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Holidays after the Fall: Seaside Architecture and Urbanism in Bulgaria and Croatia is a richly illustrated compilation by Elke Beyer, Anke Hagemann, and Michael Zinganel with contributions by Maroje Mrduljaš and Norbert Mappes-Niediek. The variety of their backgrounds—from history and Slavic studies to architecture and architecture theory—is well suited to establish a logical link between two fields of research, both of which have recently attracted increased interest: the study of tourism under state socialism (Băncescu 2012; Kil 2013; Koenker 2013; Conterio 2014) and the study of modernist architecture and urban planning in former socialist countries (Maxim 2006; Hurnaus, Konrad, and Novotny 2007; Novikov and Belogolovsky 2010; Chaubin 2011; Ritter, Shapiro-Obermair, Steiner, and Wachter 2012; Thaler, Mrduljaš, and Kulić 2012).

Tourism, “the largest peacetime movement of human beings in human history” (Greenwood 2004:xv), has long been neglected by social scientists;¹ unjustly so, as Davydd Greenwood (2004:x) maintains, for its analysis offers much broader answers to social, historical, artistic, as well as political and economic questions. *Holidays after the Fall* traces the development of tourism from the early concept of social, community-minded holidaymaking (171), which was an integral element in the project of creating socialist man and woman, to a more leisure-oriented industry, which became an important economic factor in Croatia and Bulgaria and was increasingly targeted at an international clientele, including tourists from Western European countries. In doing so, it investigates the “defining role” of architecture and urban planning “in designing the tourist product” (58).

Both architecture and holidaymaking were prime state agendas in socialist countries and were employed as important vehicles and symbols for (social) modernization. While Western tourist architecture often intends to create an exotic, spectacular escape from everyday life (Ockman and Frausto 2005; Maxim 2015:77), socialist seaside resorts were not meant to simulate otherness. Instead, they often served as testing grounds for collective socialist living, the renewal of a “resolutely modern design” (57) and urban planning, and new building technologies such as precast concrete elements, which were then applied to mass residential quarters (84). This made holiday resorts an interesting playground for architects and the architecture itself an

¹ Pioneering publications on tourism appeared around the millennium (Löfgen 1999; MacCannell 1999; Bray and Raitz 2001).

important part of the “tourist product”: Bulgarian tourism architecture became an “international reference for the design of mass tourism destinations” and was used as a “premium showcase for the country as a whole” (79, 87). The authors shed light on the decision-making processes that led to the development of large resorts for domestic and foreign holidaymakers in Croatia and Bulgaria. They demonstrate that socialist planning not only produced some fine examples of modernist architecture but, at least in the context of tourist development, was also aware of the value of natural resources as an irreplaceable constituent of the “tourist product” that must therefore be preserved (60, 173–174).

Other studies on architecture in socialist states (Hurnaas et al. 2007; Novikov and Belogolovsky 2010; Ritter et al. 2012; Thaler et al. 2012) have also demonstrated that state planning, with all its limitations and restrictions, offered indisputable advantages; few, however, have specifically looked at tourist architecture. One notable exception is the recent anthology on Romanian seaside architecture (Șerban 2015), which, like *Holidays after the Fall*, leads on research that was undertaken for an exhibition under the same name. What makes *Holidays after the Fall* stand out among recent publications on socialist modernism is that it does not end with regretful yet vague remarks on the irretrievable destruction of modernist architecture. Instead, it offers a detailed study of the transformative processes that took place after the transition from planned (or semiplanned) economies to neoliberal capitalism.

The carefully chosen variety of representative case studies is well worth reading, especially to qualify the perhaps slightly too bold message conveyed by the images that frame the book. It opens with a selection of advertising pictures from the 1970s presenting the Croatian seaside as a place of infinite elegance and style, both in terms of its modernist architecture and its chic clientele, and closes with a series of photographs by the artist Nikola Mihov, who skillfully portrays the ugliness of oversized, postmodern hotel complexes, omnipresent advertisements as symbols of Western capitalism, and flesh burning in the heat of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Taken in 2012, the series also illustrates the dramatic fall of tourist numbers since the real-estate bubble burst around 2008. The pictures are beautiful and expressive, illustrating that “the ambiance changed dramatically” (57), yet the rich collection of black and white illustrations and the authors’ analyses draw a more complex picture.

By choosing Croatia and Bulgaria, two socialist countries that by the 1970s ranked among Europe’s top holiday destinations (167), the authors are able to compare socialist economies with different degrees of state control and to inquire “whether or to what extent it proved possible to steer the postsocialist transformation of ex-Yugoslavia along different paths than those pursued after the fall in the ‘classic’ Eastern bloc countries” (156–157).

In both countries the development of tourism infrastructure was characterized by a close collaboration between architects and urban planners and by long-term spatial planning programs, now often “acclaimed as milestones in integral regional planning methodology” (174–176): in 1963 the Yugoslavian government invited international experts for the development of the Adriatic region and even asked for UN assistance. Three regional development plans were implemented between 1967 and

1972 (176). In Bulgaria the newly founded institute of regional planning was commissioned with a "master plan for the overall development of the coast" in 1960 (60), and four major resorts were realized by the late 1960s.

Even if not all plans were implemented as intended, the authors all agree that centrally guided development by and large led to a high quality of urban planning with ample landscape architecture and prevented sprawl (61, 84). The regions' potential and resources were calculated, and planning commissioned accordingly. In their chapter on Bulgaria, Beyer and Hagemann give an impressive example of the "unscrupulous squander of the Black Sea coast's tourism resources for the gratification of short term commercial interests" (66), which set in when the Bulgarian Socialist Party was defeated in the 1997 elections: the maximum number of beds for Sunny Beach resort, designed by renowned architect Nikola Nikolov, had been calculated as 27,000 (and reached in the 1980s); by 2004 the number of beds had exploded to an estimated 40,000 and to 150,000 by 2010 (97–98). The deregulated building boom on the Bulgarian coast left few modernist buildings of the 1960s intact and transformed the resort into an overcrowded "cheap, all-inclusive deal for binge-drinking, non-stop party people" (104). With the analysis of Albena, a resort that was relaunched as a private stock company under the original management, the authors, however, prove that integrated architectural and urban planning and appreciation for the quality of modernist design can be sold under capitalism (89–96). They also demonstrate that the sellout and depletion of modernist resorts for the benefit of quick profit have provoked considerable public opposition in recent years (116).

The second half of the book is dedicated to Croatia, where the privatization process was more complicated. All three articles on Croatia emphasize the relevance of socialist self-management and decentralization characteristic of Yugoslavia's "third way" for the tourist branch. Mappes-Niediek (215) demonstrates that the loyalty and self-confidence fostered in so-called socialized companies prevented the sellout of resorts to foreign investors and national tycoons after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. However, the Yugoslav wars (1991–2001) led to the collapse of the Croatian tourist industry, the lack of a master plan, and the financial crisis to the neglect of infrastructure. The case studies presented range from ruins that bear witness to the war (226–231) to more recent examples of minimal renovation and modernization (234–237).

While the authors rightly point to the high quality of urban planning and the original architectural and interior design (often, the best national artists were commissioned to design interiors and furniture), they only mention in passing that building standards in socialist countries were often notoriously low, which can make adaptation to contemporary needs and standards costly.

The authors draw parallels with tourism planning in Western European countries, notably France (79, 84), and include topics like private accommodation and camping sites, which represented a large proportion of holiday accommodation both in Croatia (165) and Bulgaria (78). An interesting topic that is briefly touched upon (78) but not explored in much detail is the social interaction between foreign and domestic guests and what impact holidays in socialist countries had on tourists'

views about them. The decision to accept and even promote Croatia as a prime destination for nudist holidays is a particularly interesting case of selling the product to a Western mass audience. As the authors rightly remark, the fact that “exploiting the ‘tourist product’ for profit was not entirely compatible with socialist economics was hereby conveniently ignored” (65).

Ultimately, *Holidays after the Fall* is not just an interesting case study of planning tourism and its architecture in socialist countries; it thereby also raises (and largely answers) the above mentioned social, historical, artistic, political, and economic questions—especially by choosing two socialist countries with different degrees of planned economy and by going beyond “the changes” from one economic system to another. This includes the issue of how postsocialist countries are dealing with their built socialist heritage and—more generally—the past. The example of other postsocialist/communist countries, like Estonia where modernist architecture has been given thorough professional attention, shows that the rejection of the political and ideological past does not necessarily go hand in hand with the ideological rejection of its built legacy (and ideally, this would also apply to social achievements). This might be owed to a specific kind of local “patriotism,” by which the built environment is perceived as primarily Estonian, not Soviet. Although planning in socialist countries by and large followed the line of Moscow, it nevertheless remained the creative work of local planners (with some exceptions). The fact that *Holidays after the Fall* has raised considerable interest, especially in Croatia, shows that this interpretation might well be applicable for Croatia and Bulgaria, too.

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