodification processes identified as such by the author are also recognized and acknowledged by the visitors.

7.5 Data Analysis

While methods and research instruments frame the process of collecting data, data analysis represents the strategy chosen for making sense of these data. In this study, data was analysed through the thematic analysis, a method which relies on extensive examination of data set in order to identify, analyze and interpret certain patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). This method is consistent with the chosen research design and interpretative paradigm, since allows to generate knowledge constructed through social context, and interactions between researcher and research phenomenon and participants. In practical terms, the analysis of data followed the usual 6-step process characteristic for this method, where the researcher started with reading data in order to grasp the general ideas of the entire data set (1), proceeding with axial coding (2) and extraction of general themes within the coded material (3). Since the data analysis was conducted all along the process of data collection (grounded theory), the emergence of new evidence prompted researcher to constantly review themes and coded data (4), and only after the final stages of data collection have been completed, establish a comprehensive description of each theme and its position with the broader research question

(5) and systematically write the final analysis in the manuscript (6). Hence, the analysis is conducted by deriving common patterns and themes and linking them to the research question.

7.5.1 Data handling, interpretation and archiving

Data handling, in broadest terms, refers to the process of gathering, storing and representing raw data. The main data used in this study, as explained throughout this chapter, included interview transcripts, field notes, site photographs, brochures and online reviews. All data was stored electronically and divided into categories according to data type and source (major topic). Relevant data was coded in thematic clusters and merged with theoretical framework. Data analysis and interpretation was conducted through both textual and visual content, using charts, graphs, photographs and tables to illustrate some of the most important data. In terms of data archival, while I fully support the contemporary strivings towards more transparent research processes, I do not adhere to the concept of research "reproducibility" since, as explained in the research philosophy section, it is highly unlikely that even with the exactly same data, another researcher would come up to the same research results. This is because in qualitative data analysis, the role of researchers' perspective, assumptions and philosophy. Furthermore, in grounded theory method data is collected and interpreted simultaneously, creating thus large data set, and publishing it all in the appendices would make the thesis unreasonably "heavy" and even misleading, as from this vast amount only part of data was used for deriving particular conclusions in this study. Finally, taking in consideration that due to ethical concerns anonymity of the participants was a high priority of the research process, it was decided to store the interviews in personal archive rather than to make it publicly available. Yet, all raw data – including interview transcripts, photographs, Tripadvisor review sheets and field notes, as well as the Codebook remain available in the author's archive to all the interested researchers upon request.

7.5.2 Ethical considerations

As most of the studies of the specific phenomena in the society, this analysis also included human subjects, which required careful appreciation of ethical issues which may arise from the research design. The major ethical considerations identified at the beginning of the study refers to the moral obligation towards interviewees, tour guides, site managers and other people whose activities framed data collection. In that sense, participation in the study was voluntary and participants gave their informed consent to take part in research. This refers both to the interview respondents, tour guides and other participants of the tour, as role and objectives of

the researcher were disclosed prior to engaging in the activity. Furthermore, as some of the respondents required to remain anonymous due to mostly professional concerns, it was decided that the names of the participants will remain confidential, as well as the full interview transcripts and precise job positions, as these may provide the information revealing the respondents' identity. Finally, it was impossible to provide the consent for the online user-generated content quoted in the analysis, but since these reviews were publicly posted and as such intended to be read and interpreted by everyone, I consider there are no ethical problems in using these opinions in the thesis.

7.5.3 Limitations

Despite the efforts to ensure impartial, rigorous analysis and thus reliable and credible research results, it is important at this point to emphasize some of the limitations of this research. While these drawbacks and challenges of particular methodological choices have been consistently outlined throughout the Chapter, it is important to acknowledge some of the self-criticism and research constraints at this place. First, as elaborated in discussion on research paradigm and approach, interpretive perspective emphasizes the role of researcher in interpreting data. Hence, it is important to acknowledge the inherent bias of the researcher upon the data collection and research interpretation. While the researcher always strives to be objective and impartial, and in this particular research design multiple data collection instruments were used to provide different perspectives and "correct" biases, it is undisputable that personal understanding of the phenomenon, particular theoretical experiences and socio-political inclinations impacted research results. For example, my interpretation of commodification of communism might have been different if I have experienced myself the communist oppression and political persecutions, or if I was an American marketing expert of African descent. Second, the field-derived data were obviously impacted by the Covid-19 pandemics, since the availability and accessibility of some sites was limited, as well as certain commercial and tourist activities. Thus, the moment in which the in-depth fieldwork was conducted certainly to some extent reflects the consequences of the pandemics' detrimental effect on tourism. Hence, it is likely that degree, scope and even mechanisms of commodification would be completely different had the research been conducted several months before the pandemics, or several years after. Third, the study was limited in geographical scope too – number of post-communist countries are omitted from the analysis and the data might have indicated different patterns if other post-Soviet cities such as Moscow, Astana or Riga were included in the study.

Furthermore, as only the capital cities, as hubs of tourist activity and 'bastions' of heritage and identity were explored, it would be wrong to universalise the findings and believe they apply also to small towns or rural areas. Fourth, the researchers' limited understanding of Czech, Slovak, German and Albanian, and lack of any notion of Polish, Romanian or Hungarian, clearly hindered the data collection and interpretation. This has probably not been so dramatically impactful in terms of field work and site visits, are most of the sites as tourist attractions provide comprehensive information in English, yet, it is an important drawback in what concerned the analysis of documents, brochures and online media articles. The researcher fluent in these languages would certainly come to many more important clues and evidences, which would potentially frame the findings in a different manner. Also, while most of the respondents demonstrated a very good command of English, for none of them it was a mother tongue, which means that their responses could have been more genuine, more accurate and differently organized had they been able to discuss in their native languages. Finally, as mentioned throughout the dissertation, limited number of case studies and limited time and scope of engagement which each site represents a significant drawback of the study.

8. Commodification of communism in post-socialist city

How can we argue that communism gets (occasionally) commodified? And why should that bother us? Communism, as a set of socio-political references, memories and legacies, means many things to many people. Thus, the engagement with communist history, whether in material (objects, buildings, places) or immaterial (narratives, memories) form, arises from different motives and materializes itself in different ways. Detangling commercial from altruistic purposes, cultural from commercial mechanisms, public from private ventures requires a thorough understanding and sophisticated detangling of local politics of memory, global capitalism and contemporary tourism. Even so, with increasingly changing modes of production and consumption of history, it remains challenging to argue for or against commodification, and even claim that communism is commodified at all. What more, even when commercial mechanisms are easily identifiable, it is extremely short-sighted to account such developments to the decision-making authorities or private investors only. There are multiple over-lapping layers of participation in commodification processes, and communism, as much as any socio-historical 'phenomenon' cannot be commercialized if local actors, tourists and media do not show an 'inclination' towards its commodified forms.

Mechanisms and manifestations of commodification are as varied and as diverse as local experiences of communism, scope and character of urban forms, and stakeholders engaged. Also, what could be read as commodification in one context, would not necessarily be addressed as such in the other. There is no universal 'checklist' for placing certain processes within the 'commodification' category. Developments as diverse as wedding celebrations in Palace of culture and science in Warsaw, interactive games in DDR museum in Berlin, communist guided tours of Krakow's Nowa Huta district, drinking in communist-themed ruin bars in Budapest or renting a Cadillac to drive around Tito's villa in Brijuni are all at some point been addressed as examples of "commodification" of communism (see for example: Volčić 2011; Holuj 2017; Bach 2014). Consequently, as the term depicts different urban realities and processes, commodification of communism could be only grasped as a conceptual 'container' for tracing different unconventional and commercial encounters with communist memoryscapes. In order to make sense of it and facilitate the analysis, the discussion in this Chapter will 'compartmentalize' different occurrences of commodification through phenomenological approach, shedding light on actors, forms and cultural consequences of commercialisation of particular urban realities.

In the analysis that follows, commodification of communist landscapes is thus observed through different urban scales, reflecting the diversity of commercial approaches and implications for urban and mnemonic organization. The discussion in the Chapter is structured to follow a certain logic of urban scope, analysing the forms, the degree and the consequences of commodification at the level of city (guided tours), urban underground spaces (communist bunkers), urban heritage objects (communist museums), urban landmarks (iconic communist buildings), urban outskirts (heritage of suburbs) and urban hospitality (communist-style hotels, apartments and restaurants). The multi-scale analysis allows to simplify and systematize the cacophony of commodification forms and processes and identify major actors and strategies at each level of urban organization (see *Figure 11*). The aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of how different commodification strategies impact urban and mnemonic fabrics at the different spatial echelons. While there are undoubtedly other urban frames which are omitted from this analysis (such as urban housing, public space, urban infrastructure, districts, etc.), the categories are formed based on the results of the preliminary field research and multiple encounters with remnants of the communist past in Europe and their commodified forms. As such, these urban 'levels' are designed to encompass majority of the identified commodification scenarios and observed cases and processes. Bringing together the analyses of spatial positioning, architectural design, discursive practices and mnemonic organization of communist memoryscapes, the Chapter aims to provide a solid basis for understanding mechanisms of commercial engagement with communism and their discursive and urban contingency.

Figure 11   Urban Levels of Analysis

The underlying objective of the analysis is to untangle how opulent buildings, devastated sites, disfigured monuments, acclaimed heritage, underground spaces and staged symbols all participate in shaping new urban realities of post-socialist cities. In that sense, the Chapter provides not only an account of different strategies of commercial re-use of communist built environment, but also interrogates how the commodification impacted social perception of communist urban heritage and history, and consequently also the urban regeneration or revitalization. The analyses in this Chapter could be thus characterized as exploratory and interpretive, aimed at acquiring deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its different manifestation within variety of urban 'realities'. As elaborated in the Methodology chapter, the study adopted a qualitative approach, relying on case studies, participatory observation, content analysis of textual and visual destination materials and the user-generated content analysis of TripAdvisor reviews. These methods were complemented with semi-structured interviews with 13 tourism/heritage stakeholders, conducted (with the exception of 1) face-to-face, during the most intensive phase of ethnographic fieldwork from October 2021 to March 2022. Lasting on average 20-25 minutes, interviews were recorded after obtaining a permission of the interviewee, and subsequently transcribed. Similarly, during the participatory observations of the guided tours, the author disclosed its affiliation, research topic and purpose of participation before the beginning of the tour, asking for the permission to record in order to be able to later transcribe and thoroughly analyse the discourse. The guides and other tour participants (with few exceptions) generally agreed to have the tour recorded and disclosure of researcher's role did not seem to disrupt general narrative framework and tourist interactions.

This Chapter is structured as follows. In the part One, we deal extensively with commodification at the level of the city, through communist guided tours. This section includes the review of both walking (often free group tours) and driving (mostly private, individual) tours providing a space for comparison of urban routes and narratives and various degrees of their commodification. The section Two addresses communist landmarks, including some of the most aesthetically and architecturally valuable and/or controversial buildings, being often locally contested and repurposed. Third section reflects on the communist museums as an important part of the urban cultural landscape, where the degree of commodification is often contingent on the ownership structure (public/private) and funding strategy. Exploring privately held communist museums, it is possible to understand to which extent level and mechanisms of commercialization of objects and narratives depend on the external factors. In the part Four, we deal with the underground spaces and ways in which symbols, objects and

stories are organized to create 'dark' tourist experience. Section Five examines several examples of commodification of communist objects, monuments and memorials, and the different strategies and consequences of their physical and symbolical displacement to the urban outskirts. Final part, Six, presents some of the most prominent "communist" restaurants, bars and accommodation facilities, as part of the urban hospitality landscape which often represents staged, superficial and hyper-real take on communist history.

8.1. Guided tours and beyond – commodifying (post)communist city

Tourism, as one of the major global industries, profoundly transformed the modes of engagement with the contemporary city. Cities are increasingly experienced through guided tours, which by selecting particular routes, narratives and attractions frame their urban image and spatial identity. What more, guided tours become a dominant framework for communicating to the outsiders the city's heritage, culture and history, most frequently in a condensed, selective and rather biased way. Walking the "pre-defined" path and digesting "pret-a-porter" historical content without questioning its reliability and relevance, the tourists participating in such tours are often seen as passive consumers of pre-packed experiences. In that sense, guided tours are stereotyped as "mechanical procedures where groups of people are herded as urban cattle in search for a postmodern experience pasture" (Zillinger, Jonasson and Adolfsson 2012). Guided tours are often designed in foreign language, for the audience unfamiliar with the historical and cultural context of the destination, and thus bound to use the popular culture references and stereotyped images to translate local specificities into a familiar cultural framework (Stach 2021). Contrary to this view, the contemporary tourism scholarship (Haldrup and Larsen 2009; Zillinger, Jonasson and Adolfsson 2012) suggests that guided tours represent a more dialectical, more engaging and more interactive social experience, where transmission of political, historical, aesthetic and existential messages and values is perpetually negotiated between the guide and the visitors, who themselves participate in choosing sites and shaping their meanings.

Storytelling, as a major part of the guided tour experience, plays a pivotal role in giving meaning, value and identity to places, which are symbolically constructed through what is shown and said in the tour. Consequently, guided tours have a strong political dimension, since spatial and narrative choices of the guide construct urban identity and political reality of the places consumed by tourists. In that sense, despite the fact that tourists willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously participate in construction of conceived spaces, guides have the

"symbolic power" to convey narratives, conceptualize places and steer the tourist gaze and interpretation (Hallin and Dobers 2012). Since guided tours are mostly for-profit activities organized by private companies, they do not only have the power to commodify local heritage and history, but also possess the cultural control over the tourist construction of place representations, histories and identities. The extent to which they decide to commodify the tour will thus have the significant impact on the ways in which sites are chosen and history of the places interpreted. Consequently, these choices will frame tourist experience and construct the image of the city.

Dealing with communist history and urban heritage is by no means an easy, straightforward or comfortable task. In guided tours, this task of interpreting communism is even more complex, as it is necessary to provide the entertaining, ludic and/or nostalgic tourist experience, while at the same time conveying the darkness of the era. This is often done by juxtaposing serious, dark histories of oppression, violence and suffering with "lighter" content, including trivialization, ironic comments, anecdotes and jokes. In order to understand this dynamics and major actors, discourses and consequences of commodification of communism through guided tours, the author participated in 16 specialized communist guided tours in 7 post-socialist cities (Belgrade, Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Tirana, Warsaw). While on different stages of both tourist development and "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (a process of coming to terms with the problematic past), these cities represent laboratories of contemporary commodification practices and provide a fertile ground for comparison, systematization and generalization. Arguing that tours are co-created in the interaction between the guide and the participants, the research actively investigated both spatial and discursive organisation of the tours, and the participants' engagements with communist stories, places and practices. In order to provide balanced account of different commodification strategies, dynamics and practices, the analysis included participatory observation of both free (group) and private (individual) tours. Furthermore, since mobility is an important feature of sense of place, both walking and driving tours were taken and observed. In all cases, the researcher would disclose its role and research activities to both guides and participants, asking for the permission to record the tour. In cases when recording was not permitted or possible, field notes were taken during the tour and detailed account of impressions and observations drafted immediately after the experience finished. During the tour, pictures were taken, interactions observed and documented. These findings were then complemented with the semi-structured interviews with the guides and/or companies' managers, in order to shed light on particular

tour design strategies, actors and processes. The interviews were mostly conducted in person, immediately after the tour, except in one case where responses were collected at later stage, online through email correspondence. Finally, the investigation also included a content analysis of the TripAdvisor reviews of these tours, aiming to deepen the understanding of the memoryscapes and histories which resonated the most with the participants. The logic behind choosing the tours which will be taken relied on the usual mechanism interested tourists use – by Google-searching "communist guided tour" within the particular city. While some tours were unavailable due to low season and Covid-19 related travel restrictions, the sample may be considered "representative" since these were either only or amongst the most popular communist tours available within each of the capital cities in question. The following section thus presents these findings, where ethnographic observations and discourse analysis were additionally complemented with inputs from tourism stakeholders and anonymous online reviews.

In difference from some of the following sections, where all units of analysis will be discussed jointly and juxtaposed to address similarities, patterns and differences, this sub-chapter will address each of the 8 guided tours chosen as case studies separately. This is because it was important to address, within each of the tours analysed, the particular background of the city in question, including mnemo-politics and urban outline, but also the urban design and narrative organisation of the tour, since these specificities frame the commodification processes. Consequently, the following pages address in details each of the 8 selected guided tour experiences, allowing to reflect which different strategies have been employed within different cities. Hence, each section starts with the brief introduction to the city, its relationship with communist past and contemporary tourism practices. Then, I provide a short overview of the major communist tours available, some basic information about the company and the overall organisation of the tour, followed by a comprehensive "mapping" of the experience – outlining the major urban sites visited throughout the tour. Finally, the discussion sheds light on narrative commodification strategies, reflecting diversity of mechanisms and various approaches to communist history experienced through such tours. This part is complemented with the insights gained through the conducted interviews and TripAdvisor reviews, providing thus both the perspective of 'producers' and 'consumers.' At the end of this sub-chapter, a short conclusion provides summarized and systematizes the findings, drawing on specificities and parallels that can be drawn from these cases.

8.1.1 Walking tour – Communist Berlin and Berlin Wall tour (Sandemans)

There are few places in the world where memory culture, memory work and memory politics became so important and prominent as in the city of Berlin. There is a myriad of both state-mandated and privately-managed mnemonic contents and activities, and wide variety of urban heritage sites dispersed throughout the city. The tourist industry capitalizes on that diversity, and as one of its major tools, the guided tours extensively use the available urban resources, enriched through storytelling activities. There are hundreds of both general and specialized guided tours which offer various tourist experiences of Berlin, ranging from the Medieval Berlin tour to the Queer tour or "Babylon Berlin" – TV-show inspired tour. While there is a great variety of both mainstream and 'alternative' tours, most of the guiding companies, besides the general, 'Introduction to Berlin' tour, offer at least some tours based on the XX-century history of Berlin. Third Reich and Communism tours thus regularly appear as some of the most frequent and most popular tours of Berlin in online guided tours search engines, TripAdvisor reviews, and regular Google browsing. Specifically, communist-themed tours are offered both as group (shared) and private tours and include a range of "catchy" tourist performances, such as the ride in a Soviet minibus, self-driving Trabant tours, testimonies of the contemporary witnesses of the GDR or interactive games (escape room, etc.). Hence, different companies provide different tourist experiences and variety of urban and historic interpretations of Berlin. The decision to analyse "Communist Berlin and Berlin Wall tour" was thus made based on two major considerations. First, it is the one of the first results appearing in Google search engine when entering keywords "communist Berlin tour" and one of the very few which does not include the Third Reich or other historical references to the XX century. Without entering in the complexity of the Search Engine Marketing (SEM) organisation and the rules of website visibility, the order of appearance on Google is reliable predictor of number of views and subsequently also the potential for the tour to be booked and taken. Second, as the tour is offered bi-weekly by the industry's leader, Sandeman's New Europe, it is undoubtedly taken more frequently and by much larger number of tourists compared to the mostly private, randomly organised tours. Hence, the message send through this tour will be more detrimental to the overall image of the city created through contemporary tourist activities.

As the world's largest walking tour company, Sandeman's New Europe offers number of tours in Berlin and 19 other cities in Europe, US and Middle East, "connecting over 450 great guides with 1.5 million smart travellers per year" (as in June 2022). As the first company offering "free tours", where guides take visitors around the city in exchange for a voluntary tip

at the end of the tour, it captured an important segment of the guided tour market. Based on "pay-what-you-want" pricing mechanism, free walking tours are mostly designed as a form of 'edutainment', capitalizing on a particular way of urban storytelling which aims to capture and withhold tourists' attraction and amazement (Nilsson and Zillinger 2018). The revenues are thus mostly based on the satisfaction of the participants who can decide (or not) to tip as much as they value the tour. Furthermore, in each of the cities where they operate, free tour companies offer a "general" free tour and several "paying" niche tours, conducted in a similar manner and style, advertised to the participants of the original free tour as an interesting way to continue their exploration of the city. The popularity of these tours makes them particularly relevant for this research, since they appeal to large number of consumers and thus frame the contemporary image of the city. Hence, while the Sandeman's "Communist Berlin and Berlin Wall tour" is not actually free (priced 16 euros as in 2021/2022), it operates within same framework as the company's free tours, in terms of booking and check-in mechanism, organization of the tour, guiding style and narrative. Just like the other tours of this type, the "communist" tour has scheduled days, times and locations of departure (usually twice a week, meeting point Brandenburg gate) and may be booked (and payed) online. Thus, this tour represents an important unit of analysis shedding light on how communism is displayed and consumed in the city.

The Communist Berlin tour (taken in December 2021) started at the Brandenburg gate, with 7 participants in total, coming from the US, France, Germany, Israel and Spain (besides the researcher). At the meeting point, the guide introduced himself and the tour, giving a brief overview of the events following the end of the World War 2 and the arrival of Soviets to Berlin (such as *"putting flag on the Reichstag by Mayday"* and Potsdam conference). The second stop of the tour was, surprisingly, right next to the nearby traffic lights, where the guide introduced the Appleman, the *"East German traffic light guy"* and the story behind its emergence and proliferation across the GDR. At the third stop, next to the Russian Embassy building, the guide discussed "Stalin's favourite architecture style – the 'wedding cake' style" and the 1939 siege of the West Berlin. The ruins of the former Willy Brandt Forum (demolished and replaced at the time of the tour) and the historical posters displayed on the construction site fences, served as a background for the story of Guillaume spying affaire and the Cold War espionage. Next to the former US Embassy at Neustadtische Kirschstrasse, the guide continued to elaborate on the spying operations, focusing on the Operation Gold and espionage in 60s and 70s as compared to the modern spying. Arriving to the sixth site, the Weidendammer

bridge, the guide addressed the American blockbuster movie "The Bourne Identity", using the popular culture reference to introduce the story of the West/East divide and the Security Passport Control building (Palace of tears). The visit to the Palace of tears in the framework of the tour was designed to *"allow the participants to immerse themselves into the history of the Cold War divide"*, without standard guiding throughout the Palace. The eight stop of the tour was reached by a short s-Bahn ride to the Nordbahnhof train station, where the participants were guided through the poster exhibition and introduced to the "Ghost stations" of East Berlin. Just outside the station, the participants were shown the Berlin Wall memorial at Bernauerstrasse, with narration focusing on design, function and security system of the Berlin Wall, and several references to the process of recruitment of the guards, escape attempts and fate of the buildings placed on the Death strip. The tour ended in the same memorial complex, next to the Chapel of Reconciliation, where the guide presented the history of the church, shared anecdotes about the fall of the Cross during its demolition and explained the symbolism behind the contemporary reconstruction of the site.

The short overview of the tour's urban and discursive organisation sheds light on important tendencies and mechanisms of tourist engagement with the post-socialist city. First and foremost, in terms of heritage sites visited, the tour surprisingly omitted the famous communist "catchy" landmarks, such as Alexanderplatz, Fernseheturm TV tower, Eastside Gallery or Checkpoint Charlie. Instead, it showed the traffic lights, an embassy, a bridge from the popular movie, the s-Bahn station and some posters at the construction site. Or, many of the sites visited during the tour seem to be chosen not because of their strong reference with the communist history, but because of their geographical convenience ("on the way" to the two major points of the tour, Palace of tears and Berlin Wall Memorial) and the capacity to be used as triggers for entertaining stories from the period. In that sense, urban sites represent more a background for storytelling, since many of the stories told at each of the sites could be interchanged and told in many different places without losing the context or connotation. The tour, thus, seems like a process of matching stories and urban landmarks. Or, as the guide (who is also a research and development officer at the company, in charge of the tour development) stated in the interview:

> *"Sometimes there's a story that's looking for a place. Sometimes it's a place that kind of needs a story. So you do have the restrictions of time and geography. It'd be wonderful if everything could just be chronological, I could start 1945/48/ 53/60."*
> *(Berlin tour guide)*

Interestingly, instead of the chronological history of communism, including important dates, personalities and historical events, the tour is designed as a combination of stories of Cold War, East/West divide, espionage, Berlin Wall architecture and escape attempts. Since these stories don't have a fixed "spatial" embodiment, they are often arbitrarily "assigned" to the urban spaces which might resonate with characters, symbols or events mentioned in the story. In that sense, urban history of communism can be told through number of buildings which would not necessarily be understood as landmarks of communist past in the city. This demonstrates that commodification of communism in the city sheds light on alternative urban heritages, inscribing on the communist map unexpected urban symbols such as traffic lights, former Embassies, poster exhibitions on the construction sites or metro stations. Consequently, communist tourism participates in the construction of urban identities of the post-socialist cities, amongst other things, also by "commodifying" or at least by putting on the tourist maps places which were previously neglected or just unacknowledged. In the long term, this may act as a trigger for revitalization and re-use of such spaces, since tourist interest often act as a catalyser for wider societal engagement, political acknowledgement and urban/cultural revitalization of certain remnants of the past.

It might be argued that commodification of communism gives places certain meaning, identity and connotation through storytelling and commercial narration. Hence, it is often not the urban places *per se* that get commodified – rather, what is commercialized are the historical narratives which are located (or arbitrarily placed) within these urban spaces. In that way, commodification plays an important role in construction, de-construction and "reciprocal misconstruction" of place meaning, place attachment and place identity. Urban place thus becomes a spatial canvas upon which communist history is inscribed through the means of storytelling and tourist engagement. In that sense, places act as visual or symbolic cues to stories which in their turn reveal parts of the "communist" puzzle, rather than the comprehensive account of political, economic and social organisation under the regime.

The "mnemonic" or "historical" part of the tours is thus where we can observe the most apparent manifestations of commodifying processes. Noteworthy, the task of condensing, moderating and translating complex layers of communist history and urban memory into a 2 or 3-hour-long tour is certainly an extremely challenging exercise. While tourists are sometimes attracted and entertained by the unsettled histories, contested meanings and mnemonic controversies, the process of entangling, interpreting and mediating layers of 'difficult' past in a 'tourist-friendly' way represents a particularly sensitive challenge. Thus, in

cities like Berlin, filled with urbo-mnemonic palimpsests, tour managers and guides need to decide which parts of the complex mnemonic fabric shall be addressed, in which way and at which point. Consequently, even within the "communist tour" niche, there are many different routes, and even a similar urban design does not guarantee the universality of experience, due to diversity of approaches and stories told. Nonetheless, in most of the tours I took during my fieldwork, especially when it comes to free walking tours, the historical storytelling was organised in the form of 'infotainment', combining historical information with personal stories, anecdotes, popular culture references and jokes. The places, events and personalities are presented in a "catchy" and entertaining language, more as a theatre play than a history lesson. In these tours, history becomes blended with personal and family memories, anecdotes and stereotypes, popular culture, street performances and local tips and recommendations. While such approach to history and memory has been often criticised as a source of banalizationit, it is debatable whether history can still be sustained, transmitted and consumed as a scholarly endeavour, in today's fast-paced world where opportunities are limitless and attention span as short as ever. Due to changing global conditions, commodification may appear as one of the few 'viable' strategies of attracting people to engage with history and heritage. According to the Berlin's guide, the entertainment facilitates the transmission of history, rather than 'corrupting' it.

> *"I think that the fact that the free tour is more entertainment, more story based, doesn't necessarily mean that it loses anything or loses quality because maybe there are less facts, but you remember them more, exactly. It's a more effective way of teaching people."* (Berlin)

While rather common and popular, the light-hearted storytelling approach to communist history in free tours is never linear or straightforward. In the extreme cases, the tours are even 're-designed' at the spot, or in the guide's words - *"it really does get tailored a lot to what I think the expectations are of the type of guests that we get."* This demonstrates that free tours often capitalize on tourists' expectations and pre-conceptions, which frequently leads to commodification of memories, homogenization of culture and reproduction of common stereotypes. Several examples from the Berlin communist tour confirm this hypothesis, shedding light on particular narrative style relying on humour, stereotypes and popular culture references. For instance, the Appleman was presented as a design of the *"East German communist traffic psychologist"* aiming to make children safer at the streets by redirecting their attention towards the *"cute little traffic light cartoon character"*, and Willy Brandt was

introduced as the West Berlin Mayor who was *"outcooling"* JFK when the two were driving around Berlin with the *"Blues Brothers dark glasses"*. Similarly, the Russian Embassy was described in terms of the *"Stalin's favourite architectural style – the wedding cake style"*, and Trannenplast as the place through which Westerners used to smuggle to their Eastern counterparts the "*Rolling Stones records, or other contraband dangerous Western propaganda, or like, actually good coffee"*. The highlight stories of the tour included the fragments of the history of the West Berlin siege, Willy Brandt and the Guillaume affair, the spying Operation Gold, ghost stations and the Berlin Wall. Thus, the tour was as much about East Berlin and communism as the West Berlin and capitalism. In fact, the narrative was arguably much more Cold War- than communism-themed, and not accidentally, since, according to the guide "*most people are looking for the spy stories"*. In that sense, popular culture references such as movies "Bridge of Spies" and "Bourne Identity" co-participate in mediating particular historical content and translating it into a digestible tourist experience.

Finally, there were several additional aspects of the tour which deserve to be noted. First, there were several digressions, such as the explanation of the purple coloured library space within the British embassy (as the exact colour that one would get mixing the British flag colour in the extent to which they appear on the flag), the story of Bourne movie mistake (the main character entering the s-Bahn at Zoologische garten station and immediately jumping down from the 3 km far away bridge at Friedrichstrasse), or the emphasize on the Nazi's favourite "German" letter font (still co-existing along with modern script on the guiding signs at the Nordbahnhof station). These seemingly unrelated trivia were in general acknowledged as the "side stories", but oftentimes also "linked" with the main topic of the tour (such as the explanation that the Nordbahnhof "Nazi-style" underground signs still remain intact because the station was closed during the Cold War, in an introduction to the story of ghost stations, for example). Yet, their main purpose was undoubtedly to astonish or entertain the visitors, rather than to clarify certain historical events or shed light on some local specificities. Similarly, the bodily experiences such as showing passport (both ID and covid-passport) at the entrance to the Palace of tears (Passport check office) or gazing through the hole between two concrete slabs in the Berlin Wall did not seem as purposefully chosen mnemonic performances, yet, they co-participated in creating tourist experience. Finally, the friendliness and wittiness of the guide, who even admitted it was his birthday and that he *"loves giving tours on his birthday"* played an additional role in cultural production and proliferation of urban memories, place identities and tourist experiences. In a way, histories of the places become blended with

the popular culture references, anecdotes, guides' personal stories, observations and even his personality.

8.1.2 Walking tour – Budapest Free Communism tour (Walking Tours Kft.)

The "Free Communism tour" offered in Budapest by the Walking Tour Kft. is advertised on the company's website as a "personal and realistic insight into what life in Hungary was like after the Second World War, during Communism". It is conceptualized similarly as the other group tours of this type, with participants arriving at the meeting point at the time announced on the tour web page, the guide presenting the tour and explaining its mechanism, content, duration and the end point, and inviting the participants to "tip" after the tour. The choice of the tour was bind by the availability of communism-themed tours in Budapest. In fact, besides the "Red Budapest Free Tour", by another multi-city free tour venture "Generation tours" (unavailable in 2021-2022 due to Covid), the "Free Communism Tour" bookable through the website "triptobudapest.hu" was the only communism-themed free tour of Budapest one could find at at the time. Promising "an interesting first-hand account of life before and after the Iron Curtain", the tour was available at designated time twice every week (Friday and Saturday at 15h30, as in March 2022), as a 2.5-hours-long "interactive adventure" through communist times. The description of the tour however makes clear that is should not be understood as "a classical sightseeing walking tour" due to lack of original remnants of the communism in downtown Pest. Rather, it is described "more like a university lecture" and readers invited to search for the authentic remnants of communism in the Memento park. The tour is entirely free of charge, and at the guides rely on the generosity of the participants who are invited to tip at the end of the tour.

The tour (taken in March 2022) started in the park nearby one of the major city attractions, the Budapest Eye, and the group counted 13 participants, coming from Canada, US, UK, Germany, Italy and Spain (besides the researcher). The guide opened the tour by acknowledging that she was born and raised during communist times and admitting that *"it is not just the tour for me, but it is my life that I can tell you".* In that sense, even before the beginning, the tour was given certain "exclusivity" by the guide's acknowledgment that she is not only the local, but also the 'witness' of the time, which should thus enhance the quality of the experience to the participants. The tour was conceived so that each site visited covers one major topic of the tour, including travel, religion, housing, propaganda, Cold War, revolution of '56, etc. The tour thus began with the short introduction of communism, its ideological roots, the aftermath of the Second World War and the experience of Hungary as a place of "soft

dictatorship". At the first stop, Erszebet square, the guide pointed out that the square used to be the main bus station, showing pictures from the period and introducing the communist travel restrictions, popularity of smuggled Western goods, shortages in the East and the planned economy system. At the second site, St Stephen's Basilica, the guide addressed the religion during communism, including personality cults, renaming of the religious ceremonies, pioneer movement and the employment policies. At the same site, the building just across the Basilica served as an illustration for the story of housing, pre-fabricated construction, inter-apartment surveillance and privatization following the collapse of regime. The following several sites where all placed within the Szabadag (Freedom) square. First, the guide showed an entrance to the bunker, briefly addressing its history, design and purpose, including random anecdotes and 'stories from the neighbourhood'. Second, the Palace of Stock Exchange was introduced as the "House of the propaganda", where the functioning, role and availability of media and advertising under communism was explained. Third stop at the square was the Soviet memorial, which was presented as the "unwanted" heritage, and "neutralized" through humour and anecdotes. The major highlight at the fourth site, the George Busch memorial/US Embassy, was the story of the Budapest cardinal who lived in the US Embassy for 15 years. At the final point of the tour, the Parliament building, the revolution and the shootings of '56 were mentioned, including mostly personal and family recollections, ending the tour with the message of hope, reconstruction and freedom.

Unlike the Berlin tour, the tour in Budapest was structured around the main aspects of the every-day life under communism (travel, propaganda, religion, consumption) and largely based on the personal and family memories. In that sense, buildings and monuments were, similar as in Berlin, used as a background setting for the storytelling, where the communist past was presented through myriad of anecdotes, jokes, personal memories and family stories. Many of the chosen sites (Erszebet square, Basilica, Parliament Building) are part of the many other (non-communist) tours, in which other segments of their past are interpreted and conveyed. In that sense, urban heritage was once again mostly used as the illustration for the particular topics covered in the tour (such as religion, housing or travel), often thus neglecting particular urban, architectural and cultural value of the site in question. However, several sites (like the Bunker entrance, the Soviet Monument, Memorial to the Hungarian revolution of '56 – bullet hole markers across the Parliament building) were elaborated in more details, not as part of the chosen broad thematic framework, but precisely in relation to the history, architecture and identity of the place itself. Thus, some sites were purposefully selected and interpreted as part

of the communist history, while other place were somewhat "choice of convenience", where stories only vaguely matched the site itself.

If one was to designate the dominant "commodification" mechanism of this particular tour, it would be the prevalence of the mnemonic content, such as the personal recollections and family anecdotes. At the beginning of the tour, the guide promised the participants they will *"get to know communism through the eyes of a Hungarian"*, attaching to the tour certain exclusivity by using her own experience of communism as a "selling point." Consequently, the guide illustrated shortages in communist times by sharing a personal memory of queuing for bananas; travel restrictions in reference to the Western goods (jazz music, jeans and chewing gums) that her father would bring her from his trips; surveillance and oppression through the experience of her mother who was systematically denied university entrance because her grandparents practiced religion. At the end of the tour, which is usually where all the tour guides in free tours present their most entertaining, most emotional or most inspiring stories, the guide shared two "borrowed" memories to exemplify the events framing the 1956 revolution and October shootings. The vivid narration about her grandmother's experience of crawling between tanks in order to visit her husband in the hospital and the direct encounter with Soviet tanks as she was brooming the terrace and soldiers mistaken the broom for a riffle, was particularly illustrative of the ways in which communist tours operate – at the level of individual stories rather than "grand narratives".

Several other commodification strategies have been used throughout the tour, such as the guide showing a picture of young Stalin, juxtaposing his dictatorial brutality to how approachable and kind he appeared in his youth - *"because he's so stylish with the hair and the scarf, in the Szimpla Ruin Bar I think all girls would like to talk to him."* Hence, by brining Stalin closer to the contemporary everyday life and by reducing him from historical figure to a popular culture reference, the tour both commodifies communism and mediates difficult histories. Similarly, one of the popular jokes was used as an illustration of shortages and system failures to provide basic goods and services:

"The man visits a retail store and tells he wants to get a car.

– Ok sir, which car would you like?

– Which is the quickest one to get?

– It would be Lada at the moment.

- OK, than I want Lada.

– And which colour would you like?

– The one that will be quickest to deliver.

– OK so that would be white. Which type of engine would you prefer?

– The one that is quickest to get.

– Ok sir, we'll get you a white Lada with rear engine, so please come back 10 years from now to pick up your car.

– Thank you, just tell me can I pick it up in the morning or in the afternoon?

– Sir, it is 10 years from now, what difference does it make if it is morning or afternoon?

– Actually, it does make a difference, as in 10 years from now in the morning, the plumber is coming to fix the sink." (Budapest tour guide)

This humorous turn on communist failed state planning is actually a variant of a joke told by Ronal Reagan in 1988, and different versions of that same joke have been encountered in other communist tours throughout Europe. Hence, this points to a particular transnational dimension of commodification, as some of the stories and anecdotes 'travel' through the post-communist space and get adopted and adapted as the illustrations of life under communism in different urban, political and social settings. Similarly, the act of showing a Christmas card to explain that in communist times it was known as a pine tree event in order to obscure the religious connotation, or the description of the prefabricated buildings as the places where due to poor isolation *"neighbour sneezes, you say bless you"*, both have a similar purpose of wrapping the communist history into a more convivial, more entertaining and more likable format. Even spatial features of certain urban sites visited were addressed in a similar manner. Thus, the Soviet Red Army Memorial was explained as a combination of 5 columns, with one central in the middle, so that *"they say from above (US Embassy) it looks like a hand with the middle finger."* Consequently, through family history, popular jokes and witty remarks, such tours aim to stimulate emotional response of the participants, make them feel comfortable and 'familiar' with communist history and trigger the visitor attachment to places. In that sense, commodification can be played out through personal recollections of everyday life, "borrowed" family memories, witty comments and ironic observations, aimed not only at entertaining visitors, but also at "easing" the difficult history and making it more digestible for the "leisure time" tourism activity.

8.1.3 Walking tour – Tirana communist tour (Tirana Free tours)

While some of the analysed communist tours extensively used nostalgia as a tool for approaching and embellishing history, the Communist Tirana tour (by Tirana Free tours), although largely based on the mnemonic content, was arguably an anti-nostalgic tour. Out of all the tours taken in the framework of this research, Tirana tour was probably the one that depicted communism in most critical and most negative way. Unlike most of the communist tours in other cities, in Tirana the storytelling was rarely eased through funny anecdotes and personal nostalgia. What more, it also lacked both popular culture references and nostalgic stories of everyday life, putting rather the emphasize on shortages, oppression and violent nature of the regime. This might be due to a particularly violent nature of the regime in Albania, or still relatively undeveloped 'free tour' concept and slower proliferation of global trends and storytelling strategies. Yet, this is not to say that certain choices of urban and mnemonic content of the tour did not employ commodification strategies. Contrary, the tour was designed to provide a general overview of the hardships and inconsistencies of communist regime in Albania, based on the combination of historical information, selection of entertaining details and family stories of life under communism. Rather than following chronological or topic-based structure, the tour was designed as a 'collage' of different stories of Albanian society and the everyday life under communism, with most of the topics appearing as being 'randomly' chosen by the guide and attributed to certain urban landmarks. The tour was chosen at it was (and still is, as in June 2022) the only communist free tour of Tirana, and was booked through an email correspondence with the company's officials.

The Communist Tirana tour (taken in October 2021) departed from the Skenderbeg square, where the guide briefly introduced himself to a group of tourists from UK and Spain (besides the researcher), most of them in their late 20s and early 30s, with the exception of the older couple from the UK being in their 50s/60s. The guide provided a short introduction to the communist history of Albania, focusing on the two particular buildings on the Square - the Opera House and Tirana International Hotel. Short walk from the square, the participants were shown one of the emblematic communist residential building, which now hosts the museum of Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, and explained the challenges of housing policy in the country. At the Unknown soldier monument, the discussion centred on the state ownership, illustrating through the Toptani family the fate of private property under communism. In a similar vein, the communist crimes and oppression were discussed in front of the Former Headquarters of Albanian Communist Party, nowadays the Institute for studies of communist crimes, highlighting also some of the challenges of the contemporary memory politics in Albania. The

following stop, the Tanners' bridge, was briefly addressed as one of the few Ottoman-era monuments which survived communism. Unlike the other tours, Tirana Free communist tour included almost one-hour-long stop at Café Komiteti, a communist-style coffee shop advertised as "kafe muzeum", where participants were offered a drink (typical Albanian 'raki') and the guide shared mostly personal (family) stories of life under communism, including travel restrictions, economic situation, childhood and schooling, family life, etc. The tour continued towards Postblloku, the Checkpoint – Memorial to the communist isolation, where the background of the concept, artist's ideas and importance of the three main monuments were elaborated as the illustration of oppression and brutality of regime. In the Blloku area, the narrative centred on the Hoxha's dictatorship, personality, life and death, including the mystery of the suicide of his closest friend and comrade, Mehmed Shehu. The tour ended at the Maria Theresa Square, where several important buildings from the time (such as the Palace of Congress) were addressed and stories of education, architecture, arts and propaganda under communism conveyed.

In terms of spatial organization of the tour, the communist Tirana tour included several categories of mnemonic urban fabric, including the city landmarks (Opera, University, The Palace of Congress) and protected heritage sites (Tanners bridge), historical buildings (Kadare museum building, former Headquarters of the communist party of Albania, Hoxha's residence), monuments and memorials (Memorial to the unknown soldier, Memorial to the communist isolation) and a historically-themed coffee shop (Komiteti). Such an eclectic approach enabled to tailor the narrative as widely and as diversely as possible, and to trace the transformation of city's memoryscape in both use and form. The juxtaposition of symbolic traces of difficult past and ultra-modern skyscrapers throughout the city was constantly emphasized, shedding light on the "long way" the Albanian capital had to go through - from the backward, impoverished totalitarian settlement to the modern and progressive urban sprawl.

Concerning the narrative organisation of the tour, the communist history and heritage were extensively commodified through storytelling, mostly based on personal and family memories and anecdotes. The guide shared personal stories of growing up during communist times (*"bread and butter or bread or jam, never both"*), poverty and shortages (remembering his mother collecting plastic bottles from the garbage bins when visiting cousins in Montenegro), or living standard (his uncle earning slightly more than his parents thus being able to offer his cousin a bicycle). In a way, such stories told in a laid-back ambiance of

Komiteti café resembled more a casual encounter with friends, than a guided tour through the history of dictatorship. In a similar vein, even the 'historically charged' topics such as the death of Enver Hoxha were referenced through personal anecdotes – the guide's recollection of they day he arrived late to school expecting the corporal punishment, yet avoiding it as the class was grieving the "beloved" leader. Another extensive family history of the aunt's marriage and life was used to depict privileges of the communist party members, oppression towards the 'enemies of the state' and escape from the country under the regime. While such approach to history as a collection of personal and family memories is not unusual in historic guided tours, it is however the prevalence of such narratives that distinguishes the experience of communist Tirana from other similar exhibits of communist legacies in Europe. The communism in Tirana was depicted 'through the eyes of the guide', who conveyed personal stories as bold generalizations true for the society as a whole. In that sense, personal genealogy and family martyrdom were used not only as commodification tools, but also a benchmark of socio-cultural identity and repository of communist conjunctures.

Another worthwhile aspect of the tour was the use of urban trivia, where particular urban landmarks were addressed not through their history, but the anecdotes surrounding them. Thus, the Opera house was "ridiculed" for ending up smaller than the grandiose Kruscev-supported project due to the lack of funding, and the building now hosting the Kadare museum as the "culprit" for imprisoning the architect, as state found it too modern. A popular joke about applying for a car and scheduling its delivery in 10 years to arrange the meeting with the plumber was again used as an illustration of the shortages and scarcity of goods and services in communist times, and the guide extensively interacted with the participants by asking questions about their perception of communism, its social organisation and everyday life. With very few dates and names, the narrative was thus constructed as a personal story of communism and the "friendly" chat with participants aimed at amusing and surprising them, thus re-iterating stereotypes of the communist "Other". In that sense, commodification was not a tool for "embellishing" communist past, triggering nostalgia or "sanitizing" difficult history, but a mechanism for providing dark "first-hand account" of state shortages, propaganda, terror and oppression. Yet, these personal accounts of 'difficult' history and brief references to the general socio-political framework were carefully tailored to satisfy the interest of Western tourists and their taste for unusual, out-of-ordinary stories of the "communist other" and the peculiarities of their every-day life. While escaping sanitization, such approach to communist heritage and memory undoubtedly ends up in stereotypization of communist experience, which appears as

a "universal" container for childhood memories, anecdotes of everyday life and universally acknowledged, yet personalised, circumstances and processes.

8.1.4 Walking tour – Communist Warsaw tour (Walkative)

As one of the leaders in the free guided tour market in Poland, *Walkative!* offers number of tours in 10 major Polish cities, but also in several European capitals. Arguing that as a company they not only "pursue a wider perspective and broader understanding" but also engage in urban projects and social activisim, *Walkative!* created a strong brand and network of guides and partners working "off the script". Their "Communist Warsaw tour" was at the time of booking running regularly on Sundays (as in 2022), in English and Spanish, with scheduled meeting time and place. Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and unavailability of the free group tours, the tour was taken as a private tour in February 2022, yet the itinerary, narrative and the overall experience were designed in almost the same manner as the free guided tours the company regularly runs. While the lack of possibility to observe and interact with other participants represents a limitation of the analysis of this particular tour, it was nonetheless possible to observe major topics of interest – urban sites visited, their narrative framing and commodification mechanisms in place.

Advertised as "a story of control, terror, and propaganda, but also of the absurdities of everyday life under communism", the tour starts close to the Palace of culture and science, at the entrance to the All Saints Church, where the guide briefly introduced himself and the tour. Moving towards the Palace of culture and science, the guide communicated important dates related to the emergence of communism in Poland, focusing subsequently on the history, architecture and socio-political background of the Palace, including its contemporary uses and cultural significance. At the parking of the Palace, a parked Fiat was used to convey the story of Polish car production and consumption in general, the coat of arms on the nearby staircases (the remnants of the Parade square) was illustrative of the story of Mayday parades, and the fast food stands on the Palace's plateau triggered comments on post-communist privatization and de-regulation. Nearby the Novotel hotel, the guide focused on communist "internalization", including interactions with foreign tourists, foreign currency, consumption of foreign goods and shopping at the time. The following site, the building of the Ministry of Agriculture, served as a trigger for elaborating urban planning and rural policies in the 50s and 60s, including food shortages and black markets, while the stroll through the neighbourhood offered a glimpse into the ideas of prefabrication, Le Corbusier, housing policies, informal connections and inequalities. The food shortages and state-subsidized

restaurants were further elaborated in front of the Milk bar "Bambino", as one of the communist ideas which outlived the system and kept operating in similar conditions even decades after the fall of the regime. In front of the Passport office the guide extensively discussed travelling in communist times and relationships with communist East and capitalist West. At the final stop, the Constitution square, the story centred on largest socialist urban project in Warsaw, resistance and revolution and the collapse of communism.

In terms of urban design, the tour was organised as a combination of communist monumental landmarks, aiming to, as argued in its official presentation, "overshadow everything that was before and that was to come in the future", and the less known places related to communism. The role of these "marginal" sites, which are often nor aesthetically prominent nor historically recognized as important communist spaces, was to provide a framework for communicating "side" stories, unrelated to the particular urban landmarks, yet often entertaining and captivating for tourists. Similar as in the case of Budapest, the fact that there were very few communist landmarks in the city centre meant that the communist walking tour of Warsaw required some 're-packaging' in order to enable the fluidity of narrative and compensate for the lack of communist monumental buildings. Yet, in difference from the Budapest walking tour which often relied on non-communist landmarks to trigger the discussion on particular topics related to life under communism, the Warsaw walking tour actually included several less prominent, yet still arguably places filled with communist history (Milk Bar, Passport office) and even objects and symbols of the era (Fiat, coat of arms). These spaces were employed not only as a background illustration for the particular stories and anecdotes, but as the important historical urban traces with their own history, architecture and value. In that sense, both for the city landmarks such as the Palace, Ministry of Agriculture and MDM square, and 'off-the-beaten-track' places and objects connected to communism, the guide provided comprehensive description and interpretation, bridging the gap between their history and contemporary uses and values.

Storytelling strategies used throughout the tour were as diverse as the character of urban places visited. In that sense, probably the most emblematic building in Warsaw, the Palace of culture and science was elaborated both in terms of history of its construction, Socialist realism in architecture and arts, and the design of the surrounding landscape. Unsurprisingly, the tour re-iterated certain "popular" stereotypes of the Palace as the *"unwanted gift from Stalin"* which served *"to remind us of who was really the boss right here".* The grandeur of the urban landmark was epitomized through the story of a statue inside which *"looked exactly like Moses*

with the 10 commandments" where the old ladies from province often kneeled down as they thought being in the church, *"because they only saw such buildings being so big as churches".* Other storytelling tools related to Palace included conspiracies about alleged laboratories in the dungeons, and trivia such as its energy consumption (equalling to a small town of 18000 people), cat breeding activities (in order to keep the place rat-free) and still-operational air conditioning system (from the fifties). While adopting a critical stance towards the Palace and its urban 'footprint', the guide however addressed the communist landmark through a combination of nostalgia and what Michal Murawski named the "Palace complex":

> *"No matter how many skyscrapers are built around this place, you will always find the Palace of Culture dominating the landscape. And it's still by far the tallest building in Warsaw. Although that one the Varso tower, thanks to its pin, which is to the left, is actually a bit taller right now. But I, in my opinion, this still would be the tallest, at least in my eyes, and in my mind." (Warsaw tour guide 1)*

The dominance and inevitability of communist heritage in landscape, memory and mentality have been often emphasized throughout the tour. The Palace was thus addressed as the contemporary symbol that the generations could not imagine Warsaw without, and the Milk bar as the *"capitalist institution, which has the roots in communism"* that if *"it was closed, people would be on the streets"* (protesting). But other than physical traces in landscape, immaterial communist legacies were also elaborated as an inseparable part of the contemporary *"mentality patterns"*, reflected for example in reliance on *"connections and unofficial ways to avoid the state, to avoid taxation, to avoid paying some fees and so on"*, or the *"huge difference in the quality of work, which is in the state institutions, and which is the private institutions"*. In a similar vein, the guide also sentimentally emphasized the ignorance towards public goods and focus on private property as *"yet another part of the post-communist heritage mentally"*, because *"common wealth was important in communism, and now we no longer have communism."* These narrative choices represent a tool for communicating communism and its legacies to foreigners as more vivid, more contemporaneous and more prominent than one would expect, shedding light on its difference from capitalist mentality patterns and behaviours. Such commodification of persistence of practices and institutional organizations and behaviours was particularly evident the example of Passport office:

> *"The art of work here has not changed since the '80s, they are still rude to you, they still are not giving you a helping hand, if you ask or if you are doubtful about something,*

they still treat you as a sort of like a nuisance that is not letting them have a rest when they are at work." (Warsaw tour guide 1)

Similar as in other tours, several aspects of life in communist Warsaw were illustrated through personal and family recollections, such as the family holidays in the Polish 'Maluh' and Mayday parades. The consumption in communism and popular 'dollar shops' were elaborated through guide's personal memory of 1$ notes that his father would give him upon the visit to the dentist, and the oppressive politics of traveling by remembering how even in the 90s his mother was being "*still sort of afraid of entering*" the Passport Office, as she went through humiliation in 80s when she went there to get a passport and visa for a business trip to "across the ocean." In a similar vein, the contemporary life of the Palace is explored through personal interactions within the palace:

> *"Moreover, it has also now many places inside, many things inside, like companies and institutions that are really that invention of the last 25/30 years, including one school of dancing where I had to attend classes before I got married. That's something so traumatic that I would not actually want to see it." (Warsaw tour guide 1)*

The paradigm of George Orwell's Animal Farm (all animals equal but some more equal than others) was used to highlight unequal character of the communist society when it comes to opportunities such as housing. Nostalgia was briefly mentioned, as "a positive sentiment" of especially the generation of parents, yet not elaborated as phenomena or capitalized through narrative. Thus, nostalgic sentimentality was 'reserved' for the cars, rather than places, events and practices of the time.

Commodification of the narrative was more evident in the guide's comments on particular events and places than in the history of the places and objects itself. Thus, the witty comments about Fiat being able to drive more than 110 km per hour *"but then you feel like in a space rocket, it is about to fall apart"* or that going abroad "*made no sense for that reason that you were earning 30 US dollars a month so you could not conquer the world with such amount*" were designed to entertain and illustrate the peculiar nature of the goods and practices of the time. Similarly, illustrative of the company's 'liberal' policy when it comes to individual design of the tours and narratives was a rather suggestive guide's comment about the Russian bazar, which used to take place at the square in front of the Palace after the collapse of communism, as *"a sort of like turn around though, they were trying to humiliate us by building this building and then we humiliated them by buying things that were worth sometimes a lot*

for quite a little money." Noteworthy, the liberty that guides have in shaping the interpretation and 'exhibition' of communism in the city tours invites to contextualise, question and doubt the 'generalization' of commodification processes and 'styles' in guided tours. In that sense, it is important to acknowledge that since the guide's personal observations, impressions and recollections frame the tourist experience of communist urban and mnemonic landscape, there will be as many narrative styles and commodification strategies as the personalities of the guides. Yet, certain patterns clearly emerge, pointing not only that there is a convergence of communist urban narratives and commercial tourists' 'digests', but also that communism throughout Europe gets "glocalised", as guiding practices become framed by global influences and transnational trends.

8.1.5 Walking tour – Prague Communism and Nuclear Bunker tour (Prague Special Tours)

With almost all the tour companies in Prague charging for the 'communist tour' of the Czech capital (even Extravaganza Free tour and Sandeman's), the Prague Communism and Nuclear bunker by Prague Special tours was chosen as a case study due to its online popularity and similarity of the concept to the 'free tour' paradigm. While participants are actually charged the fixed price before the departure, the tour is designed and organised just like the free walking tours, departing every day from the pre-determined spot with a group of random participants, often informed through social networks and website. Advertised as an invitation to "look behind the Iron Curtain" into a period "full of paranoia, spying and violence", Prague Communism and Nuclear Bunker tour is a 2,5-hour-long walk through the remnants of communism in Prague, culminating with the visit to the nuclear bunker, which is only accessible in the framework of this tour. The tour was taken in November 2021, with 6 other participants (Polish couple, French couple, young German man and young Filipino woman), all in their late twenties and early thirties and the observations made indeed confirmed that the tour narrative and organisation are extremely similar to the 'free tour' concept.

The tour started in the Art Passage (*Mala strana* neighbourhood) where the group gathered and met the guide who lead them to the corner of Michalska street, to convey the introduction to the organization, scope and duration of the tour. At the first stop of the tour, the former headquarters of the Czechoslovak state security service (StB - *Státní bezpečnost*), the guide addressed the topic of communist oppression, fear and terror as framing conditions of life under state socialism in Czechoslovakia. Following this, the group stopped at the Velvet revolution memorial at Narodni street, at which point the guide presented fragments of history

of the Prague spring and Velvet revolution, including stories of demonstrations, oppressions, and show trials, and famous personalities such as Jan Palach, Vaclav Havel and Milady Horakova. The following site, the entrance to the Mustek metro station at *Jungmanovo namesti*, was used to make the introduction to the Cold War bunkers (including metros), while short passage through Franciscan gardens included a story of the Church of our Lady of the Snows, despite its seeming lack of connection with communist history. The tour continued in the tram from *Vaclavske namesti* (Vodickova station) to *Olsanske namesti*, where the group was directed towards the nuclear bunker under the Parukarka hill. The narrative throughout the visit of the bunker centred both on the history of the place and the contemporary exhibition, used to illustrate variety of topics related to everyday life under communism (schooling, economy, propaganda) and Cold War. The tour symbolically ended in the tram on the way back to *Vaclavske namesti*.

In terms of urban sites visited, the itinerary surprisingly omitted some of the emblematic places related to communism, such as the Memorial to Jan Palach at *Vaclavske namesti*, Lenon Wall, or Žižkov TV tower. This might be due to the fact that the emblematic communist buildings and memorials (National Memorial on Vitkov Hill, Žižkov tower, Hotel International, Prague Congress Centre, Kotva department store, Panelaks, National Theatre, Lenon Wall) are dispersed throughout the city so that it would be difficult to reach them even by combining walking with the public transportation. Instead, the tour focused on two major highlights, the StB headquarters and the Velvet Revolution memorial, which served to introduce selected topics of the communist past and prepare the visitors for the experience of the bunker visit. In that sense, the stop in front of the Mustek metro station was an announcement to the history of bunkers, as the guide used it to 'quiz' the participants knowledge of the bunkers and nuclear attacks. The other 'additional' sites, such as the Franciscan gardens with the Church of our Lady of the Snows and the Kafka's Rotating Head memorial were unrelated to communism, or at least not contextualised as such, appearing only as the guide's personal intake on the Prague's important urban landmarks.

Concerning the narrative organisation of the tour, it is possible to identify several major storytelling strategies which might be labelled as 'commodification'. First, a rather unique aspect of this tour was the capitalization of 'nation-based' jokes and reiteration of some common ethnic stereotypes, such as that Albania has more bunkers than people because *"Albanians after communism stayed in Italy and around Europe scooping ice creams and chopping vegetables"* or that Swiss are the *"bad guys in Europe"* where up until recently one

had to show in the house plans the foreseen bunker. In a similar vein, the Italians were addressed as easy-going, spendy and habitually late, as the guide conveyed a story of how precisely the Italians, hired by Charles 4th to build the Church of our Lady of the snows, planned as the tallest in Europe, at some point run out of money and *"so they just put this green thing on top and said FINITO"*, thus never actually completing the project. Such stereotypization is thus another important mechanism of commodification, but also the testimony of the increasingly transnationalised and 'glocalised' culture of tourist memory transmission. Second, as the guide highlighted at the very beginning his first-hand experience of communism as a distinct advantage of the tour, the history of buildings and life under communism was often intertwined with personal memories and observations. The StB and its notoriety were thus illustrated in terms of personal encounter with the state security service: *"you would be invited just like I was invited, you would receive the letter telling you are supposed to come here and you knew immediately it was not for a picnic"*. Similarly, during the bunker visit, while showing gas masks, arms and ammunition, the guide recalled civil defence classes he was taking in school, where the teacher would show them how to put a gas mask on, how to use guns or how to fix broken legs:

> *"Twice a year there was an exercise where school children would be walking kilometres with gas mask and equipment and in the park, teachers would open up the box of arms and ammunitions for them, teaching them to throw real grenades, refill Kalashnikovs, airsoft guns – that is how we were prepared for the arrival of the evil West". (Prague tour guide)*

Third, while compared to the other tours, the Communist Prague tour did not include the stories of espionage, transgression, conspiracy theories or popular culture references, the narrative was still "sanitized" through jokes and witty comments. Such approach seemed very much appreciated by the tour participants, who most of time positively reacted to such content. This was especially visible in narrative interpretation of the bunker's planning, organization and architecture, as the guide persistently mocked communist miscalculations and incompetence to make it functional. The examples of such amateurism were sarcastically commented through the tour - as facts that there were only 12 toilets for 5 thousand people, or that stored food supply was mostly the canned beans, so that even in the case of nuclear attack, *"the air here would be worse than the air outside"*. Hence, the commodification of the narrative included strategies such as irony and derision, used to highlight the inefficiency of the system, irrationality of decisions and futility of efforts: *"We had shortages of toilet paper*

and at the same time we were suppling planes to Vietnamese and tractors to Cuba. They would send us few oranges at Christmas as thank you." In that sense, the system was represented through many of its inconsistencies, absurdities and nonsenses, which further contributes to the "self-orientalisation" of the discourse.

Creating mysterious experience and impression of exclusivity (for example by locking the doors of the bunker behind the group), the tour aims to both provide an authentic tourist experience and interpret communism as a bizarre and idiosyncratic system. By doing so, the Prague tour co-participates in the general 'orchestered' attempts to create 'imaginary' communist world, an 'alternative reality', which further re-iterates common Cold War stereotypes. By neutralizing 'difficult' content through popular jokes and ironic intake on communist organisation, the tour aimed at displaying caricature of communism as defunct and insidious, yet utterly impaired, innerly contradicting and highly ineffective regime. In a way, commodification of communism in such tours 'disempowers' communism, reducing it to malleable, laughable and deplorable set of failed ideas and ridiculous practices.

8.1.6 Driving tour Belgrade – The Rise and Fall of a Nation (Yugotour)

Despite the usual stereotype of Belgrade as the bastion of 'Yugonostalgia' and the general abundance of communist heritage sites dispersed through the city, there is surprisingly few communist tours offered in the Serbian capital. The first and the most popular, widely publicised in international media and praised in online space, the Yugotour, launched symbolically on Tito's birthday, the 25th of May 2015. Advertised as the "Yugoslav history on four wheels", Yugotour actually offers several different driving tours in a vintage Yugoslav Zastava (Yugo) car. Surprisingly, the tour is not a local initiative, but a brainchild of a young Dutch entrepreneur, who acquired the cars and designed several routes through the city, aiming to highlight major architectural and symbolic landmarks of the era. The fact that despite local expertise and capacities the tour originated from "abroad" showcases the controversial relationship which local population maintains with communist period, as closely intertwined in popular memory with the violent dissolution of the former country. Filling the gap in the market, the Yugotour venture targeted emerging international audience which showed growing interest in recent history of the region and thus designed a product addressing mostly Western tourists. On its website, the company skilfully uses the "communist red" colour, the font of the original YUGO car and the vintage photos, along with the catchy headlines and invitation for "dear comrades" to join the "complete Yugo-style immersion" and "feel, smell and hear the history of Yugoslavia in a car named after it: the Yugo!". Unsurprisingly, the tour (taken in

November 2021) started exactly by providing the interaction with the car, as the visitors are welcomed to both Yugotour and Yugo car, addressed as the *"time machine"* aimed to *"bring them back to a country that no longer exists, besides in the hearts of people who still remember Yugoslavia." (Belgrade tour guide)*

After the introduction to the Yugo car, the "Rise and Fall of a Nation", the original and first Yugotour, takes the visitors to the former concentration camp the Old Fairground, for the introduction to the pre-war Yugoslavia, including the urban development of the city in the first half of the XX century, history of the building and events leading to Tito's rise to power. The engagement with uncomfortable events from the pre-communist Yugoslav past, according to the guide, aims to convey that *"Yugoslavia which was undoubtedly a glorious country, communist Yugoslavia, was started on shaking roots and shaking legs, that actually all this hatred swam up to the surface."* The second stop, the former Federal Executive Council (the SIV building), now known as the Palace of Serbia, was illustrated through short stories of youth brigade organization, non-aligned Movement, Tito-Stalin split and Cold War bunker conspiracies. The third landmark of the tour, the Genex tower, was presented through its architecture, urban design and function, elaborating also the ideas of Athens Charter and Le Corbusier, tower's interior arrangement, social significance and the contemporary neglect of the building. Similarly, hotel Yugoslavia was addressed through its communist-era opulence and exclusivity, famous guests, gossips and rumours, juxtaposing its glorious past to a rather outdated and decaying present-day condition. Finally, the tour ends at the Museum of Yugoslavia, where Tito and his background, statesmanship, life and death were interpreted through a combination of historical facts, popular jokes and conspiracies, interesting anecdotes and family remembrances.

Undoubtedly, the Yugotour offers an unconventional overview of Belgrade's urban landscape by reviving difficult, unwanted or simply unacknowledged legacies of communism. Similar to the other communist tours throughout Europe, urban sites visited are historically situated less through important dates, names and events, and more through the interesting facts and anecdotes. For instance, the exclusivity of hotel Yugoslavia was conveyed by addressing the project to turn the nearby Big War Island into a private garden for Tito's guest, while the Genex tower was approached as a building of the highly successful state-owned export company, which profited on the Cold War division as Tito was *"selling Russian goods to the Americans and vice versa"*. Similarly, the SIV building was illustrated through a story of youth brigades as Tito's tool for creating the "Yugoslav" nation, by bringing young people from

different republics to work together on rebuilding the country (for free), hence promoting the inter-ethnic acquaintances and eventually marriages. Yet, while sometimes seemingly (un)related stories and details from the country's history were added to the tour narrative, the sites visited were not used as a simple trigger for wide storytelling disconnected from the place. Instead, the major tour landmarks were first and foremost addressed through their architectural, social and cultural history, contemporary uses and correlation with the country's destiny. Hence, the Old Fairground was used as a paradigm of ethnic conflicts and challenges which made the country collapse decades later, and the hotel Yugoslavia as the place having *"the same destiny as the country whose name it bears, that it was very glorious at the beginning, but later on started falling apart."* In a similar manner, the break of Yugoslavia was also illustrated through many mixed marriages initiated in youth brigades which fell apart along with the country, while the Genex tower site served to highlight the issues of state and local ignorance towards decaying socialist heritage. Thus, while central to the narrative of the tour, the buildings and their stories were also used to highlight tensions in the history of the country and make parallels with historical developments and contemporary challenges.

Concerning the commodification of the narrative, it was particularly evident in the extensive use of popular culture references, as a mean of integrating familiar cultural patterns into complex and for most visitors a distant historical framework. In that sense, conveying that Rolling Stones planted a tree at the Tito's Friendship park (next to the Queen Elizabeth and Gandhi), or situating hotel Yugoslavia as *"the place where it was rumoured that Tito had an affair with Elizabeth Taylor"*, and pointing towards the *"original moon dust"*, gifted to Tito by Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong (exhibited in the Museum of Yugoslavia) may all be understood as means of 'transnationalising' local urban heritage and history. Similarly, personal stories and family memories were used on several occasions to confirm, illustrate and highlight the important moments in the history of the country and places visited:

> *"So one of the first stories I heard was my grandpa telling me about how he constructed New Belgrade. So he lived 200 kilometres from here. And of course, my first question would be grandpa, were you forced? He was most offended, saying no, we wanted to. So actually, it was an honour to work on a place like this, they wanted to do it."* *(Belgrade tour guide)*

Besides the extensive use of mnemonic content, such as personal recollections and family anecdotes, the guided narrative was structured around number of conspiracy theories, such as the story of nuclear bunker underneath the SIV building connecting it to the Kalemegdan

fortress, or the rumour that Tito's wife was at first not allowed to participate in his funeral, but *"that Indira Gandhi played a big role, saying that if they didn't let Jovanka attend the funeral that she would make a big scandal and leave"*. In a similar vein, Tito was presented as a *"cunning man"*, *"more like a movie star than the communist president"*, with many conspiracy theories surrounding his life and legacy. The tour mentions several of these, including the common debate whether Tito was an imposter from Russia, as many inconsistencies framed his raise to power and social background.

> *"Because we've had some interviews with a guy who was working with him at that factory that produced doorknobs and who swears seeing an incident where a machine cut off two of Tito's fingers. And as the guy who returned from Russia had all of his fingers."* (Belgrade tour guide)

Contrary to personal and family memories, whose aim is to acknowledge, confirm and sustain historical facts and events, the role of conspiracies, gossips and rumours is to provide vague and unreliable, yet highly entertaining and appealing content often juxtaposed to the official history. However, both discursive strategies could be understood as commodification tools, aiming to provide consumers with the peculiar, obscure or subjective ideas and explanations, due to their seductive potential and capacity to spark interest and trigger emotions. Besides commodified narratives, the Yugotour also engages certain performative or 'bodily' mnemonic experiences, as tourists are also invited to drive the vintage Yugo car, flip through a Yugoslav passport, become millionaires for a moment by holding the 5 million Yugoslav dinars bank note, taste the Yugoslav drinks and snacks (Cockta, a "Yugoslav coke") or tie a pioneer red-scarf knot. The interaction with objects gives visitors the impression of closeness and exclusivity, and as such represents a particular mechanism for commodifying history and constructing tourist attachment to places. Alternating the stories of suffering and funny quotes and anecdotes, communist tours aim to 'balance out' the tourist experience, providing both educational content and elements of "fast culture".

8.1.7 Driving tour - Post-communist Bratislava (Authentic Slovakia)

Post-communist Bratislava tour is the pilot project of the two Bratislava-born brothers who, according to their personal account, identified the gap in the tourism market and founded the 'Authentic Slovakia' company, offering 'alternative sightseeing tours' of the Slovak capital. Started in 2010 as the first and up to these days one of the very few communist tours of Bratislava, it was since its early days designed as a 'retro drive' in a famous Czechoslovak

Škoda car – the first one was actually "borrowed" from the founders' grandfather. The business started as a small family venture and grew over time, offering now around a dozen of different 'alternative' tours, designed both for the foreign tourists and the domestic audience (such as "Nostalgia na Škodovke", showing myriad of vintage artefacts and socialist memorabilia to "nostalgic" compatriots). With strong online presence and even a virtual tour offer initiated during the pandemics, the Authentic Slovakia became number 1 attraction in Bratislava on TripAdvisor, with over 500 5-star-reviews for the Post-communist Bratislava tour. Advertised as "off the beaten path" tour, the Post-communist Bratislava tour, taken in March 2022, and guided by one of the company's founders, included indeed less prominent urban sites, more personalised narrative and more individualised tourist approach.

In terms of design of the urban path, the tour covered some of the major communist landmarks in the city which is filled with XX century memoryscapes. However, due to the nature of the tour ('driving' tour), some landmarks were actually visited, walked around and extensively discusses, while others were only mentioned and passed by while driving to the destination. The tour started at the Dunaj shopping centre, where the history of both the country and Škoda car were presented. The story was illustrated through pictures from the company's own book, printed for that particular purpose, and the shopping centre and its contemporary uses are only briefly mentioned. After passing by and acknowledging several random buildings, the tour shortly stopped at the Slovak University of Technology, only to briefly grasp the modernist architecture and the monument to the Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev. Following this, the tourists are taken to visit the first prefabricated block of flats in Slovakia, where both architecture of the building and the contemporary uses and challenges are addressed. In the same area, Stein brewery site was explored as part of the industrial heritage demolished for the sake of the capitalist development. After driving by the Slovak Radio building, Comenius University, Slovak post, Chulan monument and Istropolis, the tour continued on the Freedom square, briefly referring to its history and architecture, including the famous Gottwald monument and the nearby Presidential palace. The following stop, the villa of the former Slovak communist leader Vasil Bilak was addressed as the example of Orwellian 'equality' of communist times and contemporary engagement with the communist dictators. At the Slavin memorial, the narrative briefly centred on the "replacement of one totalitarianism by another", while the view from the top of the hill served to illustrate communist and post-communist urban development of Bratislava. After passing through and briefly addressing the SNP bridge, the tour officially finished in Petržalka, where the questions of communist urban

development and industrial heritage were discussed. Some of the tours, according to the guide, include one final stop, which is the borderland between Austria and Slovakia, where stories of Cold War, escape and espionage are often told.

Like most other driving tours, Post-communist Bratislava tour capitalizes on the vintage character of the car, it's history, interior, and driving experience as the exclusivity of the tour. Škoda is represented as more than a national brand, it was praised as a symbol of Czechoslovakia and a carrier of family memories and nostalgia. In that sense, although it has been described as "crappy car" for which *"one hour driving means about six hours repairing"*, the car was often mentioned as both the symbol of the tour and the protagonist of many stories of everyday life under communism. The illustrations of different models of Skoda and explanation of their technical characteristics throughout the tour could be thus understood both as a display of national pride and as a nostalgic return to the childhood times. In that sense, opening the truck so that tourists could take a photo of the engine, parking it next to the modern Skoda so that one can photograph and compare the two, and telling several common jokes about the car, all played important role in 'performing' the history and 'orientalising' tourist experience. Indeed, the 'aesthetics of the ugly' and the attractiveness of the old were important features of most of the driving tours taken, matching the derisory quality of the car with the general backwardness of the system. The car would be addressed as "moody", "crappy" or "unreliable" yet often mentioned with certain sentimentality and retro charisma, reproducing thus stereotype about communist nostalgia for familiar objects and practices and re-iterating the retrograde nature of communist economy and society.

> *"One of the British jokes is like the how they call a Škoda on a top of the hill? Miracle. And how do you call two Škodas on a top of the hill? A mirage." (Bratislava tour guide)*

Mnemonic content of the tour was rather scattered and anecdote-based, yet several historical events, dates and personalities have been contextualised and elaborated. The political history of Slovakia presented in the first part of the tour was addressed through a combination of several important events and many entertaining pictures and anecdotes, such as Slovak politician Milan Rastislav Štefanik *"doing some astronomical research"* in Tahiti, former Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar dancing with German supermodel Claudia Schiffer, or Robert Fico offering *"mafia-style"* money in exchange for the information on the murder of a journalist. Similarly, the urban sites of communism were often addressed through interesting facts and trivia, such as that Radio building was designed to have the 'clever' sunlight exposure, that Istropolis marble was gifted by Fidel Castro, or that Freedom square is still nowadays

commonly referred as 'Gotko' (former Gottwald square). Similar anecdotal stories included a performance of Slovak politician Alojz Halina brining Russian tank in front of the house of Vasil Bilak in order to *"remind him the invasion of the Soviet army"* or the different ways in which people died on the border trying to flee the country, including a death by a Czechoslovak wolfdog.

As in many other communist tours, the guide "legitimized" his role of 'narrator' of the communist history by highlighting his first-hand (childhood) experience of communism and his own involvement, or the involvement of his family members in the important events of communist history in the city. In the attempt to both self-authorize the discourse and provide the authentic local tourist experience, many of the places shown were addressed as part of the personal, or family history of the guide. Important historic events and personalities were thus mostly discussed through the personal references and repercussions of such occurrences. Husak's friendship with Gaddafi was mentioned in reference with his family spending several years in Libya and the Soviet tanks in front of the Bratislava's Comenius University were "connected to his life" as he studied in that same building. Similarly, travelling and escaping the country was illustrated through the experience of his parents, employees of the state-owned travel agency Slovakoturist, complaining at one point that *"again the same story, last week we sent 40 people to Yugoslavia, but now only 30 people came back."*. The 'double' role of such guiding style, as a 'legitimator' of the narrator and an 'authenticator' of the experience, reveals the underlying assumption that only those with the first-hand experience of communism are credible "transmitters" of communist history. What more, such narratives often include the displays of certain pride of being able to participate in important historic events (such as sitting on the father's shoulders at the SNP square during the Velvet revolution) or personal 'milestones' and achievements related to the transition period (pushing Skoda on the highway for four hours in order to visit Austria and finally get Milka chocolate).

Communist urban landmarks are, in a similar manner, often elaborated in connection with personal memories of family every-day life and illustrated through the significance they had for the individual, rather than their social relevance. This was particularly visible in addressing urban landmarks which were removed, or substantially reshaped after the collapse of communism, where nostalgia emerges as a dominant framework for conveying communist urban history.

> *"And it's nostalgic for me also because my father used to buy the beer right from our little window from the street, so we came up with the same Škoda car here, I was sitting*

in the back, my father "wait here", get the beer and we went home." (Bratislava tour guide)

But the nostalgic bias could be observed not only in reference to the childhood memories, but also as a form of sentimentality towards particular architecture and aesthetics of the communist built environment, as in the case of Istropolis which was just in the demolishment phase at the time the tour was taken. The discussion of such urban processes shed light on the guide's personal preferences for historic urban fabric and critical attitude towards rampant commercialization of the city which replaces communist architecture with plain glass buildings. As in the case of Stein brewery, there were even references to urban activism, and the role of tourism in re-valorising communist heritage, as the driving force behind the establishment of their business venture.

"So often developers destroy something. And they name it after what they just destroyed. So for me, it's a big irony. It's almost like a provocation. Provocation to people who wanted to save the original building. I signed the petition to save it, but at the end only one building was saved from the brewery." (Bratislava tour guide)

"And my brother was inspired also by he went to Belgium, and he visited one place, which was like abandoned, but thanks to the fact that it was abandoned they started to, to renovate it. So it's actually sometimes from the push to motivate the city council to renovate something comes from this tourism." (Bratislava tour guide)

Other than buildings and memorials, the Bratislava tour included "the view from the hill" as an additional landmark of the tour, offering the possibility to observe and comment on the Bratislava's post-communist urban landscape. As a vast canvas upon which almost any important story of the city's history could be written, the "view" was organised to convey anecdotes and trivia related to the important communist buildings, such as the TV tower from the 70s reminding *"the space rocket Soyuz"*, the hotel Borik where Queen Elizabeth and Gorbachev used to stay at the time, Austrian hills that people used to watch from their balconies knowing they couldn't travel there, etc. The observatory on the Austrian side was referred as the place where *"CIA used to spy Czechoslovaks"*, KGB as a shortcut to *"Klub Gurmanov Bratislavi"* and the chimney of tire factory in Petržalka as the site which hid some of the "Geocaching" game's treasures. Clearly, the "view from above", besides being sought by tourists as the location for taking photographs, serves as a suitable framework for conveying

jokes and anecdotes related to the places which are not visited within the tour, yet might contribute to the attractivity, versatility and overall quality of the tourist experience.

One final commodification mechanism observed in Bratislava tour should be also addressed. Performances such as showcasing Slovak *Halirs*, offering communist Kofola as a refreshment and gifting an original Stein beer label could be understood as strategies for augmenting tourist experience by providing physical contact with the popular past. The tour gifts included also a communist candy and a UFO-bridge postcard, aimed at providing tangible encounters with the communist past and bridging the gap between communist and contemporary Bratislava. Similar strategies were used in other driving tours – in Warsaw the guide offers a shot of vodka, and in Belgrade the tourists can learn to tie a pioneer knot. These 'ludic' practices can be understood as stereotypical performances aiming to, controversially, both bring the past into the present, and establish a boundary between difficult history and 'tourist gazing'. While aimed at enhancing tourist experience, the consumption and interaction with communist-era goods also contributes to 'Orientalization' and steretypization of communism as a system of contradictions and playful mundane pleasures.

Finally, it is also important to note that while the tours are often designed as a quest for remnants of communism in contemporary urban landscape, sometimes the observed environment surprisingly conveys the imprints of the contemporary events inscribed in communist landmarks. Such was the case with the Slavin monument, a memorial to the fallen Soviet soldiers, painted at the time of the visit in colours of Ukrainian flag. Such occurrences could certainly not be understood through the 'commodification lens' – as these belong to the political resistance or civil activism category, yet, they testify the sustained relevance of the communist urban traces and the importance of intervening in such spaces. What is different are the tools and mechanisms used to intervene and their implications for the post-communist mnemonic and urban culture.

8.1.8 Driving tour – Communism Warsaw self-driven tour (WPT1313)

Despite the ludic advertising and similarities in terms of organisation, the Communism Warsaw self-driven tour, compared to the other communist tours taken in the framework of this research, turned out to be distinctive in at least three aspects. First, while advertised as the 'general' communist tour, the tour was very focused on architecture and urban layout of the pre- and post-war Warsaw, and there was more of the urban-related than mnemonic-related content than in most other such tours. In practice, the tour focused on monumental buildings

from the communist times, their architecture, design and function, and only occasionally important events and personalities were added to the story. In that sense, there were very few references to political and economic reality of communist times in Poland or everyday life which are frequently elaborated in such tours. Second, perhaps precisely due to such character of the tour, or the personality of the guide, the tour was very fact-based, and unlike most other similar tours, verbal interpretation of sites included very few, if any, anecdotes, jokes, trivia and personal memories. Instead, it focused on the examples of communist oppression in both urban space and social life, untangling the layers of pre- and post-war urban development and explaining symbolic functions of the buildings. Third, unlike the other driving tours, the Warsaw tour made very few references to the retro vehicle, the Fiat 126, Polish "Maluh" (Toddler), although it was actually advertised as the tour's selling point (see *Figure 12*). Besides the initial driving lesson at the parking of the Palace of culture and science, the tour continued as if it was in a regular car, without giving special tribute to the vehicle.

Figure 12   Warsaw, Fiat "maluh" advertising communist city tour in front of the Palace of Culture and Science

In terms of the spatial design, as could be observed throughout the tour, the Communism self-driven tour (taken in February 2022) focused on three main sites – Palace of culture and science, Constitution square and House of the Communist Party. This was also confirmed by the guide during the interview conducted after the tour, as he explained that the company designed the tour to include the three sites as "flagships of communism", yet giving guides the flexibility to arrange the rest of the tour and adapt the narrative. Nonetheless, the first site, the Palace of culture and science was only briefly mentioned in the tour, as *"a gift from Stalin"* which makes the Warsaw looks like the *"Moscow of the West"*, quickly moving to other specificities of the city landscapes such as the "Manhattan-like" skyscrapers and resemblance to Shanghai and Paris. The second site, the Constitution square was much more profoundly elaborated in terms of architecture, design, arts and social functions, and also interpreted in relation with the general history of Poland and Polish constitutions. Near the square, the guide showed two memorial plaques, one to Marie Curie, chemistry Nobel Prize winner, and the other to Marijan Rejewski, the cryptographer who first decoded the Enigma machine, presenting them briefly as the two important historic personalities of Polish origin. The following site, Rakowiecka prison, was addressed in terms of communist crimes and oppression, Solidarity movement, and number of personalities related to the place (Witold Pilecki, general Fieldorf, Richard Kuklinski). The important sites which were only passed by and mentioned from the car included the Belveder Palace, Open Jazdov (Finnish wooden houses), several embassies, "Party house", Mercure hotel and the Ministry of agriculture. These places were only briefly addressed, mostly in light of their connection with communist history, Cold war or their general urban/architectural features. The final point of the tour, the Presidential Palace, was interpreted as the site "where communism both started and finished", highlighting the importance of Warsaw Pact and Round table agreement signed in the Palace.

While all the sites visited through the tour could have been arguably addressed from many different aspects, ranging from history and architecture to everyday life and popular culture, in this particular tour the narrative centred on the *"dark side of communism"*, in guide's own words. Unlike most other tours, where the focus was often on topics such as housing, travelling, consumption and everyday life under communism, the Communism self-driven tour of Warsaw was much more about communist crimes and oppression, in both space and society. The sites were mostly illustrated either through the dichotomy of their pre- and post-war layout and function, or through the stories of Polish anti-communist heroes and important personalities whose life and career remained obscured and silenced during the communist times. In that

sense, an interesting parallel made by the guide is illustrative of this particular narrative focus of the tour, where the emphasize is on how communism concealed both pre-war sites and people in order to make place for the regime-appropriate urban design and society.

> *"Remember what I told you about Witold Pilecki for example, that he was killed and the other heroes? So this was, this is what like, with this part of the Marsalkowska street, just killing, getting rid, eliminating, but also there were many people like this Kazimiers Leski that I told you, got imprisoned for 10 years, eventually were not killed. But they were hidden behind the others like the building, like of the pre-war Warsaw in the way that they couldn't play an important role because they were treated as enemies they were not treated as loyal and all for a reason as loyal to the system. So nothing responsible no big, responsible, a good task were offered to them. And this could be somehow I mean, this could be related to those buildings that survived but were hidden by the new ones which were loyal to the system." (Warsaw tour guide 2)*

Instead of the commonly used jokes and anecdotes, the interactivity of the tour was maintained through guide's "testing" of the visitors' knowledge and awareness of the communist history and architecture. Such questions were mostly designed to stimulate critical reflection and make assumptions about communist urban planning and social organization, and less to actually asses the level of participant's knowledge of history, in order to organize the narrative accordingly. Another particular strategy could be dubbed as "speculation", since interpretation of many sites included hypothetical suggestions and comments. For instance, workers depicted in the Mayday parade relief at the Constitution square were assumed to look like a bishop, a nun, a Catholic angel and even the revolutionary, Lech Walesa, as part of the silently subversive artistic practices against the regime. Such practices of searching the hidden meaning could be understood as a form of spatial and discursive commodification, since arts in urban landscape is given the "alternative" meaning in order to create entertaining and 'out of the ordinary' experience. Similar is the role of irony, which is also used to draw tourist's attention towards unexpected, controversial or disruptive elements in the landscape and history. In that sense, the NATO flag on the Presidential Palace, the place where the Warsaw Pact was signed, has been addressed as the *"irony of history"*. Similarly, the reasons for dubbing Rakowiecka *"the longest street in Warsaw"* included spatio-temporal references to communist oppression:

> *"Number one is the prison, there was the prison there, which was mostly a political prison. And then why would they call it the longest street of Warsaw? So because they*

would say that if you entered one day, with luck, you would leave in a couple of years, this is how long it will get. This is one thing. So because of the prison, it could get very long. Secondly, at the end of it was the cinema whose name was Moscow. And they will say it was as long, I mean, it was so long because it was going to Moscow." (Warsaw tour guide 2)

Despite such occasional anecdotal narration, the guided tour remained surprisingly void of funny, ludic and entertaining stories, insisting instead that *"no, communism was not funny"*. Accordingly, the tour kept serious character, constantly acknowledging communist alterations and oppression in both space and society. Rather than a deviation from the usual pattern of socialist tours, such organisation was, according to the guide himself, the matter of personal style and attitude towards communist history. While the guide's age reveal that he undoubtedly has many personal memories and significant experience of life under communism, these were not used to illustrate the events and places mentioned in the tour. Instead, what came forward was certain 'negative' bias towards communist history and even despise towards contemporary practices of representing communism.

"I don't want people to leave with an impression that communism was fine. 'It was fine. It was fun.' No, communism was not funny. And this is why I first show you the flagships, so that you see what it was like, but also I want you to see how people also lived and suffered during those times." (Warsaw tour guide 2)

With abundance of historical references and socio-political contextualisation, and very few anecdotes, ludic experiences and nostalgic cues, the tour of Warsaw clearly highlighted how guide's personality, inclinations and guiding style shape the tourist encounter wih communist memoryscapes. While the website promised the experience filled with "entertaining stories about Varsovian life and history" and "shot of Polish vodka after the tour", the guide's personal preference towards conveying "darker" history and reluctance to 'downplay' the totalitarian nature of the regime created substantially different communist 'tourism imaginary'. This demonstrates that while surprisingly similar in terms of urban interaction, narrative organisation and commodification strategies, the communist tours across Europe however remain contingent on the guide's spatial, mnemonic and stylistic choices and the exchange occurring between the tourists, the guide and the communist landscape.

8.1.9 Sub-chapter conclusion

Summarizing the results of such a multi-directional analysis of such diverse set of guided tours is certainly a challenging task. In this section, I attempted to provide semiotic analysis of the major features of urban and mnemonic organisation of communist guided tours in Central and East Europe. As a modern way of experiencing the city, in its urban and historical complexity, guided tours represent a particularly inspiring category for studying contemporary engagement with communist memoryscapes. Which communist sites such tours put forward? How they address "sensitive" topics related to communist dictatorship? How by directing the tourists towards particular sites and stories, guided tours change the urban perception and international identity of the city? While 16 guided tours have been taken during the few weeks of intensive fieldwork, 8 were eventually selected as case studies, and analysed in terms of their commercial organisation, urban design, historic content and narrative style. The choice to maintain 5 walking, mostly "free" group tours which ranked highest on Google search of the keywords "communist tour" and appeared amongst the "most popular" on social media was made in order to analyse the experiences as most frequently encountered by the tourists. Additionally, 3 private driving tours were taken, for the purpose of nuancing the obtained results and juxtaposing discursive, urban, mnemonic and contextual organisation of the private guided experiences. What more, all three tours included the vintage car ride, as a particular mechanism for embedding "living history" approach into the urban guided experience.

The analysis revealed that what is counted and "commodified" as communist is rather wide spectrum of places, symbols and objects which reflect or simply "flirt" with communist history. In that sense, such tours often included some of the major communist sites in the city, yet due to the limits of time and place, urban experience was often designed to include myriad of not-particularly-"communist" buildings and objects. This included either "general" heritage sites – seemingly unrelated to communism and often explored in different historical contexts (St Stephen Basilica in Budapest, Skenderbeg Square in Tirana, Franciscan garden in Prague) or inconspicuous objects and places – with certain "communist" legacy, yet certainly not prominent enough to be understood as communist heritage (Passport office in Warsaw, Russian Embassy in Berlin, "Stein" complex in Bratislava). Such sites often appeared as visual cues for conveying particular stories of espionage, popular culture, personal memories and everyday life under communism. Other than this, the urban design of the tours also frequently included state-mandated commemorative places, including plaques and memorials (Velvet revolution memorial in Prague, Slavin memorial in Bratislava, Berlin Wall memorial in Berlin, etc.) and even the exhibitions (exhibition of Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade tour or exhibition of

ghost-stations in Nordbahnhof during the Berlin tour). This is certainly illustrative of the tendency to align "tourist" and "commercial" exploitation of communist urban legacies with the official politics of urban memory. In that sense, guided tours re-iterate some of the state-mandated historical representations, while also adding personal experiences, sites and memories, and alternative urban interpretations.

In terms of discursive organisation of the guided tours, with the exception of Warsaw self-driven tour, there was a clear pattern of narrative commodification of communist history and memory. This was done through number of strategies – including anecdotal storytelling, humour and irony aimed at enhancing the tourist experience, referencing popular culture in order to "translate" communist heritage into well known contexts, conveying personal and family memories aimed to "authenticate" and personalize experience, etc. Re-iteration of the communist stereotypes, such as the inefficiency of the state, subversiveness of personal versus performativeness of official sphere of life, lack of production skills and low working culture were frequently addressed to enhance the ideas of the communist "Other". Furthermore, the stories of peculiarities and inconsistencies of life under communism were often juxtaposed with the stories of the "prosperous" West, where the "western world" consistently appeared as absolutely superior to the disjoint, illogical and backward communist system. Besides the focus on the East-West dichotomy, the narratives shared similar interpretive style in many other aspects. Hence, I argue that also the narrative was also "glocalised" since many of the similar stories, anecdotes and jokes appeared in several tours. This clearly showcases that dominance of particular topics, types of urban sites and discursive styles frames the contemporary interpretations of communism in post-socialist cities. Finally, many of the tours included similar "bodily" performances – especially in case of driving tours, where cars are approached through particular form of "heritage fetishization" and referenced as part of the comprehensive "communist" experience. Other bodily experiences (tying Pioneer red knot in Belgrade, drinking Polish vodka in Warsaw of snacking on "communist" Czechoslovak sweets in Bratislava) equally participated in creating an immersive communist experience, where communist urban history was commodified through number of (strikingly similar) spatial, narrative and experiential interventions. Hence, "communist" in post-communist city is displayed and organised through various commodification strategies, aimed to provide a memorable experience and thus the most profitable outcome for the guiding company. Consequently, through the means of guided tours, communism in the city is translated into an attractive, "digestible" leisure-time activity, blending urban exploration, anecdotal storytelling,

narrative stereotypization and historic speculation as the framing experience of contemporary engagement with communist history in post-socialist Europe.

8.2 Commodifying the underground – contemporary reuses of the communist bunkers

Too dangerous to be destroyed and too expensive to be maintained, the bunkers represent a particular urban form, as the underground spaces of "extreme and exceptional" (Klinke 2015). Embedded in the landscape and designed to be invisible, they are often submerged in most unexpected places and camouflaged to remain cloistered and secretive (Pais, Hoffmann and Campos 2021). In that sense, descending into a bunker represents an exceptional 'bodily' experience, similar to that of breaking down a secret code, entering a selective private members club or making a ground-breaking discovery. As places which used to be highly classified, the Cold War bunkers in particular are surrounded with the aura of mystical, dark and enigmatic. This is due to their very specific nature and purpose, since they were designed as shelters in case of the atomic war and total landscape destruction. As such, they represent both a demonstration of power and testimony to the cultural paranoia of the time. In words of Bennett (2011, 2017, p.7), "their brutal physical expression in concrete and their powerful dark resonance in language and imagery" frame these spaces as sites of traumatic, haunting and affective memories. Consequently, the Cold War bunkers, as the permanent "scars" in the urban landscape, through last several decades consistently attracted significant interest of both scholars and heritage practitioners, investigating the possibilities of cultural engagement and adaptive reuse of the concrete reminders of the Cold War anxiety (Kinnear 2020)

Financially unviable and structurally unfit for modification, despite their apparent attractiveness most of the Cold War bunkers in post-socialist Europe remained ignored, sealed and abandoned for decades. Yet, despite the concerns that their 'cultural recuperation' seems impossible (Beck 2011), adaptive and creative reuses of the bunkers are becoming increasingly popular, bringing these underground spaces back to the 'surface'. Rather than remaining dark "anomalies" in landscape, these spaces are getting revitalized, valorised and re-integrated by artists, private investors, urban explorers, tourist companies and bunker hunters. Indeed, despite the stiffness and solidity of both their form (concrete structure, inaccessibility) and function (isolation, power, defence), the bunkers are becoming "a cultural playground" (Bennett 2017; Stromberg 2013), a malleable and mutable configurations which reflect changing attitude towards history and space, contemporary economic and political exigencies

and "pragmatic improvisations of those who co-opt these relics into their practices" (Bennett 2017, p.11). Moving beyond the cultural and emotional legacy of the Cold war, these bunkers are increasingly re-used and re-purposed through private initiatives, and turned into different kinds of museums, art spaces and even night clubs. In words of Stromberg (2013, p.78), "the cultural alchemy of appropriation turns the materiality of bare concrete walls into new economic value". This new economic value is often created by divorcing the function, organisation and usage of the bunkers from their history and turning them into restaurants, storehouses, tattoo salons or night clubs. Yet, often the bunkers are re-appropriated by tourism industry, where specialized companies create museum-like exhibitions inside the bunkers, turning them into tourist attractions. Such exhibitions often display particular items and objects, most often related to the Cold War or communism, while the discursive formation framing such visits nurtures the culture of fear, confrontation, isolation and danger. As reminders of an apocalyptic threat that has never realized, bunker-museums are usually organized to highlight and even exaggerate the scale of the potential danger, suffering and anxiety.

Considered to be part of the military heritage, bunkers bring a whole new set of micro-histories and curatorial practices into the heritage arena, triggering certain reverence as bastions of power, fear and panic. Their physical roughness and bulkiness of the reinforced concrete, standing in direct opposition with the vulnerability of the landscape on-the-ground, participate in creating particular tourist spatial imaginary, half-way between brutality and resilience, horror and admiration. What more, bunkers are considered to be the "immersive spaces" which favour particular orientalising discourses and "bodily experiences", since visitors engage in corporal-sensual encounters with the bunkers' physical and historical features (Stach 2021). In that sense, managers of these very particular heritage assets tend to commodify such spaces by creating immersive experiences and narratives, focused on danger, power and anxiety.

The three museum-bunkers selected as case studies in the framework of this research shed light on diversity of commodification approaches, which surprisingly frequently result in similar set of curatorial, narrative and performative practices. The visited sites included Tirana's Bunk'art, an atomic bunker of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha, the Hospital in the Rock, former bunker-hospital built inside the natural cave system in Budapest, and an underground civilian nuclear shelter Bezovka in Prague's Žižkov area. All three underground spaces are located outside the usual tourist "beaten" path and as such represent an "alternative" tourist offer. The entrance to the bunkers was restricted in all three cases, yet the conditions of access significantly differed (guided visit in case of Budapest, entry ticket in case of Tirana,

participation in communist guided tour in Prague). The different types of exhibitions (medical appliances and military artefacts in Budapest, artistic installations in Tirana, civil defence items in Prague) and varied degrees of spatial adaptations and readjustments highlight the diversity of processes, interventions and transformations of former communist bunkers. Yet, while all formally owned by the State-related actors, their commercial metamorphosis was in all three cases 'consensual' – enabled by the public authorities and facilitated by the bunker's spatial segregation, inaccessibility and obscurity. Their commercial re-discovery, however, instigated spatial re-semantisation of the bunkers' surrounding, adding it to the 'communist map' of the city.

The bunkers chosen as cases were selected to reflect diversity of "repurposing" strategies, and represent the only (or the most relevant, in case of Tirana) communist-related underground spaces in the cities where the fieldwork was conducted. The sites were visited between October 2021 and March 2022 and approached using the traditional methods of ethnography, including observation of the spatial organisation, curatorial solutions, narrative choices and performative practices, which were documented in written or audio-visual form. Photographic documentation of the bunkers' exterior and interior allowed to more profoundly analyse the sites at the later stage, while field notes and recordings were used to detangle mnemonic content of the bunker tours. Additionally, interviews with guides, content analysis of the websites, TripAdvisor reviews and media discourse enabled to contextualise the field results and shed light on major actors and main spatial and mnemonic challenges and outcomes of various commercial uses of underground spaces. Similar as in the previous sub-chapter, each of the three bunkers is elaborated separately, and the cross-analysis is given in the short conclusion at the end of the section. Each of the cases is analysed in terms of spatial, curatorial and narrative organisation, but also in reference with major public debates, challenges and contestations surrounding the revitalization processes.

8.2.1 Bunk'art Tirana

As one of over 170 000 bunkers built during the communist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha throughout 1970s and 1980s, Bunk'art represents a living testimony of the magnitude and paranoia of the program of "bunkerisation" of Albania. While "only" 173 371 bunkers of the planned 221 143 were actually constructed (approximately 1 bunker for every 11 inhabitants), the Albanian bunkerisation program remains one of the largest of its kind. Due to its magnitude, it left a permanent and significant impact on the natural and urban landscape of the country. As reminders of the communist oppression, Hoxha's isolationist politics and economic

hardship fuelled by the colossal costs of the bunkerisation program, most of the bunkers remained abandoned for decades after the collapse of the regime. While they officially remained the property of the Albanian Ministry of defence, they were seldom informally used for variety of purposes, often as storehouses, refugee shelters, tattoo parlours and even for lovers' intimate encounters. Ranging in size and function, Albanian bunkers could be roughly divided in three major forms - prefabricated dome-shaped "firing points" (QZ- type bunkers, "qender zjarri") for 2-3 people, command-and-control bunkers (PZ, "pike zjarri") weighing around 400 tones, and the complex tunnel-style atomic bunkers made for the Communist party leadership in case of a military coup or nuclear attack. Popularly addressed as the "concrete mushrooms", the bunkers of Albania were subjects of diverse re-purposing projects ranging from the individual initiatives to the state-organised or academic-driven activities aimed at re-evaluating, re-using and reversing their function *"from symbols of xenophobic paranoia to symbols of openness."[1]* Yet, the tremendous cost of their removal and destruction, and their still largely undisclosed (sometimes even unknown) features, placement and accessibility, made Albanian bunkers surprisingly "resilient" in landscape. Even nowadays, most of the Albanian bunkers persist as disregarded, deserted and disgraced urban symbols of the irrational and paranoid dictatorial past. The public neglect and "institutionalized" silence of the government officials regarding the state and plan for these structures in Albania was only broken in 2014, when the first bunker, the Bunk'art, was opened to the public.

The post of command of the General Staff of Defence, originally codenamed "Objekti Shtylla" and popularly known as Hoxha's nuclear bunker, has been reopened in 2014 as Bunk'Art, a historical-artistic centre spread over 5 floors of underground tunnels. As "a unique confluence of aesthetic discourses, strategies of memory-production, and policies related to architectural heritage and tourism" (Isto 2017), Bunk'art represents one of the most striking examples of political and cultural negotiations of communist history and controversial heritage commodification strategies. The space is organized in three thematic areas, the Historical exhibition, Museum exhibition and Artistic installation. The Historical exhibition is organized around 5 major topics (1) Albania under the fascist Italy, (2) Diplomacy during the war, (3) Albania under the German invasion, (4) The after war: Hope and disappointment, and (5) Albania after liberation. Hence, although the bunker itself historically and culturally represents a legacy of the communist Albania, the exhibition traces the country's past since 1939 and focuses more on the history of fascism, WW2 and the immediate aftermath of the war, than

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[1] https://dornob.com/making-use-of-albanias-thousands-of-concrete-mushrooms/

communist era. In the Historical exhibition, communism is tackled only in two rooms dealing with Hoxha's project of building the "New Albania" and the dark side of the regime, respectively. In that sense, communism is situated within a larger framework of the violent XX century, where 50 years of communist history are condensed in only few sentences and artefacts. There is also a striking imbalance in the relative importance and content devoted to the few years of Italian rule of Albania, compared to the other topics elaborated in the historical exhibition. Such choices thus reveal certain bias towards particular historical allegiances, reflecting availability (or scarcity) of historical sources or the relative interest in specific periods of Albanian past. Coincidentally, the "originator and curator" of the exhibition is of Italian origin, providing thus (at least partial) rationale behind such curatorial choices.

Museum installation is also organised as a collage of original and staged spaces and artefacts. The highlight of the collection are undoubtedly the original offices of Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, including working spaces, bathrooms and sleeping areas. Besides these two major rooms, as distinctively most luxurious parts of the bunker, the museum exhibition also showcases few other "original" bunker spaces - the rooms of the chief of staff and bunker officer, as well as the inter-communication unit and the filter room. What more, the architectural curiosity of the underground, an Assembly Hall inside the bunker, has been refurbished and turned into a performance art venue, with painted bunker domes on the stage and newly reupholstered plush red chairs. Yet, there are also some bunker-unrelated spaces, such as "the socialist home" – a room furnished as a typical apartment in communist times, a "socialist" classroom, a small market and a gym, illustrating housing, education, consumption and sports in communist Albania, respectively. These installations were similar to what could be observed in popular museums of communism throughout Europe, displaying similar aesthetics and narrative framing of the most commercially appealing aspects of life under communism.

Finally, the artistic installation, scattered throughout the bunker, participate in creating aesthetic "cacophony" of the underground space, giving another layer and usage to the formerly abandoned dictator's atomic shelter. As in 2021/2022, the artistic installation included works of Albanian and Italian artists, mostly linked to different aspects of communism. These included "Utopian Tirana", a short experimental video about socialist and post-socialist urban reality of Tirana and "Chinese shadows", contemporary art installation displaying China-produced bicycle used for cardio examination of soldiers of the Albanian People's Army during communism. Others were even more immersive and required "bodily" performance and

participation of the visitors, such as "War Echo", inviting to enter a room where the war sounds were played and the atmosphere of the battle reproduced, or "Tango Down 2" with mirrors on 4 sides of the room "*miraculously disintegrating the bunker without using any kind of weapons and without breaking any bit of concrete*" (as written in the respective museum plaque). While none of the two installations directly referred to communism or communist times, they both interacted with the bunker, as spaces of both oppression and salvation. In that sense, the "War Echo" capitalizes on feelings of discomfort, imminent threat and brutality of the bunker and events which might have led to its usage, while the "Tango Down" deconstructs the place transporting visitors to a parallel reality of mirrors and video games. Consequently, diversity of artistic approaches and their spatial positioning, as well as the lack of interaction with other objects and topics explored in the historical and museum exhibition, make the whole organization of the bunker rather disarticulated, confusing and eclectic.
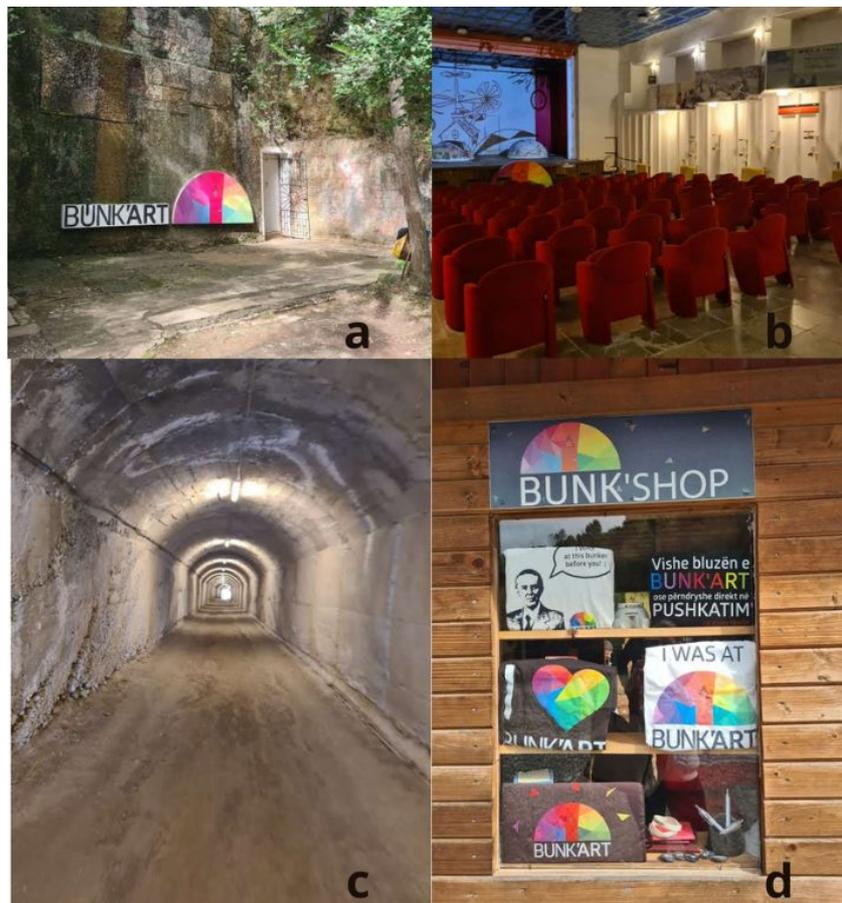
Figure 13   Bunk'art, Tirana: (a) Colorful logo at the Bunker exit; (b) Theatre inside the Bunker; (c) Tunnel leading to the Bunker entrance; (d) Bunk'shop

While the bunker was officially opened and announced as the "government's project", an Italian media entrepreneur Carlo Bolino consistently appeared as the major curatorial and managerial authority, whose "vision for its historical eclecticism has become a driving force after the museum re-opened" (Isto 2017). The opening of the bunker, inaugurated by the prime minister Edi Rama (also known for its close ties with Bolino), was surrounded by a number of controversies which illustrate the complexity of relationships between state, private sector and urban memoryscape and the difficulty to navigate through questions of ownership, interpretation and revitalization. First, the legitimacy of the tender procedure for reconstructing the bunker appeared as an important concern, due to the lack of transparency and controversial activities of both Ministry of Defence (that transferred the physical property of the Bunker) and the Ministry of Culture (that was supposed to organize and supervise bunker's reconstruction and exhibition setting). Instead, it appeared that reconstruction, management and curation of the bunker were unconditionally "leased" to Bolino and his collaborators, which opened a sharp public debate. Major sources of criticism stemmed from (a) alleged corruption, due to Bolino's close relations with Albanian government and (b) cultural, historical and conceptual issues surrounding the revitalization of the bunker and its transformation into a tourist attraction. While most of these allegations were never properly addressed by the Albanian government, the Ministry of Defence officially transferred in 2016 the administration of the Bunk'art to Bolino-tied NGO "Qendra URA" and the project website clearly stipulates that "the originator and general curator of BUNK'ART project is the Italian journalist Carlo Bolino". Hence, the lack of transparency in procedures of 'privatization' of underground heritage space appears thus in striking contrast with the blatant acknowledgment of government's cession of curatorial and managerial powers and their centralization to a single individual.

The commodification of the bunker as the element of Albanian cultural memory has been, paradoxically, supported by the government itself. In the opening speech, the Prime Minister Rama revealed his idea of 'coming to terms with the past' by merging historical memory, creative expressions of the past and tourist experiences:

> *"A visit to this anti-atomic building will surely tell the girls and boys of this country more about the dictatorship, about Enver Hoxha, about Mehmet Shehu, about all antihuman and anti-religious hordes produced by the so-called liberation of the*

homeland, than all historians gathered together can tell. Who at best can turn readers of history into partisans and Germans.”[2]

Suggesting creative engagement with the past as a remedy to the disturbing and unsettled historical accounts, the Prime Minister Rama also emphasized that "it is important to let go of the past" and "break free from the past" since history "still needs time to be written objectively". In that sense, Bunk'art is not designed to be a properly historical space, but a spatial container for creative engagements with dissonant memories. Thus, the most surprising part of "commodification" of the bunker is neither its mnemonic and spatial re-organisation, nor the unusual public-private arrangement surrounding its repurposing. Instead, the Bunk'art remains probably the most explicit and most striking example of the official acknowledgment of commodification as a favoured strategy for "coming to terms with the past" that the government refuses to engage with. The commodification, in that sense, could be understood as a process of governmental disengagement and deliberate 'privatization' of urban heritage, where the 'license' for creatively interpreting the past is given to the private (and foreign) investors. In this particular case, commodification is not seen by the authorities as a problematic negotiation with historical authenticity, but as an opportunity to re-imagine, re-create and re-purpose former communist spaces, liberating them from the burden of 'historical'.

> *"It is just the beginning because we have a project to create a historical and tourist itinerary of the communist underground and simultaneously to turn this itinerary, into an itinerary of the creative, aiming on the one hand the liberation and on the other hand the fertility of our collective memory.”[3]*

The creative freedom in interpreting the past through historical objects, inauthentic souvenirs and artistic installations could be understood either (or both) as illustrative of the contemporary Albanian politics of memory or the personal inclination of the decision makers towards pluralistic and aesthetically embellished historical narratives. Indeed, Rama, painter by education, initiated an urban renewal project "Return to identity" as a major of Tirana, when throughout the city socialist grey buildings were repainted in bright colours and bold designs. The Prime minister's personal inclination towards urban eclecticism and kitschy concoctions

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[2] Excerpts from Rama's speech retrieved from: *https://kryeministria.al/en/newsroom/bunkart-nje-thesar-i-kujteses-kolektive/,* Translation provided by the author.

[3] Ibid.

could be in that sense understood as detrimental to both spatial re-arrangement of the communist bunker and its historic interpretation. On the other hand, the current Albanian heritage politics also frames memory as purely aesthetical phenomenon, favouring creative freedom, artistic interventions and avant-garde interpretation rather than critical engagement with the (socialist) past. In that sense, communist history is only a canvas upon which Bunk'art constructs itself as a tourist attraction and creative hub aiming to "engineer an experience of the past for future generations, by producing not merely the surface network of territorialisation, but also the deep network of memory" (Isto 2017). Consequently, Bunk'art plays important role not only as a platform for "liberating Albania and Albanians from the deceitful weight of politicization of the collective memory"[4], but also as a laboratory of new mnemonic practices, where memorialization is facilitated, fragmented or disrupted by artistic interventions, creative re-interpretations and 'tourist gaze'. By transferring responsibility for the work of history and memory from state and official institutions to the individuals, the Bunk'art project presents a change of paradigm in historical place-making. While still controversial, these processes aim to sensitize new generations to approach history not as a dogmatic framework, but as an immersive, malleable and negotiable (commercial) space.

8.2.2 Prague – Nuclear bunker Bezovka

Set under the Parukraka hill in the Prague's Žižkov district, nuclear bunker Bezovka has only recently emerged as a valuable underground heritage asset of the city. Unsurprisingly for the city filled with so many historical buildings and tourist attractions, the communist nuclear bunker set at the outskirts of the town until recently did not seem to be aesthetically suitable, historically relevant or tourism-exploitable resource. It was only in 2007, after years of adaptations, negotiations and paperwork, that the bunker re-opened – first as a night club, leased to a private investor against a monthly rent of around 500 euros. After several years of clubbing in the bunker, including art shows and private events such as wedding celebrations and birthday parties, the place has been recently turned into a tourist attraction. Yet, the access to the bunker is limited and the site may be only visited on particular dates announced on the bunker website (accompanied by their guide) or as a part of the regular "Prague communism and nuclear bunker tour". The first offer mostly addresses locals who want to visit the former nuclear shelter, offering several different options including (or not) commentary on the Cold War exhibition, military/political history, manipulation and demonstration of the use of arms

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[4] Ibid.

and equipment, etc. The second one, the visit of the shelter in the framework of the "Prague communism and nuclear bunker tour" is designed for the foreign audience, and includes a one-hour-long guided walk through the bunker and both technical exposition and Cold War memorabilia displayed inside.

Conceived and designed by a young Czech entrepreneur who previously worked as a tour guide, the "Prague communism and nuclear bunker tour" is conceptualized to culminate with the visit to the bunker. The experience is thus organized to highlight the exclusivity of the bunker as an "alternative" tourist attraction, "hidden" from the crowds and accessible only to the few. This is already highlighted at the entrance to the bunker, where the guide unlocks the 4-ton heavy door inviting the participants to descend 4 floors underground, as he remains the last to enter and lock the door behind the group. This is usually followed by jokes and witty comments about staying locked inside the bunker as a major threat, thus making a place of shelter and refugee a place of danger and claustrophobia. While this ironic transfer - turning the bunker "inside out" is a symbolical practice often observed in underground spaces, it is the "commercial" take on this phenomenon that makes it particularly relevant for this research. Hence, the bunkers spatial features are used to convey both impression of exclusivity and aura of darkness and secludedness. This is perpetuated both through spatial design and the narrative framing of the tour.

In terms of spatial arrangement of the bunker, in the first room there is still an old bar, as a remnant of the times when the place was used for clubbing, while most of the remaining bunker space is turned into an exhibition of various Cold war and communism-related artefacts of dubious historical veracity. In the same way that the guided tour interpretations combine historical and non-historical material, the space itself merges authentic and 'staged' objects and scenes, blurring the boundary between the two. Throughout the tour, the participants encounter original ventilation systems, boxes of arms and ammunition, replicas of famous communist statues, civil protection items and objects of daily life without distinguishing what 'belongs' to the bunker, and what is the exposition of the 'Cold war museum' placed within the bunker. Photographs of communist leaders and important events, propaganda posters and dummies dressed in communist military and police uniforms stand amongst the original first aid kits, dosimeters, nuclear warheads and gas masks, thus making historical objects and retro memorabilia indistinguishable from each other. This ignorance towards the importance of discerning between authentic and inauthentic items could be observed in both curatorial and guiding strategies within the bunker. The objects displayed followed no particular order and

rarely had any explanatory label, thus clearly lacking any relevant information situating them in history and space. Many of the items such as sports medals and propaganda posters seemed detached from the space in which they were exhibited, escaping the usual 'museal' containment and justification of its presence and relevance for the history and the place in question. What more, these objects appeared mostly as visual cues to the stories and anecdotes from the Cold war and communism which the guide conveyed ignoring the background and historical context of the items.

The lack of labels, interpretative signs and descriptions of items was compensated through guide's narration and manipulation of objects, aimed at entertaining and amazing visitors with personal memories, interesting stories and witty comments - rather than through extensive knowledge of their historical context. Thus, the ammunition boxes and Kalashnikovs the guide "played with" served to illustrate some personal memories of civil defence classes and centrality of sports in communist times, in somewhat simplified and tourist-digestible form:

> *"You would not see a fat kid during the communist times. Do you know why? Because a fat kid is slow and easy target. Thus, the state insisted on sport and healthy lifestyle."* *(Prague bunker guide)*

The heaviness of the concrete, the unsettling atmosphere and the 'difficult' history were thus perpetually negotiated through anecdotes and jokes, aimed to balance out the 'darkness' of the site with the tourists' quest for entertainment. At the very beginning of the visit of the bunker, the guide conveyed such a humour-induced comment:

> *"There's no heaters in the bunker. Do you know why? Because it was a Cold war."* *(Prague bunker guide)*

The bunker itself was addressed through a combination of history and architecture of the place, and the ironic reflections on communist incapacity to create a functional and efficient shelter. The narrative thus focused extensively on miscalculations, inconsistencies and drawbacks of urban and spatial planning and arrangement of the bunker, as an example of incompetence of the regime. It was thus highlighted that the bunker was aimed to provide a shelter for only 2 weeks, afterwards making people *"go find (themselves) a nicer place"*, making it *"practically useless"* as everything else would remain radioactive. In that sense, bunkers were interpreted by the guide as symbols of "communist propaganda", aimed at showcasing the scope of state's concern for its citizens. The fact that only 12 toilets were built for planned 5 thousand people or that the stored food consisted mostly of canned beans were

similarly mocked as the absurdities of the bunker's organization, confirming the overarching incompetence of the regime. Similarly, the communist state was ridiculed in relation with many aspects of organization of every-day life, so that the pins and medals displayed in one of the bunker's rooms were ironically addressed as items that *"you give as award when you have no money"* and socialism explained as *"huge inefficient state"* with *"lots of workers shovelling papers"* and *"people abusing the system all the time"*.

Particularly poignant aspect of "commodification" of the bunker is the use of dummies to stage the "events" in "life" of the bunker, such as decontamination procedures, medical treatments of the injured or the manipulation of the ventilation system (see ***Figure 14***). Such 'performative' approach to history could be also observed in guide's demonstrations how to use arms and gas masks, and 'ritual' opening and closing of the bunker's doors. In that sense, the bunker resembles more a historical theatre or a space for historical re-enactment than a historical museum or heritage site. Yet, the entertaining and inauthentic character of the bunker does not deprive it of aura of exclusivity, mysticism and secrecy. In a way, both discursive and spatial organization of the bunker are designed to oscillate between danger and entertainment, between darkness and humour. For example, the banality of the dummies and staged scenes is given a serious character when the guide asked participants to stay careful and not to touch the protective uniforms, since they "should not" be radioactive, *"but we can't know it for sure"*. Yet, the seemingly 'latent' threat, exacerbated by the guide's stories of former tour participants sharing their experiences with radioactivity (such as the man who worked on a nuclear submarine and whose skin had to be scrubbed to flesh to remove radioactivity at one point, or the lady stewardess who was prevented from flying to certain destinations during pregnancy to limit in-flight cosmic radiation exposure), was somewhat neutralized and counter-acted through popular culture references displayed right next to them – such as the advertisement for the HBO series "Chernobyl" or the posters of naked lovers with gas masks.

Figure 14   Bunker Bezovka, Prague: Dummies staging "imagined" historical
scenes

Combining the exclusivity of space, rhetoric of tourism and entrepreneurial approach to history, the guided tours of the Bezovka bunker/Cold war "museum" represents a particularly strong example of the contemporary commodification hypothesis. The mismatched objects and stories, peculiar artefacts and anecdotes that barely communicate with each other and the space they are positioned within nonetheless manage to create particular emotional experience, and largely seduce the tourists. Thus, the reviews on TripAdvisor often praise the bunker as "a really cool thing to see", the museum inside "feeling as authentic as it is", and the overall experience making visitors "much smarter about history". Consequently, it might be argued that 'questionable' curatorial and interpretative arrangement of the bunker might not seem commodified, inauthentic or even questionable to everyone. Instead, there are inevitably hundreds of tourists whose limited (or none) prior knowledge of communism and Cold war makes it difficult to assess historical reliability of the bunker's display and narrative, or even those who simply prefer immersing into the experience rather than critically reflecting on it. In

that, commodification might be understood as a contemporary tool for engaging with the past 'on a holiday'.

8.2.3 Budapest – Hospital in the Rock

At the first glance, placing the "Hospital in the Rock" nuclear bunker museum within the category of "underground" communist heritage might seem at least controversial. Built in early 40s and opened in 1944, the bunker was originally conceived as an emergency hospital and reinforced bomb shelter. Yet, as such, the hospital was only used during the Siege of Budapest (1944-45) and the Hungarian uprising against Soviets in 1956, after which it was repurposed as a prison and nuclear bunker during the Cold war. Consequently, much of its history is related to the communist times and as such it represents a conveyor of communist legacy, interpreted and articulated in particular way. Thus, fully acknowledging the limitations and potential critiques of this approach, the research makes a deliberate choice of maintaining the analysis of the "Hospital in the rock" as an example of how particular features of communism and Cold war are exhibited, interpreted and (or) commodified within this underground space.

Declassified in 2002 and turned into a museum in 2007, "Hospital in the rock" is currently maintained by the association "The Rock" established in 2015 and given the status of Public Benefit Foundation. While in practice the museum tickets are to be bought either online or at the museum cash register (and vending machines), the payment of the ticket is mostly labelled as "donation", although the amount cannot be chosen as there is a fixed price of a donation for each category (adults, students, seniors, etc.). As an example, a simple adult ticket is "sold" at 5000 HUF if chosen an option "donation" or 6350 HUF (5000 + VAT) if chosen an option "simple museum visit". In fact, the museum online ticket shop specifies that the museum visit is offered "as a non-consideration service" when the "specified amount" is donated. Highlighting that the Foundation is operating the museum independently, without the state support, the website also has several dedicated "donation" options, inviting visitors to support the maintenance and functioning of the museum.

There are two major themes covered throughout the exhibition. The first one is related to the history of the bunker as a hospital, both throughout the Siege of Budapest (World war II) and the Hungarian revolution (communist times). The second part is dedicated to the nuclear threat of the Cold war and devastating consequences of the use of the atomic weapons. The tour of the "hospital" part includes visit of the several rooms used for operating and treating patients, medical tools and equipment of the time and Friedrich Born memorial exhibition, as

well as a former air raid alarm centre, Siege of Budapest exhibition and special operation forces exhibition. Throughout the exhibition, wax figures made by one of the foundation's employees have been used for re-enactment purposes, staging different scenes and situations from the history of the hospital. Parts of the exhibition include surprising items that one would not expect in a bunker-hospital, such as the part of a parachute, a military vehicle or an entire MI2 helicopter, brought in pieces and assembled underground.

During the guided tour, it was clearly delineated at which point the tour of the hospital finishes and participants "enter the nuclear bunker", making thus both physical and psychological boundary between the two realms of the underground space. While one would have expected the items of civil defence and military equipment similar to those seen throughout the 'hospital' space to make the core of the 'bunker' exhibition, there is surprisingly few of these in this part of the museum. Instead, nuclear bunker showcases mostly items related to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic destruction. These include pictures of the landscape of the Japanese cities after the nuclear attacks, replicas of the items exhibited in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, origami paper cranes and drawings of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombing survivors depicting the events following the attack. While parts of the tour also covered topics directly related to the bunker, such as the emergency protocols in case of the nuclear attack, or functioning of the air and water supply centre, the curatorial and discursive organization of the bunker tour undoubtedly centred on the destruction and consequences of the Japanese nuclear disaster. The room displaying shadows of people who died in the attack, pictures of the effects of the radiation on human bodies and maps simulating the scope of destruction caused by contemporary nuclear weapon on different cities all participate in designing a "dark" experience, signalling terror, suffering and fear.

The exhibition displayed in the museum-bunker is a combination of originals, replicas and fakes, with characteristic life-size wax figures used for historical re-enactment and aimed to stage "authentic" scenes from the hospital. Similarly, objects such as helicopter or military vehicle which originally do not belong to the hospital, are all placed in the bunker in order to provide vivid and stimulating environment for the visitors. Some of these items, such as wax figures, are often placed strategically to illustrate particular processes and activities taking place in the hospital, such as doctors and nurses caring for the patients, treatment of wounded soldiers in the battlefield, or meetings of the civil air defence league. These are often used as visual cues enabling the guides to convey particular stories from the history of the hospital, its organization and functioning. Yet, other objects, such as weapons and military vehicles are not

only spatially de-contextualised, but there are also no discursive or storytelling attempts to "place" them within the bunker and relate with the history of the place. Instead, their role is to entertain and commodify the space, offering "unexpected twists" to the usual museum display and 'dynamizing' the overall cultural experience.

Similar as in the Bezovka bunker in Prague, in the "Hospital in the rock" nuclear bunker museum there is a wide array of protective suits, gas masks, decontaminating devices and radioactivity detectors displayed throughout the exhibition. Yet, while in the Prague's bunker these are discursively situated precisely within the history of the Cold war and communism, in "Hospital in the rock" these items are illustrative of the general danger of radioactivity and destructive potential of the nuclear weapon, highlighting brutality and annihilating character of the nuclear conflict. Furthermore, in Budapest's bunker civil defence items stand alongside a rather unorthodox collection of replicas from the Hiroshima museum, various pictures of landscape destruction and children's illustrations of the nuclear aftermath. By juxtaposing the two conceptually and thematically unrelated corpus of items, the museum attempts to "fill in the blanks" in bunker's history and compensate the lack of authentic objects. In that sense, the decision to dedicate an entire section of the nuclear bunker in Budapest to the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombing is, albeit surprising, most probably a strong indicator of certain limitations and (un)willingness to engage with more local and more contemporary topics. In fact, it is clear that the history of communism, Cold war and their political and ideological repercussions is deliberately omitted from the museum exhibit and narrative, which focuses instead on the rather "safe" field of nuclear destruction in Japan. Yet, such choices come at the price, and as could be seen from the reviews on TripAdvisor, the last part of the exhibition conveying the story of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is often described as "seemingly unrelated", "not suited for this museum", "pointless" or "out of place". There are some particularly harsh comments in this regard which illustrate the effect such cacophony of artefacts, stories and styles may have on visitors seeking more structured, historically situated experience:

> *"They tried to negate the fact that it had virtually no history by implanting stories & pictures of Hiroshima/Nagasaki and placing mock-ups of what it was like for soldiers outside of the bunker, during WW2 and Afghanistan." (user "buzz_ajs", reviewed July 2019)*

While both tour guide and the staff answering comments on social media emphasize there is a strong connection between the purpose of the bunker and "contested" parts of the exhibition, there are certainly many reasons to question such museal organization and

curatorial practice – if we consider it to be a "museum" at the first place. Indeed, as one can deduce only by reading the name of the site (Hospital in the rock nuclear bunker museum)– this particular underground space could be interpreted as a (former) hospital, nuclear bunker and a museum. By attempting to become all of it at once, the exhibition often ends up in confusing, uncoherent and trivialized historical accounts and re-creations. In that sense, it seems that precisely over-arching commodification of the place, bringing together totally disjointed objects such as medical tools, wax figures, military helicopters and origami paper cranes, created the effect of "misplacedness". It seems that the curators and staff are equally aware of that fact, trying at the very end of the tour to (unconvincingly) bring "fragmented" pieces of the exhibited objects and narrated stories together:

> *"So the main message with this exhibition here today is that in a war situation, there are no true winners, because there is only the destruction that stays behind. And it needs quite a strong society to be able to rebuild itself. And that the true heroes of war are those that are saving lives. So for example, the doctors, the nurses and the volunteers who work inside this hospital as well." (Budapest bunker guide)*

The vagueness and oversimplification of such narration shed light once again on some of the prevailing outcomes of the commodification process, which often leads to spatial and mnemonic "pastiche". In that sense, understood as a source of economic gain, urban heritage gets re-designed, artefacts "fabricated" and history "handpicked" to seduce the largest number of visitors. This is particularly obvious when such underground spaces are operated by different (profit or non-for-profit) institutions and "divorced" from the public authorities. Such withdrawal of "official" institutions enables the diversity of private actors to envision and adapt the space according to their personal preferences toward particular history or curatorial style. As seen from the Budapest example, sometimes, it is also the availability of the artefacts which drives the spatial and narrative organization of the space towards particular outcome. Undoubtedly, such choices are mostly driven by the logic of entrepreneurship and principles of contemporary tourism.

8.2.4 Sub-chapter conclusion

The analysis in this section, addressing commodification of communist "undergrounds", undoubtedly highlighted certain patterns in curatorial, discursive and experiential organisation of communist bunkers. Indeed, as could be seen from the analysis, communist bunkers are re-arranged through a combination of originals, replicas and fake artefacts, which contribute to

the visual eclecticism of the space. What more, the vast number and (dis)organisation of objects inside concrete bounded space creates the impression of visual clutter, while the scarcity of explanatory labels further discourages visitors from engaging with communist history in a serious way. Similarly, the narrative framing of the bunker consistently oscillates between dark history and popular memory, using irony and humour along with the panic, fear and obscurity to create a unique tourist experience. Designed mostly as tourist attractions, contemporary bunkers are thus immersive spaces which approach historical re-enactment and encourage performative history approaches. In that sense, they provide a number of visual cues, staged scenes and even objects available to be touched and manipulated. While the spaces are designed to remain mystical and appear as "hidden gems", they heavily rely on tourist activities and sales of bunker memorabilia for meeting their commercial objectives. Hence, they attempt to attract as large number of visitors as possible, yet also manufacture the experience through the prism of exclusivity and unavailability to the masses.

Due to their spatial isolation, invisibility in urban space and inaccessibility other than through organised tourist activities, communist bunkers undoubtedly "enjoy" certain freedom in terms of curatorial and mnemonic organisation of their exhibition. Furthermore, as particularly vividly shown in the example of Tirana's Bunk'art, commodification of such spaces is not questioned as a practice "corrupting" historical character and authenticity of the place. Instead, it is seen as a contemporary mechanism for re-purposing historical spaces, stimulating engagement with history and pluralising historical interpretations, in ways which reflect needs and aspirations of a modern society. Finally, it is also important to note "transnationalization" of commodification practices and styles, as ways of exhibiting communist history and interacting with bunkers as communist legacy showcase important similarities throughout the region. Furthermore, "transnationalization" of certain narratives, such as Chernobyl or Hiroshima, which either unrelated to any of the particular bunker contexts explored appear in these spaces as visual cues for nuclear devastation, places the "attractiveness" of the narrative in the centre of bunker's conceptualisation. Hence, "borrowing" examples of nuclear experiences and commemorating "international" disasters, communist bunkers attempt to communicate with as wide population of foreign tourists as possible, providing them with fascinating and captivating, albeit de-contextualised and inauthentic "popular" content.

8.3 High-rises of consumption: Commodification of communist landmarks

Post-socialist cityscapes undoubtedly reflect decades of ideological struggles over space and urban organisation. Huge ceremonial boulevards, socialist-realist high-rises, vast industrial complexes, panel housing estates and concrete memorials represent distinctive features of the vast majority of Central and East European urban settlements. The remnants of the communist urban design provoke a wide array of societal emotional responses – ranging from admiration and appreciation to nostalgia, aversion and hostility. As the most prominent, most visible and most recognizable features of urban landscape, the landmarks physically, symbolically and aesthetically dominate the surrounding and define the spatial identity of the place. As elements with particularly strong visual impact, they are often one of the first sites that spark the interest of tourists, appearing on postcards, in guidebooks and travel media reports. Aiming to display power, technological and architectural advancement and omni-presence of communism in society, these buildings had a particularly strong ideological function during communist times. To unveil and extol a new 'glorious' building was both a demonstration of superiority and a deflection from regime's failures to deliver most basic products and services. Due to their sheer size and emblematic character, most of these colossal projects outlived communism and remained as powerful urban reminders of the urban planning in totalitarian regimes.

The cities of Central and East Europe have been undoubtedly permanently marked and "stigmatised" by the iconic communist buildings and their ideological capital (Czepczyński 2010). Despite initial reluctances and even demolition initiatives, most cities maintained their communist 'landmarks', gradually adapting to live with the politically engaged socialist architecture. This was in no way an easy task. Describing the famous Moscow's Seven Sisters, Hatherley (2015, p.215) argues that "these buildings are the most obvious and clear built legacy of Stalin's despotism, their roots unambiguous, their purpose (inside and out) easy to spot, the psychoses that created them easy to read." Indeed, as powerful visual reminders of dictatorship and oppression, these landmarks have been both 'uneasy' and inevitable for the space and society. Due to their urban resilience, contrast with the surrounding built environment and dominance over the skyline they are extremely difficult to ignore, making their relationship with local population at best challenging, at worst – toxic. For tourists, however, these buildings are impressive and immersive – as framing elements of the city's contemporary (post-communist) identity. With the passage of time, these buildings started appearing on postcards as the "front faces" of post-communist cities, and became local urban orienteers, used to facilitate positioning and navigation through the urban space. Through these processes,

communist landmarks gradually gained prominence and entered the "mainstream" societal and urban organisation. Their re-adaptations, re-purposing and re-branding often play significant role in these processes of "coming to terms", as they become more sanitized, more relatable and more 'contemporary', while preserving their "communist" identity and uniqueness.

The gradual acknowledgment of communist landmarks as significant social and cultural assets was negotiated through their commercial function and uses. Due to the exclusivity of their location, historical significance, aesthetical peculiarity or architectural virtuosity, the communist urban icons recently turned into attractive commercial resources, commodified through various and often unexpected processes. Their commercialisation, I argue in the Chapter, both emerged from and further reinforced the societal reconciliation with the 'uneasy' iconic buildings. What more, due to the ambiguous societal relationships with urban icons, their commodification is rarely seen as disruptive, banalizing or pejorative. Instead, the urban, cultural and economic "interventions" are welcomed for their capacity to de-sacralise the space and re-incorporate communist urban iconography into the mainstream societal vacancies. Besides opening to tourism and leisure industry, such processes often include architectural embellishment, functional diversifications and local appropriations of these buildings. Undoubtedly, the commodification causes substantial political, urban and social re-framing of communist landmarks, challenging in the process the display and relationship with local communist heritage and memory.

As a particularly vast category, the analysis of commercial interactions with communist landmarks needed to be substantially reduced in order to be feasible in due time, available resources and pre-determined scope. Hence, the choice of case studies was particularly challenging, as they needed to be both representative and specific enough, in order to avoid reductive and generalizing conclusions but to allow the solid extrapolation of interactions between unwanted urban icons and contemporary capitalist mechanisms. Consequently, following the Hatherley's (2015) argumentation, it was decided to focus the analysis on spaces distinctive for the non-capitalist society, which would not otherwise emerge in contemporary profit-driven urban reality. Thus, the landmarks addressed in this sub-chapter represent the sites which one would hardly ever find in capitalist environment, which makes them even more "distinctively" communist and hence more challenging, more numbing and more declarative. Particularly, the chapter illustrates two exemplary telecommunication towers, Berlin's Fernsehturm and Prague's Žižkov tower, and two palaces – Palace of culture and science in Warsaw and Palace of the Republic in Bucharest. The interactions between tourist encounters

with boldly visible landmarks and their local urban and cultural re-framing have been analysed through ethnographic visits to the sites, conversations with their managers, random tourists and local visitors, and the extensive review of major public debates (available in online media outlets, in English and/or local languages) surrounding the processes of their commercial, social and urban appropriation. Far from being comprehensive and even 'sufficient' and representative, the analysis is however revealing of particular socio-cultural patterns of commercialisation iconic urban places.

8.3.1 Prague – Žižkov TV tower

Often ranking high on the lists of the "world's ugliest structures", 216 meters tall Žižkov Television Tower (Žižkovský vysílač) is probably one of the most emblematic, and undoubtedly most visible buildings in Prague. Designed by the Czech architect Vaclav Aulicky and built from 1985 to 1992, it is often addressed as the "futuristic dream of the communists" and one of the most representative examples of the brutalist architecture in Europe. Despite, or precisely because of its dominant character, the tower has been often contested and criticized by the local population, as disrespectful towards the urban context and detached from the urban environment (Beneš and Ševčik, 2015) or even as "a crime against the old town."[5] Yet, as argued by Beneš and Ševčik (2015) the harsh public rejection of the building has been slowly declining, as new generations learn to appreciate its originality as "the embodiment of the aesthetic courage". This transformation of understanding and acceptance of the tower as an important feature of Prague's urban landscape was undoubtedly influenced by the installation of the famous David Černy's "giant baby statues". Over 2-meters long babies crawling up and down the tower's pillars were intended to be only a temporary installation in the framework of the Prague – European capital of culture 2000. Yet, due to their popularity, the babies remained for over two decades, becoming a symbol of the tower, as "subversive" and "ironic" reaction to its brutality and perverse shape. The artistic intervention on the building's exterior, supported by the tower's main architect Aulicky, is seen as a bridge bringing somewhat "autistic" building (Beneš and Ševčik 2015) closer to the local community, "softening" thus the local attitudes and reconciling the tower with its neighbourhood.

Oscillating between fascination and loathing, the Žižkov tower is undoubtedly a remnant of the communist past, in both architectural style and volume, and urban structure and function.

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[5] From the interview with the Czech architect Martin Crise, available at: https://english.radio.cz/zizkov-tv-tower-8067046, date accessed July 9, 2022.

Yet, it went through a significant re-branding over the last two decades. In the process, exterior and interior, surrounding landscape and even its name have been transformed. From 2011 the tower went through a thorough reconstruction, opening up in late 2012 as a Tower Park Prague, boasting a panoramic fine-dining restaurant at 66m above the ground, an exclusive One Room Hotel and an observatory with 360-degrees view. With additionally opened garden restaurant, ice rink, open-air theatre and a mini golf course at the foot of the tower, the high-rise was clearly re-branded into a place for leisure, luxury and tourism. This transformation of form and function was actually conditioned by the transfer of ownership, as Česke Radiokomunikace, the owner of the tower, leased it for a period of 25 years to a private company, Oreathea group, which since 2011 operates and maintains the popular building, also nicknamed the "Česka raketa" (Czech rocket). More precisely, the agreement stipulates that Oreathea shall transform, manage and invest in public spaces, from the foot of the tower to 98m height, while the upper floors remain operated by Česke Radiokomunikace, which uses them for telecommunication purposes. Operating thousands of transmission towers throughout the country, Czech Radiocommunications, owned at the time by the Australian investor (Macquarie Infrastructure and Real Assets) lacked both the know-how and the resources needed for managing the tower for the public, according to the Martin Gebauer, CFO at the time.[6] Instead, it was by giving under lease that the tower was given a „second life", becoming an interactive space for variety of corporate, family, leisure and tourist activities.

While the main commercial activities of the tower revolve around restaurants, hotel and the observatory, there is also a rather wide array of events that the company offers to host and organize in the premises of the former „Žižkovska vež." The effects of the renovation which made the tower's interior ultra-modern in style and suitable for high-end events are particularly visible on the Tower's website, which advertises the building's facilities and possible uses in a very sleek, elegant and contemporary way. The "event centre" of the Tower Park thus promotes the building as an appropriate venue for number of upscale events, including congresses, exhibitions, corporate gatherings, press conferences, wedding celebrations, fashion shows, teambuilding activities, concerts and theatre plays, live TV broadcasts, etc. In a way, the unique design of the tower, its aesthetic notoriety and international prominence act as a catalyser for its commercial usage, rather than its historical background and 'communist' appeal. What more, the most „marketable" assets of the place seem to be its many ironic

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[6] Source: https://cesky.radio.cz/opravena-zizkovska-vez-se-znovu-otevrela-verejnosti-8550014, accessed 14 June 2022

'nicknames', public contestations and architectural criticism. Or, in words of Roman Lain, one of the tower's managers:

> *"For our purposes, aiming to run the place for tourists, it is actually an advantage that this structure was once voted the second ugliest on Earth. That presents a marketing advantage as people will certainly be interested in seeing such an infamous place."*[7]

Undoubtedly, the commodification of the tower is a peculiar paradox. Surprisingly, despite numerous interventions in its interior and exterior, the tower did not lose its character as the symbol of communism. Locals and tourists are still first and foremost aware of the building as the "communist space-rocket". Yet, its aesthetic and architectural controversies have been "polished" through artistic installations, modern re-styling and commercial exploitation. In other words, the commodification actually "humanized" formerly "austere" and "detached" structure, by designing and advertising the space as a modern city landmark rather than communist heritage site. Thus, what is commodified in case of the Žižkov tower is not its communist legacy, but its urban prominence and architectural distinctiveness. While the tower is recognized as a remnant of communism, it is not communist history that made it commercially attractive – it even operates almost entirely "detached" from its totalitarian legacy. Instead, it is the exclusivity of the space and its idiosyncratic aesthetics that represent the "selling points" of the tower and its premises and offers. In that sense, the commodification neither capitalized on, nor hindered the "communist" spatial and mnemonic legacy of the tower. It appears that many other characteristics and features of the tower were more prominent, more attractive and more commercially exploitable. Despite still recognized as constitutive, the communism nonetheless remains rather marginal in contemporary uses of the building and its commercial utilization.

8.3.2 Berlin – Fernsehturm

With the height of 368 meters, Berlin's television tower, the Berliner Fernsehturm, represents the tallest structure in Germany and one of the most popular symbols of Berlin. Conceived by the GDR architect Hermann Henselmann and constructed from 1965 to 1969 according to the design of Günter Franke and Fritz Dieter, the Fernsehturm represents a powerful reminder of the Cold war, the modernism and the Zeitgeist in Germany. A team of

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[7] Available at: https://english.radio.cz/pragues-rocket-tv-tower-undergoes-re-fuelling-20th-anniversary-8556436, date accessed July 9, 2022.

prominent East German planners and architects imbedded modernist ideas both in tower's design and its urban surrounding, making it imposing and symbolically dominating the space, yet applying Le Corbusier's concepts in arrangement and functional setting of the open public spaces and facilities around the Tower. The Tower itself is reminiscent of the "space-travel enthusiasm" of the 60s, with a Sphere paying tribute to the first Sputnik satellite and the shaft simulating a rocket. Sending a strong message of architectural virtuosity and technological progressiveness of the Eastern bloc, the Tower went a long way from the metaphor of communist ambition to the symbol of German reunification.

Owned by Deutsche Telekom, the Tower was renovated in 1997 and 2011, modernising the interior yet without removing the "vintage" charm of the 60s, preserving much of the original "vibe" in both furniture and the overall design. The major attraction of the Tower, the revolving restaurant, in over 5 decades only went through minor refurbishments, and it still looks strikingly similar to when it first opened in 1969. Similarly, a simple walk through the Tower's interior provides a strong evidence of the importance given to the preservation of the historical fabrics of the place, since most of its inner design, including staircases, chandeliers, wooden panels and ceilings still reflects the characteristic communist style of late 60s. This historical anchoring of the Tower is reflected in its official presentation too, as the website presents the abundance of historical information and even some archival pictures, clearly situating the Tower within the Berlin's turbulent past.

Still used as a broadcasting tower, Fernsehturm over the years became one of the most important tourist attractions of the city, nowadays hosting over 1 million tourists per year. The main point of interest is undoubtedly the observation desk at the altitude of 203 meters, with 360 degrees view over Berlin and boards presenting images and short descriptions of the city's 200 major attractions. Several meters above the observation, the former "Telecafe", now known as the revolving restaurant "Sphere", promises "a culinary journey through 50 years of Berlin." Besides its standard offer, the restaurant, accessible only with a valid tower ticket and a reservation, also organises salsa nights, family breakfasts, and jazz concerts in the framework of "art and culture in the tower" program. Both the restaurant and the observation deck are also rented for various types of events, including corporate and personal celebrations that require "world-famous, historical architecture and a unique view."

> *"The TV Tower is a unique event location in every respect. Whether for 20 or 200*
> *people, we create a perfect, stylish ambience for your event and make company parties,*

receptions, banquets, weddings, birthdays, Christmas parties and other festivities an unforgettable experience for you and your guests.''[8]

Thus, despite its historical character and the strong emphasize given to its tradition and historical context, the Tower is commodified not as much as a symbol of communism, but as one of the world's most popular high-rises. Its totalitarian legacy plays minor, if any role in its commercial employment. Instead, it is the "breath-taking view" and the "mix of modern design and retro chic" that creates marketability of the place. This is not to say that its historical context and modernist legacy do not contribute to the aura of exclusivity and uniqueness of the monumental structure. In fact, the Tower remains one of the "best known and visually most compelling examples of the political and economic power of the socialist state" (Gumbert 2010, p.98). Yet, the commercial appeal seems to be connected rather to its recognizable aesthetics and architectural uniqueness, than the communist background. Or, while the communist history might have indirectly participated in establishing the Tower as an iconic landmark of Berlin and raising its international prominence and cultural capital, communism is not in the core of its commodification process. In fact, communist features are nor what instigated commodification, nor the fabric commodified. Instead, the Tower is advertised through its retro design, recognizable architecture and unique panorama, giving the aura of exclusivity and prestigious character of the visit. Consequently, it represents a case of communist heritage which became listed, managed and commercialized not because it is communist, but because it is deemed valuable in terms of architecture, urban design and monumental status.

8.3.3 Warsaw – Palace of Culture and Science

There are very few buildings in the world which are as typically "communist" as the Warsaw Palace of Culture and Science. And there is certainly not a single building more recognizable and more controversial than the Palace in the city of Warsaw. A 237-meter-tall skyscraper occupying as much as 35000 square meters of the ground area was already at the time of the construction, in 1950s, predetermined to become the Warsaw's "unchallenged social and architectural *dominanta*" (Goldzamt 1956, quoted in Murawski 2019, p.9). Surprisingly, unlike many of the socialist planning projects which failed to deliver its urban, architectural and social promises, almost 70 years since it was constructed, the Palace remains

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[8] Retrieved from: https://tv-turm.de/en/events-celebrations/, date accessed June 21, 2022.

unchallenged in terms of overwhelming dominance over the urban landscape and social life of the Varsovians. This does not mean that there were no attempts to contain and diminish the building and its ideological capital. There were several ambitious municipal projects to overshadow the Palace by building skyscrapers in its immediate surrounding and make it "one tall building among many" (Deputy Mayor Jacek Wojciechowicz, quoted in Murawski 2019, p.11), in order to move beyond what even state officials address as the "Palace Complex". Nonetheless, the Palace still remains poignantly central to the historical, urban and social organization of the city and the everyday life of its inhabitants.

The controversies surrounding the Palace and its brutal dominance over the Warsaw landscape are at least as old as the Palace itself. Perceived as a sign of "Soviet occupation" rather than the propagated "Stalin's gift" and a powerful reminder of the communist oppression, the Palace has become over the years one of the most disputed, most contentious and most captivating topics of Polish (and European) urban history. Built in Socialist Realist recognizable "wedding cake" style of architecture and aesthetically "divorced" from the Warsaw's urban fabrics, the monumental Palace is undoubtedly too visible to be ignored. Yet, it would be short-sighted to consider its notoriety to be entirely a consequence of the sheer size and style of the Palace, or its urban subjugation of the remaining parts of Warsaw. What matters even more than its physical domination over the city is its capacity to permeate lives of Varsovians and its presence, resilience, permanence and relevance for the contemporary Warsaw. Indeed, due to its multi-purposeness, colossal dimensions and vibrant location, the Palace became a locus of social, economic and cultural life of the city, cross-referencing perpetually the communist history and every-day activities. In that sense, as argued by Murawski (2019, p. xiii), "much (if not all) of Warsaw could be encompassed through the prism of its relations with the Palace."

While many of the communist landmarks have been successfully "cleansed" of their communist legacy and re-branded as bastions of capitalism, the Warsaw Palace of Culture and Science remains "locked" in the "unwanted gift" perspective, as an eternal reminder of communist megalomania and local powerlessness and humiliation. With none of the projects for its demolition ever reaching a serious stage, and the attempts to conceal it through urban interventions in its immediate proximity (through skyscrapers, fragmentation of Parade Square, construction of Museum of Modern arts) with limited success, the Palace showed remarkable resilience in time and space. Even though the communism collapsed over three decades ago, the Palace not only stands firmly as a visual emblem of the capital, but also more than ever

through its history it pulses as a vibrant social and cultural hub of the city. Hosting Youth palace, panoramic terrace, multiplex cinema, swimming pool, bars, restaurants, universities, museums, dance academy, municipal administration and number of small businesses, the Palace is one of the busiest and most effervescent places in East-Central Europe, consuming as much energy as a town of 30,000 people.

With so many inhabitants actually encountering Palace on every-day basis, either because they are working inside or because they use some of the services and activities organized within, it is not surprising that the Palace transitioned from despised reminder of symbolic "Soviet rape of Poland" to the fascinating object of cultural fetishism and nucleus of social life. Managed by the municipal LLC, the "Administration of the Palace of Culture", the building is home to many private companies, ranging from beauty salons to urban bee apiaries and accounting offices. As such, it is regularly frequented by Varsovians from all social strata. Yet, it would be obviously reductive to consider implantation of private companies in the Palace as a sign of commodification of communist heritage. Most of the activities and services organized within the Palace are completely unrelated to the communist history and independent from the building's historic legacy. Instead, the choice to situate particular commercial activities in the Palace is often due to the convenience of the location, availability of adequate premises or their competitive prices. For some, however, it is also the question of 'prestige' of having a 'home' in the Palace or staying inside one of the liveliest 'tourist' spots of the city.

While the majority of economic activities in the Palace remain 'divorced' from their historical context, there are undoubtedly practices and projects which commodify precisely the urban and historic fabric of the Palace. Such are the guided tours of the Palace organized by a tourist company operating inside the Palace (FPT1313), or a shop selling souvenirs and communist memorabilia. To some extent, even the Event centre of the Palace capitalizes on communist chic and historical character of its' interior. Yet, the diversity of events being organized in the premises of the Palace, ranging from wedding celebrations to trade fairs, fashion shows or jazz festivals, makes it highly improbable to generalize contexts or degrees of commodification of communist heritage within such activities. Most of such events are undoubtedly, not drawn to Palace due to its communist legacy, but due to its emblematic status in contemporary Polish urban and social life. However, the building's prominence is to a large extent anchored in its controversial history, subversive aesthetics and political, ideological and cultural predilections. Hence, communist legacies and the societal capacity to 'come to terms with it' indirectly navigate, or at least facilitate its commercial uses.

Despite seeming "reconciliation" between historical legacy of the Palace and social and urban identity of the city, it still represents a particularly 'flammable' remnant of the communist past, capable of creating new controversies and reviving the old disputes at most unexpected times. Such was the aesthetical clash of the first cover of Polish Vogue, showing Polish supermodels posing on black Soviet Volga car in front of the Palace, in a subversive homage to the bygone communist era. Such juxtaposition of the socialist urban and cultural symbols and capitalist luxury fetishism is visible throughout the Polish edition of the magazine, featuring models in lavishly expensive jewellery and Versace dresses posing amidst potatoes and cabbages on the Palace floor, combining ironic and subversive messages and connotations. National and international press reacted to such "stereotypization" as a deliberate attempt to banalize Polish cultural and urban landscape, keeping it 'contained' within post-socialist framework and 'tamed' by the Soviet remnants, even on the luxury goods market. Thus, social and commercial 'reconciliation' with the Palace might be viable only when it does not challenge the contemporary identity frameworks, national pride and its public demeanor. In a similar vein, the attitudes towards the Palace oscillate depending on the personal relationships with it. Thus, the "nightmare of a drunken confectioner" became actually "dream come true" for many who celebrated their weddings at the Terrace or met their partners inside the Palace's premises. Consequently, the contemporary uses of the Palace often 'soften' the repugnance and revolt and replace them with romanticization and affective commitment, stemming from the personal engagement with the place and strong place attachment emerging consequently. One might say that commodification is both a result and a catalyzer of societal 'reconciliation' with uneasy urban memoryscapes.

8.3.4 Bucharest – Palace of the Parliament

As one of the largest administrative buildings in the world, second only to Pentagon, the Palace of the Parliament occupies a vast area of 350 thousand square meters in central Bucharest. As a painful reminder of the brutality of communist regime and megalomaniac paranoia of the country's totalitarian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, the Palace, formerly known as the House of People, remains one of the most odious, most stigmatized and most contentious buildings in Central Europe. With number of historic districts, churches and family houses destroyed in the project of 'spatial cleansing' for the sake of the construction of the Ceausescu's Palace, the building is unsurprisingly seen through the prism of hefty sacrifices Romanian people had to make in the name of it. Consequently, after the dissolution of communism, there were serious considerations to demolish the structure. However, these were soon disregarded

due to the colossal costs of such operation. Bound to re-use it, the Romanians considered several concepts for re-purposing the building, including the project of adaptation into a giant casino, transformation into a largest shopping mall in the world, Disney-like Dracula theme park or the Museum of communism. Eventually, it was decided that the building will host a Romanian Parliament, Chamber of Deputies, Museum of contemporary arts and the International Conference Centre. Upon the decision of the Chamber of Deputies, in 1994 the management of the large part of the Palace was outsourced to the International Conference Centre, who oversees the organization of guided tours through the Palace and rents number of rooms for various commercial purposes.

Challenges and aims of the contemporary re-branding of the building could be best grasped through the official representations of the Palace. Noteworthy, the official home page of the Palace opens with a splendid night-view picture of the Palace addressed as "a masterpiece of the Romanians", in words of the former Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Catherine Lalumiere.[9] Yet, precise and full quote was actually "the palace of a megalomaniac man, but also a masterpiece of the Romanian people", however 'slight' de-contextualization sheds light on institutional determination to make a discursive shift, from Palace as the symbol of oppression to Palace as the symbol of Romanian craftsmanship. Indeed, with the post-communist transformation of the society, the need to emancipate urban landscape became one of the focal points. Where physical transformation seemed impossible, other strategies were employed, aimed at neutralizing and sanitizing difficult heritage. The attempts to 'contain' the communist legacy of the Palace, as the "grotesque Romanian contribution to totalitarian urbanism" (Judt 2001) included narrative, artistic, spatial and commercial interventions. In terms of discursive re-branding, the Palace was labelled as symbol of modernity, Romanian "savoir-faire" and, paradoxically, even 'democracy', as it hosts some of the main political bodies of democratic regime. Besides the most obvious activities of the Museum of Contemporary Arts, the artistic strategies mostly focused on downsizing, ridiculing, ironizing or confronting the building and its physical and psychological grandeur. Spatial interventions include the construction of the external glass elevators, or most recent erection of the People's Salvation Cathedral right next to the Palace, 50m taller than the Palace itself, aimed to "provide a dialogue" between politics and religion, yet being heavily criticized for "rivalling" the colossal building and attempting to "correct" communist urban deliriums through new megalomaniac projects. Finally, commercial interventions range from renting the

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[9] Retrieved from: http://cic.cdep.ro/en, date accessed Jun 21, 2022.

premises of the Palace to all sorts of events, including conferences, fashion shows, wedding celebrations and photo shootings, to organizing Top Gear races in its underground tunnels, or having Shakira, Bon Jovi and Lady Gaga performing in front of the Palace.

The contemporary challenges of coming to terms with difficult urban legacies are particularly visible in the way that guided tours of the Palace are organized. The English guided tour of the Palace taken in 2015 already demonstrated that deliberate choice was made to 'purge' the building from its uneasy dictatorial history. Instead of the stories of communism and Ceausescu, the narrative of the tour emphasized the architectural value of the Palace, Romanian craftsmanship and richness of the construction and decoration materials used, as well as the contemporary uses of the building. Exhibiting impressive staircases, halls and rooms, the tour was designed to showcase the 'masterpiece of the Romanians' as a product of extraordinary savoir-faire, architectural virtuosity and manufacturing mastery. While Ceausescu and communism were only briefly mentioned at the beginning of the tour, the extravagant facts and figures were put forward and contemporary spatial arrangement of the Palace addressed in detail. The focus on lavishly decorated premises obscured the topics which belong to the 'uneasy' or 'controversial' context of the building, such as the 'patriotic labour', food deprivations, tortures and oppression which framed the construction of the edifice. What more, the questions of the tourists concerning communism and Ceausescu were quickly and efficiently "managed" by the guide, through a combination of deflection, de-contextualization and re-direction of the narrative.

Yet, some of the more recent research endeavours, such as the netnographic analysis of the website of the Palace, reveal the emergence of the "uncomfortable" discourses from the 'inside'. For the last several years, the official web pages of the Palace provide significantly more information related to the "uncomfortable" history of the building, in terms of its connection with communism and Ceausescu. Thus, one may find number of urban legends and myths about the Palace, a short urban history of Bucharest with a brief note about Romanian communism, and several anecdotes and trivia about Ceausescu family. Yet, similarly as in the tour, there are not many information about people's sufferance, destruction of urban fabric, displacement, shortages or anything particularly "dark" or uncomfortable. Thus, there seem to be a gradual acknowledgment of the historical fabrics of the building, yet also the reluctance to engage more profoundly with its controversial legacies. In that sense, parts of history displayed, advertised and commodified are undoubtedly 'handpicked' to display particular

urban image, cultural identity and social relevance. More often than not, however, such choices are market-driven, or at least influenced by the contemporary interest of the tourists. In that sense, commodification as a commercial 'acknowledgment' of obliterated fragments of uncomfortable history might be understood as a tool for making sense of the difficult past and a starting point for reconciling with unwanted totalitarian legacies.

8.3.5 Sub-chapter conclusion

The engagement with communist landmarks, as most visible, most permanent and often most "painful" urban traces of communism have been explored in this section through the analysis of four cases, selected due to their particular character – as they belong to the structures which visually and functionally oppose the contemporary urban design and organisation. Both Palaces and TV towers mentioned through the sub-chapter represent particularly "unsettled" buildings, both aesthetically and architecturally, and in terms of their non-contemporaneity of urban forms and functions. However, due to their dominance over the surrounding landscape, centrality in organisation of urban life, tourist attractiveness and significant re-purposing potential, they were, more often and more urgently than most other communist legacies, re-branded and sanitized. While spatial re-constructions were often limited, different artistic (such as the Giant babies on Žižkov tower), architectural (glass "insertion" of Museum of Modern Arts to the façade of Palace of the Parliament) and tourist (opening of the observation towers at the Palace of culture and Science, Žižkov tower and Fernsehturm) interventions were used to mediate the contemporary relationship with difficult legacies. Hence, commodification was ensured by transferring ownership or the "licence to use" from state to private actors, diminishing thus the potential criticism of the official neglect and controversies over their practical uses.

In all cases observed, tourism appeared as one of the dominant activities, but the rental of premises for variety of purposes including corporate and private celebrations, conferences and large-scale international events was also a surprisingly common commodification strategy. While such activities are advertised and executed in diverse ways throughout the region, it is important to note than in each of these cases, it was not communism that was commodified. Rather, it was their urban prominence, central location, aesthetic and stylistic features and iconic status of the place that were major "selling points". Hence, while communist legacy indirectly contributed to the commodification of these sites, their commercialisation was mostly fuelled and advertised through different set of features and characteristics. Surprisingly, while still remaining symbols of communism, these sites are in their commercial activities

often "ahistorical", testifying of the highly contradictory "cohabitation" of two different frameworks of engagement. What more, by de-sacralising the space and incorporating communist urban iconography into the realm of contemporary commercial activities, commodification often "humanized" formerly contested sites. Blending commodified and historical engagement with communism, communist landmarks appear as facilitators of "alternative" approaches to history and memory, framed by co-existence and interaction of plurality of mnemonic, urban and commercial interventions. What more, such commercial "compromises" could be also seen as catalysers of societal reconciliation with urban legacies of communism. Indeed, by ensuring continuous exposure and frequent encounters with the communist past, in often sanitized form and "everyday" setting, commodification contributes to acknowledgment and disburdenment of "difficult" legacies. In that way, communist landmarks become bastions of architectural and cultural value, rather than urban traces of dictatorial regime.

8.4 Consuming the periphery: Commodification of suburban communist heritage

Long opposed to the city as the antipode of 'urban', suburbs have been increasingly understood as a "continuum of the city's spatial-social complexity" (Vaughan 2015, p.1). Often neglected and considered "emptied" of historical, communal and aesthetical value, suburbs are nonetheless crucial for tracing historic and spatial evolutions of the city. Due to their accessibility, low density and attractive price, suburban areas have been often used for the new real-estate development as easily malleable "blank spaces". Indeed, most of the time history and heritage of the suburbs are neglected and marginalised, in both scholarship and everyday practices. Yet, heritage of suburbs represents an important asset reflecting the cultural diversity, consolidating the spatial identity and fostering the resilience of urban peripheries. What more, focus on suburban memoryscapes help us understand how the heritage has been negotiated between the centre and the periphery, and how such relationships are articulated through commodification processes.

While heritage sites are usually placed, activated and consumed in historic downtowns and popular tourist urban hubs, some of the communist memoryscapes ended up at the urban outskirts. Sometimes, this is simply a matter of "destiny" – certain monuments, memorials and buildings are historically placed in locations which due to different processes in the city became (or remained) peripheral. Other times, however, it is a choice of convenience, when previously

centrally located heritage sites or objects are removed to suburban areas, for various, mostly political and economic reasons. This was often the case with communist heritage sites, such as monuments and statues. Knowing the nature of post-communist urban and political transformations, it would be naïve to believe that communist memorials have been mis-placed due to the lack of urban capacities. Instead, most of the spatial re-positioning of communist memoryscapes was a consequence of deliberate attempts to "cleanse" the urban downtowns and remove the visible traces of the unwanted past. This was particularly evident in post-communist 'management' of communist statues and monuments, which were often the first to disappear from urban landscape, in order to make space for ideological renewal and urban re-branding. Displacement of controversial and dissonant monuments as a form of spatial "decontamination" often turned out to be highly contentious and subversive process, as epitomized in the dispute over the relocation of the Tallinn's Bronze Soldier. The removal of the Soviet World War 2 memorial from central Tallinn to peripheral Defence Forces Cemetery in 2007 was followed by riots, diplomatic rift and cyberattacks on Estonian organisations, showcasing the complexity of political, social and mnemonic contingencies of such processes.

Yet, even for the memorials, buildings and objects re-located to periphery without controversies, as well as for those originally placed in suburban areas, the 'rules of engagement' remain arguably different. This is particularly evident in the era of commodification of heritage assets, where different commercial 'solutions' have been proposed and implemented in suburbs, compared to the centrally located communist landmarks. In the first place, the remoteness of the location makes the tourist exploitation of such spaces more challenging, bringing thus their financial viability in question. As a response, various original techniques and strategies, ranging from heavy tourist advertising to renting premises and publishing books, have been adopted. Consequently, it is important to reflect on the specificities of the communist heritage of suburbs, including the sites as varied as the train (station) and (statute) park. Without searching to generalize, the cases analysed in this section demonstrate only two (out of myriad of possible) scenarios. They are however important as they shed light on the particular sets of challenges and solutions emerging from the character of peripheral memoryscapes. While diversity of monuments and memorials may enter this category, including institutions such as Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia, Hohenschnohausen memorial in Berlin or House of Ceausescu in Bucharest, the Memento Park (Budapest) and Blue train (Belgrade) are chosen as case studies since they reflect most of these suburban heritage processes and display several different commodification mechanisms determined by

their spatial setting. The analysis of these sites was conducted through a combination of ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews with their managers, and content analyses of their web pages, media reports, and user-generated reviews.

8.4.1 Budapest – Memento Park

Located at the outskirts of Budapest, Memento park represents one of the politically, aesthetically and socially most relevant, most referential and at the same time most controversial solutions for dealing with the 'unwanted' urban traces in the aftermath of dictatorship. As most of the former communist countries, in the first half of 1990s Hungary had a difficult task to address and contain urban legacies of the former regime. Throughout Europe, most of the monuments associated with communism have been toppled, removed and destroyed, often through violent public outbursts of anger, by citizens who saw it as the ultimate 'liberation' of the space from totalitarian past. Yet, for Hungarian state, the idea of political removal of the 'unwanted' propaganda statues in order to re-arrange public space to reflect new state ideology was seen as a continuation of dictatorial practices and violation of the newly established democratic principles (Toth 2011). Aiming to provide a possibility for the people to preserve their memories, yet also to remove the symbols of failed regime from the urban centre, Hungarian policy-makers entitled Budapest Gallery to coordinate the competition for the architectural concept of the future park, where the unwanted communist statues will be organised and displayed. Offering a solution which escapes both glorification and stigmatisation of communist regime, Hungarian architect Akos Eleod designed the winning proposal of the Park, with two organically connected sites – the Statue Park, exhibiting the removed sculptures, and the Witness Square, with replica of "Stalin's boots" and premises for exhibitions, catering and shops.

Showing as much openness and dignity, as the tolerance and "mercy" of the democratic system towards abdicated communist ideas, the Memento Park was strategically placed in a remote "wasteland" of the 22nd district, some 14 kilometres from the downtown Budapest. The Park was officially opened in 1993, yet fully completed only in 2006 with the inauguration of the "Boots" on the Witness Square. While analysing the political turmoil surrounding almost 13 years of stagnation and deadlocks in the process of its completion is out of scope of this paper, it is however important to note that the process of actually implementing the project of the Park was not as straightforward as the decision making. This testifies to the fluctuating political priorities and lack of public engagement (and/or interest) in the matter. While Park was initially conceived as a place of commemoration, education and pilgrimage, it was the

surprisingly positive international reaction that raised awareness of the tourist potential of the place. Or, in the words of one of the Park's managers, interviewed in March 2022: *"this was a memento for the Hungarian people basically, and later we turned it into a tourist attraction."* Thus, the initial project was not motivated by profit and commodification came only as a consequence of both the interest of visitors and governmental disengagement from funding and maintenance of the Park. Indeed, as the informant from the Park framed it *"the Hungarian state and the municipality of Budapest excluded itself from its financial maintenance, and it has been operated by a small enterprise for 29 years without state support."* Such eradication of Memento park from the 'official' cultural map and lack of state funding thus opened the door for various types of commercial engagement with the site, making the management of the past in this particular site both more challenging, and "more fun" according to the Park's manager.

Indeed, over the last decade the Park unexpectedly became one of the most important tourist attractions of the city of Budapest. Its implantation in the suburbs of Budapest, in order to keep the communist remnants out of sight, now actually seems as a problematic aspect of the Park's growing popularity and commercialization.

> *"As it wasn't designed as tourist attraction, I mean, nobody really cared. It was just designed a proper place, like enough place for these statues and for the conceptual design. And I don't know, urbanization takes us closer and closer to Budapest. Now, if you really plan it, then you can approach a Memento Park in 35 minutes."* (Memento Park manager)

While spatial dissociation of the site from the main tourist hubs makes it more complicated to attract and bring larger audience to the Park, it is somehow also a source of "pride" that it is not a mass tourism destination.

> *"It is far enough from the city. So it is a popular destination, but not a populist destination, [it] attracts particular audience."* (Memento Park manager)

What more, it is by creating a strong brand, by collaborating with tour operators, advertising the Park on tourist maps and flyers and managing social media presence that the Park's management overcomes the „spatial" dislocation from tourist city centre, ensuring that even *"independent travellers they are fighty, fill in the place, and they do the distance, they come here."* Thus, the heritage sites placed in the urban suburbs require different set of techniques to attract the visitors and the effort made to reach it represents part of the tourist

experience – Park comes as a reward for the determination to make the trip and exit the usual tourist areas.

Besides the sale of the entry tickets, Memento Park management designed number of additional tourist and commercial activities, ranging from the guided tours and Trabant transfers to Park, to the theme-building activities, the "Red Star Store" souvenir shop and the alternative communist tours in the 'Trabbie'. Most of their offer is advertised on the official website, presenting the Store as "a goldmine for vintage souvenirs, nostalgic bric-a-brac, and authentic relics," selling diversity of badges, postcards, propaganda posters, Soviet passports and similar memorabilia. Yet, besides the rather common tourist commercial activities, the area has been also available for rent, and over the years many corporate and private events have been organised within the Park's premises. Already in the late 90s, the Hungarian telecommunication company Pannon GSM organised its big corporate event in the Park, and electric techno DJ sessions, concerts and 'fancy car meetups' have been also hosted in the Park recently.

While the guided tour of the park actually enables visitors to understand and appreciate the context and the concept of the space, it is not the Park's museal character which makes it appropriate for renting to commercial events. Rather, according to the company's representative, it is the vastness of the open space and the sassiness of the Park as the last "guardian" of artistic and historical value of communist monuments that attract its commercial re-use.

> *"And regardless of the point of your interest, or the reason of your event, this is a great scenery. And who wouldn't want to, you know, who wouldn't want to party under Stalin's boots, who wouldn't want to drive in a park, with actually the last Eastern European Communist propaganda statues?" (Memento Park manager)*

On the one hand, the spatial dislocation of communist monuments, depriving them of their "power" and "threatening effects" (Turai 2009) and the juxtaposition of multiple themes, styles and historical periods in their display throughout the Park (DeTar 2015) have been often criticized as problematic and "disempowering" for not only the statues, but the visitors too. Often addressed as a "communist graveyard", the Park with its conceptual design omitting museal explanations and interpretations of the displaced and 'mismatched' statues certainly appears confusing to many independent visitors unaware of the communist history and architectural design of the place. While the idea is "to make everybody build their own

thoughts, and own story" in interaction with the Park, it is debatable whether a typical tourist critically reflects and profoundly engages with the statues, as it requires significant intellectual effort and cultural curiosity which often surpasses the aspirations of the contemporary leisure tourism. On the other hand, when the Park is used as a venue for commercial events, such drawbacks and critiques become irrelevant, as these practices are not about understanding the concept of the Park or the history of statues, but about spending time in an exclusive and eclectic environment. Contrary to the tourist visits which strive for meaningful cultural experiences, organisation of commercial events favours outstanding, peculiar and eccentric scenery without questioning its historical, ideological or cultural repercussions.

Finally, it is appropriate to note that similarly as the Ceausescu's Palace, the Memento Park has been imagined as a place "dedicated to democracy", since the mere act of preserving and openly displaying, instead of violently destroying the monuments to the previous regime, is understood as the sign of dignity, tolerance and democratic openness. Even the architect's explanation of the conceptual design concluded with the statement about how "it is a pleasure to participate in the absence of book burning" (Eled 1993, quoted in Toth 2011), thus emphasizing superiority of the peaceful and respectful engagement with the ideologically charged remnants of the unwanted past. The conversation with the company's representative revealed that even nowadays the Park has been often contacted by civil and political leaders (as in Black Lives Matter movement in the US) to advise on the "peaceful management" of the vandalized monuments. Thus, paradoxically, the act of displacing, silencing and "reducing" political statues to artistic 'mementos', branded the Park as a symbol of democratic values and a "museum of democracy".

> *"And this is how they have become eternal symbols of a fall of a dictatorship or Hungarian peoples fight for freedom. And so they are the symbols of democracy. And at the end of the day, Memento Park is a museum of democracy." (Memento Park manager)*

Hence, the Memento Park is undoubtedly constructed on the particular vision of "democratic management" of the unwanted monuments. Yet, in the process it also incorporated the ideas of neoliberal capitalism, thus planting trees and bushes in order to hide it from the curious gaze, because *"if there are no trees around the fences, and people can see everything, so why would they come inside and pay an admission fee?"* Due to public disengagement and urban remoteness, the Park is bound to heavily rely on marketing and commodification in order to be sustainable. Thus, while it may be debatable whether there were better (and more

democratic) solutions for the unwanted monuments, and whether certain commercial orientation of the Park is appropriate and culturally relevant, it is the "inherited" condition and ultimately the responsibility of Park's management to maintain it operational. In that, commodification might be understood as the source of stability and sustainability of the place.

8.4.2 Belgrade – Tito's Blue train

Placed at the outskirts of the city, in the *Topčider* rail depot and over 2 kilometres away even from the now closed *Topčider* railway station, Tito's Blue train is surprisingly concealed for an object which has been historically so relevant and for decades extensively mediatized. Although undoubtedly recognised as a symbol of communism, the train of the former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito could be hardly contained within the category of "urban legacies" since it is an object, a vehicle which has been used and re-used as such, in spite or precisely because of its historical significance. Yet, its exploration within the framework of urban heritage might be justified not only because the "railway system is a fully-fledged urban element unto itself" (Santos y Ganges 2011) but also because rail heritage assets, strategically imbedded into particular urban environment, become inseparable feature of urban landscape. In contrast to its sailing 'counterpart', Tito's vessel Galeb which has been reconstructed and transformed into a museum in order to be strategically placed at the heart of the Rijeka's waterfront, the urban integration of Tito's Blue train in Belgrade seems at best incomplete and ignorant, at worst erratic and tendentious.

Custom-built during the '40s and '50s exclusively for the private use of the Yugoslav president, Tito's Blue train represents one of the best-known communist artefacts in the region. Considered to be one of the most luxurious and technologically advanced trains of its time, the convoy and its interior remain a testimony of Tito's lifestyle, personal tastes and preferences, with the compartments decorated in classical socialist realist style with art-deco influences, using precious materials such as walnut, velvet, silk and mahogany. The main convoy consisted of 9 coaches, but the train contained as many as 19 wagons, including the Presidential suite, lounges, conference coach, carriage for honourable guests, a restaurant and even a closed wagon for transport of Tito's personal Mercedes. The train was designed to provide ultimate comfort and safety for president's journeys around the country and until his death in 1980, Tito crossed over 600 000 kilometres on board of his train. A symbol of power, Yugoslav expertise and technical advancement, the Train was a source of pride for both the president and the citizens of Yugoslavia. Some of the most important world leaders of the time were hosted and entrained in the train, such as Queen Elizabeth, Moamer Khadhafi, Indira Gandhi, Leonid

Brezhnev, Shah of Iran, Jaser Arafat, and many more. Particularly illustrative of the train's symbolic importance are the pictures from its last Presidential journey, in May 1980, when after the Tito's death his coffin was transported to Belgrade for the state funeral in the Train. The media around the world shared pictures of the Train passing through the crowds lined up along the rails throughout the country, throwing flowers on the convoy and grieving the deceased communist leader.

After the death of Tito, the train was used only on several occasions and spent most of the turbulent '90s in a dusty Topcider hangar in the suburbs of Belgrade. Forgotten for over a decade, the train re-emerged as a combination of tourist attraction and still operational railway asset in the early 2000s, when Serbia Railways started re-using surprisingly well-preserved symbol of communism. This period coincides with the emergence of Yugonostalgia, and subsequent re-discovery of communist symbols, pop-culture and aesthetics, which shed light on retro-chic of the forgotten monuments, objects and artefacts. Consequently, it is unlikely that the train would have had such a successful commercial life if Yugonostalgia did not become the 'fancy' project of re-constructing (mostly consumable) fragments of popular history through objects and narratives of life under communism. Yet, despite more than two decades of complete disinterest in the object, and lack of any conservation strategy other than Serbia Railways' due diligence, the famous train kept its original appearance almost entirely, making it an attractive (and very marketable) heritage resource. With its interior almost intact, including the exclusive furniture and distinctively socialist memorabilia, the Train with its famous history appeared as an ultimate Yugo-experience, for which Serbia Railways considered number of uses.

According to sources from the company, one of the initial ideas was to turn "Tito's rolling residence" into a museum-like tourist entertainment and make it available to the general public. The exploitation of the train since 2005 was, however, more related to commercial and entertaining than historical and educational purposes. Most of the contemporary usage of the train was based on rental agreements, as parts or the entire train were and still are mostly rented for various corporate events, conferences, rail journeys, press trips, wedding celebrations and similar occasions. Over the years, the train was used as a filming location, exhibition space, promotional venue, private transportation means, photoshoot setting, and much more. Due to its historical importance, the train attracted significant attention of local and international media, who reported on the train's diplomatic past and contemporary commercial exploitation. While some press presentations and cultural events took place in the train, for years it was

impossible to visit the train as a historical object, as no guided tours or commemorative events for the general audience have been organized. The train was, however, often leased to tourist agencies and tour operators which organised number of journeys from Belgrade to Bar (Montenegrin seaside) for mostly foreign tourists – and for a hefty fee. Train lovers and "yugo-nostalgics" had thus the opportunity to take a seaside journey in the Blue train if they were willing to spend often as much as 10 times the price of the same journey on board of the "regular" train.

Number of commercial, social and cultural events took place in the train over the last 15 years, including wedding ceremonies, film and photo shootings, birthday parties, music festivals. Some of the events had distinctively "historical" character, but most were only using the socialist *décor* as an original setting for their completely 'unhistorical' corporate or promotional events – such as Microsoft's Windows 7 launching or Carlsberg's (beer producer) musical wagon. Tito's train known for "never being late and never being broken" over the years also hosted the ATP tennis players, NBA stars, Japanese billionaires, British pop-singers, Italian pasta producer Barilla and many more. For several years, Playboy Serbia even organised its birthday celebrations in the train, using antiquities such as Tito's worktable, Jacuzzi or diplomatic salon as a vintage background to their covers, editorials and media advertisements. On the official website of the Serbia Railways, the train is advertised as "suitable for filming movies, TV shows, musical videos, commercials" but also for "holding meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences, divers travelling events, exhibitions, selling actions, fashion shows, presentations, video- projections, but also gala events such as marriages, celebrations, etc." To add some exclusivity and promise a nostalgic trip to socialist times, they specify that "During the travel, the guests can enjoy special dishes made according to the recipes from the original "Tito's cookbook".

While the train spent most of its contemporary life as an opulent vintage gadget for commercial exploitation, there were very few (if any) political reactions regarding its historical significance, tourism potential and commercial use. Only recently, in December 2019, local media reported that the Serbian president suggested to host some of the world leaders' in the Blue train, in order to additionally promote it as a tourist heritage resource. Yet, the state officials prefer to inaugurate new high-speed trains and modernized railways, as it corresponds more to the image of Serbia as the progressive and fast-growing society, rather than historical trains which remind of its communist legacy and authoritarian regime. Hence, the train has not yet been protected or declared cultural heritage and its maintenance, preservation and

exploitation are entirely managed by the Railway company, which keeps it at the remote train depot, along with many other used and unused rail carriages. Yet, such political disengagement made it possible for Serbia Railways to advertise and use the train as any other vintage-commodity, often sacrificing in the process its historical character and cultural significance. Furthermore, the train's "exclusivity" kept it inaccessible for most of the general public interested in the history and legacy of Tito and former Yugoslavia. However, after years of solely commercial use, several years ago Serbia Railways started offering occasional guided historical tours of the train. According to the company website, the new offer since 2018 consisted in organization of visits for tourists (and locals interested in the train) with possible guided tours or lectures in the train, for an additional fee (the simple entrance ticket to the train is charged around 2.5 euros per person). However, this offer remains unknown to many, and the remote location and untransparent procedure of access to the train represent strong impediment to the larger cultural-historical usage of the train. Furthermore, despite this recent opening of Tito's train, which could be understood as the "democratisation" and "musealisation," the access to the train and tours remains subject to availability of the object, which might as well be occupied or absent due to the more lucrative appointments.

Tracing the process of commodification of what undoubtedly is one of the most important memorial sites (objects) of communism in former Yugoslavia, one may grasp lots of the controversies surrounding the post-socialist heritage management in the Balkans. While for years the train was limited to the profit-making activities, the recent care and efforts to revive its historical and symbolical legitimacy testify to the surprising historical resilience and the willingness to acknowledge and showcase the history of "failed socialist ideas". The passage of time, mediatisation of the topic and commercial interaction with the objects of socialism made it possible for the community to further engage with contested, controversial and dissonant past narratives. Yet, the Governmental reluctance to engage in denomination, protection and valorisation of the Train as the heritage site and its placement in the urban suburbs showcase that heritage of socialism remains marginal and thus 'unwelcomed' within the contemporary urban image and social identity of the city.

8.4.3 Sub-chapter conclusion

This section aimed to illustrate different actors, systems and activities related to commodification of suburban communist heritage. While limited in time and scope, the analysis of engagement with suburban heritage of communism revealed several important aspects related to touristification and commodification of communist legacies. First, spatial

displacement of communist sites and objects in most cases is a deliberate choice, aimed to "contain" uncomfortable or unacknowledged legacies of communism within particular spatial context. The symbolic removal and spatial re-arrangement "disempowers" and de-sacralises heritage sites and objects, facilitating commercial engagement with them. Second, these sites are often managed by independent companies and not the official cultural institutions, which contributes to their cultural marginalisation and obscures their historical/heritage value. Third, these sites are usually not conceived for a large-scale tourist exploitation. On the contrary, they are frequently turned into tourist attraction through a set of "trial and error" re-purposing activities and driven by the demand side. Fourth, their remoteness from tourist hubs of the city makes organisation of tourism activities at the site rather challenging, requiring different promotional tools and strongly determined visitors with the intention to visit. Fifth, their urban and cultural peripheralization, as well as the "externalization" of responsibility, enables the variety of commercial uses, which could be frequently found acceptable in centrally-placed heritage attractions. In that sense, Playboy photo shootings and electronic parties could be hardly imagined in "mainstream" downtown heritage attractions. Hence, contemporary commercial relativization of communism, which enabled multiple forms of engaging with that historical period, as well as the spatial displacement of the objects facilitates the emergence and establishment of the particularly aggressive commodification mechanisms. However, these places often navigate between extreme commercialisation and more serious engagement with historical content, by providing various services and narratives to different types of audience. Thus, they can be both "lieux de memoire" and commercial decorative element, and sometimes even both at the time, to accommodate different set of tourist requirements.

8.5 Curating communism: Commodifying cultural objects in communist museums

As flagships of urban and cultural development, museums play important role in touristification of public spaces, and creation of the particular urban aesthetics of the city. Museums represent an integral part of cultural landscaping, and contribute to "touristic urbanization", establishing particular spatio-social relationship with their environment. Due to their capacity to mobilize resources, attract tourists and encourage implantation of shops and commerce's in the proximity, museums are often seen as a factor of urban regeneration and dynamization of particular urban areas. They are not only able to enhance urban identity, but also to promote social cohesion, strengthen local community and reinforce city's cultural brand

(Paul i Augusti 2014). In extreme cases, large-scale cultural projects of museum opening transformed declining cities into vibrant and economically prosperous urban communities. Such was the example of Bilbao and the „Guggenheim effect", where the opening of the Guggenheim museum designed by the famous architect Frenk Gehry caused the unprecedented urban, cultural and economic revival, attracting millions of foreign visitors and changing the local perception and self-identity of the city.

Nonetheless, museums are also connected with several negative cultural and urban effects –homogenisation of culture, overtourism and degradation of quality of life for the local communities, commercialisation and oversimplification of history, loss of local identity, and gentrification have been most frequently mentioned. While these issues have been often analysed in scholarly literature, contemporary practice still favours (often uncritical) both small-scale and extravagantly ambitious museal projects, where museum implantation is seen as part of the global competition for attracting visitors, capital and reputation. Unsurprisingly, political, economic and cultural opening of the former communist countries triggered a revival of cultural institutions and proliferation of both public and private museums. Most of these new museums and memory sites aimed to strengthen the sense of national pride and display anti-communist elements of national history. Nonetheless, the arrival of Western tourists and their desire to understand, experience and consume the remnants of communism, along with the local urge to "come to terms" with the uncomfortable recent past, instigated the emergence of museums dedicated to the communist history.

Usually conceived as private ventures, museums of communism mostly centre on every-day life under communism, avoiding thus the engagement with controversial questions of collaboration, communist crimes and oppression. They are often strategically placed in lively urban centres and areas regularly frequented by tourists, aiming to remain accessible and easily integrated into touristic routes of both individual and group visitors. As mostly privately owned and managed museums, these institutions mostly rely and depend on the entry fees, thus organising their exhibitions and advertising activities in a way which maximises the flow of visitors (and revenues). Since they operate independently from the state authorities, cultural institutions and national archives, these museums encounter significant difficulties in obtaining profoundly relevant and precious 'historical' artefacts, such as the objects belonging to the communist leaders, or physical traces of important communist events. Instead, they are limited to displaying mostly popular everyday memorabilia which can be acquired directly and at minor cost from the ordinary people, flea markets and private collectioners. Most museum of

communism thus adopt the 'every-day-life' perspective, due to the availability of objects and limitations of the collection. Yet, this independence also enables private museums of communism to freely conceptualise their exhibition, narrative, activities and events. This deregulation along with the focus on generating profit and prevalence of mnemonic content have been often criticised as major causes of commercialisation and trivialisation of communist history in contemporary city.

While communist museums could not be understood as "communist urban heritage", I argue that their urban and mnemonic content participate in shaping contemporary urban reality of the post-communist city and represent a valuable resource for studying commodification of communism. Indeed, communicating the past through museums is culturally contingent on the symbolism of the location, architecture of the place and its urban environment (Iordachi and Apor 2021). For the exhibitions placed in historical buildings which are architecturally significant and mnemonically charged, such impact of the space is rather evident and straightforward. Thus, museums such as House of Terror in Budapest, placed in former Arrow Cross Party's headquarters, or House of Leaves in Tirana, which used to be the Central Directorate of the Sigurimi secret police or Hohenschonhausen memorial in the former Stasi prison in Berlin are intrinsically imbedded into their spatial setting, and both urban and cultural meaning is co-produced in the interaction between the museal narrative and the building's symbolic. Yet, even the museums situated in the buildings which are seemingly 'neutral' or at least unrelated to the particular history displayed within, maintain particular relationship with their spatial 'host', as its location, architectural design and extended urban space frame the cultural topography of the exhibition. What more, museums of communism situated in the buildings which are unrelated to communism, due to their popularity quickly get inscribed on tourist maps as focal points of communist history in the city. Thus, they are important part of the 'commodification' puzzle as they provide important information on how communism is displayed, advertised and consumed in the urban landscape of post-socialist cities.

Communist museums, in broadest sense, could be roughly segregated into two distinct categories. On the one hand, throughout Europe we witnessed the wave of opening privately owned and managed museums of communism, displaying mostly retro-chic items and tailoring tourist-appealing narrative of every-day life under communism (Museum of communism in Prague, DDR museum in Berlin, etc.). On the other hand, there is a myriad of state-sponsored, publicly initiated or even managed museums, such as Stasi Museum or Hohenschonhausen Memorial in Berlin, House of Terror in Budapest, Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights

in Vilnius, or House of Leaves in Tirana, often placed in symbolic buildings and focused on the history of oppression, terror and political history of communism. Notwithstanding, there are museums which cannot be easily placed within any of these two categories, such as Museum of Yugoslavia, which is publicly owned yet deals with political, economic and cultural life under communism, hosting both the grave of the communist leader Josip Broz Tito and exhibitions of presidential gifts, industrial heritage, product design or communist immigration. Similarly, the Museum in der Kulturbrauerei opened in 2013 in Berlin, under the management of public foundation House of History. The Museum emerged as an answer to the revised Federal Memorial Concept of 2008, which called for incorporating "everyday life in the GDR" in state-funded museums and memorials, to counteract trivialization and 'ostalgization' often seen in privately curated exhibitions. Nonetheless, for the sake of structural simplicity, the sub-chapter will analyse communist museums belonging to the first category (privately owned and managed museums), contextualising both public and 'in-between' museums through and against this analytic framework.

In difference from organisation of cases in other sub-chapters, this discussion does not elucidate each museum within separate section. Instead, the three major cases are juxtaposed within the same passage, as it allows to better nuance the similarities, patterns and divergences in commodification styles and mechanisms. Hence, unlike the previous sub-chapters where understanding particular framing circumstances, different urban processes and individual characteristics of the memoryscapes was crucial for deriving conclusions, in this section the cases are approached as a single unit of analysis. This choice was made since, unlike in other sections where the general framework of each case was crucial for understanding commodification process, the ethnographic fieldwork in museums highlighted striking similarities in activities and phenomena related to commodification. Hence, the reading and navigation through the section would be significantly hampered if the "individualised" approach was adopted. Instead, the section is structured to approach particular spatial, mnemonic and commercial aspects of the communist museums, illustrating each phenomenon through the examples from the observed cases.

Often criticised as amateurish, trivialized, sanitized and commercialised exhibitions of communist kitsch, private museums of communism have been flourishing throughout Europe over the last two decades. The most prominent ones, the Museum of Communism in Prague (opened in 2001), DDR museum in Berlin (opened in 2006) and Museum of Life under Communism in Warsaw (opened in 2013) consistently and increasingly rank high as the top

attractions in these capitals. As a consequence, all three museums have been in recent years expanded and two even moved to a more suitable location (Prague in 2017 and Warsaw in 2019, Berlin extended in 2010 and opened a Motorbike exhibition in another location in 2008). In the framework of this research, the museums have been visited in 2021 and 2022, yet all three of them have also been visited on several occasions from 2015 to 2019. Additionally, the newly opened Budapest Retro – Interactive museum was also visited in 2022, yet as an "extreme" example of commodified exhibition emptied of socio-historical context, it has been only occasionally referenced to illustrate certain contemporary tendencies in the realm of communist museums. The analysis was conducted using a multi-method approach. Other than exploring exhibited objects, their museal organisation and narrative framing, the methods used included the observation of the visitors' interactions with the museum, photographic documentation, analysis of the TripAdvisor reviews and semi-structured interviews with museum representatives. The following passages are thus structured as follows. In the next section, I provide a brief background of the urban implantation of each museum, highlighting specificities of local contexts and interactions between museum location and the surrounding environment. Then, I proceed with discussion of general organisation of communist museums,

8.5.1 Museums as part of contemporary urban landscape

In order to understand the profound impact museums of communism have on urban landscape of post-socialist city and the importance of their location for the ways in which communism is digested, consumed and communicated, one needs to reflect on their urban situatedness. As argued by Dickinson, Ott and Aoki (2005), the physical location of museums frames their content and context, and thus "it matters where memory is activated". But this relationship is also bidirectional, since it is not only the location impacts museal organisation, but the museums also participate in changing the urban landscape. Indeed, as cultural institutions and locus of urban tourism, museums represent an important factor of physical and social transformations of the neighbourhood, impacting changes in transport services, hospitality offer and tourism promotion (Paul i Augusti 2014). On the one hand, museums undoubtedly co-produce the meaning of the place and place attachment. On the other, the location and urban surrounding is crucial for the sense-making that takes place within the museum. Hence, the relationship between location, as its spatial reference and museum, as the tourist attraction is bidirectional and mutually reinforcing. Consequently, understanding the type of the building which houses the museum, its urban surrounding and attractiveness of the

location is detrimental for grasping this particular variant of commodification of communism and its repercussions.

8.5.1.1 Warsaw - Museum of Life under Communism

Recently moved to Piekna 28, in the heart of the flagship communist urban project, the Constitution square, the Museum of Life under Communism is a particularly vivid example of the symbolic spatial implantation of the historic museums. Indeed, in words of the Museum's manager, the emblematic socialist urban district is *"the best place for museum like this"* since *"it is like the visit card of the communism"*. Most of the tourists interested in communist history, arts and architecture, and most of the general guided tours of Warsaw include the Constitution square in their itinerary. Thus, the attractiveness of the location lies both in its capacity to attract targeted audience, and the symbolic 'aura' of exclusivity of the historical setting. This dialogue between the historic location and the exhibition is evident both on the outer and inner layer. As seen from the square, the neon sign "Museum of Life under communism", appearing just above the KFC logo and beneath one of the district's famous communist bas reliefs, participates in the new aesthetics of the square, shaped by communist-style neon inscriptions, street graffiti and worn out socialist decorative facades and columns. On the other hand, the Museum also attempts to immerse itself into historical location on the square by making clear references to the Square through its exhibition. With dedicated theme "Reconstruction of the capital" it showcases bas-reliefs model for the MDM Constitution square after the opening, photo reproductions depicting the MDM projects, plans, design and construction process. What more, the exhibition extends the communication with the Square by displaying numbers on the window pointing to particular urban features of the square showed in archival photos and described in museum labels (see *Figure 15*). Hence, Museum undoubtedly strives to immerse itself into historic location and provide a dialogue with the urban surrounding.
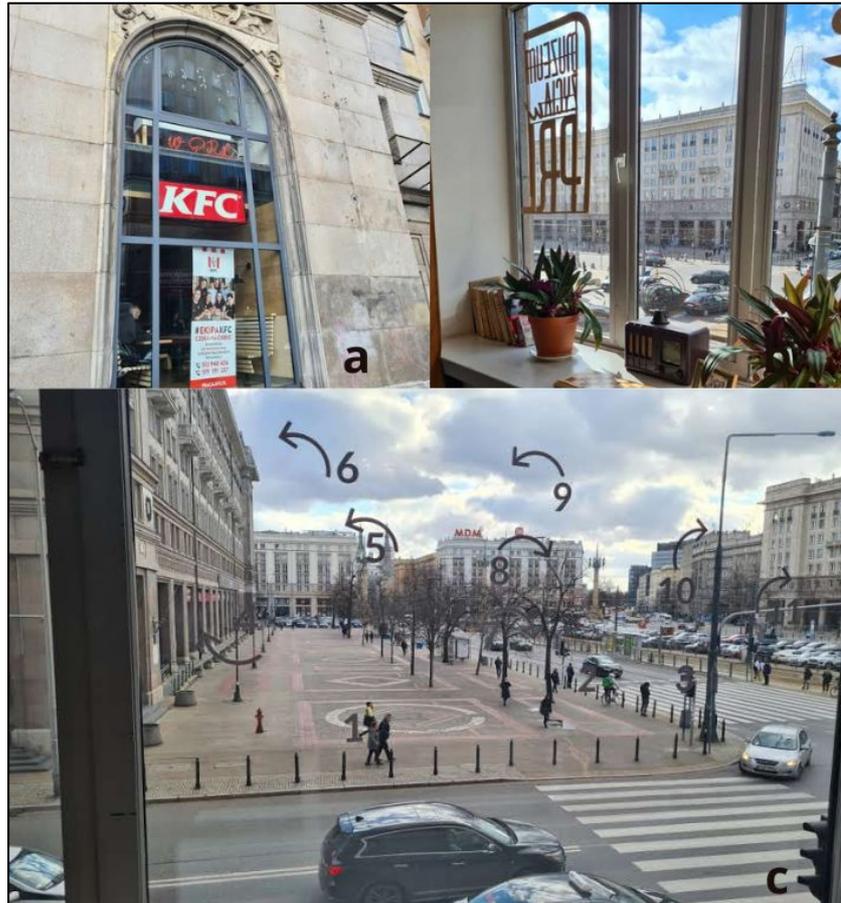
Figure 15   Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw: (a) View from the Constitution Square; (b) View of the Constitution Square, from the Museum Cafe; (c) Exhibition "communicating" with the Constitution Square

8.5.1.2 Prague – Museum of communism

Topography of the Prague's Museum of communism was long been a subject of sarcastic comments, since the museum was located just above the symbol of global capitalism and consumerism – the fast-food chain McDonalds. Even the Museum itself perceived it as an ironical twist of fate stating on the website that "*Lenin must be turning in his grave*". Whether such a "cultural" institution should be referencing such cynical historical jokes is debatable, the location was undoubtedly mediatized as a peculiar cohabitation of capitalist and communist legacies. What more, at the time the Museum occupied a former ballroom of the baroque Savarin Palace and shared the floor with a casino, depicting in particularly vivid style the transformation of Prague's historical core to the extremely gentrified commercial hub. In 2017, the Museum of communism moved to the 19-century 'Stara Celnice' (Old Customs), a historical building recently reconstructed and turned into a modern rental office space. Nested in refurbished classical building and surrounded by the famous renaissance Municipal House

(Obecni dum), gothic Gate Tower (Prašna brana), contemporary shopping centre (Paladium), baroque church (Kostel svatého Josefa), functionalist monumental bank palace (ČNB) and "The black pearl" of socialist brutalism - Kotva department store, the Museum nowadays participates in stylistic, aesthetic and functional hotchpotch of the Czech's capital's busiest square. Just a stone's throw from "Masaryčka", the latest archi-star project of regeneration of the Masaryk railway station brownfield by Zaha Hadid, the Museum of communism is indeed situated in the heart of the Prague's most touristically vibrant, most architecturally diverse and most 'hyped' urban neighbourhood. With large "Museum" sign on top of the building's reconstructed roof, the Museum of communism ensures its visibility and strongly inscribes its presence in the eclectic urban district filled with street performers, fast food kiosks, and leaflet distributors on Segway, rollers and eclectic scooters. Hence, its location provides a clear evidence that contemporary museal engagement with communism favours dynamic and symbolically charged spaces, where tourism and everyday life interact and exchange.

6.5.1.3 Berlin – DDR museum

Similar to the communist museums in Prague and Warsaw, Berlin's DDR museum is also located in a vibrant tourist area in central Berlin, just opposite the famous UNESCO site – the Museum island. Surrounded by some of the Berlin's most popular and most visited attractions, such as Berlin cathedral and Alexander Platz, the museum is visible and easily accessible to tourists, attracting as much as half a million visitors every year. What more, the strategic position and proximity to the major state-managed museums gives certain credibility, trustworthiness and political power to the DDR exhibition (Atkinson 2016). Indeed, placed just opposite the renowned public institutions such as Pergamon and Bode museum, the DDR appears as a 'museological' cousin separated by the river, but equally historically relevant and trustworthy. With the original museum space reaching its' full potential through two expansions (in 2010 and 2016), the further growth of the museum, as the collection reached 300 0000 objects, had to be ensured by moving the exhibitions to new places and venues. Thus, the DDR Motorbike exhibition is permanently placed in a nearby historic building located under the S-Bahn arches of Alexander Platz, while the Conference room, where seminars, press conferences, book launches, and public discussions are held is just a stone's throw from the museum's original location, at St Wolfgan Strasse 2. These urban expansions undoubtedly strengthened the importance and visibility of the 'DDR museum' brand, thus making the Museum one of the strongest references of the communist past in the city.

8.5.2 Patterns of convergence: Topicality, (staged) Authenticity, Interactivity and (contained) Politicisation

As one of the pioneers in the industry, the DDR museum opened in 2006, as an initiative of the West German ethnologist Peter Kenzelmann. Designed as an interactive and immersive space, the museum displays around 1000 communist artefacts (out of the 300.000 original objects preserved in the museum archive). The exhibition itself is divided in three major thematic subjects: Public Life (1), Party and the State (2) and Living in the High-Rise Tower Block (3). The first theme covers the topics such as transportation, education, work, consumption, culture, sports and vacations, while the second deals with the 'darker' side of communism – party, ideology, opposition, prison, elections, military and the border are some of the subjects elaborated. Finally, the third part is all about "Life at Home", staging a popular communist apartment, using all sorts of retro furniture, vintage memorabilia and trivia relevant for the communist life "behind the walls". In a similar vein, the Museum of Communism in Prague, opened in 2003 by an American entrepreneur Glenn Spicker, is designed as a chronologically narrated "three-act tragedy" with the main axes named 'Dream', 'Reality' and 'Nightmare'. The exhibition opens with the 'dream' of communism, including the birth of the idea, its main ideologists and the rise of communism in Czechoslovakia. The 'reality' covers the major topics of every-day life under communism, including communist propaganda, healthcare, work, vacations, sports, industry, urbanization, consumption and typical 'socialist room'. Contrasting the 'light-heartedness' of the other parts of the exhibition, the 'nightmare' in dim light and black panels brings forward the stories of Cold War, emigration, oppression, borders, secret police and political trials. Finally, while less explicitly segmented, the Museum of Life under Communism in Warsaw, founded by Rafal and Marta Patla from the "Adventure Warsaw" tour company, elaborates a similar array of themes – party, opposition, culture, tourism, consumption, fashion, gastronomy – including a small, "staged" vintage flat.

Even at the first glance, the preference towards certain topics in the museums of communism is rather obvious. Recurring themes such as consumption, holidays, sports, party and propaganda are illustrative of the contemporary tourism-oriented approach to history in privately funded museums. In sharp contrast with the state-owned museums where the focus is usually on condemning the communist crimes and oppression (such as House of terror in Budapest, Stasi museum in Berlin, Museum of Warsaw Uprising in Warsaw), the private museums mostly address the popular topics of everyday life, as a private, informal and individual, yet highly ideologically permeable sphere of communism. Indeed, as "a

fundamental site of ideological intervention" (Crowley and Reid 2002, quoted in Bach 2015) but also a bastion of individual dreams, freedoms, unofficial culture and subversive activities, the everyday life represents a "mundane" anti-dote to the overly political reality of the communist public sphere. The commercial appeal of communist everyday life could be due to its nostalgic character (for those who spent their childhood or adult years in 60s, 70s and 80s) and the underlying 'orientalisation' of communism, as a peculiar 'socio-political experiment' framed by inner paradoxes, inconsistencies and loopholes. Contemporary tourism favours surprising and entertaining, yet relatable, empathetic and vivid stories, and communist everyday life represents a very dynamic repository of unusual products, practices, activities and habits, while remaining approachable due to its historical proximity. As such, it is a highly marketable "product" of the communist past, both for its commercial appeal and narrative 'flexibility' – the capacity to be framed within the context of many different exhibition objects. Indeed, the objects recurrently appearing in these museums are those that could be broadly placed within 'everyday life category', as they include myriad of popular books, clothing items, groceries, electronic devices, vehicles and appliances, which are most easily acquirable in family homes, vintage shops and street markets. At the same time, these objects are also the most versatile types of museum artefacts, since they can be staged to fit number of different narratives and re-framed in different museal contexts.

Indeed, scarcity of authentic communist objects in such museums have been identified as one of the major challenges these institutions have to deal with (Zombory 2017). In order to compensate for that lack, the museums of communism adopt different strategies, such as blurring their authenticity (displaying authentic, reproductions and fake objects without clarifying their nature), re-framing objects to fit the narrative (illustrating particular narratives through vicarious objects) and tailoring narrative contingent to objects (structuring the exhibition narrative around the available objects). What more, the scarcity of objects is also counterbalanced through the interactive games and tapping lines (GDR museum), the audio-visual material such as recordings of the interviews with witnesses of the time (Museum of communism Prague) or the satirical content and infographs (Museum of Life under communism Warsaw). Often frivolous, light-hearted and "retro-attractive", objects displayed in many of those museums are rather similar – vintage cars, retro furniture, electric appliances, sports equipment and popular consumers goods can be found in all of these exhibitions of communist everyday life. While frequently regarded as banal and superficial, such objects are not only most recognisable and most commercial, but also most 'open-ended', allowing the

visitors to assign them meaning and thus 'fabricate' their own museal experience. The versatility of such objects and their narrative re-framing could be traced throughout these exhibitions, as shown in the explanatory notes of various objects within these museums:

> *"Chemistry sets were especially popular and the result was more often than not an unholy mess. Some of the naughtier children even read up on the production of stink bombs or gun powder. "Never mind", said the parents, "he will go far". (DDR museum, Berlin)*

> *"Cut-up pieces of Rude Pravo, the communist newspaper, were used as toilet paper- this was the reality of the late Communist period in Czechoslovakia. And why Rude Pravo? It featured the largest pages, it was printed on high-quality paper, and you could buy it anywhere." (Museum of communism, Prague)*

> *"Holidays abroad would typically involve some kind of trade. Resourceful travellers were able to make enough money to cover the cost of an even 3-week-long stay in Bulgaria. Travelling there, they would take towels, bed linen, tents, tracksuits, crystal glassware ("pearls" of the black market export) and NIVEA cream, which was available in every kiosk in Poland in the 1980s, and then sell them during holidays to local residents. Heading back home, they would buy furs and gold only to resell them at a profit upon return. Trade tourism flourished with Poles as its masters. Some people came back from their holidays richer than they left." (Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw)*

Another tactics for 'commercialising' communist history in private museums of communism refers to disgracement of the communist regime not as much as violent and oppressive dictatorship, as the utterly inefficient, incompetent and irrational system of socio-economic organisation. The brutality of the communist state is thus often juxtaposed, and even neutralized by ridiculing its cumbersome administration, unproductive workforce, deficient planning and sloppy execution.

> *"The GDR economy, as the joke went, was like an old steam train. Unfortunately, 90% of the steam was used for a whistle." (DDR museum, Berlin)*

> *"According to one legendary joke, President Antonin Novotny released his fury on a maintenance man who was taking a long time to repair an ordinary door lock; he told the worker that he could have done it himself in no time. The maintenance man's*

response could not have been any truer for the time: Well, yes, Mister President, because you are a locksmith, but I'm a university professor." (Museum of communism, Prague)

"Consequently, communist offices are always packed with people whose only job is to seal an envelope previously addressed by somebody else who in turn received it from the messenger sent by the author of the letter." (Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw)

Indeed, a 'mockery' to communism is one of the defining features of the private exhibitions observed. This is particularly emphasized with relation to production, so that according to the DDR museum *"the only commodity (GDR) produces efficiently was hot air"*, while in the Museum of communism in Prague one may read the Churchill's quote *"If you put the Communists in charge of the Sahara Desert, there will be a shortage of sand in five years"*. The shortages and queues are similarly represented as 'normality' of life under communism and elaborated in each of these museums through a combination of funny anecdotes, jokes, photos of lines in front of the shops, and artefacts such as grocery and cosmetic communist products - or even 'staged' supermarket shops and shelves filled with goods from the times. In the DDR museum, there is even an interactive game, where the visitors are invited to become managers of the Trabant factory and make decisions on planning, production and sales of the car, arguing that *"After playing the game, it soon becomes clear why the planned economy was predestined to failure and what factories had to do to be able to demonstrate success."* In Warsaw's Museum of Life under Communism, the irony of socialist planning is even more explicitly addressed through the excerpts from "Communist Civilisation" by Leopold Tyrmand, 1972:

"In Eastern Europe private greengrocers are millionaires. This may only be explained by metaphysics which provides for the fact that socialism is capable of producing any number of tanks and submarines, but shows an organic inability to grow lettuce and deliver it to grocery shops." (Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw)

In a similar vein, the everyday commodities such as cars are mostly addressed through a combination of mockery and nostalgia. In the DDR museum particularly, Trabant is ridiculed as the *"cardboard on wheels"* with the *"unreliable mechanics"* and *"considerable technical*

defects – the breaks were so weak that they needed a special permit for the production". The descriptions don't fail to present these drawbacks as part of the communist "working ethics":

> *"True to the moto "what we don't have cannot break", designers decided to do without a cooling system and a petrol gauge. In place of the latter came a next-to useless consumption indicator." (DDR museum, Berlin)*

But it is not only the cars that are represented through irony, jokes and trivia, the communist events are also subjected to such caricatural portrayal, as in Prague's Museum of communism where Spartakiad is explained as the venue where *"plenty of extramarital affairs took place"*. Even the military parades in GDR were ironized - *"The tarmac was ruined, but at least the peace was being protected."* In a similar way, the visitors are informed about the East German bathroom as *"nothing short of a functional miracle"* with the installations *"either sometimes leaky or often blocked: sometimes even at the same time"*. In Warsaw's Museum of Life under Communism, the telephone tapping was similarly used as a paradigm for the secret police's incompetence:

> *"…Generally the telephone tap should be automatic. However, whenever the human being and human labour come in cheaper than even the most mass produced recording tape, the device will be replaced with the human being who might get cold in winter, hot in summer and occasionally might even burp due to some digestion problems. We have heard of the cases of ostentatious yawning when the telephone conversation was unnecessarily long or of covered coughing in the flu season; it went even so far that the callers who were tapped, driven by the simple human solidarity, would give health advice to those who secretly listened to their conversations…" (Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw, excerpt from Tymand's "Communist Civilisation")*

Another particularity of these museums might be addressed as the 'living space fetishism', since they all exhibit rooms (or, as in the case of the DDR museum, entire apartment) furnished and decorated in vintage, East European communist-style, aiming to showcase the cosiness and 'cushioned' normality of the family life, as opposed to the paranoia, propaganda and state-of-alert in the public sphere. Arranging hundreds (and even thousands) of mismatched vintage pieces of furniture and decoration objects from different decades, styles and even countries, such rooms appear as universal time-capsules, the designer visualisations of communist kitsch and testimonies of curatorial frenzy and artefact cacophony typical for privately organised museums of communism. What more, the popularity of such mechanism

of displaying communist history and design resulted in opening of flat-like museums throughout Europe. In Serbia, Yugodom, a stay-over museum, an apartment entirely decorated in communist-era style and available for weekend or holiday rentals, photo shoots and private events, opened already in 2013. In Sofia, collector of socialist relics Valeri Gyurov opened in 2019 "The Red flat – Everyday life in communist Bulgaria" and since 2019 Bucharest also has its own "Ferestroika – Museum of Family life under Communism". The commercial appeal of such 'museal' style is highly controversial, as it invites visitors to interact with furniture and objects of everyday life, to go through anonymous communists' cupboards, dress in their clothes, sit on their sofa and browse their TV channels, thus performing history in an unstructured, arbitrary and often banal manner. What more, the activities of scavenging someone's privacy "mimic the Stasi's intrusion into the private sphere, without being thematised as such" (Arnold-de Simine 2013, p.180).

While the emphasis on everyday life is one of the defining features of commercial museums of communism, this is not to say they only exhibit a light-hearted content. In that sense, both Museum of communism in Prague and DDR museum were expanded to address frequent criticism about the commercialised and trivialized approach to history of dictatorship. As a response, these museums included in their exhibitions the topics such as political trials, interrogations, prisons and oppression. In that sense, the narratives of dictatorship in both museums were significantly expanded, but even the physical exhibition material, as the DDR museum included an interrogation room, and the Museum of communism came up with the installation of replica of the gallows used in 50s for the political executions. Yet, comparing to the politically charged institutions such as House of Terror in Budapest, Hohenschonhausen Memorial in Berlin or Museum of Warsaw Uprising, the 'terror' of communist dictatorship is somewhat nuanced through the focus on stories of escape, spying operations and opposition, often represented through anecdotes and light-hearted context. Instead of overemphasizing death, violence and suffering, popular private communist museums "flirt" with the 'dark' content, putting forward the ideological 'trivia' and 'softening' the violent manifestations of dictatorship. Furthermore, the 'dark' topics such as labour camps, political persecutions and imprisonments are given no more space in the exhibition than stories of toilet paper shortages (Prague), communist sexuality and drinking habits (Berlin) or washing powder and sugar (Warsaw). What more, the discursive style remains consistent throughout the exhibition, thus equalling, in terms of relevance, cultural significance and educational potential, communism as dictatorship and communism as a regular everyday life.

"Even children of Kindergarten age was taught to count tanks and soldiers like a real NVA officer. Ten soldiers minus five soldiers makes... But what happened to the other five? They probably sacrificed themselves for their Socialist homeland." (DDR museum, Berlin)

"Political trials, just like automobile production, were subject to planning. The Party planned in advance how many people would be sentenced to death and how many to live imprisonment. And this plan needed to be adhered to." (Museum of communism, Prague)

"A satirical piece criticizing the PZPR (the Polish United Worker's party):

....3. Add a kangaroo to the national emblem, because Poland keeps jumping up and down and her bag is always empty.

....6. Add the word "why?" to the Polish national anthem before "Poland did not die"

7. Design a new flag: a worker's bust on the white-red background, a sickle on his neck, a hammer over his head, and stars in his eyes."

8. Do not produce beds to be slept on, because the farmer sleeps on the hay, the labourer sleeps on his shift, the manager sleeps during the meeting...." (Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw)

According to Bach (2015) it is precisely their interactive, tactile and informal mode of representing communism that frames these museums as "antipolitical" institutions, which are not aiming for the master historical narrative nor uncritically following the state-mandated politics of memory. The findings from my own research contradict such views. Indeed, museums of communism function as "cognitive and sensual "experience factories"" (Balcerzak 2021), highlighting micro-histories, popular culture and mundane activities. They provide immersive sensory experience, capitalize on popular topics and construct tourist-friendly narrative. Yet, their consumer-oriented nature, lack of public funding and support and focus on the everyday stories and artefacts does not make them apolitical. On the contrary, these museums, as much as the public ones, mostly re-iterate official memory discourses of victimhood and condemn communism as oppressive, dysfunctional and morally idiosyncratic, yet they do so through irony, anecdotes and interactivity, 'disburdening' thus at least slightly the narrative. Indeed, the interactive, "hands on" approach to heritage results in de-mystification and de-sacralisation of culture and history, but even more so "sanitizes" difficult

themes such as oppression, violence and political crimes. Nonetheless, while juvenile interaction with museum artefacts may act as a 'neutralizer' of the negative connotation of the history displayed (what Atkinson (2016) calls the "acoustic participatory camouflage"), it does not diminish or relativize their 'political' engagement. Although these institutions adopt different museological approach and have more flexibility in designing the narrative compared to the state-mandated museums, they undoubtedly adhere to the contemporary perspective which 'vilifies' communist leadership and abolishes ordinary citizens, favouring the 'victimhood' perspective and the role of dissidents as national heroes.

> *"According to conservative estimates, Communist experiments of putting Marxist theories into practice resulted in the deaths of up to 100 million people through-out the world." (Museum of communism, Prague)*

> *"The anti-Communist opposition in the Polish People's Republic existed throughout the whole period of the communist rule. Resistance and discontent were manifested in the activities of the Polish Underground State, demonstrations, strikes, and the opposition groupings in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite brutal repressions and the extensive terror apparatus, the authorities were never able to successfully eliminate civil disobedience." (Museum of Life under Communism, Warsaw)*

> *"Prison was a key feature of SED rule and between 1949 and 1989, GDR courts passed sentence on 250 000 political prisoners who were then subject to intentionally inhumane prison conditions. The regime needed this ever-present threat to ensure survival." (DDR museum, Berlin)*

Commercial orientation of private communist museums is also reflected in their adoption of popular culture references, where communist cultural products, events and personalities are often explained in relationship with their "Western" counterparts. For example, Trabant is addressed as a "rival" of the West German Beatle (DDR museum Berlin), first Czech musical "Starci na chmelu" as "kind of a forerunner of Grease starring John Travolta" (Museum of communism Prague), and Currara perfume "the Polish equivalent of the Poison by Christian Dior" (Museum of Life under Communism Warsaw). References to Monopoly, Mickey Mouse, Audi, Pepsi or Disney appear in the DDR museum, the museum in Warsaw mentions IKEA, Radio Free Europe, Abba's "Waterloo", Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen, and Prague museum addresses Exxon oil spill, Milk chocolate, founding of the State of Israel,

Adidas sneakers, Rolling Stones and Federico Fellini, amongst other Western points of reference. These 'Western' cultural markers, while used with the same purpose to communicate with international audience, are however treated differently in these museums. While in Warsaw these are often used to illustrate 'adoption' of Western standards and goods by Polish society (such as the IKEA opening in Warsaw, or the appearance of the mini skirt in American "Vogue" as a marker of the "mini fashion" trend in Poland), the Museum of communism in Prague juxtaposes particular Western events and personalities with their counterparts in communist world. Hence, the "timeline wall" projects a range of 'parallel' occurrences in East and West, such as the 1975 explosion in Bohumice nuclear power plant coinciding with the founding of Apple and Microsoft, Depeche Mode concert in Prague in 1988 with Bin Laden's founding of the Al-Quaide, unveiling of the Stalin's monument in 1955 with the opening of the Disneyland, or the 1981 arrest of Ladislav Hojer, the Czechoslovak "Hannibal Lecter" juxtaposed with the wedding of prince Charles and Dianna. Such 'patronizing' approach, where events, products and personalities of the 'East' are addressed as the impaired 'cousins' of their Western counterparts, is particularly visible in the DDR museum, where most of the East German developments are benchmarked against the superior West German references.

> *"With Western music most popular, East German cultural innovations such as the "Lipsi" (a new form of dance) never really caught on." (DDR museum, Berlin)*

> *"Whilst the GDR failed to progress beyond the group stage, West Germany went on to become world champions." (DDR museum, Berlin)*

> *"Real football was played on any spare part of land with your friends, otherwise the craze for roller skaters or self-made skateboards copied from the American ones and called "roller boards". (DDR museum, Berlin)*

> *"We don't want the Lipsi or Ado Koll – we want Elvis and his Rock 'n' Roll!" (DDR museum, Berlin)*

Indeed, the DDR museum represents East Germany as a dysfunctional and highly incompetent 'relative' of the progressive West Germany, as a 'Workers' and Peasants' State' where capitalist goods such as Schiesser underpants and Pepsi Cola have been produced, where Western goods' shop, the Intershop, was a place to find *"what was missing in the GDR: variety, glamour and a taste of the big wide world"* and *"every capture of a stray Donald Duck or*

Mickey Mouse was treated as an ideological victory". There is, however, reference to one particular aspect in which GDR was beating West Germany:

> *"In comparison to their capitalist cousins, East Germans had sex earlier, married younger, had more children and were more likely to have an affair or to divorce."*
> *(DDR museum, Berlin)*

Another typically commercial strategy in these museums refers to the overaccumulation of items and cacophony of mismatched, stylistically incoherent and historically 'misplaced' objects, making them resemble, as Bukovska (2020) framed it in the analysis of Prague's Museum of communism, the "cabinets of communists curiosities". While after the relocation and renovation the Prague's museum got rid of the vast majority of the previously exhibited objects, focusing instead on explanatory texts and reproductions of archival photos, the private museums of communism are indeed notorious for their almost fetishized collection and display of extreme number of artefacts (see for example: Jones 2011). The abundance of objects acts as a shield aiming to obscure the lack of their historical value, as these are not precious, rare, often not even authentic items (see for example: Arnold-de Simine 2013). Instead, these museums are filled with typical, mundane and easily accessible objects such as soaps, ashtrays, pickle jars and hair dryers, cheaply acquirable at flea markets and antique stores. In extreme cases, such as the Budapest Retro-Interactive museum, there is almost no narrative – the 'museum' is organized as an overwhelmingly 'cluttered' collection of retro objects, interactive boards and flashy colours. Without even searching to categorize and contextualise objects at display, Retro-interactive museum invites the visitors to touch and play with the artefacts, immerse in 'staged authenticity' of the exhibition, and evoke their childhood memories. While only few objects are actually given the explanatory label, such as "Hungarian-styled canned food prepared for the joint Soviet-Hungarian space flight and eaten of board the Salyut-6 space station" or "Lada 2102", the vast majority of the exhibited objects are just arranged across the space with even general thematical context unspecified. With bright lights, dazzling sounds and cacophony of mismatched retro objects, the Museum resembles more a casino than an exhibition space. What more, every negative connotation has been avoided, so that the communism appears as a cluttered storehouse filled with visually entertaining objects and vintage aesthetics.

Most of the private museums of communism commodify not only the retro-style objects, but also the nostalgia for communism. Often criticized for lack of the critical engagement with the past, nostalgia promotes socialism as a "marketplace mythology", where objects from the

past serve as the emotional trigger of the (real and imagined) childhood and youth memories, values and ideas. In that sense, the dialogue with museal exhibitions is supposed to create and sustain nostalgia, even for those who never lived under communism. Nostalgia promoted through such curatorial practices is de-territorialized and depersonalized, creating a utopian space "haunted by the futures that failed to take shape" (Caušević 2019). This is another reason of the popularity of mundane, everyday life objects in these museums and lack of their historical contextualization. The objects of the 'ordinary' are easily relatable and have the capacity to spark distant memories, warm feelings and sense of belonging, untarnished by political and ideological perspective. Instead, the dialogue with these objects is supposed to promote uncritical and ahistorical bitter-sweet longing for the social relations, consumption patterns and utopian dreams which once seemed possible. Indeed, according to Balcerzak (2021), these objects "function as cognitive and sensual "experience factories" and nostalgic "time locks" of the everyday realities", which is visible both in the ways in which objects are arranged and labelled throughout the museums, and in the ways visitors comment their experiences on TripAdvisor platform.

> *"As I mentioned before, there are many objects available to view in the museum, that I remember from my childhood home. I felt really nostalgic when I noticed the Unitra radio called Lana, the Zelmer Predom hoover, the oldschool hairdryer, Polsport skiis and my favourite Visolvit!" (Maria, The Adventure Seeker, on Museum of Life under Communism, reviewed in March 2019)*

> *"I grew up in the 60s and 70s and it was also a nostalgic journey back to a pre-technology kind of existence!" (NMMc, Life in East Berlin, reviewed in November 2016)*

> *"It was a fantastic timetravel to our childhood. The interactive museum presents Hungarian life between 1960-1990. We saw lots of interesting, old consumer goods, nostalgic things like: old furniture, TV, radios, studio, Lada police car, space ship, space suit or chocolate, soap etc. from the past." (laczkozsu, Interactive time travel, reviewed in October 2021)*

Interactivity represents one of the major features of commercial museums of communism, as both their 'selling point' and 'curatorial' style. What more, the interaction with the objects on display is, according to the museums' managers, crucial for facilitating the learning process

and providing a comprehensive cultural experience. The role of interaction as educational tool was particularly emphasized in the interview with the DDR staff members:

> *"So if you don't interact with the exhibition doesn't work for you, and you just get a very, very shallow idea of what the GDR... so you have to open the cupboards and interact with the objects and the installations with the games. And the more you use, the more you learn, of course." (DDR museum employee, interviewed in December 2021)*

Consequently, many of these museums promise and advertise the 'hands-on' approach to history, where one needs to participate and engage in certain performative actions in order to better understand the communist past. This is ensured through interactive digital storytelling, use of multimedia, interactive quizzes and board games, which aim to immerse visitors in the exhibition, blending virtual and physical artefacts and experiences. In DDR museum, visitors are invited to watch tutorial, step on the floor and dance the East German 'Lipsi' dance, play a Soviet board game on iPad, pick up the vintage phone and spy on the visitors in the tapped bedroom of the 'apartment' exhibition part, or scroll through the TV programme from 1984 while resting on the retro sofa. In the "New socialist human" interactive game visitors get points for choosing the appropriate communist attire, jewellery, hair, flag and accessories, being offered to print their design of 'homo sovieticus' for free (see *Figure 16*). They are invited to learn the 'new GDR language' by finding the appropriate 'GDR' counterparts to English/German words displayed on a circuit and connecting them with electrical clips. Throughout the DDR museum, visitors are opening cupboards with exhibited objects, browsing through the shelves of the 'communist' family, driving a Trabant and even sitting on the toilet and using the vintage typing machine in the communist 'apartment'. In Budapest Retro – Interactive Museum, one can pick out a vintage tune on the ten-forint jukebox, read evening news in a broadcast studio, browse through the diaries of the communist party officials, or enter a retro phone booth to listen the recordings from the satirical radio show *Radiokabare.* Monitoring the behaviour of the visitors through the author's field research, it was easy to identify how the initial reluctance to engage with objects due to their 'museal' character slowly fades as the visitors proceed through the exhibition and observe the others freely manipulating the objects. In that sense, visitors both 'learn by doing' and 'learn by copying', since they often engage with the interactive displays and exhibited objects only to the extent to which they observe other fellow visitors utilize them. This almost chorographical interaction represents an 'empowering' experience as visitors feel they participate in co-producing the meanings and co-

curating the exhibition. While often criticized as overly commercialized and trivialized engagement with history, the 'hands-on' approach is gaining the momentum and even the topics as serious as dictatorship are exhibited and digested through interactive content and bodily performances.

Figure 16   Interactive game "The new socialist human" in DDR museum, Berlin

Finally, it is important to address the museum shops, as one of the most obvious forms of commercialization of communist cultural and mnemonic legacies. Ranging from hammer and sickle magnets, communist propaganda posters, mugs with Brezhnev-Honecker kiss (DDR museum), to Rubik's cubes and miniatures of communist vehicles (Museum of Life under Communism, Budapest Retro-Interactive), objects sold in museums of communism are undoubtedly kitschy, mass produced and frivolous tourism memorabilia. This is particularly evident in the case of Museum of Communism in Prague, which branded vampire matryoshka as its "front face". Appearing on advertising posters for the Museum and many of the items sold in museum shop (as trivial as the bottle openers), the "satirical" take on the famous Russian doll is tourist catchy and visually entertaining, becoming both a "souvenir sold in museum" and "souvenir selling museum" (Trabskaia et al. 2019). As a clear allusion to the predatory nature of the Soviet regime, matryoshka became 'hyped' symbol of the Prague's Museum of communism, contributing thus to the aesthetic banalization of history and symbolic displacement of communism. In that sense, it is one of the commodification mechanisms which

jointly with other curatorial, urban and mnemonic strategies re-shapes the aesthetics, character and experience of communism in the contemporary museums (see ***Figure 17***).

Figure 17   Souvenir 'business' in museums of communism: (a) Museum of communism, Prague; (b) Museum of Life under communism, Warsaw; (c) DDR museum, Berlin; (d) Retro-Interactive museum, Budapest

8.5.3 Sub-chapter conclusion

The three museums observed as representative forms of 'privatized' cultural engagement with communism share striking similarities. First and foremost, a stroll through museal collection reveals not only the tendency of shifting from object to experience (Hein 2000), but also the general lack of authentic objects (Zombory 2017) and emphasize on the narrative and explanatory displays (Bukovska 2020) as the main features of the exhibition. Second, the centrality of everyday life, as the dominant topic explored from different angles (consumption, holidays, sports, media, education, propaganda) in all three exhibitions clearly demonstrates the general preference towards particular "curatorial" style in such museums. Third, at each of these museums one of the central exhibition points was the 'staged' communist apartment,

featuring vintage furniture and decoration from the communist period. Fourth, there was an evident "transnational" dimension – besides in "general" communist stories, places and references, the "traveling memory" could be also observed in the seemingly unrelated "Chernobylization" of parts of the exhibition. While completely divorced from the local context, the story of Chernobyl disaster appears in all three museums, confirming that the choice of themes is highly biased towards Western-clichéd images of communism and its defectiveness. Finally, all three museums extensively "commodify" the narrative, through the use of communist jokes and popular culture references, re-iteration of common stereotypes or nostalgia, and orientalisation of the communist 'otherness'. Yet, subtle differences in the ways in which communist heritage and history are organised, curated, narrated and transmitted represent an important framework for understanding the contemporary challenges of exhibiting totalitarian history in popular museums.

By using the wide array of commercial strategies (sanitization of narrative, reliance on popular culture references, use of the interactivity, 'nostalgic' curatorship, overfilling the 'cabinet of communist curiosities'), private museums of communism create an alternative communist memoryscape, where communism is debilitated, disempowered and disburdened. The image of communism they proliferate appears not as brutal, treacherous or "morally deformed Other", but as "an uncle whose eccentric Trabi-loving, gardening and nude-volleyball enthusiast ways are an amusement but not a tremendous hindrance to the rest of the family" (Hwang 2009). Hence, it is through a combination of questionable curatorial choices, tourist-friendly design of historical narrative, facilitation of the interaction between objects and participants and simulation of life "as it used to be" that communism in museums is 'sanitized' and ironized. While such approach to communist history enabled to widely popularize certain topics related to the political, economic, urban and cultural organization of life in CEE in the second half of the XX century, it is the general nature and perception of communism which was significantly transformed. Yet, previous scholarly and textbook interpretations have been replaced by humorous, stereotyped, 'hands on" approach to communist history, produced, consumed and transnationalized through private museums of communism.

8.6 Between heritage and hospitality: Commodifying communism in historic and retro bars

The study of representations of communism and their commodification in the city would be incomplete without discussing thematic bars, restaurants and hotels, which, overtly

commercial and liberated from 'cultural' dimension, apply different set of mercantile and advertising techniques to address, evoke and simulate the communist times. While these institutions have often been analysed only from the point of view of their internal spaces and services, they are becoming increasingly relevant for understanding larger spatial dynamics – on the level of city, urban area and landscape. As the cities become "loaded with hospitality", boarding and logging facilities emerge as "increasingly structuring elements of urban space" (Torres Tricarico, Pereira de Oliveira and de Mello Rossini 2018). As points of reference, tourism incentives and often defining features of particular urban area, local pubs, restaurants, hotels and coffee shops are undoubtedly participating in the production of place identity. This is particularly true for the 'historical' or 'themed' bars and restaurants, which often become landmarks of the area, meeting points and spatial tokens of the city's urban topography.

It is consequently possible to make a distinction between historical communist eateries, and communist 'themed' bars. While the first ones are mostly historical places, which were popular in communist times and survived the transition preserving their historical 'communist vibe', the 'themed' bars are contemporary facilities which are decorated in 'communist' style, using communist memorabilia, vintage design and often nostalgic cues to demarcate themselves. Despite the very clear distinctions, it is difficult to make the typology of visitors frequenting each of these two types of 'communist' bars. In both cases, these places are often known and visited by locals and tourists alike, and often for similar reasons. In fact, most of these places are understood as anti-modern and avant-garde facilities, where visitors either indulge in nostalgia or orientalisation. What draws most of the visitors to such places is the combination of historical significance and funky anesthetization, through which communism appears as curious, eccentric, humorous and entertaining commodity. Without seeking to interpret communism or critically engage with the past, these places provide non-provocative but sassy and upbeat décor and memorabilia, often tossed around in a mismatched, kitschy and prosaic way. While the aim of the section is certainly not to make comprehensive or generalizing overview of these places, the following passages aim to analyse some of the defining features and mechanisms of commodification of communism in 'historic' and 'themed' hospitality venues.

As often neglected, yet highly relevant features of urban landscape, restaurants, bars and accommodation facilities and their intake on communism have been analysed through ethnographic observation and netnography. The method consisted in identifying (usually through online search), visiting (mostly between October 2021 and March 2022), observing

and documenting (through the means of photography and field notes) and analysing the urban setting, interior design, display of objects and customers' behaviours in such venues. As bastions of urban leisure and tourism industry, these sites were also addressed using the netnographic analysis of tourist experiences (user-generated content on TripAdvisor), in order to contextualise their impact on and role in commercialisation, trivialisation and "coming to terms" with the communist past. The section is structured to aggregate the observations and analyses of all the sites visited through these two analytical categories (historic versus "themed" bars), shedding light on only few, out of myriad of different commodification scenarios. While it is certainly controversial to place commercial "themed" within the "heritage" category, it is due to their straightforward and systematic engagement with communist past, that they are understood, for the sake of the diversification of the commodification analysis, as (staged) memoryscapes. Hence, it is necessary to take the analyses in these section with certain reserve, as it is clearly not the realm of communist "heritage" in proper sense, yet it is communist-related aesthetics and organisation which makes it useful contribution to the study of commodification forms.

8.6.1 Communist historic bars

The restaurants established decades ago, popularly known as 'time-honoured restaurants' derive their popularity and respectability from the long-standing tradition, which acts as a 'guarantor' of quality. These restaurants are not a staged 'retro' – they are a genuine 'throwback', most of them looking almost the same as in the 60s, serving the same food and maintaining the same atmosphere. Defying contemporary trends, mass tourism and commercial chains, these places remain bastions of local neighbourhoods, preserving the spirit of the times without showing off their communist descent. In that sense, most of these bars are "communist" by "origin" and décor, not because the communism is "in vogue." Rather than kitschy communist memorabilia which fills the contemporary retro bars, the communist 'time honoured restaurants' display only the minimal socialist-realist design, focusing on functionalism and tradition rather than innovation and trends. Unpretentious and not seeking to impress, these bars act as 'time machines' frequented mostly by locals and some well-informed occasional tourists. Their 'communist' nature is not flashy and overtly displayed through myriad of retro objects and ideological symbols. Instead, the communism is in their DNA – in their design, furniture, menu, service culture and even the guests' activities on the spot. Rather than pursuing entertaining, 'cabinet of curiosities' style, these bars just remained

'their usual self'. Hence, their charm lies in the fact they maintained their style and identity in the decades which saw aesthetic, social and commercial re-framing of everything.

In Budapest, such processes are epitomized in Bambi Espresszo, named after the famous Disney character and opened in 1961, preserving its aesthetics, menu and ambiance for decades. Majolica tiles on the walls, red faux-leather seating upholstery, coffeemaker and neon sign at the entrance – everything is decades old. Even the emblematic domino-playing is still practiced in the café, and café's current owner and manager actually started as a Bambi's waitress in 60s. In Berlin, Café Sibylle in the iconic Karl-Marx Allee was reopened in 2018 after a short closure period, in presence of Hans Modrow, the last GDR's head of government. Privately owned and subsidized by the district, the Café has been recently a matter of disputes between tenants, who see it as a venue for organizing training in hospitality industry, and the district authorities and neighbourhood locals who insist on its historical character. Hence, besides the characteristic decades-old furniture and design, locals and officials urge private lendor to have re-installed, curated and further developed the exhibition on Karl-Marx Allee which has been previously displayed in the coffee shop. In Warsaw, the communist-era canteens known as Milk bars recently regained popularity, and places such as Milk Bar Bambino, opened in 1959, remain staples of the Polish gastronomic offer. With their ultra-affordable family-style meals, simplistic yet authentic décor and self-service, these restaurants preserve the communist aesthetics, organisation and style. Still mostly run by the "cooperatives" and subsidized by the state, these Polish communist-style "fast foods" are popular not only amongst the nostalgic elders, but also amongst local students, young professionals, hipsters and even occasional politicians and celebrities. What more, even tourists are increasingly drawn to the retro-chic and traditional "grandmother-style" Polish food served in Bambino and other milk bars across the country.

"Effortlessly" communist, the "time honoured" bars and restaurants rarely commercialize their 'historic' character by compiling and displaying vintage communist artefacts, staging authenticity or "fine-tuning" the atmosphere to appear more retro-marketable and tourist-appealing. Instead, communist historic bars rely on their originality, longevity and proximity to the community to ensure their commercial success. Despite or precisely because their position "off the beaten tourist path" these places "survived" decades of urban transition, and surprisingly resisted demolishment and transformation into more capitalist-friendly institutions. While occasional tourists also visit such places, their main role is the one of a 'bastion' of local habits, customs and folklore. As vibrant hubs of the everyday life, with

recognisable neon signs adorning the façades of the host buildings, communist historic bars undoubtedly shape the identity of urban neighbourhoods. While these areas are often (as in the case of Karl-Marx Allee in Berlin, or Warsaw's former ministerial district where Milk bar Bambino is) stripped of their communist-era vibrance and dynamism, the historic restaurants act as transmitters of cultural, urban and mnemonic legacies of communism, framing the districts' identity and character. Consequently, these places do not commodify communism as such – rather, what is commodified is their resilience to urban, social and economic change and capacity to defy contemporary trends of luxury aesthetisation, tourist over crowdedness and fine-dining gastronomy. In that sense, the commodification plays out as a process of operating in 'non-commodified' way and appearing as distant from commercial, modern and fashionable as possible.

The unpretentiousness and originality of the historic bars is highly appreciated amongst their visitors, according to the TripAdvisor reviews. The visitors praised it for being *"far from fancy and pretentious"* and having *"the vibe of my 80s childhood which I loved"* ("galinak386" from Sofia, Bulgaria, on "Bambi Café, Budapest, reviewed April 2022). Sites such as Milk bar Bambino are referred to as the *"legend"* with "*authentic people food from the communist era"* ("faozanrizal", Berlin, Germany, on Milk bar Bambino, Warsaw, reviewed August 2019) or the "fascinating reminder for a 'tourist' to the history" ("781lynna**,** Georgetown, Canada, on Milk bar Bambino, reviewed April 2018). In a similar manner, many of the visitors of historic bars clearly link them with communist times, showing the striking resilience of communist legacies and placing these bars on "communist" urban maps.

> *"When the communists were ousted, thank god this baby was not thrown out with the bathwater." ("taistealai_fanach", London, on "Bambi Café", Budapest, reviewed June 2019)*

> *"If you want to step back in time and experience a cafe that has more or less remained unaffected by the huge political changes of the past three decades, then, paying Cafe Bambi a visit, is an absolute must!" ("TravelingHealer", Washington, DC, on "Bambi Café", Budapest, reviewed March 2017)*

> *"Communist era canteen with Stalin looking over your every bite to ensure every comrade gets their fair share. But actually, this was probably the best restaurant we went to in Warsaw. I'd recommend this a hundred times over as the food is amazing, the experience*

*is unforgettable, and these canteens are becoming rarer in Warsaw." ("388andrzejm",
on "Bar Bambino", Warsaw, reviewed October 2019)*

*"As a westerner, never having experienced communism, it was a narrow window into the
stark reality of the time. Although not likely close to the austerity of the Warsaw people,
it was a fascinating reminder for a 'tourist' to the history." ("781lynna", Georgetown,
Canada, on "Bar Bambino", Warsaw, reviewed April 2018)*

Hence, it is obvious from the comments that communism is recognised and acknowledged
by the visitors as one of the main features of these historic bars and restaurants. Consequently,
commodifying authenticity and nostalgia rather than communist itself, historic bars and
restaurants present a highly relevant and under-studied factor of contemporary engagement
with (difficult) history. Yet, the awareness that these 'institutions' belong to a different urban
category, makes them divorced from contemporary concerns over banalization, disneyfication
or stereotypization of communism. Instead, they are understood as places of leisure and
entertainment and hence do not poses "sacral" dimension typical for heritage and lieux de
memoire. As such, they enjoy the status of "in-between" category, where communism is
displayed as a set of aesthetic criteria, gastronomic specialities and service styles, rather than a
particular ideology and (difficult) historical legacy.

8.6.2 Communist themed bars

In contrast with traditional eateries and historic bars, the communist 'themed' places
are usually strategically placed in the areas usually frequented by tourists, often close to the
popular tourist attractions. Their interior design is not a product of the passage of time, but
the deliberate choice to appear "vintage" and uncontemporaneous. As the cultures of
memory start permeating all aspects of everyday life and becoming increasingly popular and
consumable, number of bars and restaurants decide to integrate retro objects as 'triggers' of
popular memories and nostalgia. Communism, as recent historic 'container' and
increasingly fashionable cultural product appears as a particularly appealing and rewarding
retro thematic framework. It is not as morally condemning as Holocaust, it is not as distant
as Industrial Revolution, nor as detached from the contemporary conditions as the Middle
age. Instead, albeit a totalitarian regime, communism is an "imaginary" space framed by
nostalgia, orientalisation and disneyfication. Thus, many of the bars and restaurants chose
to appear 'communist', as a way to demark themselves from the contemporary offer. In

doing so, they rely on overcrowding the space with retro communist memorabilia, offering 'Soviet-style' food and often even dressing up the staff in retro outfits. Taking a light-hearted, de-contextualised and sarcastic approach to history, such places undoubtedly contribute to the overarching tendency of "de-historicization" and banalization of communism in the city.

Communist themed bars may be found in almost every larger city in Central and East Europe. Places such as Propaganda bar in Prague, Café Tito in Sarajevo, The Soviet in Cluj, Red Ruin in Budapest and Raketa Rakia in Sofia are all distinctively "crowded" with propaganda posters, communist memorabilia, retro objects, satirical slogans and kitschy souvenirs. In Bratislava's "Nastartovane Retro", amongst the Czechoslovak furniture from '60s and '70s, one may find a vintage gramophone, camera, TV sets and even half of the famous Skoda 100. In "Kafana SFRJ" in Belgrade, traditional Balkan food is served in the eclectic atmosphere of loud folk music, overdimensioned Yugoslav flags, and hundreds of vintage artefacts "tossed around" – such as retro telephones, books, uniforms, bills – some even "historically" misplaced, such as the iron from the first half of the XX century, and other clearly satirical ("Red Bull" advertising poster with Tito's face on it). Budapest's craze for ruin bars combined with communist revival resulted in an eclectic "Red Ruin bar", adorned with a mural of "communist party" – a graffiti showing Marx, Mao, Lenin, Stalin and Castro binge drinking. Other illustrations in "Red Ruin" highlight the contemporary fetishism with satirical overturning of communist references - Chegueavara picking his nose, Lenin with a mohawk and Stalin with fancy sunglasses. The parodic representations of formerly feared communist dictators appear as a frequent motive, as they incarnate both cultural 'disempowerment' of the regime and the visually entertaining commercial motive.

Ranging from 'communist living room' to 'communist propaganda' and 'cabinet of curiosities' style, communist-themed bars appear as tourist-catchy displays of cultural otherness, stripping communism not only of its dictatorial brutality, but also of its historical character. Communism displayed in these places appears as a subversive element of decoration, a de-personalized, de-territorialized and debilitated melting pot of cultural symbols, popular jokes and uncanny objects. In difference from Café Sibylle, where the exhibition is supposed to be supervised by the Friedrichschain-Kreuzberg Museum in cooperation with relevant scientists, neighbours and civil society actors, the communist themed bars are mostly (dis)organized, cluttered and aberrant. With unrestrained freedom to acquire, display and arrange all sorts of popular artefacts and exhibit communism in

satirical, kitschy, primitive and sometimes even vulgar manner, themed bars are the ultimate illustration of the communism commodified. While throughout this chapter we traced different degrees of commodification, it is probably in these communist-theme bars that one may observe most blatant commercial processes, where communism becomes both an "empty shell" and an "open canvas" upon which any sort of political, social, cultural or tourist meaning can be inscribed.

Several reviews extrapolated from TripAdvisor can shed light on how local and tourist visitors interpret communist "themed" bars. Surprisingly, not many comments for each of the bars visited and analysed in this section were available on TripAdvisor. Yet, most of these comments were rather general in context, addressing décor, food and service quality just like it was a "regular" bar. Hence, several reviews illustrate that some of the participants perceive the experience within the "communist" realm:

"This establishment has a special meaning for us who were born and raised in former Yugoslavia. The interior is museum like, with many former state memorabilia, photos, car plates, banknotes and other nostalgic staff." ("B1714D", Belgrade, Serbia, on "Kafana SFRJ", Belgrade, reviewed June 2020).

"Absolutely lovely! Funny! I felt like at my grandparents flat in 80ties. Lovely and willing staff. I recommend to visit. Good "treska s rožkom" which was a must in socialism time:-)" ("AndreaO355", on "Skodovka Café", recently renaimed to "Nastartovane Retro", reviewed January 2018)

Despite the occasional references to communism (whose authenticity cannot be confirmed), majority of reviews focus on general ambiance, music, offer and quality of food and drinks, providing recommendations and advice unrelated to the "theme" of the place. Hence, unlike the historic bars, which despite being unpretentious, are praised as "communist" memoryscapes, themed bars apparently do not elucidate same experience. In spite of the clear thematic focus and cacophony of artefacts and memorabilia, according to the available reviews, remain perceived as ordinary hospitality facilities.

8.6.3 Sub-chapter conclusion

The analysis in this sub-chapter aimed to approach "communist" bars and restaurants as another important aspect of urban engagement with communism, a "product" displayed and experienced through objects of urban hospitality. While restaurants and bar have been

already addressed as heritage sites (Mattson 2001) and historic tourist attractions (Josiam, Mattson and Sullivan 2004), in this section we addressed both historic and thematic communist bars as spaces where communism is often encountered, displayed and elucidated (see *Figure 18*). Thus, the discussion in this section shed light on different actors and levels of commodification, revealing how "unpretentiousness" of historic bars acts as a catalyzer for engagement with communism, compared to the "staged" communist eclecticism of thematic bars, which are usually perceived as "ordinary" and evaluated in terms of food, music, service and ambiance. While any generalization on such a small sample would certainly be biased and inadequate, it is however possible to hypothesize that in case of urban hospitality, "less is more" and signal of authenticity remains a powerful driver of profit and tourist engagement. Hence, the future research in the field might benefit from exploring these interactions and suggesting why authenticity and tradition matter in certain urban context, while other memoryscapes are praised despite their evidently inauthentic character.

Figure 18   Communist bars and restaurants: (a) Entrance to the Kafana SFRJ, Belgrade; (b) Logo of the "historic" Milk bar Bambino, Warsaw; (c) Interior of the "themed" comunist bar Naštartovane Retro, Bratislava; (d) Original neon sign at Cafe Sibylle, Berlin; (e) Kitchy memorabilia in Kafana SFRJ, Belgrade

9 Conclusion

In 2018, Alexander Motyl published a paper "Why is the "KGB Bar" possible? Binary morality and its consequences", arguing that the reason for 'moral blindness' concerning the controversial naming is a direct consequence of the centrality of Holocaust memory in contemporary societies. According to him, as an ethically 'sacred' category, Holocaust gained moral supremacy over all other historical tragedies, hence making it possible to trivialize anything but the Holocaust itself. Indeed, the underlying question, the "fil rouge" of the thesis is, why it became possible to experience communist memoryscapes in ludic, entertaining, inauthentic, trivialized and highly commodified ways, when such processes would be deemed highly inappropriate and thus remain unimaginable within heritage sites related to Holocaust, for example. What is so particular about communism which makes it commercially exploitable with large public consensus about such practices, and which are the main mechanisms through which communism is commodified? The concluding Chapter of the dissertation will briefly re-state the main arguments and finding, highlighting the contributions and policy implications, but also the limitations of the study and potential directions for the future research in the field.

It would not be an over-statement to claim that any young author, faced with the task of translating such a thought-provoking and multi-faceted analysis of paradoxes framing the contemporary commercial engagement with communist past into a coherent conceptual thought process would feel overwhelmed. In the thesis, I attempted to provide a conceptual framework for studying commodification of communist memoryscapes, by focusing on 6 "heritage" categories, where the notion of "heritage" is understood in its broadest sense, and even "stretched" to include some of the urban sites rarely addressed in that context. The analysis revealed that within each of the six spatial levels of engagement with communism (city tours, bunkers, landmarks, heritage of suburbs, museums, historic bars/restaurants), there are specific spatial, mnemonic and experiential "commercial interventions". Hence, it is through the extensive ethnographic and netnographic research that the thesis demonstrated existence and different strategies of commodification emerging within different types of urban legacies of communism. While adopting the grounded theory method which refuses setting hypothesis in the initial stage of the research, the analysis was nonetheless structured around some broad assumptions about actors, processes and characteristics of commodification within each of the six spatial "containers". These were, respectively, the ideas that (1) communism was selectively commodified (particular urban features will be commodified when there are low levels of public funding, delegation of responsibility, anti-communist sentiment, etc.), (2)

degree of commodification depends on the nature of site (privately managed sites will be more commodified than public), (3) actors frame commodification (curators, guides, site managers play crucial role in commofidication, as they organize spatio-mnemonic framework and uses of heritage), (4) commodification of communist heritage often operates "isolated" from communist legacies (sites commodified due to their architectural, artistic, cultural features and not communist-relatedness), and (5) commodification is trans-nationalised phenomenon (successful commodification strategies are "communicated" between countries). In the conclusion, I summarize again, yet within these 5 analytic categories, main findings of the study.

First, while the idea that communist heritage is selectively commodified may seem straightforward and even obvious, it is the findings related to the nature and causes of that selection which were particularly revealing. Indeed, lack of "public funding" was often addressed in the interviews as the main catalyser of commercial activities. Most sites visited relied heavily on commodification, as that seemed the only "viable" option for the memoryscapes in question. Indeed, sites which are privately managed are certainly more prone to use wide array of commercial strategies in displaying communism and its legacy, however, the extent to which such places are "submitted" to privatization is striking. As shown in the analysis, even the most important heritage assets, such as the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest, Enver Hoxha's nuclear bunker in Tirana, Žižkov Tower in Prague or Memento park in Budapest are "transferred" to the private or public foundations and organizations. Hence, the deliberate choice to disengage national cultural institutions from the management of communist sites highlights an important tendency in contemporary relationship with the "difficult" past. On the other hand, selective commodification was also apparent in the way city guided tours were organized, as the urban design of the tour seldom "commodified" inconspicuous sites, inscribing thus through profit-driven activities and mechanisms "alternative" heritage of communism on the "communist maps" of post-socialist capitals.

Second, in line with the hypothesis that privately managed heritage assets will show more important degrees of commodification than publicly owned, there were several surprising findings. First, I argue there is a bizarre, almost "parasitic" relationship between private and public sphere in terms of commodification of communist memoryscapes. This confluence can be traced not only in official "silence" regarding often concerning effects of commodification of communist urban sites and memories, but also in certain convergence of practices identified through the field analyses, and perpetual intertwining of public and private (commercial)

memory culture. For example, the analysis of museums of communism revealed that private museums approach "official" politics of memory by exhibiting and reproducing official discurse on oppressive and violent nature of the regime. On the other hand, public museums such as "Museum in der Kulturbrauerei", managed by the "Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", extensively integrate topics and artefacts of everyday life into their exhibition of communism, thus approaching narrative and curatorial practices of the private museal institutions. Similarly, guided communist tours often include in their itinerary state-organised exhibitions and memorials, hence reinforcing aligning with the official politics of memory.

Third, while certain patterns could have been identified, the analysis confirmed the centrality of the role of actors in commodification process. Indeed, both participatory observations and interviews confirmed that interpretations, attitudes and approaches towards communism – hence also the degree of spatial, experiential and mnemonic commodification – are contingent on the personality and individual preferences of guides, curators and site managers. Indeed, de-centralization and 'democratization' of the urban memory production, enabling myriad of new practices, activities and actors to engage in tasks of "heritage-making" and "heritage-transmitting" gave to the individuals unprecedented power to translate local histories and co-produce local identity. Disengagement of the official cultural institutions and lack of clear policies in the field significantly contributed to these processes, enabling private tourism stakeholders to independently organise and manipulate much of the local heritage fabrics. Hence, the role of individual actors in determining degree and type of commodification of communist memoryscapes is becoming increasingly relevant. What more, the actors frame the engagement with communist memoryscapes not only according to their personal affinities towards communism or history in general, but also depending on their perception of tourists' expectations. Indeed, the analysis consistently highlighted that main actors of commodification 'tailor' the urban experience of communism according to what they believe the tourists expect, prefer and value.

Fourth, different commodification mechanisms (within different spatial categories) provide conflicting evidences related to the nature and degree of engagement with communism. Or, within each of the spatial categories analysed, different commodification tools have been used, commodifying various aspects to varying extent the communist past. Hence, while in guided communist tours or museums it was clear that the communist history, memory, sites and artefacts were commodified, commodification processes within other units of analysis

were not as straightforward. For example, the analysis of commercial usage of communist landmarks revealed that most of the time, it is not even communism that was commodified, but the architectural, aesthetical or cultural value of the place, or the exclusivity of location and availability of premises. In that sense, communism is not explicitly commodified, it is only a part of the larger puzzle which instigated and promoted commercial engagement with inherently communist heritage. Consequently, the analysis revealed an important characteristic of commodification processes – they often "divorce" or at least "disburden" communist buildings from their communist legacies, since the commercial engagement with these spaces often comes in forms which favour and highlight different urban, aesthetic or cultural features of the place. Hence, while such buildings remain symbols of communism, the "practical" commercial interaction with them most of the times occurs in the "alternative reality", where communist history represents only marginal, if at all mentioned and experienced, feature of the place.

Fifth, cross-country analysis offered an important insight into patterns of commodification of communist memoryscapes emerging throughout the region. It revealed important similarities, within each unit of analysis, in the ways communist memoryscapes are managed, organised and interpreted. Consequently, not only the mechanisms were similar (disengagement of state actors, delegation of responsibilities and privatization of heritage assets), but urban narratives, curatorial practices and spatial organisation also showed striking similarities. I argue that rather than transnationalisation, these practices testify of the 'glocalisation' of communism, where both universalisation and particularisation frame the experience. Indeed, the analyses demonstrated that global influences and trends shape the contemporary tourist and other commercial practices related to communist memoryscapes. While these are often designed to highlight local specificities, it is the reliance on consumers' expectations, trans-national exchanges and the processes of filtering local histories, urban spaces and experiences through socio-political and cultural framework of foreign visitors that contribute to the contemporary 'glocalisation'. In that sense, communism emerges as a set of culturally de-territorialised social practices, a hybrid historical construct which blends local past with global forms of memory work and tourist engagement. Consequenly, through commodification communism becomes not only "globally" sanitised, but also an increasingly "homogenised" cultural experience, and communist heritagescapes a mirror of dialectical relationship of global and local urban and mnemonic dynamics.

Noteworthy, besides these five major contributions stemming from the research finding, the analysis also revealed several equally important characteristics of the commodification processes. First, as demonstrated in the thesis, commodification of communist memoryscapes, while different in form, degree and nature is often a strategy to "contain" communism, whereas through "re-packing" it for tourist consumption or adapting to accommodate practical needs of local economies, communities and urban development. Second, commodification favours particular version of "authenticity", which often relies on self-exoticisation, simulation and stereotypisation of local past and communist experience. Third, communism in its commodified forms often fosters social reconciliation with difficult heritage, as it is through commercial engagement with communist urban remnants that communist buildings become 'emancipated' and brutal connotations relativized and sanitized. Fourth, it is through commodification mechanisms that communism often ends up in disneyfication and vulgarisation of urban and historical interpretation. This was visible both in narratives and bodily performances encouraged at many of the communist sites visited (driving cars, putting on the gas masks, tying Pioneer knots), and the "large-scale" actions, such as Fernseheturm's transformation into a giant T-mobile pink football (for the occasion of European Champtionship), Playboy photoshoots on the Blue train, or the illumination of Palace of Culture and Science in rainbow colours (in solidarity with the LGBT community). Finally, as revealed through the netnographic analysis of the TripAdvisor reviews of the studied cases, while sometimes addressed in critical perspective, commodification is almost always seen as a "de-personalised" process. There are no calls for social accountability for commodification and its outcomes, and most of the time no alternatives suggested. Hence, blurred delimitation of ownerships, responsibilities and duties, and vague and subjective understanding of how communist sites should be used and interpreted limit the potential of commodification critique. In that sense, lack of accountability and alternative solutions implicitly authorizes commodification and favours, albeit in the long run, wide societal 'license' to commodify.

Despite many of the important and innovative findings of the analysis, the research has certainly many limitations which deserve to be mentioned at this point, as they may represent the interesting alleys for future research. Many of the methodological and conceptual challenges of the dissertation have been discussed in previous chapters, yet it is important to acknowledge some of the major researcher and data limitations which impacted the process. Besides the "usual" drawbacks, which evidently hampered the generalizability

of the findings of this study, such as the time and budget constraints, post-Covid "new normality", or the limited scope of the analysis, I aim to highlight three more "personal" limitations. First, "the beholder defines the ruin" (Hell and Schonle 2010, p.7) and the personal experiences, constructivist perspective and researcher bias certainly significantly impacted the overall research design and execution. In that sense, it would be more than beneficial to see the future research in the field addressing the topic from different perspectives, filtering the interpretations through other cultural lenses and more advanced levels of academic or heritage expertise. Second, as the study omitted important post-socialist countries, and more importantly experiences outside the capital cities, its potential to derive generalisations remains limited. It is extremely probable that the review of commodification practices in small-sized cities, rural areas or border sections would give diametrically opposed results and highlight completely new dynamics. Hence, the analysis of different manifestations of commodification within a single country, or cross-national analysis of commodification of communist rural or industrial heritage would undoubtedly greatly enrich this fascinating topic. Third, this research failed (or did not attempt at all) to analyse and understand some important aspects of commodification of communist memoryscapes, such as the main causes, "digital" forms or future prospects. I am persuaded, however, that other researchers will help me fill these gaps in our understanding of the phenomenon, opening some new questions and providing new provocative thoughts and interpretations.

Rather than finishing the Chapter by highlighting the limitations, I would like to, nonetheless, re-iterate the contribution I believe the thesis made to this emerging field. By providing a phenomenological analysis contained within spatial categorisation, the thesis undoubtedly suggested a rewarding structural design template, which may be useful in both academic and policy analysis of different heritage phenomena. Second, the enhanced understanding of main types and actors of commodification may be beneficial to cultural institutions, heritage practitioners and also governmental institutions for suggesting, framing and organising relevant policies in the field, aimed to balance conservation and commodification. Third, the study revealed important global patterns in commodity-treatment of communist memoryscapes. Undoubtedly, this highlights the transnational aspect of the phenomena and local "importation" of mechanisms for dealing with difficult past. Finally, a number of non-generalisable, yet explanatory findings stemming from this study may serve as important 'pilot' projects for other researchers to keep expanding. In that

sense, this dissertation may be understood as a 'roadmap' for future research in the field, shedding light on important tendencies, actors and mechanisms of contemporary commodification of communist memoryscapes. Considering the current trends in tourism, history and urban development in post-socialist city, these processes will continue to frame the everyday lives and experiences in the region, hence making the subject relevant and topical for many future years and research projects to come.

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