



Holidays After the Fall: History and Transformation of Socialist Holiday Resorts

session chairs: Michael Zinganel & Elke Beyer



The focus of this panel is the planning history of holiday resorts in Socialist countries and their physical and economic transformations after the fall of the Iron Curtain. After World War II, mass tourism started to be perceived as a driving force for the economic development of landscapes that had been marginalized before not only in Western but also in Eastern Europe. Segregation of urban space into zones for production and reproduction was expanded to a much larger scale: in Socialist countries too, spaces of leisure were planned and built at the peripheries of cities, on the mountains and at seashores, e.g. at the shores of the Bulgarian, Rumanian and then-USSR Black Sea or at the shores of the Mediterranean Sea of the then-non-aligned Yugoslavia. Socialist countries, however, needed more serious ideological argumentation than their Western counterparts before starting their effort: therefore they first introduced a so-called "social tourism", subsidized holidays in cheap and therefore simple accommodations, built and run by workers' unions, youth organisations, the army, and big companies for their own employees. Although first facilities were already developed in the 1930s in fascist Italy (Dopolavoro) and Germany (Kraft durch Freude), during the Popular Front government in France, in Great Britain (Billy Butlin's Holiday Camps), in Sweden and in communist USSR, their success was limited due to the overall economic crisis and the beginning war. The most important preconditions for mass tourism, growth of economy and paid holidays for workers were only realized after World War II. The liberation after Stalin's death enabled several Socialist countries to heavily invest in the design and construction of tourist resorts – and many of those were opened to foreign tourists as well.

Papers therefore should emphasize the planning history of Socialist holiday resorts on all scales, from traffic infrastructure (hubs, harbours, stations, airports), to spatial, urban and landscape design, to building typologies and interiors. Papers might also deal with the ideological arguments and the shift from collective experience to individual hedonistic encounters. Papers may also emphasize the process of post-Socialist transformation of their physical status (abandonment, restoration, refurbishment, or rebuilding) and their economic status (private, semi-private, public) including problems such as restitution of land expropriated during communist revolutions, unclear building regulations and corruption, as well as their adaptation to the demands of a much more differentiated tourism and a very powerful real estate market.

On Socialism's Shores: Romania's Black Sea Resorts, 1956-1965

Juliana Maxim

The socialist regime that came to power in Romania after 1947 invested heavily, economically and symbolically, in the development of resort facilities on the Black Sea coast. In the history of postwar socialist architecture, the resort of Eforie Nord, built in 1956, is one of the first projects to fully formulate the break from the neo-classicism of the architecture culture of the previous period. First through modest beach facilities such as showers and cabins in 1956, and subsequently through the full register of hotels, restaurants and health pavilions, Eforie Nord (and later Mamaia) was the first instance in which the socialist state endorsed an openly modernist architectural ethos.

This paper argues that, at least in the case of Romania, the sea-side resorts played a central role in the search for an architectural expression of socialism, and profoundly shaped the architectural culture of the following decade. Although Eforie Nord was conceived as a realm of exception, and was meant to stand in contrast with the everyday urban environment, the planning, constructive, and aesthetic principles initially articulated in its design nonetheless rapidly propagated to the ulterior building of mass housing projects in urban settings.

The paper will examine the many reasons why sea resort architecture was considered to expand and ultimately fulfill the socialist experience and, as such, was promoted by the socialist regime as one crucial example of its spatial culture, on par with its mass housing districts. The summer vacation and its new architectural setting powerfully dislocated the traditional economy of holidays based on religious festivities, family gatherings, eating and drinking, and replaced it with a liberatory counter-narrative of non-regimented time and active, healthy, hygienic leisure. Meanwhile, vacation accommodations, and in particular the hotel, by offering minimal two-bed rooms and common eating facilities, enforced a new, improved form of collectivity, based on, for instance, affiliation to a particular workers' union, which dissolved domesticity and suspended family ties.

The paper draws from a variety of sources, from the archives of the Central Committee that detail the degree of financial autonomy granted to these developments, to postcards and touristic brochures of the time, which I use as evidence that a convincing visual discourse about life under socialism was also at play.

Hungarian Sea Promises a Rich Summer: Collective Good and Economic Interest in Socialist Leisure Architecture

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The workers' right to leisure and recreation was one of the principles of socialist ideology, so during the socialism – especially after the failed revolution of 1956 – in Hungary many organizational and architectural forms of holiday were developed and in use.



The subject of the paper is the architectural development around Lake Balaton in the period 1957-1965. The regional plan – though it also counted with foreign visitors – concentrated mainly on domestic tourism. The intensive and thorough design process involved the entire architectural profession. Architects had the opportunity to realize their ideals on socialist holiday resorts, though they had to implement them within restricted financial and technical circumstances. The constraints led to creative solutions: buildings combined industrial prefabrication with on-site manual work, light construction with heavy materials; all this gave them a special character in tune with the feeling of the happiest barrack. However this period ended soon and by the middle of the 60s a new concept was realized: high-rise quality hotels for foreign tourists and summer cottages purchased by Hungarians.

The paper focuses on how ideological changes influenced architecture and urban development. It argues that behind the radical and visible change in development and architectural concept there was a shift in the relationship of the regime towards foreign tourism, which moved from the original resistance to capitalism to the acceptance of foreign tourism as a source of hard currency, which the state awfully lacked. The highest political circles' debates on how they should relate to foreign tourism were hidden from the public (and became open to research only after 1990), but the official argumentation published in newspapers is an excellent source for discovering the change. The paper demonstrates how development around Lake Balaton was presented in the media, how the appreciation of common good and collective leisure soon turned to emphasize the economic interest and how the growing number of foreign visitors was interpreted as a source of national pride. The thesis of the paper is that – at the attractive tourist destination places – the idea and praxis of building for socialist tourism was rapidly forced back, and the collective experience gave primacy to the individual, well before socialist state ceased to exist.

Nordic Sochi at the Baltic Sea: Company Holiday Homes Creating Differences in Soviet Estonia

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The 1970s has been considered a period marking the consolidation of party elite in Soviet Union, when the *nomenklatura* had finally a chance to devote itself to enjoying privileges and „stability of cadres“. The complex system of privileges, that up to certain extent became available to a wider span of institutional hierarchy, included also leisure possibilities. As a result, holiday homes were extensively built along the Baltic coast of Estonia from late 1960s to mid-1980s, the most outstanding one was for local Council of Ministers on a sandy beach of Valgeranna. In addition, numerous other holiday homes for collective farm construction and design offices, industries and cultural institutions, even a rest home for cosmonauts from Russia were constructed in Estonia known as the „inner West“ or „Nordic Sochi“ in late-socialist cultural mythology, thus holding a significant place in Soviet resort history and holiday culture.

Holiday homes as semi-public spaces represented the ambiguous character of leisure culture in Soviet block where spending one's free time was structured by public roles, i.e. institutional identity. On the other hand, this ideological performativity was escaped and appropriated by experiencing privacy through material privileges and extraordinariness of built environment. Paradoxically, holiday homes were one of the channels where the Estonian architectural avant-garde of the seventies, managed to manifest their ideas of diverse spatial practices, hence a possibility of a different kind of society.

The paper argues that company holiday homes were both the product as well as the constituting part of the peculiarities of late-socialism imbued with ideological controversies. I would like to consider „difference“ as one of the key terms for analysing Soviet holiday culture and spatial practices carrying interpretive potential for a whole period, coincidentally incorporating ideology critique and explaining cultural production. The consolidated party elite, at one hand, created social privileges in space that was clearly producing and representing social inequality in the „classless“ society, on the other hand, occasional slacks in the system enabled the manifestation of ideas celebrating user freedom in that same architectural space.

Learning from Yugoslav Tourism: between Arcadia and Pragmatism

Dafne Berc, Maroje Mrduljaš and Luciano Basauri

Since the 1950s the Yugoslav Adriatic coast became a popular tourist destination and one of the rare places where citizens from Western and Eastern Europe could freely meet in an affordable working class 'Arcadia'. The rapid development of an economically deprived littoral was one of the strategic priorities of former Yugoslavia. For such purpose, an integral approach was conceptualized on the basis of complex spatial plans testing latest principles of urban and economic planning in accordance with principles of decentralization. Hotels and tourist resorts emerged as one of the most exciting investigative topics for architects, resulting in a quick evolution of architectural typologies and urban design concepts. The socio-economic system in socialist Yugoslavia went through numerous reforms and introduced a specific hybrid market and planning economy. These shifts demanded harmonizing market interests and public welfare while urban planning and architecture played a mediating role. As „defenders of public good“, using their influential position, architectural and urban planning disciplines played an essential role in the control of market-driven tourist developments.

This Paper argues that planned tourism in Croatia during Yugoslavia was able to set in motion a dual process that on one hand lead to an important contribution to post WWII modernist architecture culture, and on the other built coherent and productive „lucrative landscapes“. Tourism was a fundamental modernizing device which introduced not only



spatially well-articulated tourist resorts but contributed to the whole process of reconfiguration of built environments and fortification of local socio-urban dynamics, while tourist facilities became focal points of urbanization through their controlled distribution. The landscape arrangements, coastal infrastructure and programmatic offer of this legacy often constitute valuable resources of civic space for guests and local communities.

Today, tourism industry still capitalizes on the recycles of tourism infrastructure largely developed during socialist Yugoslavia. A comparative analysis shows that the loss of integral planning principles and socio-political changes negatively affected the overall implementation of tourism, which is mostly less convincing than in socialism in matters of local coastal prosperity, natural preservation and spatial justice.

Paper will focus on the specific, mostly positive “modernizing effect” of tourist facilities in socialist Yugoslavia through the investigation of evolution of modern urban and architectural concepts and their multifaceted influence on the littoral’s development, which has proven to be extremely vital and currently used.

Transformation of Bulgarian Socialist Holiday Resorts: Tourism, Liberalization and the “Civil Society”

Todor Boulev

With the fall of communism, political pluralism, market economy, new social and culture models were introduced in Bulgaria. But the liberalization of the real estate market and the lack of building regulations induced a building-boom at the Black Sea coast that tended to destroy the resources that the coastal leisure culture and tourism industry are depending on. When tourism industry and the real estate market extended its interest to several beautiful shores that were not developed during the socialist times – or even protected as natural heritage parks, campaigns to fight the expansion of tourism and to save these territories started. Therefore the negative by-effects of this transformation also led to significant protest movements that contributed to the establishment of a civil society in Bulgaria.

In this paper I will introduce the different ways of privatization and transformation of tourist resorts and complexes built during the socialist period from the 1960s to the 1980s: “Albena”, a huge prefabricated “structuralist” resort serves as the best example. The resort is still managed as a whole by the same stakeholders, a management buy out share holding company (SHC), which abandoned the option to increase the density, but developed the quality of service and the character of the resort, its open spaces and infrastructure “Sunny Beach”, on the other hand, illustrates the worst case scenario, where the negative effect of the expansion of its territory, the restitution of former agricultural lands, the lack of building regulations and “privatization” drove a haphazard expansion of building projects of all sizes and typologies culminating in the increasing construction of so called “apartment hotels” and “closed” resort complexes. Its units (private apartments and small detached houses used as second homes for a few days in the year) are sold one by one creating an absolutely ineffective use of resources. The complex lost its “resort character” and changed into a dense cityscape with noise, traffic jams, and large concrete territories without greenery.