



 UrbanMetaMapping



## UrbanMetaMapping Semester Talks: Winter Term 2023 via zoom, 11.00 - 12.00 (CEST)

Registration via: [talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de](mailto:talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de)

September 20

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### Cartography of dissonance: Mapping communist heritage through guided tours of post-socialist cities

While spatial organization of memories and their insertion into citiscapes was traditionally considered to be a product of the contemporary ideological framework and work of political elites, the ways and forms in which we bring urban memories back to the present significantly changed during the last decade. In this paper, I argue that by directing the tourists towards particular sites and stories, and by promoting particular urban and discursive interpretation of the history of places, guided tours transform urban perception and international identity of the city. Drawing on participatory observation of 5 walking and 3 driving communist tours in post-socialist capitals (Tirana, Belgrade, Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Berlin) and interviews with 6 tour guides, the project addresses variety of mechanisms through which tourism commodifies both ‘mainstream’ (palaces, monuments, buildings) and ‘alternative’ urban forms (metro stations, ruins, traffic lights, memorial plaques). Inscribing on the communist city maps unexpected urban symbols, often used purely as visual cues for conveying popular anecdotes, stories of espionage, popular culture, personal memories and everyday life under communism, guided tours contribute to the particular kind of post-socialist urban ‘orientalisation’, where communist heritage is simultaneously constructed and de-constructed, revitalized and silenced, valorised and sanitized. Hence, the paper explores how through the means of guided tours, communism in the city is translated into an attractive, “digestible” leisure-time activity, blending urban exploration, anecdotal storytelling, narrative stereotypization and historic speculation as the framing experience of contemporary engagement with communist history in post-socialist Europe. In that sense, mapping communist heritagescapes through guided tours becomes a valuable tool for understanding design of the contemporary urban experiences and dialectical relationship of global and local urban and mnemonic dynamics



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