

# Marshaling Tito: A Plan for Socialist Cultural Heritage Tourism in Slovenia

by  
**Gregor Balazič**  
*Photographs by the author*

## Introduction

After World War II and up until 1991, Slovenia, as part of the former Yugoslavia, was influenced by state socialist management first imposed by Marshal Tito (Figure 1). The ideological change in Slovenia resulted in a systematic program of rapid industrialization aimed at achieving modernization. These changes are evident throughout the country, but are ever present in the cities, three of which are the focus of this article: the capital, Ljubljana; the leading industrial city of Maribor; and the port city of Koper.

The consequences of the socialist management of space remain visible today. The cultural legacy of socialism, consisting of a variety of architectural relics as well as an intangible heritage can still be seen on the landscape and in the ethos of the Slovenian people. Although historians must label periods in such a way as to imply abrupt all-encompassing changes

among periods, it is unusual to find such a precisely defined spatial demarcation as is the case in countries that abruptly changed from incipient stages of industrialization to socialism and then to free market economies.

Evidence of the socialist heritage is likely to have tourism potential as it captures a time marked with relict landscape evidence that I argue should be integrated into tourism programs. The cultural heritage of socialism in these three functionally different cities of Ljubljana, Maribor and Koper should be of interest to sociologists, historians, and anyone interested in Cold War political themes (Figure 2). I further argue that each city would benefit from concrete proposals for the integration of some of its individual relics into its array of tourist attractions.

The means of dealing with post communist or socialist pasts are likely to differ from society to society. For instance, in Slovenia, where the menace of totali-

tarian government was relatively mild, there was no frenzy to rid the nation of depictions of its dictator. Instead, Slovenian space has been cluttered since World War I with plaques listing the dead of both World Wars and even the Spanish Civil War, as well as innumerable statues dedicated to victims of war. Comparisons of the different responses to change are likely to interest many cultural travelers. In Belgrade, Serbia, atop the Balkan Hotel in the city center, the yellow arches of McDonalds are currently displayed, while in Slovenia, which has had a less harried post socialist history, such a blatant display of a globalized popular culture icon would be unthinkable.

## Socialist Management of Space and the Formation of Socialist Heritage

After World War II, urban rebuilding was clearly necessary throughout Europe.



Figure 1. Slovenia's location within Europe.



Figure 2. Three major Slovene cities: Koper, Ljubljana, and Maribor.

Where socialism was adopted after the World War II, it was supposed to provide quicker and more efficient development, the elimination of agrarian overpopulation and rapid progress toward modernization (Balazič, 2010). Whereas the more wealthy countries involved in World War II retained the general outlines of their political models, the countries under Soviet dominion and Yugoslavia had been slower to develop. If it was not already apparent from their economic statistics, the War made clear that the more industrialized regimes had the upper hand in warfare.

This state of affairs was further complicated by the nascent Cold War, as the victorious Allies took sides in the battle for future territories. Thus, it was almost inevitable that some nations—especially those in the Soviet sphere—would move toward socialism, while others, such as Greece and Italy, would not be allowed to deviate from the democratic mold of the United States and the other western European allies. This resulted in two main changes in the countries that became socialist: private ownership and the management of space were replaced by state ownership, and the free market and market economy such as they had existed were abolished. The economy and spatial planning became guided by state authorities in order to meet the needs of the country and citizens, with the objective to establish equality among social classes and an equitable distribution of goods, eliminating disparities in development.

An ancillary result of this systemic change was that regional authorities became subordinated to state authorities. Concomitant changes therefore appeared in space, a consequence of economic planning toward the nexus of 'de-agrarianization', modernization and urbanization (Vrišer, 1978). In the Balkans north of Greece the changes were more stark than in neighboring central European countries. Migration from rural to urban areas in Slovenia and the rest of Yugoslavia (much of this from southern regions to Slovenian factories and mines) is reflected, in Slovenia, by the following differential degrees of urbanization. The share of the urban population increased 115% from 1961 to 1981 in Koper, 54% in Ljubljana, and 29% in Maribor (Horvat, 2006). In turn, the migrants helped shape the landscape. New workplaces and increasing urban populations created the need for housing which was most obvious in the capital city Ljubljana and

large regional centers like Maribor and Koper.

Such changes occurred throughout industrial countries. What is virtually unique in Slovenia and other socialist countries is that it occurred in a precise period, generated by the adoption of a precise ideology, and while the changes may have been inevitable, they were often hurried along. Slovenia was relatively unscathed from bombing strikes as compared to war-torn Bosnia, Serbia, and other former Yugoslavian nations, and exhibits fewer changes of the landscape, rural or urban. Venetian and Austrian-influenced material culture will likely continue to exist in Slovenia, as will the bell towers associated with Catholicism in every village, some, of course, topped by Orthodox onion domes.

The socialist era appears to have had virtually no visually apparent effect on the Mediterranean foothills. The viticulture remains. Likewise, Ljubljana's narrow streets remain and Maribor's architecturally grand buildings still stand in nearly a full half of the city. Most important is what Slovene geographer Urbanc refers to as Slovenia's 'socialist landscape' (2002). That socialist landscape did indeed take form, to a large degree exemplified by Ljubljana, Maribor, and Koper, and marked by a unique cultural heritage largely consisting of spatial phenomena typical of the time: commercial and residential buildings, suburban settlements or separate buildings, nationalized agricultural land, monuments (particularly the National Liberation War monuments) and other relics of socialism along with an intangible cultural heritage retained, for example, by the partisan songs that continue to be popular in taverns throughout the country.

The cultural heritage of socialism is much more than drab and dispiriting rows of identical cinder-block apartment dwellings. These do exist, but they would make for a dull tour of an era. Each city retains its own unique aspect, largely because, though industrially based, the time of socialism was, historically speaking, very short. In spite of the homogenizing effects of socialism, these three cities are different because of their unique geographical settings: one a Mediterranean port city, another a capital city located in a virtual bog, and the third a city straddling a great European river (the Drava in Maribor). In addition to their unique locations, each city has experienced widely disparate forces acting upon them for centuries.

### **Relics of Socialism as a Part of Cultural Heritage**

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 of (tangible/material) heritage, and the cultural assets associated with this (intangible/non-material) heritage. For my purpose, I define cultural heritage as the legacy of tangible objects and intangible elements of culture inherited from past generations that include, among others, buildings, monuments, tools, artifacts, songs, dances, manners and customs. Cultural heritage is not another way of saying simply history, rather, the term allows re-experience and understanding of the past (Smith 2001). It is an essential part of so-called 'cultural tourism' that is defined by the UN World Tourism Organization as travel with a focus on learning about such topics as foreign cultures, presenting indigenous art work, visiting festivals, and cultural sightseeing. In the broadest sense, cultural tourism should satisfy the need to learn about foreign countries by enriching tourists' cultural knowledge (Richards, 1997).

Relics of socialism are derived from the roughly four decades of socialist rule during the latter half of the 20th century and constitute a peculiar sort of cultural heritage, particularly as this distinct period began and ended relatively recently. This means that despite the existence of a tangible material heritage (along with archaeological heritage, cultural landscapes, movable heritage and collections, national treasures and non-material intangible heritage (Zavod za varstvo kulturne dediščine, 2010), the actual architecture is not strikingly different from that conceived and built in other socialist countries - i.e., there is no Venice of socialism.

Socialism, in relation to recent history, politics, and society remains a potential source of controversy - even its definition is debated. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ignore a period of history together with its historical effects, and, therefore, socialism's heritage represents great tourism potential. Other former socialist countries such as the Czech Republic with its Museum of Communism in Prague, Hungary with the Statue Park in Budapest, and Poland with the Communism tours in Nowa Huta, have imagined means to recognize and highlight their Communist heritage. Yet, Slovenia has taken no steps towards the



integration of its socialist cultural heritage. One likely explanation alluded to earlier is that socialism was, despite some turbulent early years, less traumatic in Slovenia. Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians suffered a socialism inextricably linked with terror, a terror to some degree exercised by acceptance into a wider European community in the post-socialist era.

According to Young and Light,

“There has been a dramatic rise in the number of tourists visiting ECE [eastern central Europe]. The major change has been in the nature of tourism and tourists with an expansion of ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ or ‘niche’ tourism catering to niche markets with particular interests. Among the best known of these are: cultural tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, educational tourism and ‘dark’ tourism (2010).”

Slovenia will inevitably be required to offer tourists specific, and recent, “niche” cultural tourism, including “socialist heritage tourism.” The dramatic differences in circumstances in the former socialist countries only serve to make each particular country of more interest. The key specific question arises as to how particular elements of the cultural heritage of socialism in Slovenian cities are to be incorporated into the tourists’ itineraries.

**Proposals for the Integration of the Heritage of Socialism into Urban Tourism Offerings**

Although the three selected cities are functionally different, they hold similar potential to present socialist heritage as an urban tourism product. Ljubljana as the capital, administrative and cultural center of Slovenia should emphasize the cultural component of the heritage of socialism even though it also has at its disposal an industrial and architectural heritage of socialist times. Maribor, as the second largest city and, at the time of socialism, the most industrial city, should highlight the industrial and technical component of the heritage of socialism, while Koper as a coastal city should illustrate how coastal life—the use of the port and the sea—was affected by socialism.

All three cities have some prominent industrial facilities that fit typologically into the category of building heritage and have prominent social and technical significance.

In Ljubljana, several factories operated during the socialist years. Among the most prominent still standing are Litostroj (Figure 3) and Droga Kolinska (Figure 4). The former is now a specialized producer of complexly shaped individual castings made of steel and special alloys focused on supplying components for hydro, gas and steam turbines, pumps, valves and shipbuilding to the global market.

Founded in 1947, Litostroj developed from a classic iron foundry to a high-tech cast steel plant. As mechanical plants had existed for more than one hundred years in the Ljubljana region, Litostroj was born amidst an established industry. The first

iron was made and poured on September 1, 1947, in a new plant, ceremoniously opened by Josip Broz (Marshal Tito), and named Titovi zavodi Litostroj until 1990 (Litostroj jeklo, 2010). In fact, the naming and re-naming of plants, streets, squares, and so on, constitutes a heritage issue in its own right. Kolinska (today part of the Droga Kolinska Group) produced a selected assortment of foods for the market, such as coffee, natural mineral and spring water, soft drinks, spreads, sweet and salted snacks and children’s food. Kolinska was one of the oldest factories in Ljubljana, founded in 1908 as a branch factory of the Czech town Kolin. The



Figure 3. Litostroj jeklo, a steel plant in Ljubljana.



Figure 4. Droga Kolinska factory in Ljubljana, producer of food products.

factory, which at first produced only chicory, was greatly expanded in 1946, producing more and new products and employing additional workers. In 1965, it produced puddings, soda, vanilla sugar, baking powder, spices and condiments, sugar products and ice cream (Setnikar, 2007).

Several metal and textile manufacturing factories were operating in Maribor, the most industrial city during the socialist era in former Yugoslavia. The two most prominent of that time were TAM (today named TVM) (Figure 5), a factory producing vehicles, and TVT Boris Kidrič (Figure 6), producer of rail vehicles and heating devices. TAM's history stretches back into the era following World War II with the establishment of the company Tovarna avtomobilov Maribor, which was, at that time, the largest manufacturer of trucks and buses in Yugoslavia (TVM, 2010). Factory TVT Boris Kidrič (the factory was named in the seventies after the Slovene hero Boris Kidrič) dates back to the year 1863, when it was located in Studenci, near Maribor, and functioned as a workshop for refurbishing rolling stock after the establishment of the Vienna-Trieste railway. Eventually the premises were converted almost entirely to use for the reconstruction of steam locomotives, but eventually the demand for locomotives declined and the company established an association with the German firm Stadler and began the manufacture of boilers for central heating (WVterm, 2010).

As a port city, Koper's development during the socialist era, while guided by industrial needs, was transport oriented. Not having been an especially large city in the past, the port did have room to grow given a virtual horseshoe of space surrounding the city center. Some of that horseshoe-shaped parcel remains a wetland, but much of it is recovered land, called *bonifica*. The recovered wetland has provided room for a belt of functional construction, parking lots, and office buildings. As an example of a typical socialist management solution, the port was expanded into wetlands, where now the dominant sights are tank farms. Often a mist of iron ore deposits are captured in trees that were formerly green. On the other hand, though Koper's population is roughly one-eighth that of nearby Trieste, the port now receives nearly as many vessels.

Shortly after the establishment of the company Luka Koper (Luka means port in Slovene) authorities established a factory that manufactured motorcycles under the



Figure 5. TAM factory in Maribor, producer of vehicles, today named TVM.



Figure 6. TVT Boris Kidrič, once producer of rail vehicles and heating devices in Maribor.

Tomos brand name in Koper (Figures 7, 8). The motorcycle factory was officially opened in 1959, again by Marshal Tito. Today it extends to a 23,000 m<sup>2</sup> area of production (Tomos, 23.11.2010). Another phenomenon often associated with relatively weak socialist economies is the prevalence of one or two brands of home-grown products; Tomos for many years was the main two-wheeler of Yugoslavia. Today, in the former Yugoslavia, there is a feeling of warm nostalgia for old Tomos vehicles and there are numerous collectors.

All factories from the three selected cities described share an industrial heritage. Even the port of Koper is inseparable

from the industry of its time. Though not an engine of growth per se, the port has played an historical role as a stimulant of industrial development in the surrounding area. Such prominent industrial and port-related facilities fit into the category of building heritage and with prominent social and technical significance of their time and region are by nature part of the worldwide phenomenon of industrial tourism. Industrial heritage tourism is concerned with presenting machinery, processes, buildings, manufacturing processes, and ways of industrial life. A factory may decide to open a museum about the industry's history while inviting visi-





Figure 7. Port of Koper, named Luka Koper.

tors to tour the existing factory as well. There are several possibilities for organizing a tourism product: a factory tour, a purpose-built visitor center, catering facilities and shops selling the company's products (Yale, 2004).

Of Litoštroj, Droga Kolinska, TAM, TVT Boris Kidrič, and Tomos, each has its own unique untapped tourism potential in the form of industrial and technical heritage that may constitute a separate or additional tourist destination. Tourists could enjoy nostalgic visits to factory tours and technical museums representing a collection of different products, especially those items that are no longer produced. In fact, a collector's market actually exists for old and unusual cars formerly ubiquitous in Yugoslavia as well as Tomos bikes.

Factories (as well as the port of Koper) have influenced the development and expansion of the suburban settlements around their areas. The suburbs in Ljubljana (Figure 9), Maribor (Figure 10), and



Figure 8. Tomos motorcycle factory in Koper.



Figure 9. Suburbanization in Ljubljana.



Figure 10. An example of suburban settlement in Maribor.

Koper (Figure 11), are barely distinguishable from one another in their general structure. Current residential suburban areas are often a relic of the socialist era with its modernist architecture of function and expediency. According to the Institute of the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia such mundane structures would qualify as building heritage. Employees from the factories lived in these settlements in large blocks of flats and terraced houses. Suburban settlements could be made a part of the proposed technical museums focusing on the theme of everyday life during socialism. It would be also appropriate to develop thematic pathways

in suburban developments or even an open-air museum. Visitors on a guided tour would see a certain part of these suburban settlements and take note of the daily lives in these settlements where there could be some service facilities arranged in socialist-style (e.g., a socialist dry-goods store, a socialist-style post office).

The socialist heritage also extends to the semi-material and non-material (intangible). These relics of socialist ideology play an anchoring function and can be clearly seen in all three cities. Examples of semi-material (rather than using the established term 'building heritage') heritage include monuments and memorials from

the National Liberation War (Figures 12, 13, 14).

Intangible heritage consists of street names, squares, schools, museums and other institutions named after war heroes (Figures 15, 16, 17). There are many ways these features can be integrated into the urban tourism. For instance, without drawing any categorical conclusions, what was once Revolution Square in Koper is now known as Brolo, with no hint of the former name evident to the visitor. While demolishing statues of tyrants such as Stalin were virtually *de rigueur* after the dissolution of the USSR, it is hardly conceivable that the revolution that occurred on Slovene territory during and after World War II induced such durable anguish that the event would be revised by erasure.

Although the inheritance of socialism consists of spatial elements that can be found in functionally different cities, its memorialization should be taken on as a national project. A logical starting point would be the establishment of a museum of socialism or a park in Ljubljana, which would represent the historical image of socialism and society through different periods. Examples of similar heritage tourism can be found in other former socialist countries including the Czech Republic and Hungary. One must refrain from viewing the socialist period as one of economic and productive ineptitude. Many older Slovenes miss the vacations that were arranged and paid for by the state-owned companies on the coasts of Istria. Urban heritage tourism should include some of the great successes of Slovene industry as well, such as the Iskra factory in Kranj that produced a hand drill that was on a par with if not better than those of Black and Decker, and Gorenje, a producer of quality refrigerators, washers, and dryers.

### Conclusions

The short period of socialism left behind its own legacy, with relics in all three cities, Koper, Ljubljana, and Maribor. This heritage consists of meaningful landscape elements such as industrial facilities, suburban villages, and monuments and memorials of the National Liberation War. Today elements of socialism are still visible on the Slovenian landscape. Such clearly delineated and visible periods in history rarely die a rapid death. Socialism in Slovenia persists in the form of partisan songs, the persistence of memorial celebra-





*Figure 11. Suburban development in Koper.*



*Figure 12. Statue of Stane Kavčič in Ljubljana, a prominent politician during socialism.*



*Figure 13. Kojak monument in Maribor, symbol of the national liberation struggle during World War II in Maribor.*



Figure 14. Example of a monument to national heroes in Koper.



Figure 15. Naming of a street after national hero, general Franc Rozman Stane in Ljubljana.



Figure 16. A road named after national hero, marshal and president of Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito in Maribor.



Figure 17. Street named for national hero Boris Kidrič in Koper.

tions, the remnants of the cult of Tito with his name written on hillsides as well as Tito-themed bars. In addition to material remembrances, ubiquitous, daily arguments held in taverns and cafes throughout the country about the themes of revolution and socialism show that the memory of socialism is very much alive in Slovene culture today. Socialist heritage represents the potential to generate tourism strategies that would include a variety of culturally oriented tours, inextricably linked to the specific political and historical movement that was socialism. Cultural tourism in Slovenia should include the relics of the former socialist landscape, whether or not they perpetuate the mythic status of Marshal Tito.

#### Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Mrs. Simona Kaplan for guiding me through Ljubljana.

#### References

- Balažič, G. 2010. Integrating Cultural Heritage of Socialism into the Tourism offer of the Municipality of Koper. In *Sustainable Tourism IV*, edited by F. D. Pineda and C. Brebbia, 369–381. Southampton: WIT Press.
- Horvat, U. 2006. Razvoj prebivalstva v mestu Maribor v obdobju med letoma 1981 in 2002. *Revija za geografijo (Journal for Geography)*, (1-1): 41–62.
- Litostroj jeklo. 2010. [http://www.litostroj.com/].
- Richards, G. 1997. The Social Context of Cultural Tourism. In *Cultural Tourism in Europe*, edited by G. Richards, 47–70. Oxon: CAB International.
- Setnikar, N. 2007. Kakovost, izbira in ocenjevanje dobaviteljev v nabavni službi. Master's thesis, Univerza v Mariboru.
- Smith, V. L. 2001. Sustainability. In *Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the*

*21st Century*, edited by V. L. Smith and M. Brent, 187–200. New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.

- Tomos. 2010. [http://www.tomos.si/].
- TVM. 2010. [http://www.tvm.si/].
- Urbanc, M. 2002. *Kulturne pokrajine v Sloveniji*. Ljubljana: Geografski inštitut Antona Melika.
- Vrišer, I. 1978. *Regionalno planiranje*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- WVterm. 2010. [http://www.wvterm.si/].
- Yale, P. 2004. *From Tourist Attractions to Heritage Tourism*, 3rd Edition. Huntingdon: Elm Publications.
- Young, C. and Light, D. 2006. "Communist Heritage Tourism": Between Economic Development and European Integration. Formerly at: [http://www.swkk.de/hermes/research/Buchbeitraege/HERMESBand\_3/HERMES\_vol3\_18Young.pdf].
- Zavod za varstvo kulturne dediščine Slovenije. 2010. [http://www.zvkds.si/sl/].



## About the Authors

Chie Sakakibara is an Assistant Professor of Geography and Planning at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina. Previous to this appointment, Sakakibara was a Fellow at the Earth Institute and the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University. She received her Ph.D. in 2007 from the University of Oklahoma in Cultural Geography. Sakakibara has published widely on cultural response to climate change among the Inupiat of Alaska's North Slope. Her book on climate change and cultural resilience of the Inupiat is under contract with the University of Arizona Press (to be published in September 2012). The author may be contacted at: depochie@gmail.com.

Janel Curry is professor of geography and environmental studies at Calvin College. Her research focuses on the interaction of cultural worldviews and environmental policy. She has extensive experience in cross-cultural settings including this most recent Fulbright fellowship to Hong Kong. Her Hong Kong blog has evolved into a blog that reflects on cross-cultural encounters with place. It can be found at: [www.curryinhongkong.blogspot.com](http://www.curryinhongkong.blogspot.com). She will return to Hong Kong for six months in 2012. She can be reached at: [jcurry@calvin.edu](mailto:jcurry@calvin.edu).

Gregor Balažič, M.S., is an assistant at the Faculty of Tourism Studies Portoroz - Turistica, University of Primorska, Slovenia. He is a postgraduate student of geography. In his PhD. thesis he deals with the socio-geographic effects of gambling tourism in the Slovenian-Italian contact area. His research fields include the integration of natural and cultural heritage into the tourism offer and the spatial effects of tourism. The author may be reached at: [gregor.balazic@turistica.si](mailto:gregor.balazic@turistica.si).

Chris Laingen is an assistant professor in the Geography Program at Eastern Illinois University. His primary research interests are regional, rural, and agricultural geography with a specific focus on Corn Belt agriculture and rural land use change. The author may be contacted at: [crlaingen@eiu.edu](mailto:crlaingen@eiu.edu).

## Submission Guidelines

Manuscript submissions are to be sent electronically to either of the co-editors, Peggy Gripshover ([margaret.gripshover@wku.edu](mailto:margaret.gripshover@wku.edu)) or Tom Bell ([thomas.bell@wku.edu](mailto:thomas.bell@wku.edu)). *FOCUS on Geography* welcomes article ideas and manuscripts from geographers and those who write geographically. Articles must be excellent in quality and written for an informed general audience. A personal point of view and a sense of humor are welcome. *FOCUS on Geography* provides a place for geographers' individual voices to emerge, free from professional jargon.

Brief articles (photo essays) should be five to ten pages, double-spaced; feature articles are about fifteen pages double-spaced. Your submission should follow the guidelines set forth in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition. Please submit your manuscript in a digital format via email in MS Word. Photographs or other images (including maps) must be submitted in digital format, be of very high quality, sharply focused, and reasonably bright for clear viewing (prints should be scanned at 900 dpi). TIFF format is required for all images. Maps should be included. The design and production of maps should be individually discussed with the editors but each map must include a title, neat line, scale, legend, and northing system. If using maps or photographs from outside sources, it is the author's responsibility to seek permission for publication. Authors should indicate in the text the preferred location of figures. Figures (including images) are not to be included in the text, but, rather, should be saved to a separate file. Figure captions are to be included at the end of the manuscript after the reference section. A brief biographical sketch should also be placed at the end of the manuscript. Due to the large size of image files, it is preferred that images be transferred to a CD and mailed to the editors. If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact the editors prior to submission.

Each manuscript will be sent to at least two referees. The acceptance or rejection of manuscripts is based on referees' and the editors' comments and criteria. Your manuscript can only be accepted if it has not been published in another publication or submitted to another publication. The American Geographical Society will retain copyrights of all articles published in *FOCUS on Geography*. *FOCUS on Geography* does not pay for articles; authors receive multiple copies of "their" issue. For other information about *FOCUS on Geography*, *Geographical Review*, *Ubique*, and the AGS Travel Program, please visit the *American Geographical Society* website at: [www.amergeo.org](http://www.amergeo.org).

