

Integrating socialist cultural heritage into the tourism offer of the municipality of Koper

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Abstract

The period of socialism has changed the society and the space of the Municipality of Koper and bequeathed the cultural heritage of the recent socialist period, which may be referred to as the relics of socialism. This cultural heritage includes spatial phenomena of the time: commercial and residential buildings, suburban settlements, individual buildings, monuments of the National Liberation War and other structures that were erected during the time of socialism. Invisible relics, called the relics of ideology (non-material cultural heritage), may be included as well. The purpose of this paper is to present the cultural heritage of socialism because it is not yet integrated into the tourism offer, as well as to form proposals for its integration.

This paper initially deals with the registration of the relics and provides their presentation. Next are highlighted those relics that could potentially be integrated into the tourism offer of the Municipality of Koper as new or complementary tourism products. Because of the typological diversity of the relics, we propose various forms of tourism products: the establishment of museums, expansion of the existing museum collections, the establishment of an open-air museum and creation of info points, perhaps including souvenir shops, and learning pathways. In conclusion, the importance of the integration of cultural heritage of socialism in tourism and the promotion of new tourist products is highlighted. We also emphasize the importance of involvement and participation of all potential stakeholders on the local, regional, and national levels in integrating the new products into the sustainable tourism supply of the Municipality of Koper.

Keywords: socialism, cultural heritage, Municipality of Koper, relics of socialism, tourism offer, integration.



1 Introduction

The period after World War II was marked by a changed socio-political situation as a result of the establishment of socialism as a social political system. Since 1954, when the area of the Municipality of Koper was definitively connected to Yugoslavia, the socialist management of space caused substantial spatial and social change as the result of systematic industrialization aimed at achieving modernization. The consequences are currently visible in space and society and represent the cultural heritage of socialism, which consists of a variety of architectural relics and an intangible heritage. We consider them to have tourism potential and with the appropriate interpretation they should be integrated into the tourist offer of the Municipality of Koper. The purpose of the text is therefore to present the cultural heritage of socialism and to formulate concrete proposals for the integration of some of its individual relics into the tourism offer.

The central part of the text presents various proposals for their integration based on appearance, functions, positions in space and their typological diversity. Certain relics we have proposed as separate tourist products, while others are set out as complementary to existing tourist facilities. On this basis, we suggested their integration in a variety of ways: the establishment of museums, expansion of the existing museum collections, the establishment of an open-air museum, creation of info-points, perhaps including souvenir shops, and creation of learning pathways. In conclusion, we highlight the importance of integration of the cultural heritage of socialism in tourism and its promotion. In addition, we emphasize the importance of involvement and participation of all potential actors in the realization of new tourist products of sustainable tourism in the Municipality of Koper on the local, regional, and national levels.

2 Socialist transformation of space and society and the formation of socialist heritage

After World War II urban renewal was necessary, as was a solution to the problem of unemployment and the restoration of welfare. Socialism was supposed to provide quicker and more efficient development, elimination of agrarian overpopulation and generate the process of modernization. There are two main changes reflected in space and society: private ownership replaced by and managed by the state and the abolition of the free market and market economy. The economy thus became guided by the state authorities to meet the needs of the country and citizens and to establish equality between social classes and an equitable distribution of goods and thereby eliminate disparities in development regions. Spatial planning was also subordinate to the measures of state authorities. Consecutively changes appeared in space as a consequence of managing and they are a result of economic planning [1]. The most important period in terms of spatial change and planning in the Municipality of Koper was 1953-1962 when visual implications concerning the transformation of the area into industrial became manifest. According to the regional plan and political and



economic foresight Koper should become a kind of Slovenian coastal metropolis - alternative competitor to Trieste - with the opportunities for industrial development, development of commercial and industrial port and railways [2].

The pre-war agrarian landscape of the Municipality of Koper underwent a number of changes. The strategically important border area near sea began to change, especially upon the development of the port (Luka Koper) and fledgling factories (Tomos and Cimos). These led to agrarian decline, migration to the city, urbanization, and suburbanization. New workplaces and increasing numbers of immigrants caused the need for new housing. The previously sparsely populated surroundings of Koper, Semedela, Markov hrib, Olmo and Šalara changed into a dense suburban agglomeration, crisscrossed by asphalt roads. This changed the relationship between the city and its suburban area. In the period 1961-89, the population of the Municipality of Koper rose by almost half, while at the state level there was only about 25% growth recorded [3].

All the above coincided with the period of socialism in Yugoslavia, including Slovenia, which adopted the socialist ideology and went along with the measures dictated by the government of the time. This can confirm with certainty the existence of a socialist landscape in our country [4]. Thus, the space has been marked by a unique cultural heritage as a result of socialistic spatial planning, largely consisting of spatial phenomena typical of the time: commercial and residential buildings, suburban settlements or separate buildings, monuments - particularly the National Liberation War monuments - and other objects along with an intangible cultural heritage. Today, we can define individual elements of this cultural heritage by the term relics of socialism.

3 Cultural heritage, cultural heritage of socialism and cultural tourism

Cultural heritage is the legacy of tangible objects and intangible elements of culture inherited from past generations. It includes buildings, monuments, tools, artefacts, songs, dances, manners and customs, etc. Cultural heritage is not history, but it allows its re-experience and understanding [5]. The institute for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Slovenia defines cultural heritage as sources and evidence of human history and culture regardless of origin, development and level of preservation (tangible/material heritage), and the cultural assets associated with this (intangible/non-material heritage). Its basic function is its direct incorporation into space and active life within it, chiefly in the area of education, the transfer of knowledge and experience from past periods of history, and the strengthening of national originality and cultural authenticity [6].

Relics of socialism are derived from the roughly four decades of socialist rule during the latter half of the 20th century and constitute a sort of peculiar cultural heritage. These are to a large extent spatial phenomena of the time, economic and housing facilities, perhaps the entire suburban settlements or separate buildings, nationalized agricultural land and other buildings in the area, such as monuments, particularly the National Liberation War monuments and are



typologically different because they are the result of human management of space in various fields like industry, settlement, agriculture and ideology [7]. Relics coincide with the categories of cultural heritage. These are tangible (material) heritage, built heritage, archaeological heritage, cultural landscapes, movable heritage and collections, national treasures and non-material (intangible) heritage.

Cultural heritage is an essential part of the so-called 'cultural tourism' that is defined by UN World Tourism Organization as travelling with the aim of learning about foreign cultures, presentation of one's own art work, the visiting of festivals, cultural sightseeing, etc., and in the broad sense as tourism that satisfies tourists' needs to learn about foreign countries and raises their cultural level, knowledge and experiences by meeting other people [8].

Although there are many dilemmas and a variety of opinions on the role of socialism in relation to recent history, politics and society, we believe that socialism's heritage represents great tourism potential. Although there are reasons for non-integration of this heritage (variety of opinions on the role of socialism as a political system, political favouritism or non-favouritism of the past policy, positive or negative attitude to the past social situation regarding all human rights) it is impossible to ignore this part of history and its concomitant historical effects. However, there are strong movements to preserve at least some of the communist past. "Much of the current struggle among the new administration is how much of this heritage should be removed and what should replace it" [9]. Even if this form has not been detected so strongly in Slovenia, the need will arise in the near future to choose from among identity, economy, and marketing. Other former socialist countries have made important changes based on this. Some examples are in some former socialist countries: Czech Republic (Museum of Communism in Prague), Hungary (Statue Park in Budapest), and Poland (Communism tours in Nowa Huta).

"This involves visits to places associated with the Communist or socialist past and present or to sites that represent or commemorate that past or present. It is increasingly developed in the former socialist countries of East and Central Europe but also in the former Soviet Union where Cold War heritage sites are now being preserved as tourism sites" [10]. It was particularly reflected after 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall when the tourism market began to change. "There has been a dramatic rise in the number of tourists visiting ECE. The major change has been in the nature of tourism and tourists with an expansion of 'new' or 'alternative' or 'niche' tourisms catering for niche markets with particular interests. Among the best known of these are: cultural tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, educational tourism and 'dark' tourism" [10].

In our case we will, taking into account the "niche" form of cultural tourism, use the phrase "socialist heritage tourism". It is important to note that the description may be limited in this regard, and generalization in terms of variety of the socialist/communist political regime from the point of view of forms of social political system of socialism/communism is problematical since different countries had various forms of socialism/communism. In our case therefore we must take into account that the link between socialist cultural heritage and its



“niche” form of tourism is strictly tied to our example, and therefore to the socialist socio-political system in the former Yugoslavia.

The integration of cultural heritage can have positive and negative effects, all of which should be considered. According to Prosser [11], cultural heritage is essential for sustainable tourism development for two reasons: simply as a category of important tourism attractions and as a strengthener of local people's identity. Sensible inclusion of cultural heritage into the integral tourism product can make a destination unique and more competitive, but it should not be forgotten that heritage can be very vulnerable as every encroachment on it, in the sense of change or commodification (or even negation), leads to tensions. Cultural heritage as such is a non-renewable resource, and subject to slower or more rapid decline [12].

In the following, we register and analyze the cultural heritage of socialism formed by various particular relics. We describe each relic, its tourism potential and place among the different types of cultural heritage.

4 Registration and analysis of the relics of socialism

The socialist era has left standing many industrial facilities that typologically fit into the category of building heritage and have prominent social and technical significance. On this basis so-called industrial tourism has developed on a global level. “While industrial heritage tourism is concerned with presenting redundant machinery, processes, buildings, and ways of life, industrial tourism is about manufacturing processes. Sometimes the two can overlap. A factory may decide to open a museum on the industry's history while inviting visitors to tour the existing factory as well. Thus the tourism product has several possible components: a factory tour, a purpose-built visitor centre, catering facilities and shops selling the company's products” [13]. This type of heritage corresponds to the two selected relics in the Municipality of Koper: the Port of Koper (Luka Koper) and Tomos motorcycle factory. Although the Port of Koper with its transport activity is not an industrial plant, and could be classed within the heritage of transport, we have classified it as part of the heritage of industry because of its historical function as a stimulant of industrial development in the area.

The reputation of the port, which was in the time of the Republic of Venice more important than Trieste and Rijeka, started to return in 1957. A key role was its geo-strategic location, which still has a special effect [2]. Luka Koper is also a real spatial giant, which has been upgraded with a number of terminals (e.g., container, car, bulk cargoes). “The total economic area has 4,743,000m² surface, the length of operative quays is 2897m, the capacity of closed warehouses is 214,700m², there are 76,500m² of roofed warehouses, and 880,000m² of open warehouse space. The capacity of tanks is 52,300m³ and silo storage capacity reaches 81,000 tons” [14].

The Tomos factory of was officially opened in 1959 by the then President of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz-Tito. The first motorcycle designed in Koper was the Tomos Puch SG 250 [15]. The factory now extends to a 23,000m² production





Figure 1: Relics of socialism: Luka Koper-Port of Koper (top) and Tomos factory (bottom).

area and its geographical location has influenced the development and expansion of the suburban settlements of Olmo, Šalara, Semedela and Markov hrib, which represent the relic of settlement. According to the Institute of the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia it ranks as building heritage. Employees from Tomos lived in these settlements in large blocks of flats and terraced houses.

Important socio-economic changes in agriculture due to agrarian reform occurred during the time of socialism, such as the implementation of land reform, mainly the reorganization of ownership structures, and of modern management of large socialist complexes, the abandonment of cultural terraces and the decline of the rural population. The result of agrarian reform was land consolidation, and modernization of the countryside, which was a priority of the authorities. Post-war changes in agriculture had a strong impact on land structure with consolidation and new land treatment and its effect are visible still today [7]. The resulting state property in Slovenia, including in the area of the Municipality of Koper, is in no way comparable in size to the state property and state farms in eastern Europe (except Poland), which introduced state

management. The consequences of these measures represent relics of agriculture. Among them are agricultural cooperatives, which represent the building's cultural heritage but also the heritage of rural life. Agricultural cooperatives were mainly engaged in the trade of general consumables, distribution of fertilizers and materials for reproduction. Their task was also to familiarize farmers with new working methods, machinery, and crops.

Among the relics of ideology belong building and intangible heritage, which had an ideological anchoring function. Building heritage consists of monuments and memorials from National Liberation War and buildings designed to protect and control the borders, whilst the intangible heritage consist of the naming of streets, squares, schools, museums and other relevant institutions after war heroes. Intangible heritage is also represented by patterns of daily life, traditions and celebrations. In Slovenian Istria memorial monuments started to appear in 1946, initially in the municipalities of Izola and Piran, and since 1950 in great number in the municipality of Koper [16]. Buildings designed to protect and control the border have had a special significance, in addition to these strictly limited state functions also controlling the life of people living along the border area. These were border guardhouses and border crossings.

5 Proposals for the integration of the heritage of socialism into the tourism offer

Proposals for the integration of the cultural heritage of socialism formed by the individual relics into the tourism offer should consider Ashworth's division into primary and secondary sources of tourist attractions. The first constitute the basic



Figure 2: Relics of socialism: border guardhouse (top right), monuments of national liberation war (top left), Suburban Markov hrib (centre left), Cooperative hall Bertoki (bottom centre), Naming of the street (bottom left), border crossing Škofije (bottom right).

motive behind the visit, while others represent a supplemental supply during the tourist visits [17]. Accepting this dichotomy, we will identify the tourist role for each selected relic and give proposals for its integration into the tourism offer. It is important to consider the appropriate interpretation of tourist attractions whether they represent a primary or supplementary source of tourism.

Tomos and Port of Koper, which own unique untapped tourism potential in the form of industrial, technical and transport heritage, may constitute a separate or additional tourist offer. The separate part of the tourist offer would be represented by a technical museum and perhaps a souvenir shop in the former Tomos factory that could be in one of the existing derelict sheds representing a collection of Tomos's range of old motorcycles. There is also the possibility of guided tours in the factory area. Regarding this, it would be necessary to make a thematic pathway.

Luka Koper, with its unexploited potential of transport heritage, could be included as a constituent part of the city centre tourist tour or as a supplemental tourist offer for those visiting the city. After touring the city, there could follow a guided tour in the port (which is already done by schools by bus). The port could establish an info point from which a thematic pathway could be arranged. The thematic pathway would be safe for visitors and adjusted to ensure smooth work in the port. Visitors could see different terminals and learn about the port's present and past activities. Not far from the info point it would be useful to organize a museum exhibition about port operations, technology of transfer and daily lives of port workers. The exhibition could, among more obvious displays, underline the role of the port for socio-geographic and socio-economic development of the city and its gravitational effect on the hinterland.

Agriculture cooperatives as a building heritage also represent untapped potential of building and rural heritage and should be classified as an independent tourist offer. We propose the organization of a museum collection in the building of Bertoki's agricultural cooperative hall, which is not far from Koper. A museum collection could represent the cooperative's role and social function at the time of socialism, with an emphasis on the village's life. The thematic part of the agricultural cooperative could also be the Nature Park Škocjanski zatok (inlet), which is a protected area under the Ramsar Convention. There are some domestic animals like horses and dogs already in the park, but it would be reasonable to supplement the number of animals with traditionally Istrian ones such as boškarini (Istrian bulls/cows), Istrian donkeys and goats. Animals would authentically represent the daily rural life and practices with their role on farms. Active participation of visitors could provide an unforgettable experience. The construction of an info point for the nature park is already planned, but it could also serve those visitors who would come from Bertoki's cooperative hall.

The relics of ideology represent building and intangible heritage. There are many possible suggestions for their integration. We suggest supplementing the existing collections of the Regional Museum of Koper with material from the period of socialism and establishment of a souvenir shop, where the emphasis would be on daily life, symbols, traditions, and holidays. The exhibition



collection could include signs of streets relevant to the socialist era, such as those named after prominent socialist figures, and material about the monuments and memorials to the fallen, which have a strong symbolic and ideological function still today. For the integration of both, we suggest organization of the thematic and learning pathway tour of Koper, which would present to the visitors selected streets and personalities regarding the naming of the streets, monuments, and memorials. Visitors to the monuments and memorials would learn about historical personalities, facts, and events that occurred during socialism and about their particular social and political importance.

Border buildings represent an example of ideology facilities for surveillance of the border. These are military and customs facilities. We suggest the establishment of a border guardhouse museum that could include selected material from the daily life of guard soldiers and therefore introduce their role, daily tasks and way of life along the border. We propose the establishment of a smuggling museum in one of the existing customs facilities. Visitors would get information about the importance of customs and the work of customs officers at

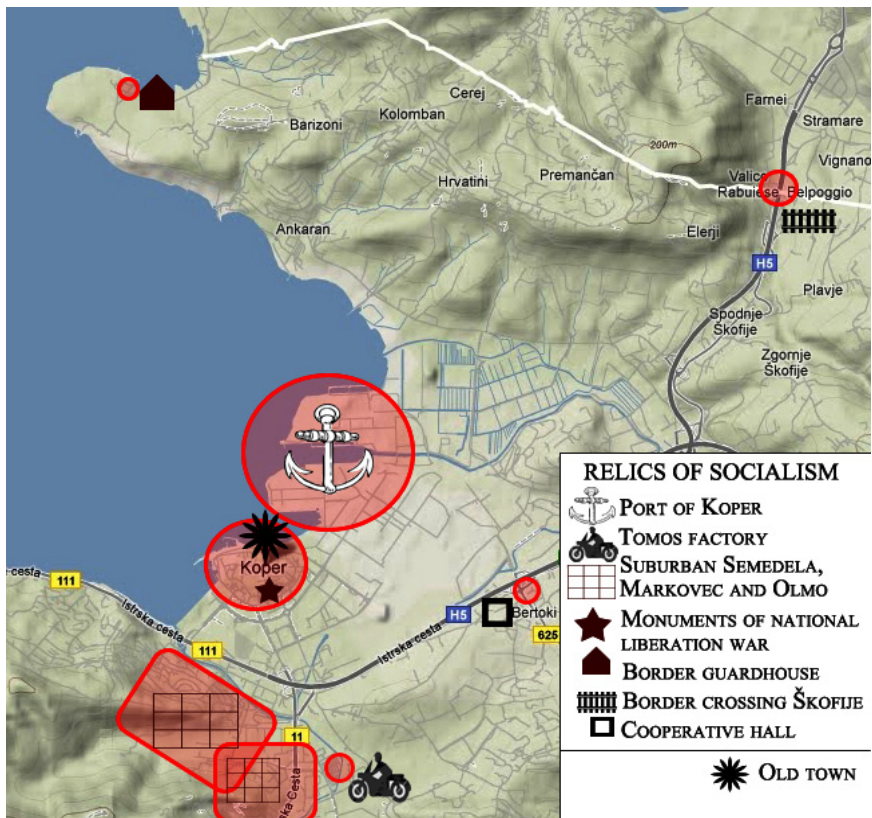


Figure 3: Map depicting relics of socialism in the Municipality of Koper.

the time of socialism, and the administrative border crossing procedures. Additionally, it would be possible to include active participation of visitors, who would return to the time of socialism by re-enacting border crossings.

The recently formed suburban settlements of Markovec, Olmo and Šalara represent the relic of the architectural and urban heritage. It would be reasonable to include them as a part of the proposed technical museum Tomos (construction of the Port of Koper and Tomos promote the building of suburban settlements) or even as a complement to of the Regional Museum of Koper (on the theme of everyday life in socialism). In both cases, it would be appropriate for that purpose to regulate a thematic pathway or open-air museum. Visitors on a guided tour would see a certain part of these suburban settlements (as architectural and urban heritage) and take note of the daily lives in these settlements, and the specific functions of individual buildings from the period of socialism. There could be some service facilities arranged in socialist-style (socialistic store and socialist-style mail office).

6 Conclusion

The changes brought about by the period of socialism in the area and society of the Municipality of Koper and its relics constitute a socialist cultural heritage. Relics are seen as the largest meaningful spatial elements of the time in which they arose. They form a spatial whole, covering industrial facilities, nearby villages, and other elements in space, such as monuments and memorials of the National Liberation War [7]. Today, amid a democratic and capitalist society, socialism is still visible, its heritage forming a spatial and historical reflection of the socialist system, although intertwined with the post-modern trends and established principles of sustainability in space policies. In addition, they represent yet untapped tourism potential to be integrated in the tourism offer as separate or complementary tourism products.

Regardless of the variety of opinions on the role of socialism in relation to recent history, politics and social matters, we believe that socialism's heritage represents great tourism potential. Other former socialist countries have made important changes on this basis. Examples from the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland bear this out. Thus, it seems appropriate that Slovenia follows the good practice of those countries and thus acquires new tourism products from the heritage of socialism. The Municipality of Koper certainly has the potential to take the lead given its selection of relics, their potential arrangements for tourist purposes, ease of interpretation, and, of course, given the appropriate degree of marketing.

In the text, we registered and analyzed some of the potential relics that represent the cultural heritage of socialism. We are aware that our proposals for the integration of heritage of socialism is only one small step forward and that in this regard, much remains to be done. The vision for tourism development should be focused on the further development of tourist attractions to offer new tourism products. This requires good cooperation, dialogue and communication and interdisciplinary work. Therefore, the process of the integration of the



heritage of socialism into the tourism offer of the Municipality of Koper should affect a wider social context. We suggest the involvement of all professional bodies and interested members of the public to be involved in the necessary studies that will determine which relics (among those we proposed, as well as those we did not) are worthy of integration into the tourism offer. By this we mean the active participation of local tourist offices, professional services at the state level and we appeal to a long expected foundation of regions that would help to promote tourism in the region and establish better links with government departments and efficiently acquire available EU assets. (This should also mean new jobs for local people and experts).

Tourism as a market economic branch requires perpetual development and adjustments to market trends. The recognition of the cultural heritage of socialism and the integration of its relics into the tourism offer appears to be one opportunity to fulfil these needs. At the same time the cultural heritage of socialism represents an opportunity to develop sustainable forms of tourism, as is the general feature of heritage tourism. Thus, the integration of the cultural heritage of socialism would not only mean a major environmental and economic contribution to the Municipality of Koper, but also enhance the regional and national recognition and identity of this region. Concomitantly it would increase the number of tourists visiting Koper and contribute to the promotion of Koper as a town and tourist destination.

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