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NAEF, Patrick James

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"Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma"
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The objective of this contribution is to explore heritage management through the lens of concepts like terrorscape and leisurescape. Using a case study from Lithuania, “Stalin World”, it will examine the way specific landscapes can overlap with the touristification of Soviet traumatic heritage. This historical theme park located in the south of the country may be conceived as a touristscape constructed of traumatic memory: a reconstituted terrorscape based on the history of the gulag. The main argument here is that, through the mobilization of irony and derision in a context close to leisure, this traumatic heritage can be confronted in a country still trying to forget the dark years of Soviet rule. However, the trivialization of such a traumatic heritage has been contested and this memorial initiative was a source of vivid debates on the safeguarding or obliteration of Soviet memory, as well as ethical questions as to its management.

Keywords
Heritage, Lithuania, trivialization, theme park, Gulag

1. Introduction

A cheap holiday in other people’s misery
I don’t wanna holiday in the sun
I wanna go to the new Belsen²
(Sex Pistols, “Holiday in the Sun”)

In 1991, after 50 years of incorporation into the Soviet Union, Lithuania regained its independence. As noted by McKenzie (2013), one of the earliest post-communist successes of the Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – was their ability to reignite their long-dormant tourist industries. Furthermore, “a key component of the tourist agenda was to provide opportunities for visitors to learn about the struggle that had occurred during Soviet period” (McKenzie, 2013: 115). This struggle is illustrated by several sites dedicated to the communism history, like the Museums of Occupations situated in both Latvia and Estonia. Other tourist attractions in the region also provide the opportunity to visit (or to spend a night as a fake convict) in the ex-prison of Karosta in Estonia, also known as the Karosta Prison Hostel, or even to stay in the former Dacha of Leonid Brezhnev in Latvia. The latter is characterized by an historical reconstitution

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process, whereby the tourist plays the role of a guest of the former General Secretary of the USSR. In Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, the Museum of Genocide Victims, locally referred to as the “KGB Museum”, presents the history of Soviet oppression and the gulags. Lastly, in 2001, another site was inaugurated 130 km south-east of Vilnius, next to the city of Druskininkai: the historical theme park Grūtis, commonly referred to as “Stalin World”. This open-air museum displays monumental sculptures and many other artifacts of the Soviet period. As stated on the official website, this exhibition “symbolizes absurdity and brutality of Soviet system and occupation, and shows its political leaders and hero. The exhibits disclose manipulations with the historical facts and deformations of historical memory”.

The objective of this contribution is to analyze the management of Soviet heritage in Lithuania in the context of this particular site, adopting an anthropological perspective. It is proposed that traumatic elements linked to the Soviet oppression are trivialized through a process of touristification and presented in a context involving irony and derision, through practices attached to leisure. This reflection will also allow us to consider the notion of landscape through the lens of concepts like *traumascapes* (Tumarkin 2005), *terrorscape* (van den Laar 2013), *tourist scape* and *leisure scape*. In other words, this contribution will explore certain mechanisms involved in what could be considered as the transition of a *terrorscape* into a *leisure scape*. The data presented here were collected during fieldwork in Vilnius and Grūtis, obtained by semi-directive interviews and content analysis of media and tourism promotion material, such as websites and travel guides.

2. From *terrorscape* to *tourist scape*

As Garden (2006) notes, while heritage sites as physical places are easy to recognize, they are much more difficult to grasp as cultural phenomena. For a more comprehensive approach, heritage studies scholars are more and more frequently mobilizing concepts with the suffix “scape”, such as *heritagescape* (Garden 2006), *traumascapes* (Tumarkin 2005), *memorialscape* (Carr 2011) or *terrorscape* (van der Laar 2013). Some of them (Garden 2006, Carr 2011) question the cultural and social decontextualization of heritage sites and objects, along with the overlooking of the links that they maintain. Accordingly, Garden considers heritage sites as “[...] unique social spaces as a means of acknowledging both the tangible and experiential qualities that make up these sites as a place. A heritage site is a complex social space constructed by the interaction and perceptions of individuals who visit the site” (Garden, 2006: 397). Looking at post-war settings, Jansen-Verbeke and Georges (2012: 278) introduce the notions of *memoryscape* and *warscape*, and emphasize both the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage landscapes attached to war or collective trauma. They also join Garden’s constructivist approach to heritage, arguing that war landscapes should be regarded as process and not objects: “These landscapes are not to be seen as objects or territories, or as textbooks to be read, but as processes by which social, subjective, national or regional identities are formed”.

One can thus observe the development of a growing interest for heritage landscapes attached and produced by trauma such as war or state terror, challenging its unique material dimension and considering its construct and dynamic dimension. Assayag (2007: 1, my translation) conceptualizes the lasting effects of a traumatic event as the eye of a cyclone, or a “violent and unique perturbation zone, with long lasting devastating effects”. Similarly, Tumarkin (2005: 12) proposes the concept of *traumascapes*, describing a distinct category of sites transformed physically and psychically by trauma: “[...] traumascapes become much more than physical settings of tragedies: they emerge as spaces where events are experienced and re-experienced across time”. A trauma attached to a war, natural disaster or terrorist attack is not only embodied by a place or an event, but by the way this event and this place are experienced and interpreted in time. Regarding the tourism sector, memorials, museums or historical theme parks can thus become the experience and interpretation vectors of the traumas and the places they are associated with. Tumarkin (2005: 12) also underlines that those traumascapes contribute to crystallising identities: “Full of visual and sensory triggers capable of eliciting a whole palette of emotions, traumascapes catalyse and shape remembering and reliving of traumatic events. It is through these places that the past, whether buried or laid bare for all to see, continues to inhabit and refashion the present”. For Tumarkin, the past is not a welcome guest, but an intruder. On the other hand, the concept of *terrorscape* is introduced by Van der Laar (2013) in reference to places where terror, political or state-perpetrated violence has happened or was prepared.

Following the conceptualizations of Tumarkin and van der Laar, the objective here is to try to better understand the past and to explore how trauma is collectively remembered, presented, interpreted and forgotten; the touristification process of Soviet traumatic heritage serving as a case study. Turnerbridge and Ashworth (1996) state that violent and traumatic heritage strikes the most powerful social impacts, and has some of the most marketing potential. This last statement can be confirmed by the numerous sites of trauma visited by tourists worldwide, which contributes to turning those *terrorscapes* or *traumascapes* into *tourist scapes*. Different approaches to the tourist scape concept have emerged in tourism literature over the past several decades, usually defining it as a set of elements attached to tourism, including resources (e.g. sites, objects, attractions, parks, museums) or services (e.g. hotels, restaurants, shops).

http://www.grutoparkas.lt/
Finally, whether it concerns terrorscape or touristscape, another dimension must be added to the heritagescape approach, a component that still appears to be partly overlooked: the flows that contribute to the production of these landscapes. Appadurai (1990) presents a conceptual framework to analyse what he conceives of as a global cultural economy, proposing five dimensions of cultural flow: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financeescapes and ideoscapes. He justifies the "scape" suffix by arguing that those interconnected dimensions are deeply perspectival constructs, "inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-state, multinational, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national groupings and movements (whether religious, political or economic) and even face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighbourhoods and families" (Appadurai 1990: 296).

Mediascapes and ideoscapes thus describe complex repertoires attached to information, images, interpretations or ideologies. In this analysis, traumascapes and terroscapes are also conceived of as landscapes experiencing flows produced by their trauma. They are defined here as socially constructed landscapes characterized by a circulation and production of flows. In the context of their tourification, these flows are also materialized by objects and practices, such as postcards, websites, photos, organized tours, movies, promotion material and even tourist representations.

However, if leisure is one of the central dimensions of the tourism practice, it cannot be presented as the only one. Especially when war heritage is mobilized, other aspects, such as learning, testifying or even grieving, can represent important motives for visitors. But the leisure dimension can still be observed in several war heritage tourist sites. In Vietnam, the Cu Chi tunnels\(^4\) can serve as a paradigmatic illustration of leisure and trivialization in the tourism sector. This highly traumatic site for American soldiers is now a hotspot for Western tourists in Vietnam. This war site constitutes a "guerilla theme park" where Vietnamese War history is presented by guides dressed as Viet Cong soldiers and where tourists can wander through reconstructed tunnels, shoot with real weapons and even dress as guerrilla soldiers for a few more dollars. For Alneng, this site represents Vietnam's response to Disneyland:

organized to have tourists make-believe they are heroic Vietcongs; they crawl into the tunnels, eat Vietcong food and join the Vietcong dolls for photos. [...] Some confess to be true GI-wannabes with a hedonistic repertoire of boozing, drugging and whooping. Adding to this their proclivity for war memorabilia, they present themselves as not too far stereotypes of wartime GIs. (Alneng 2002: 474)

Alneng adds that the Cu Chi tunnels constitute war site attached to a new form of war: "A war of ideological napalm and propaganda booby-traps". Schwenkel (2009: 97) also points to the trivialization of Cu Chi war heritage, highlighting its historical detachment: "Despite government efforts to retain its historical and commemorative significance, Vietnamese youth, in particular, have transformed the Cu Chi Tunnels into a site of entertainment that is largely detached from the war". She suggests that the way this site is experienced by Vietnamese youth tends to generate anti-memorial functions, leading to a form of distancing from this national traumatic heritage.\(^5\)

Cu Chi does not represent the only illustration of the merging of traumatic and leisure dimensions. On the historical battlefield of Waterloo, Bressens (2013) looks at the way this site could become more comprehensive, and also more attractive to visitors. He takes the example of leisure games recently added to the site, a new mediation now presented along with other, more classical interpretation techniques, such as guided visits. For him, the tourist, who is less and less responsive to conventional discourses, must be seduced: "It's about introducing originality, modernizing the narratives, introducing emotion" (Bressens, 2013: 1, my translation).

On the other hand, the addition of a leisure dimension to the presentation of traumatic heritage can also be source of criticism, as with the management of the Cu Chi site and Vietnam War heritage in general, as noted by Schwenkel and Alneng, who explore the transformation of a traumascapes into a consumer good. Schwenkel notes that touristic processes that commodify war with exchange value are indicative of larger global trends in which social suffering is appropriated and consumed in diverse social fields. She adds: "The ambivalence of Vietnamese citizens toward such commodities, in contrast with the engaged consumption by international visitors, alludes to the symbolic violence that occurs in converting the landscape of Vietnamese suffering into an object of consumption".

Ashworth (1991) is even more critical, stating that in such a context, the sombre and serious tone of a battle is reduced to the atmosphere of a carnival. A remark partly confirmed by a site in France, Oradour-sur-Glane, where the director of the historical department, Pascal Plas, exposes one of the main motives supporting the creation of an interpretation centre next to the site: "We would like visitors to stop visiting Oradour like a castle".\(^6\)

Several other sites attached to war have also been designed as theme parks by the media. The newspaper World Affairs looks at a new open-air museum next to the village of Mleeta in Lebanon, dedicated to the Lebanese resistance, stating with the title "Hezbollah's Disneyland":

\(^4\) The Cu Chi tunnels represent a network of underground tunnels and gallerias used by Viet Cong soldiers as communication and supply routes, hiding spots, as well as food, medicine and weapon storages.

\(^5\) Another part of the Cu Chi area also containing underground tunnels is mostly frequented by locals and especially by Vietnamese youth.

\(^6\) Interview with P. Plas, Oradour-sur-Glane, September 2011 (translated from French by the author).
Hezbollah now has a theme park. The Tourist Landmark of the Resistance promises a fun-filled day for the entire family celebrating the holy Islamic “resistance” against the perfidious Zionist Entity. The Syrian- and Iranian-backed Party of God built it on top of a mountain overlooking South Lebanon and the Israeli border area, and they bus in school kids from all over the country to look at it.8

In the Cambodian jungle, the village of Along Veng, the last bastion of the Khmer Rouge, where tourists can visit the grave of Pol Pot or the house of Ta Mok, is now an historical theme park sponsored by the government. Highlights of this new touristic site include an underground concrete bunker, Pol Pot’s outdoor swimming pool, a replica of his house and even the remains of a toilet that he used during his detention. This site is described by the New York Times as “Disneyland meeting the killing fields”.7 Most of the tour guides are former Khmer Rouge who served the dictator during the war, a fact that is severely criticized by Long and Reeves, whose interpretation points out the lack of evidence:

The guides do not stick to the official narrative and there is no other source of interpretation: no signage, no leaflets, no guidebooks. Can anyone imagine being given a tour of Hitler’s bunker by former SS soldiers and being told that Hitler was a good man because he got the trains running on time. (Long and Reeves 2009: 76)

Finally, Holocaust heritage could seem like one element that is in total contradiction with the notion of leisure. In 2005, after the inauguration of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, many conflicts arose, due to differing uses of the site, which varied between memorial functions, such as showing respect or grieving, and more trivial or leisure-oriented uses, like playing, running or picnicking (Fig. 1). Security guards had to be posted to ensure visitor compliance with what is seen as appropriate behavior.

However, Cole (2000) underlines the historical distortions of Holocaust history that can be generated by guided tours. He illustrates this process with the emergence of Schindler Tours, proposed in Poland following the worldwide success of Steven Spielberg’s Schindler’s List. He notes that the sites presented during those tours are more attached to the movie than to the actual facts of Holocaust history. Spielberg’s work thus acquired a superior reality to that of the Holocaust: “and while Spielberg filmed his movie there because that is where the ghetto was, for the ‘Schindler’s List tourists’ it is the film location — rather than the ghetto — that is being visited, because the virtual reality of Spielberg’s Holocaust is more real than the ‘Holocaust of history’” (Cole, 2000: 75).

This can also be illustrated by the museification and the tourification of what can certainly be conceived as one of the quintessential traumascapes: Auschwitz-Birkenau. Cole (2009: 110) qualifies this site as “Auschwitz-land”, arguing that it is becoming more and more detached from the original site history: “Representing the complexities of the past in a ghoulish theme park for the present has consequences. The ‘tourist Auschwitz’ threatens to trivialise the past, domesticate the past, and ultimately jettison the past altogether”.

Cole’s vision of Holocaust trivialization is certainly provocative, and indeed, presenting the site of Auschwitz as a ghoulish theme park can seem extreme. However, the trivialization process of Auschwitz is a reality and the development of “stag weekends” that propose Auschwitz in their offer certainly illustrates this dynamic. The British operator Last Night of Freedom invites clients to tick the cultural box and to visit Auschwitz, among other, more conventional stag party activities, such as striptease or paintball:

Though not exactly the first thing you’d associate with a stag weekend, many who visit Krakow feel compelled to pay their respects at this moving and bitterly sad museum. [...] For those that do, transfers, professional guide, museum entry and soft drinks are included as part of an unforgettable sobering experience that leaves every visitor feeling numb as they board the bus back to Krakow.7

Another operator that specializes in stag weekends, Chilli Sauce, offers the same kind of activities: “Truly eye-opening and thought-provoking, why not take a break from your stag weekend mayhem and immerse yourself in a little world-defining history before heading for the flight back home”.8 These examples of Holocaust trivialization are extreme and their main motors seem to be essentially commercial. However, some scholars also identify other motives supporting this process, linked to power and ideology. The trivialization of Holocaust heritage is conceived

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7 http://www.lastnightoffreedom.co.uk/build-your-own/stag-party/krakow/
as “Shoah business” (Edkins 2003) or “Holocaust industry” (Cole 2010) by those arguing that this dynamic allows financial and political groups to appropriate parts of Holocaust memory. As stated by Edkins (2003: 165): “The Holocaust has been packaged and sold as a commodity. A simplified collective memory has been manufactured by different groups in the pursuit of their political objectives”.

Likewise, Soviet heritage is now being mobilized within the Lithuanian tourism sector. Theme parks and museums are emerging in different parts of the country and the Disneyland comparison is being put forward once again by the local media: “You may have thought Disneyland and Stalin-era mass deportations had nothing in common. They do now – thanks to enterprising Lithuanian Vilius Malinauskas”.11 Presenting such a traumatic heritage in a context apparently close to leisure led to a animated debate in the nineties; supporters of this memorial initiative promoted it as a safeguard for history, while the opponents argued that it was an affront to the many Lithuanians who were deported and killed during Soviet oppression. The idea of recreating a mock railway in order to carry visitors in cattle wagons was seen as particularly disrespectful of their memory. This debate thus illustrates the tensions that emerge when a traumatic past has to be confronted and interpreted, especially when tourism and leisure are convoked.

3. “Stalin World”: from oblivion to preservation

“Stalin World” is officially called the “Soviet Sculptures Museum” or “Grūto Parkas”12 due to the nearby lake of Grūtas. This is also the name of the village where most of the park founder’s family lives. This historical theme park arose from the private initiative of a local entrepreneur, Vilius Malinauskas, who made a fortune in the snail and mushroom exportation business. The founder’s original idea was to establish a park retracing the general history of the country, through the centuries up to the present. In the end, the scope was limited to the Soviet period after Malinauskas observed the progressive disappearance of this part of history in other former Soviet countries:

That’s living History no matter how painful it is! Why should we hide it? In other countries like Belarus or Ukraine there [the statues] were all stolen or destroyed. In those countries we couldn’t have done it. In Lithuania we were there at the right time! […] I was also strongly supported by the population. After a survey on the need of such a park, 87% of the population agreed.13

Malinauskas approached local heritage institutions and the Lithuanian government with the Park idea. In 1998, the Ministry of Culture established a contest for potential investors. Four projects were proposed, one of which was based on public funding. Malinauskas’ project won the bid and the first oppositions followed directly after this decision, mainly from public associations and parliament deputies. From the park founder’s point of view, they were essentially linked to the refusal of the public-sponsored project. However, the need for the conservation of such heritage was questioned: “The idea of destroying everything following the Soviet ideology was suddenly again on the table”.14 Finally, construction began in 1999 and the park was inaugurated on the 1st of April, 2001.

According to the park owner, there are 111 monumental sculptures – all from Lithuania – and more than 1.5 million artefacts, such as stamps, coins or medals. Most of these items were provided by the private sector, while the Lithuanian government promised 87 sculptures, only to finally offer 39. Malinauskas is now in a legal dispute with the Lithuanian copyright association, which represents seven artists who designed some of the statuary and who are now asking for 6% of the park’s annual revenue. The owner has strictly refused to pay anything, arguing that he is already taking care of those objects which would have vanished if it was not for him. He has also reminded the artists that copyright legislation did not exist during the communist era, noting contemptuously: “When my father was deported in Siberia and I was starving those sculptors were almost millionaires!”.

Situated in the periphery of Lithuania tourist map – one has to specifically ask the public bus driver to stop at the destination – this historical site receives relatively few visitors. The park is in a financial deficit and Malinauskas states that its central motive is the preservation of memory, not economic profit. Despite a certain lack of interest from tourists, especially foreigners, the park founder capitalized on this site of memory to diffuse his presentation and interpretation of Soviet heritage. Malinauskas was invited to give several conferences around the world and was even granted the Ig Nobel15 prize of peace in 2001.

Although in financial deficit, the park has progressively gained a certain amount of attention from the international media and is now presented as one of the country’s tourism highlights by the traveller’s bible, the Lonely Planet: “Eight kilometers west of the southern spa town of Druskininkai, in the village of Grūtas, lies the infamous Grūtas Park. A cross between

12 http://www.grutoparkas.lt/
13 Interview with V. Malinauskas, Grūtas, June 2010.
14 Idem.
15 Idem.
16 As stated in the Ig Nobel official website: “The Ig Nobel Prizes honor achievements that first make people laugh, and then make them think. The prizes are intended to celebrate the unusual, honor the imaginative — and spur people’s interest in science, medicine, and technology. Every September, in a gala ceremony in Harvard’s Sanders Theatre (http://www.improbable.com/ig/).
kitschy entertainment [...] and an attempt at education about life in Soviet times” (Masters et al. 2013: 499).

According to the management staff, the park is run by 50 to 60 employees. A wide swampy forest of firs and pines infested by mosquitoes constitutes the natural setting of this peculiar theme park, an environment supposed to remind the visitor of the harsh conditions of Siberia. After paying the two-dollar admission fee, visitors enter the 20-hectare park, which is surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers.

The main exhibit consists of monumental statues and bas-reliefs of principal figures of the Soviet era, such as Stalin and Lenin, positioned as a two-kilometer-long exposition. Speakers diffuse Soviet propaganda broadcast continuously. Numerous social realist paintings and graphic works are exposed. As stated by the official website, the main objective is to expose the truth about Soviet occupation:

These idols and symbols, thrust upon us, the Lithuanian nation during the tragic Soviet era, reveal to us and our children the historical truth about the Soviet occupation in Lithuania. Grouping of the sculptures of the park of the “Soviet lager” is based on the fact that all these historical characters more or less took part in organizing and carrying out the terror, anti-state activity annihilating statehood of Lithuania.  

Sculptures are grouped into different circles depending on the different figures that they represent: the totalitarian circle (including founding figures of Communist ideology, such as Lenin, Marx and Engels), the circle of terror (including figures of the occupation of Lithuania in 1940), the Soviet circle (including figures who took an active part in the struggle against the independent state of Lithuania in 1918-1919), the red circle (including figures implicated in the Lithuanian genocide in 1944-1945), the circle of occupation (including figures in the occupation of 1940 and organizers of annihilation of Lithuanian statehood) and the circle of death (including figures involved in the organization of shock-groups and anti-Lithuanian actions in the post-war period).

The whole architecture of the site calls to mind Soviet oppression and gulags. The house information centre resembles a cultural house as they were built in the 1940s and 1950s. The wooden path directing visitors within the site is the same as those used in the gulags of Siberia. For hungry visitors, a cafeteria proposes “exotic Soviet dishes” as part of their “nostalgia menu”, such as: sausages with mustard, sprats with onion and vodka, “nostalgia borsch” and the “deer’s eye cocktail” (two dl glass of pure vodka). The park website emphasizes the ideological dimension of the project, along with its uniqueness:

Fig. 2 - Soviet canon and playground in Grütas (P. Naeff)

17 http://www.grutoparkas.lt/
18 Idem.
19 Audio-guide.
20 http://www.grutoparkas.lt/
21 Idem.
Visitors can also take the audio-guide option while wandering through the site. The proposed narrative is composed of two distinct types of discourse: the first one describes Soviet occupation through the presentation of its heritage – statues and other artifacts – and the second one exposes the process that led to the implementation of the park, such as the statue acquisitions, the history of the Malinauskas family or the copyright conflict mentioned above. Tourists and visitors are thereby informed about Lithuanian communist history, along with certain aspects of contemporary post-Soviet time.

4. Dealing with memory through leisure and trivialization

Before looking more closely at the ways in which this traumatic heritage is presented and interpreted, one must question the nature of the site itself. While its touristic and leisure dimensions can be illustrated by the different tourist-oriented services and objects directly attached to leisure – like a children’s playground or a zoo – its terrorscape condition still has to be examined. There is a distinction between sites of memory built in situ – on the site of massacre, terror of violence – or others built ex-novo (Violi 2011, van der Laarse 2013). Grūtas Parkas should be placed in the latter category, which implies the collection and reconstruction of different objects and practices attached to a terrorscape linked to Soviet state terror. The reconstruction of gulag architecture serves as the most obvious illustration in this context. This analysis thus examines a process involving the touristification of a reconstructed terrorscape.

Whether it concerns traumascape or terrorscape on the one hand, or touriscpe or leisurecape on the other, the merging of leisure and traumatic dimensions seems to contribute to enhancing the diffusion of this particular memory. The site allows for the development of new vectors, such as the park website and promotional material, the visit of tourists and locals, the press coverage of the park (and the debate on the ethics of the site), the conferences of the founder, among others. Looking at some of these vectors can thus illuminate ways in which this traumatic past can be confronted by part of the Lithuanian population.

As previously mentioned, one of the main characteristics of the interpretation of Soviet heritage in this context is highly related to dimensions such as irony and derision, thereby allowing local population to confront this painful memory. Indeed, this traumatic heritage is turned into a tourist attraction involving a process of trivialization and desanctification. This is clearly implied on the official webpage explaining the main objective of the park:

Taking the “idols” off the pedestal, changing the location and status of the exhibiting of the monuments, and using a special exhibition technique and additional aids have substantially altered the ideological content of the monumental sculptures. The Grūtas Park exposition discloses the negative content of the Soviet ideology and its impact on the value system.

Losonczi (1999) observes the same dynamic at Memento Park, also known as the “Statue Park” in Budapest, where “communist idols” have also been taken off their pedestal and relocated in an outdoor museum in the periphery of the city. Losonczi opposes two forms of heritageization: the institutionalization of a valued and legitimated memory and a paradoxical type of museification, like the one he analyses in Budapest, situated between memory and forgetting. For her, the main objective of actors involved in the Memento Park would therefore be “to remove those statues from nodal urban places in order to suppress the traces of an historical period seen as definitively over and conceived as a tragic slip” (Losonczi, 1999: 444-45, my translation). In her view, the park aims first and foremost to confine, seal and remove cumbersome emblems of a delegitimized past.

Like the Hungarian Park, Lithuanian Soviet sculptures have been removed from their central, urban locations and installed in a very peripheral location. Furthermore, the ironical interpretation of this tragic heritage seems to play a similar role in the de-sanctification of historical Soviet figures, as can also be generally observed in different items of merchandise that are sold in the post-communist tourism sector, such as pop-art representations of Lenin or Stalin on mugs, posters or t-shirts. (see fig. 3)

![Communist party tee-shirt](http://www.threadless.com)

**Fig. 3 - Communist party tee-shirt**

In the context of tourism development in the Baltic States, McKenzie (2013) introduces a difference between what he conceives of as “remembrance
tourism” and “nostalgia tourism”. The former focuses more on educational aspects, while the latter type of tourism looks at historical events with an aim to promote kitschy and longing representations of the past. It is into the latter category that McKenzie (2013: 119) places Grutas Park, as he considers it to be a “nostalgia site”: “Unlike the remembrance attractions, which generally caused little controversy inside each country, there were regular articles and posting about these nostalgia attractions and sites”.

However, in the context of Grutas Park, this distinction seems too homogenous and rigid. While it is true that this heritage site served as fodder for debate and controversy, and that the so-called “Stalin World” certainly mobilized kitschy representations of the past, nostalgia does not seem to fit in a dynamic where Soviet heritage is more challenged than longed for. Furthermore, as previously stated, different levels of discourse can be identified and kitschy representations of Soviet heritage certainly do not constitute the only vector for interpretation. The numerous artifacts presented by “Stalin World” also possess an important historical and documentary value, which can be equally attributed to McKenzie’s conception of “remembrance tourism”.

The trivialization of Soviet heritage can moreover present a way for the population to deal with its traumatic past without erasing it. By looking at the Budapest Statues Park, Losonczy introduces the idea of preserving to erase. By confining heritage objects in a prison-like space, heritage actors in Hungary have “turned into heritage the obliteration of memory through the grouping of public icons and emblems in a fenced site, rarely open and separated from the quotidian space” (Losonczy 1999: 451, my translation). In the context of “Stalin World”, though traumatic memory is trivialized and can therefore be challenged and confronted by the local population, Lenin and Stalin statues nevertheless avoid destruction. It seems indeed that heritage trivialisation can contribute to preserving objects of memory that may be otherwise destined to disappear, partly contradicting its anti-memorial functions as described by Schwenkel in the case of Vietnam.

However, although the trivialization of Soviet heritage partially allows for its safeguarding, the historical detachment mentioned by Schwenkel when looking at Vietnamese war heritage management should not be overlooked. The historical disconnection attached to “Stalin World” has received some critics from part of the population, mainly survivors or their relatives, for presenting a sanitized and simplified vision of traumatic events.

In another case, looking at tourism development in post-war Sarajevo, Volčić, Erjavec and Peak (2013: 2) analyse the commodification of its heritage for tourists, criticizing the simplification of the Bosnian capital’s traumatic past: “Memories of the war undergo a process of commodification for tourists: history is simplified as a necessity of shaping a consumer experience. This simplification provides tourists with a very limited way to learn about Sarajevo’s past and the impact of violent conflict in general”. Others also consider the simplification process that follows the one of trivialization as a way of controlling narratives by selecting appropriate elements of the past. Similarly, the simplification process attached to museums or tourism in general is conceived by Uzzel (1998: 19) as a selection of romantic and nostalgic “slices of the past” that is attractive for tourists and visitors: “At best it reduces the educational value of history, and at worst it creates and reinforces myth and promotes sanitized versions of the past where guilt is removed and fantasy rules”.

Finally, Ashworth (1991) considers this dynamic in the context of nationalistic trends, demonstrating that when nationalistic ideology is at stake, trivialization can lead to selective simplification in order to present a sanitized and idealized past. Accordingly, Grutas Park should also be considered in the context of the post-Soviet re-branding that Baltic States are experiencing in general. As noted by McKenzie (2013), a majority of tourists continue to see the Baltic countries as ex-Soviet, and the Soviet period is still a defining characteristic of each of them. Thus, the trivialization and de-sancitification of Soviet heritage can also be seen as a means of national branding, by detaching a new state like Lithuania from a past attached to Soviet occupation.

5. Conclusion

This case study analysis aimed to explore how elements of a terrorscape – linked to Soviet state terror in this context – have been incorporated into a toursitscpe. Through this example, it was shown that traumatic and leisure dimensions are merging, leading to the overlapping of terrorscapes and leisurscapes. Traumatic heritage can thus be confronted and challenged by the local population through irony and derision, and in some ways, this can be seen as an alleviation of collective trauma. But this certainly does not imply oblivion. On the contrary, turning a terrorscape into a toursitscpe or leisurscpe can contribute to its diffusion by adding new vectors, as it has been demonstrated. Furthermore, the trivialization of a terrorscape could also be seen in certain ways as an indicator of reconciliation with the dark past attached to this condition. If in Vietnam, less than 50 years after the end of war, the trivialization of war heritage is experienced by both former fighting parties, Americans and North Vietnamese, Soviet heritage trivialization in Lithuania could also be considered as a sign of alleviation of the collective trauma attached to Soviet state terror.

References

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