

Thomas Lahusen,
Schamma Schahadat (eds.)



Postsocialist Landscapes

Real and Imaginary Spaces
from Stalinstadt to Pyongyang

[transcript] Culture & Theory

From:

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Postsocialist Landscapes

Real and Imaginary Spaces from StalinStadt to Pyongyang

April 2020, 328 p., pb., 37 B&W-ill., 8 col.-ill.

45,00 € (DE), 978-3-8376-5124-9

E-Book:

PDF: 44,99 € (DE), ISBN 978-3-8394-5124-3

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, formerly socialist countries have gone through manifold transformations, whilst remnants of socialism remain ubiquitous. The volume explores various spaces of the postsocialist landscape, presenting a mixture of real and imaginary spaces, of memory and nostalgia, of aesthetic and political symbolism, of the global East and the global South, of academic and essayistic writing. It casts a glance at the heterogeneous relics of socialism and their transformation in very different parts of the world. From the description of (post-)socialist interiors, façades, neighborhoods, parks, monuments, and objects towards the imaginary spaces of literature, the contributors describe the concreteness and intimacy of some of the places that span across and even beyond of what is left of the »second world« today.

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For further information:

www.transcript-verlag.de/en/978-3-8376-5124-9

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Introduction

Thomas Lahusen and Schamma Schahadat

Fourteen years after the fall of the Berlin wall, Landolf Scherzer, a former GDR author and journalist, decided to walk 440 kilometers along the so-called Kolonnenweg, the fortified cement-paved path constructed by the East German authorities on their side of the border separating East and West Germany (Scherzer 2007). In every locality encountered, he chose to ring the doorbell of the first house on his left, asking the question: “How are you after fifteen years of German unity?” When the authors of the present volume met during a workshop on “postsocialist spaces,” held first in Tübingen in 2014, and then in Toronto in 2015, Scherzer’s question had taken a new urgency. Russia and the West were engaged in a confrontation that was increasingly labeled as a new Cold War, and the cracks in the European Union started to be felt along the old “iron curtain.” The shift to the right and nationalism is of course felt globally, but in the “East” it strangely echoes what, some twenty years ago, Katherine Verdery labeled as “transition to feudalism” to characterize the transition from socialism to the neo-liberal order (Verdery 1996: 227). Would it be too far-fetched to consider the regimes of Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orbán, Andrzej Duda, or those of the Central Asian “heads of clan” a new form of “suzerainty” and the breakup of the Soviet Union and its “outer empire” as some sort of “feudal” fragmentation? (Ibid.: 205). With the transition to postsocialism came what Catherine Humphrey has called the “emotional identification with place”: the obsession with frontiers, territoriality, nationhood and ethnicity, from the Bosnian war to the war in the Donbass and the occupation of Crimea, and its social effects—the exponential increase of the “dispossessed.” (Humphrey 2002: 5-6)

None of the participants to our workshops has experienced the border of postsocialism like Scherzer, but each of them has followed Karl Schlögel’s advice “to go out, to set oneself in motion, and descend from the high seat of reading,” (Schlögel 2003: 503)¹ in order to take stock of what is the postsocialist “landscape” today. This term seemed to us better suited for the interdisciplinary character of our collection, represented by cultural anthropology, geography, history, literary scholarship, and

1 English translation: Karl Schlögel, *In Space we Read Time. On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics*, transl. Gerrit Jackson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

even artistic photography. It also better “covered” the various uses, by its authors, of the notions of *place* and *space*. Some of us were dealing with the official, “detached” spaces that were the monuments, museums and other “lieux de mémoire” found in Bulgaria, Bielorussia, Kyrgyzstan, and even Senegal.² Others were drawn to the concrete, personal and intimate experience of what humanistic geography has called “place,” to “topophilia” (to use Yi-Fu Tuan’s term), i.e., “the affective bond between people and place.” (Tuan 1974: 4)

Affect and *emotion* have indeed become a major theme for human geographers. For Nigel Thrift “thinking” is “forms of doing and inhabiting.” He writes about the “infinite of sensuous real-time encounters through which we make the world and are made in turn.” (Thrift 1997: 138) It is such “sensuous real-time encounters” that the authors of the present collection have often searched for and, to some extent, have used in their writing. In this sense, we have attempted some sort of “critical feeltrip,” to use the term of a recent “engaged” experiment conducted by geographer Oleg Golubchikov, who sent his students on a fieldtrip to Moscow, based on an “explicitly more-than-cognitive conception of field-based teaching and learning.” (Golubchikov 2015: 143-157) A number of essays in our volume have been written in such “explicitly more-than-cognitive conception,” in other words, “in affect,” especially, but not exclusively, when they were written by “natives.” We have in mind Ivaylo Ditchchev’s memoir “Neighborhood Socialism,” Davor Beganović’s essay about besieged Sarajevo and its literature, Ekaterina Mizrokhi’s essay “Mourning the Microrayon,” Kate Brown’s “The Last Soviet City” and, to some extent, Gulzat Egemberdieva and Thomas Lahusen’s “Finding a Place in Kyrgyzstan.” We think that their inclusion gives our collection a “feel” not always present in academic volumes.

We agree with Maruška Svašek and most contemporary cultural geographers that “emotions are inherent in political dynamics” (Svašek 2006: 1): they are inherent in the memories or the traces of a socialist past that haunt many of the landscapes described in this book. If emotions are one of the cornerstones of dealing with a socialism that was once conceptualized as a future that has already reached the present and that has now become the past,³ imagination is the other one: the spaces that seem to be so real—houses, people and objects left behind by socialism

2 A concept famously used by Pierre Nora, for whom memory means life, while history tries to control the events that happened, defiguring and taming them. Nora speaks of “the conquest and eradication of memory by history.” See Nora 1989: 8. An interesting study of such lieux de mémoire of socialism is provided by Owen Hatherley in his *Landscapes of Communism. A History through Buildings* (London: Allen Lane, 2015); Hatherley follows communist ideology through its buildings: the magistrale, the microrayon, etc.

3 Emotions in Russian and Soviet culture are a topic that has been explored in detail in the last few years; we just want to mention three studies that trace the history of emotion in Russia and the Soviet Union: Plamper 2009: 229-334; Eli/Plamper/Schahadat 2010 and Steinberg/Sobol 2011.

(like the Spreewald gherkins in the film *Goodbye Lenin*, 2003)—are always already imaginary spaces, filling the traces of the past with new meaning.

An earlier Russian example of Schlögel's call to "descend from the high seat of reading" is Vladimir Kaganskii's *Kul'turnyi landschaft i sovetskoe obitaemoe prostranstvo* (Cultural Landscape and Soviet Habitable Space) (Kaganskii 2001). It is based on the author's two-year travel across thirteen regions of Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Kaganskii visited more than two hundred cities, towns, settlements and villages, traveled by train, bus, car, ship, sometimes by plane, and walked thousands of kilometers. His conclusions can be summarized as follows: the "universality" and "totality" of the former Soviet landscape, which was "generated by and lived in the semantics of the slogan, telling the story of overcoming and fulfillment," has given way to a "universe of blocs, details, fragments, painfully becoming places, towns, districts, and countries." The privatization of land has revealed the "true nature of *homo sovieticus*: to involve him in the control of the land has resulted in the privatization of theft [*privatizatsiia grabezhy*]" (Ibid.: 6-7)

To a greater or lesser extent, the authors of the present volume have explored various spaces of the postsocialist landscape by travel, or including travel and movement in their analysis: from Moscow to Dakar, through Pyongyang (Gesine Drews-Sylla); from Bishkek to Belarus (Serguei Oushakine); through vanished or vanishing literary "Central Europe" (Schamma Schahadat); from Stalinstadt/Eisenhüttenstadt in East Germany to Sztálinváros/Dunaújváros in Hungary, or to Slavutych (near Chernobyl), a "brave new world, which, if we are lucky, city builders of the future will emulate" (Kate Brown); or, to the contrary, to an urban village in Guangzhou where the ghost of socialism is very much alive (Tong Lam). From the description of (post-)socialist interiors, façades, neighborhoods, parks, monuments, and objects to the imaginary spaces of literature, the authors have attempted to describe both the concreteness and intimacy of some of the places that span across and even beyond of what is left of the "second world" today.

On the one hand, the Soviet mapping of space has undoubtedly left traces of "Sovietness" in its former territory and zones of influence, and more than one essay in our volume deals with its legacy. On the other hand, one has to be careful not to over-emphasize the "fetishism of legacy," as Oleg Golubchikov contends. Golubchikov understands transition as an "ideological, totalizing—indeed, totalitarian—project" and proposes to conceptualize the "mutual but hierarchical embeddedness of capitalism and socialist legacy" as "the hybrid spatialities of transition":

Hybrid spatialities represent the mutual containment and reconciliation of otherwise highly contradictory tensions between the spatial ideologies of state-socialism inscribed into the previously egalitarian landscape of economic geography and those of neoliberalism with its anti-egalitarian and exploitative effects. ... At the scale of the city, new urban consumption-based semiotics lubricates class

transformation. ... The social and physical conditions of cities and their fortunes may seem to depend on their geography and legacy, but the root causes of their crises or otherwise are in the existing socio-political system—which twists, distorts, or recreates the meanings of the inherited landscape in its own image. This is why when under state-socialism the geographical differences served the egalitarian project of equalizing development, under capitalism, as Harvey [...] contends, even minor inequalities “get magnified and compounded over time into huge inequalities of influence, wealth and power.” (Golubchikov 2016: 616; Harvey 2010: 290)

As demonstrated, for example, by the essay of Gulzat Egemberdieva and Thomas Lahusen, the “hybrid spatialities of transition” started well before the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Soviet “affirmative action” (Martin 2001) ended up by producing Russified and urbanized Kyrgyz or other Russified ethnic minorities, who happened to be “more equal” than those who remained in the periphery or the countryside, but “less equal” than their Russian fellow citizens. After independence, both Russians and Russified Kyrgyz were increasingly challenged by citizens of the titular nation from “below” or the periphery, attempting to take their place in the conditions of “Kyrgyzization,” but most of them ended up by joining the ranks of the new colonized in the conditions of global neoliberalism. We have in mind the masses of migrant workers from the most impoverished places of Central Asia, sending their remittances back home. The Kyrgyz case—like many other postsocialist “cases”—proves, as Arif Dirlik has argued in a famous 2002 article, that “the cultures constituting the hybrid [...] are themselves products of previous hybridizations; that is, previous histories” and that “the colonialism of the nation-state has become more apparent in these new settings, as the formerly colonized have sought to establish the hegemony of the nation, and the national idea, over widely disparate populations.” (Dirlik 2002: 428,442)

The authors of our volume explore such hybrid spatialities in their own disciplinary terms. Historian Serhy Yekelchuk sees the “main lesson” of Mariinsky Park’s history in its hybridity, i.e., the “co-existence of the political, the commercial, and the communal within the same ‘ecological system’.” For Mark László-Herbert, also trained as a historian, what is distinct in the centrally-planned space of socialism in East German Stalinstadt and the Hungarian Sztálinváros turns out to be the absence of a center in both cases. The “five-storey, prefabricated *khrushchevka* apartment on 9-Parkovaya ulitsa” which Ekaterina Mizrokhi “mourns” in her “essay on affective geography” is inhabited by individuals “who do not always relate to a singular temporal framework, but can hold several temporalities simultaneously in variety of fractured, disjointed, hybrid and integrated ways.” Schamma Schahadat writes about “aesthetic geography,” “a cultural image, a pictorial way of represent-

ing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings,” a “way of seeing.”⁴ For Susi Frank, the fact that Soviet literature continues to have an effect on the shaping of new literary developments in post-Soviet regions is due to the “complex and multilayered, transregional and transnational” character of its literary space, and its “dense intertextual entanglements,” brought forward by the project of a multinational Soviet literature.

Seen from a distance of more than a quarter of a century, the recollection of socialism may acquire accents of irony and nostalgia like in the memoiristic essays of Ivaylo Ditchev and Ekaterina Mizrokhi, or negativity (the crimes and the dead bodies of World War II in Schamma Schahadat’s chapter on (East) Central Europe). But it can also be surprisingly hopeful, like Kate Brown’s celebration of Slavutych, despite contamination, economic depression and isolation. There are official spaces and intimate places inscribed with the traces of socialism. Examples of the first are the *lieux de mémoire* built to preserve or, more often, to create a collective memory. Serguei Oushakine, Gulzat Egemberdieva and Thomas Lahusen, Daniela Koleva, and Gesine-Drews Sylla describe such spaces of memory: the State Historical Museum in Bishkek, the Khatyn’ Memorial near Minsk, the one hundred tourist sites in Bulgaria, and the “Monument de la Renaissance africaine” in Dakar. Examples of the second are the places that are lived in: the socialist apartments in North Korea (Andre Schmid); Ivaylo Ditchev’s own childhood neighborhood in Sofia; the microrayon and communal apartment in Moscow (Ekaterina Mizrokhi) or the Chinese Urban Village (Tong Lam).

The mixture of real and imaginary spaces, of memory and nostalgia, of aesthetic and political symbolism, of the global East and the global South, of academic and essayistic writing makes it possible for us and, we hope, for the readers of this volume to cast a glance at the very heterogeneous and indeed “hybrid” relics of socialism and its transformation in very different parts of the world.

“In space we read time,” states Karl Schlögel, going back to the idea of Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary chronotope (see Bakhtin 1990: 84-258) and, at the same time, coining a very apt formula for the entanglement of time and space. History, Schlögel argues, can only be understood if the historian frees himself or herself from the linear regime of time and attempts, instead, a spatialization of time-maps, mental or geographical, that allow the historian to identify simultaneity and similarity, as well as differences (Schlögel 2003: 51). The authors of this volume do not only read space in time, but turn space into text (a scripturescape) and sometimes experience it with their memories or their bodies, so that space is transformed into a mem-

4 The first term is used by Schamma Schahadat in her essay. The further definitions are by Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, also quoted in Schahadat’s essay.

oryscape or a bodyscape.⁵ Conceptual frameworks are recapitulated, living spaces revisited or analyzed, spaces are visualized, intertwining (historical) narratives and images, time and space. There are many other aspects that the essays in this book deal with, such as memory, narrative, borders, center and periphery. Certain *topoi* show up again and again: emptiness and abandonment, vision and failure, planning and chaos, dreamworld and catastrophe, as Susan Buck-Morss puts it (see Buck-Morss 2002). What connects all our case studies is the fact that they have experienced a socialist experiment, and that most of them came “back from the future” (Groys/von der Heiden 2005) and had to adjust to a *hic et nunc* without the perspective of a shining path ahead, to use the Russian translation of *svetlyi put’*.

When did postsocialism begin? Is it the “post-communist condition” that Boris Groys writes about, the time after “the communist event,” i.e., after 1989/1991?⁶ On the one hand, this time line holds true for the former Soviet Union or, more generally, for the former Eastern bloc. On the other hand, we need to consider postsocialism in a broader framework, both in time and space (Shih 2012: 28). Three essays included in our volume transcend the time-space of the “post-communist condition”: an essay on the “socialist” resistance of a present-day “urban village” in China challenges this country’s neo-liberal repositioning that already started toward the end of the 1970s;⁷ the return to a Pyongyang apartment of the late 1950s not only “preserves” the laboratory status of socialism in action, allowing for useful comparisons with other such domestic spaces analyzed in our volume, but it also serves as lesson of history that any scholarship alternative to the current neo-cold war studies of North Korea should consider; the third “anomaly” is an essay on a highly syncretic monument in Senegal, which enlightens us about the way socialist myths and ideologies worked their way into the rest of the world and how persistent they are, even if Senegal has never been a “people’s republic.”⁸

The book is subdivided into four subsections.

PART ONE of the book, “History’s Playground,” is devoted to three very different hot spots of the present: the former Tsar’s Garden in Kyiv, which became one of the political landscapes of present-day Ukraine (Serhy Yekelchuk); “Plutopia” in post-Chernobyl workers’ communities (Kate Brown); and the postcolonial spaces of

5 These neologisms are, of course, inspired by Arjun Appadurai’s attempt to describe global space as a network of ethnoscaples, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes. See Appadurai 1996.

6 Boris Groys, “The Post-Communist Condition”: <https://blogs.brown.edu/hiaa-1810-s01-fall-2017/files/2017/08/Groys.pdf>, 167. Accessed 31 Oct. 2018.

7 See, e.g., Bolesta 2014.

8 See also Stanek 2012.

the Khatyn Memorial and the reenactment park of the Stalin Line in Belarus (Serguei Oushakine). Serhy Yekelchyk, in his analysis of “The Ideological Park: How the Tsar’s Garden in Kyiv Became a Modern Political Space,” concentrates on an urban site that only in recent history was transformed into a political space: the Tsar’s Garden, rather than the Maidan, for example, which is saturated with political and symbolic meaning. The Tsar’s Garden (or: Mariinsky Park) acquired its political role much later and is, as Yekelchyk claims, “a site that could still revert to its previous social role”—as such it offers an interesting example to show how space becomes a political place and its reverse. Yekelchyk narrates the park’s history from the 18th century until today. The park acquired political meaning from the 1980s onward, due to its closeness to the Supreme Rada—in the crisis of 2013/2014, however, the park was claimed by the (often paid) supporters of the anti-Maidan as part of a “street politics.”

Kate Brown, a specialist in (post)catastrophe in the Soviet Union and the United States, acts as participant observer in her text, “The Last Soviet City,” attending a memorial party, feeling “transported into the set of a Soviet film.” The reader follows her to Slavutych, the town that was built after the Chernobyl reactor exploded, to house plant operators and liquidators and, more important perhaps, to prove that, “like the mythical phoenix, the Soviet Union would emerge triumphant from the catastrophe.” Once built as a Soviet town, Slavutych now finds itself on Ukrainian soil. Until today, however, the town has preserved its Sovietness; “the last Soviet city” is an anachronistic landscape in a post-Soviet world. In a very personal account about her visits to Slavutych, Brown describes the place as a total exception to the drab, one-artery provincial towns of post-1991 Ukraine and shows how the architectural plan of the city is based on the ideal of a Soviet city that encompasses, among others, “the international ideology of the late Soviet state,” something hardly ever realized. The contribution combines a short history of Soviet city landscape with an ethnographic narrative, focusing on the woman Nadia who was evacuated with her family from Pripjat after the Chernobyl accident in 1986 and found a new home in Slavutych.

Serguei Oushakine, in “Spaces of Detachment,” describes the “uneasy coexistence of history and material structures” in post-socialist nations (in this case: Kyrgyzstan and Belarus). The starting point for Oushakine is the State Historical Museum in Bishkek, which appears to be an “uneasy” combination between the material inherited from socialism and a post-socialist context: state socialism has inscribed itself into the post-socialist narrative. This example, Oushakine states, is typical for many post-socialist countries; post-socialist memorial sites turn Soviet structures into “objects of elaborate historical debates”: while the material structure/space remains unchanged, the signification has shifted considerably. Oushakine looks at two sites closely linked to the Stalinist past: the Khatyn

Memorial near Minsk, which was built to commemorate the victims of World War II, and the theme park Liniia Stalina (Stalin's Line).

PART TWO is devoted to what is left—or not—of the “Friendship of the Peoples” after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Susi Frank writes about the legacy of Soviet multinational literature, taking examples from contemporary Ukrainian poetry; Schamma Schahadat traces the literary “invention of (East) Central Europe” in the travelogues of the Polish author Andrzej Stasiuk, of the Ukrainian writer Yuri Andrukhovych, and others; Gulzat Egemberdieva and Thomas Lahusen analyze the multiple hybrid landscapes of post-independence Kyrgyzstan, while Davor Beganovič focuses on the literary landscape of Sarajevo before and after the Bosnian war, attesting to what was destroyed of the multiethnic socialist Yugoslavia.

Susi Frank's contribution is entitled “Contemporary Ukrainian Russian-Language Poetry and Post-Soviet Literary Space,” and it thus shifts the focus from geographical to literary space. She asks what happened to the paradox of the Soviet project of “multinational literature” in post-Soviet times, a paradox insofar as multinational Soviet literature was supposed to be Soviet and national at the same time, a “zone of influence of Soviet and Russian literature where Soviet Russian-language literature formed the center of a transnational and multilingual canon.” In the contemporary literary field of Ukraine, where we find Ukrainian-language and Russian-language poetry side by side, Soviet traces as well as national and transnational tendencies can be observed. How, Frank asks, does the post-Soviet literary field (new literary institutions, journals, or internet-platforms) “try to reshape Russian literature transnationally in the form of a Russian-language literature that is crossing political boundaries?”

Schamma Schahadat's focus is on the “(Re)invention of (East) Central Europe,” borrowing Larry Wolff's expression of the “invention of Eastern Europe.” The chapter follows the traditions of the invention of Central Europe from pre- to post-socialist times: from Friedrich Naumann's political and economic notion of *Mittleuropa* to the imaginary geographies from the cold war until today. Czesław Miłosz's concept of (East) Central Europe in his *Native Realm* (1959) and Milan Kundera's in his “The Tragedy of Central Europe” (1984) were continued by Andrzej Stasiuk, Yuri Andrukhovych, and Serhii Zhadan, among others. What becomes obvious is the fact that Central Europe—a cultural landscape with a historical dimension—is always already an imaginary space governed by geopolitical, artistic, or intellectual forces.

Gulzat Egemberdieva and Thomas Lahusen, in their article titled “Postsocialist Hybridities: Finding a Place in Kyrgyzstan,” examine the complex hybridities of a changing place and those who inhabit it: the recent total remake of the State Historical Museum in Bishkek analyzed by Oushakine; the self-published novella written by a Russified Kyrgyz man whose identity is still very “Soviet,” but whose

“Kyrgyzzness” surfaces when he is confronted with Russian privilege; an interview with the first president of independent Kyrgyzstan Askar Akaev, advocating his political program of a “common home” for all ethnicities, which recalls the utopia of the “friendship of nations” in a country of overlapping ethnic and regional borders; the transition from previous “*clan*” practices to new *class* divisions of a rural Kyrgyz family, its rise and decline under the “spatializing effects of neoliberalism”; and finally those left behind, experiencing various degrees of hybrid existence: like Nurbek, a Kyrgyz who only speaks Russian, still living in the “no-place” of a previous Soviet “secret city,” or like Liudmila, whose first language and emotions are Kyrgyz, but whose “homeland” considers her Russian.

In “Space under Siege: Sarajevo during and after the War” Davor Beganovič follows Sarajevo’s city planning from Ottoman times until the Yugoslav War in the 1990s. From the beginning the city has, on the one hand, a “vulnerable city core,” and, on the other, difficulties expanding on either side for topographical reasons. If one looks at besieged Sarajevo during the civil war, two topographies emerge: the landscape of the occupier and the landscape of the occupied, both of whom experience an intimate but also different relationship to the city. Beganovič analyzes three literary texts to examine the relationship between the actual situation of the war and the imaginary reworking of it in literature (Milenko Jergovič’s “Gravedigger,” Aleksandar Hemon’s “A Coin,” and Semezdin Mehmedinovič’s *Sarajevo Blues*).

PART THREE is entitled “Minus Stalin,” to locate the transcendent body of power eliminated after the collapse of the Soviet Union and that still somehow remains present as a specter of the past. If Ernst Kantorowicz in his *The King’s Two Bodies* argues that the “King never dies,” (Kantorowicz 1957: 377, 396)⁹ he has in mind the transcendent body of power that is eternal. The essays of Part Three examine post-Soviet spaces in which the “king is dead,” but where one can, nevertheless, still feel his uncanny presence. They deal with the “absent” town centers of two former “Stalin cities” in East Germany and Hungary (Mark László-Herbert); with memories of a “different” neighborhood of Sofia and its changes after socialism (Ivaylo Ditchev) as well as with childhood memories of a Moscow microrayon (Ekaterina Mizrokhii) and with the “remapping of national space” through the “one hundred tourist sites of Bulgaria during and after socialism” (Daniela Koleva).

The imaginary spaces in Mark László-Herbert’s essay titled “The Limits of Central Planning: Rudimentary Town Centers in the Planned Cities of Stalinstadt and Sztálinváros” take shape on the drawing board, when architects planned socialist cities in the GDR and in Hungary. These cities, however, were never built as designed—history overthrew the blueprints. Disagreeing with Henri Lefebvre, according to whom socialist space never existed, László-Herbert argues that this existence became obvious *after* the end of socialism. Paradoxically, its main charac-

9 “Dignitas quae non moritur”.

teristic is absence: absence of a proper social center. Instead, we find “unfinished, rudimentary civic centers.” Instead of monumental buildings, after the 1953 uprising in Stalinstadt (later, Eisenhüttenstadt), the dissatisfied population was awarded with shops and entertainment along the *Magistrale*. Today the never filled city center is covered by a park and a parking lot. Similar developments can be observed in Stalinstadt’s Hungarian twin town, Sztálinváros (later, Dunaújváros).

Ivaylo Ditchev’s essay titled “Neighborhood Socialism: A Memoir from 1960s Sofia” is very different from the impressions László-Herbert evokes in his two socialist towns gone capitalist. Ditchev confronts us with a personal narrative about the neighborhood in which he grew up in (socialist) Bulgaria. Instead of planning from above, as shown in László-Herbert’s contribution, here we have intimacies from below, although the neighborhood’s origin lies in the official plan to create an intellectual district in the 1920s. What is similar, however, in both cases is the failure of state planning: while Stalinstadt and Sztálinváros could not be realized because of the unexpected turns of history, political will in Bulgaria’s socialist center was disturbed by irrational forces from below, from the neighborhood, a “relatively closed space that both profited from and resisted to the communist project, transforming its backwardness into privilege.” Ditchev’s reminiscences go back to a neighborhood called Losenez, a privileged intellectual district, “far from urban planning.” Ditchev, like László-Herbert, asks what was specific about socialist space and responds with another paradox: “The socialist character of place consisted in the specific resistance to the socialist project.”

“Mourning the *Microrayon*: An Essay in Affective Geography” by Ekaterina Mizrokhi echoes the landscape of Kate Brown’s “last Soviet city.” But it doesn’t share Brown’s nostalgia for the future. Many years after emigration, Mizrokhi returns to her native Belyaev in Moscow to investigate the rhythms and characteristics of the spaces of the *microrayon*, the standardized, prefabricated late-modernist micro-district housing estates that littered the Soviet Union and many other places of the socialist landscape, as well as their affective geographies in the face of impending demolition.¹⁰ Weaving together personal reflections, architectural particularities, and artistic exploration, Mizrokhi creates a matrix of understanding of what it means to inhabit these places in the present moment. To study and document the phenomenology of life in a *microrayon* is an exercise in the archival preservation of fleeting local and diasporic cultural histories profoundly rooted in places that will soon cease to exist—an act of frustratingly futile mournful defiance. Mizrokhi’s essay is perhaps the closest in this collection to Golubchikov’s “feeltrip”—including engagement with spatial justice, with perhaps the same limitations that were experienced in Golubchikov’s experiment: “thinking

10 About the persistence of prefabricated housing in the post-socialist world and the emotions of those who continue to live in them, see also Lahusen 2006: 736-746.

about the ‘difference’ of the Russian spatialities involved only limited reflections of what this means for the order back home.” (Golubchikov 2015: 147)

Daniela Koleva’s chapter called “(Re)Mapping National Space: The One Hundred Tourist Sites of Bulgaria and their Metamorphoses” concerns itself with the transformation of “national space through tourism in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria.” What happened, she asks, to “socialist leisure and tourism” in post-socialist Bulgaria? Koleva’s starting point is the difference between capitalist and socialist tourism: While Western tourism is satisfied with leisure and consumption, socialism had to justify leisure activities in the context of the ideology of national production and the creation of the “new man” (and woman). Tourism under socialism constituted a kind of biopolitics, controlling the individual’s body and time. This ideological background for tourism in Bulgaria is measured against the tourist landscapes (the “tourist inventory”) that have changed significantly in the shift from socialist to post-socialist Bulgaria. Koleva shows how tourists are perceived to respond to landscape, especially postsocialist landscape.

PART FOUR, entitled “Traveling Boundaries,” goes beyond the European scope of its predecessors. It deals with the bewildering migrations of socialist aesthetics in a Senegalese monument (Gesine Drews-Sylla), with “gendered anxieties” of dormitory and apartment living in North Korea during the early 1950s and their transformation in the early 1960s (Andre Schmid), and ends with a photo essay on an “urban village” in the midst of Guangzhou, China (Tong Lam).

In “The *Monument de la Renaissance africaine* and Global Routes of (Socialist) Monumentalism: New York, Moscow, Pyongyang, Dakar,” Gesine Drews-Sylla follows the route of a socialist aesthetics from Russia to Senegal via North Korea, thus showing how two global paradigms, the postcolonial and the post-socialist, interact locally in the Global South. Senegal marks the semantic center of the essay, or, more specifically, the giant *Monument de la Renaissance africaine* located outside of Dakar, which from the aesthetic point of view is a “syncretistic hybrid” that evokes Soviet as well as American associations. Drews-Sylla shows how ideological and aesthetic concepts are inscribed into this statue, built in 2010 by a North Korean company. The contribution offers a perfect example of the global circulation of a socialist aesthetics through both socialist and post-socialist spaces and shows how socialist internationalism and local traditions fuse.

Andre Schmid’s contribution deals with the last Stalinist-type country in existence, one that is definitely not “post-socialist”: North Korea. In “The Gendered Anxieties of Apartment Living in North Korea, 1953–1965,” Schmid concentrates on the restructuring of living space in the 1950s, after the devastation wrought by the Korean War when prefabricated mass-housing was built. These houses resembled their counterparts in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. Specific to this Korean case was that the housing project not only carried the symbolic meaning of socialism and nationalism but it also was viewed “as a space of potential labor

and production.” The apartment, Schmid writes, “acquired shifting meanings” depending on the context: (national) history, socialism, or the everyday. Individual in tune with collective happiness lay at the core of this New Living, and it was closely connected to participation in the production process; the “model workers stories” functioned as the *grand récit* of happiness.

Tong Lam’s contribution to the book is a very special one, since it combines image and text to show and to describe an “Unreal Estate: Postsocialist China’s Dystopic Dreamscapes”. While Lam’s photographs give us artistic insights into this Chinese urban village, an essay accompanies his photographic work. They both evolve around the oxymoron of the “urban village”: the village transported into the city, representing the dark side of an “urban modernity that fetishizes gleaming skyscrapers and spectacular architecture.” Lam follows the changes in Xiancun (Xian Village) in the southern provinces of Guangdong from the 1950s to today, from a “Soviet-style collectivized farmland” to a space swallowed by the growing metropolis Guangzhou (Canton). Xiancun turned into an illegal settlement within the metropolis, one in which the city’s most marginalized population found its living space, a spot “where the disposable labor force is stored, ready to be mobilized when needed.” It is a very special slum space created in the uncontrollable aftermath of socialism, located not at the capitalist city’s periphery, but right in the city center, protected by walls from intruding into the surrounding city.

Undoubtedly many blank spots remain on the landscape sketched by our volume. For example, none of its authors have dealt with Russia *per se* (with the exception of Ekaterina Mizrokhi’s microrayon), but since “Russia” had neither its strictly national territory during the lifetime of the Soviet Union, nor its own Communist Party, it identified increasingly with the Soviet Union as a whole, it was “everything else.” (Slezkine 1994: 435) As to the “periphery,” Cuba, Cambodia, or Vietnam, and all the mental and political landscapes of the left in Western Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere, their history is in need of many other travels along the hybrid places of our global world.

Let us go back to Landolf Scherzer’s inspection of the former border between the two Germanys. First published in 2005 by Aufbau-Verlag, *Der Grenz-Gänger (The Border Walker)* earned both criticism and praise. The author was accused of lacking objectivity, even of falsifying some of the interviews he conducted. One critic accused Scherzer of “fogging up” (*vernebeln*) his argumentation, along the lines of PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) followers, presenting everything related to the Federal Republic of (West) Germany (FRG) as negative, and everything concerning the former East Germany (GDR) as positive.¹¹ Judging from the almost four hun-

11 Matthias Biskupek, “Krieg um die Grenzen der Rezension, Ein Lehrstück in bisher fünf Bataillen.” <http://www.matthias-biskupek.de/text/palmbaum-grenzen.html> (accessed 1 Nov. 2018).

dred pages of *Der Grenz-Gänger*, the latter criticism seems rather unfair, even if Scherzer's leanings to the political left do crop up now and then. At times, some of the remarks made on the former GDR-FRG border sound prophetic. Near Point Alpha, NATO's Cold War observation post between Rasdorf, Hesse (former West Germany) and Geisa, Thuringia (former East Germany), a former GDR soldier talks about the border guard dogs: "Only the best German shepherds survived the horrible torture to run along the border all year long in the heat and the cold. Out of these, the breeders chose the toughest ones for the next generation. These very dogs were bought by American breeders. Where are these German-American dogs deployed today? Perhaps at the Mexican border?" (Scherzer 2007: 359-60) A few days before, a (West) German peasant, asked about his relations with the Thuringian farmers besides whom he now works on adjacent fields, shares the following comment with the author: "The wall is higher than before; even if one cannot touch it, it's there." (Ibid.: 339)

For one of the editors of the present collection (Thomas Lahusen) Scherzer's account of the inner German border was not only an example of the "descent" called for by Schlögel, but helped to clarify unresolved issues of childhood memories. Born in (West) Germany, Thomas Lahusen remembers discovering on a postal stamp, sometime around 1952, the existence of the "Deutsche Demokratische Republik." Asking what the abbreviation of DDR meant, he was informed that it was "in der Ostzone" (in the East zone), beyond the "iron curtain".¹² "I imagined a gigantic metal curtain coming down from the sky... Both the 'zone' and the image stayed with me for a long time, as it did probably for many West Germans, perhaps even until today, which marks perhaps the origin of the misunderstanding between "Ossies" and "Wessies" and most certainly the fact that, for those born in the German Democratic Republic, the "East" does not "let them go."¹³

Recently, a retirement home in Dresden has chosen an interesting new method of helping its patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease and dementia, called "reminiscence therapy." It is a room, furnished in the style of the GDR sixties. According to nurses, doctors, and psychologists, it has helped many affected persons "to regain lost skills, such as taking meals by themselves."¹⁴ A real-life sequel to the film *Goodbye Lenin?* We hope that our volume will contribute to both reminiscence and therapy.

12 About the "iron curtain" between the two Germanys at that time, see the interesting report by Rutter 2014: 78-106.

13 Elke Bredereck, "Der Osten lässt mich nicht los" (The East does not let me go). *Die Zeit* (14 September 2018): <https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2018-09/ehemalige-ddr-ostdeutschland-identitaet-chemnitz-fremdenfeindlichkeit-10nach8>. Accessed 14 September 2018.

14 "DDR-Devotionalien helfen Alzheimer-Patienten," *MDR Sachsen March*, 1, 2017: <http://www.mdr.de/sachsen/dresden/demenz-erinnerungen-100.html> (accessed 6 March 2017). We thank Sanja Ivanov for having drawn attention to this article.

The book is the result of the project “(Post)Socialist Spaces”, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). To both institutions we want to express our thanks for the generous funding of our international and interdisciplinary project.

We also want to thank various people who read the manuscript at its different stages: Petra Dreiser for copyediting the English texts of the non-native speakers; our students in Tübingen who helped to prepare the manuscript: Daniela Amodio, Jennifer Döring, and Josef Nelson; transcript publishers and Gero Wierichs for turning the manuscript into a book and publishing it.

And, last but not least: We also acknowledge the help of the kind and not so kind reviewers who helped us to make this volume better.

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