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The Making of (Post)colonial Cities in Central Europe

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Agata Anna Lisiak,
"The Making of (Post)colonial Cities in Central Europe"
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Abstract: In her article "The Making of (Post)colonial Cities in Central Europe" Agata Anna Lisiak discusses some of the transformations taking place in Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw after 1989. Lisiak proposes that Central European capitals are (post)colonial cities because their politics, cultures, societies, and economies have been shaped by two centers of power: the Soviet Union as the former colonizer, whose influence remains visible predominantly in architecture, infrastructure, social relations, and mentalities and Western culture and Western and/or global capital as the current colonizer, whose impact extends over virtually all spheres of urban life. Furthermore, the cities under scrutiny are "in-between" not only because they exist between the West and the East, but also because they are torn between the Soviet colonial past and the Western/global colonial present. The (post)colonial and "in-between peripheral" identities and locations of the Central European capitals complement each other and their analysis provides a relevant perspective on the transformation processes that have shaped and continue to shape the region after 1989.

Agata Anna LISIAK

The Making of (Post)colonial Cities in Central Europe

My conceptualization of the notion of the (post)colonial city in Central Europe is based primarily on Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's notion where he defines the region and its culture(s) "in-between peripheral," as located between the West and the Soviet empire ("Study of Central European Culture" <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/STotosy1.pdf>). The framework for the study of the region is based, in turn, on Tötösy de Zepetnek's notion of comparative cultural studies ("From Comparative Literature" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss3/2>), a construction of tenets of the fields of comparative literature and cultural studies built upon Siegfried J. Schmidt's thought (see, e.g., <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss1/1/>; for a bibliography of Schmidt's work, see, e.g., Lisiak and Tötösy de Zepetnek <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss1/9>) and other contextual frameworks applicable for the study of culture (for work in comparative cultural studies see Tötösy de Zepetnek <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss3/7>).

Central Europe's "in-between peripherality" is determined politically, historically, sociologically, as well as culturally by two "centers," namely the postcolonial condition determined by the remnants of the colonial (Soviet) past and by Westernization from within and the outside of the region. To the colonial nature of post-1989 Westernization I add the developments of globalization (on more detail of this, see my *Urban Cultures in (Post)Colonial Central Europe*). Following the above, I define my notion of the (post)colonial Central European city as

> a city whose politics, culture, society, and economy have been shaped by two centers of power: the former colonizer, whose influence remains visible predominantly in architecture, infrastructure, social relations, and mentalities, and the current colonizer, whose impact extends over virtually all spheres of urban life … characterized by political, cultural, social, and economic tensions resulting from the condition of being postcolonial and colonial at the same time; the intensity of the tensions is proportional to the differences between the former colonizer and the present colonizer. The postcolonial aspects of the (post)colonial city are strongest immediately after decolonization and become weaker with time, whereby the pace of their decline depends on a complex set of factors ranging from economic cycles through political constellations to urban migration. The colonial aspects of the (post)colonial city are most intensely experienced immediately after colonization; with time, they become identified increasingly as qualities essential to the postmodern city rather than results of colonial influences.

Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw — the four cities I am discussing in my article — are "in-between" not only because they exist between the West and the East, but also because they are torn between the Soviet colonial past and the Western/global colonial present (and most likely also future.) The cities are not exclusively postcolonial or solely colonial: they are "in-between" the two predicaments and, hence, are best described as (post)colonial. Furthermore, in a geographical — but also, importantly, cultural — sense, Central European cities are located on the peripheries of the Eastern and Western spheres of influences. In their colonial past, these cities were located on the periphery of the Soviet empire: outside the official borders of the Soviet Union and dangerously close to and aspiring to the West. In their colonial present, the cities are located on the periphery of the West: inside the official borders of the European Union and NATO, but still dangerously close to the East. The (post)colonial and "in-between peripheral" identities of the Central European capitals complement each other and their discussion provides an insightful analysis of the transformation processes that have been shaping the cities after 1989.

The remarkable exception of the (post)colonial identity of Central European cities is the former West Berlin: a (part of the) city occupied by Western Allies, which, after rejoining with East Berlin in 1990, experienced another wave of Westernization, this time coupled with globalization. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the former West Berlin could be considered postcolonial rather than (post)colonial. In order to achieve a deeper understanding of the economic, political, cultural, and social transformations in the cities after 1989, it is crucial to examine the processes that were shaping Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw under the Soviet regime. An analysis of the transformations taking place after the fall of the Berlin Wall not only reveals diverse aspects of the said (post)colonial

cities, but also prepares for further discussion on communication of urban identities (on this, see my *Urban Cultures in (Post)Colonial Central Europe*).

The developments that took place in Central European cities in the first years after 1989 were mostly connected with eradicating the previous political and economic system and quickly replacing it with a new one. Soviet symbols, street names, and monuments were readily dismantled and either destroyed or taken away to communist theme parks. In Berlin, "more than 60 streets and squares, most of them named after socialist politicians, communist philosophers, and anti-fascists, were re-named. A lot of plaques on houses where important socialists once lived or worked disappeared, but neighbors and activists have replaced many of them" (Häußermann and Kapphan 210-11). Apart from being a beehive of apparatchiks, Berlin had a long tradition of Marxist politics (even in West Berlin there was a Karl-Marx-Strasse), therefore, the statues of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were allowed to remain, while Lenin's monument was dismantled. In no other Central European city did people demand so vehemently that the signs of the communist past be kept, but we need to remember that no other capital was (re)connected with a Western city and incorporated into a Western country. Therefore, East Berliners sought to keep traces not so much of the communist system, but of the history of Berlin as the capital of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), a country that ceased to exist.

The democratic reforms introduced in and after 1989 were shaped largely along well-known patterns: whereas the political developments were inspired by the European Union, to which Central European states applied for membership, the economic transformation followed the harsher US-American path. The cities under scrutiny were affected by the changes on both national and local levels. As capitals of now independent states, Berlin (capital of united Germany in 1990), Prague (since 1993, after the split of Czechoslovakia, capital of the Czech Republic), Budapest, and Warsaw took an active part in the development of new political infrastructure including the creation of new institutions and accommodating them in new or renovated buildings. On the municipal level, these cities also experienced establishment of new local government structures, agencies, organizations, and offices. The general decentralization of politics and economy and the introduction of Western and/or West-inspired rules affected the patterns of urban life and culture in Central Europe and contributed to the creation of a new identity of the cities.

Virtually all political institutions of the bygone era proved to be corrupt, inefficient, and no longer required. There was no chance of ever accomplishing a system transformation with the bureaucratic and fraudulent relicts still in place. Many employees of the communist regime were dismissed and replaced by not necessarily less corrupt and often completely inexperienced people. Local offices of international governmental and non-governmental organizations were set up in Central European capitals, which gave the cities a more international character. Whereas Berlin and the whole former GDR were incorporated immediately in the structures of the European Union after the German reunification in 1990; Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic had to wait until May 2004 before they could join. Nevertheless, Central European capitals had started preparing for membership in the European Union (EU) years before by adjusting national and regional laws according to Brussels's commands. Furthermore, the capitals joined the network of sister cities, which increased international cooperation on the municipal level. As Ian E.E. Hamilton notes, "the international integration and 'globalization' of Central and Eastern European cities in the 1990s has occurred largely through 'Europeanization,' or most notably through the process of EU integration and enlargement ('EU-ization'), reinforcing cross-border and historic relations with West European cities and regions" (113). Importantly, in the first years after 1989, the transformation process was based more on copying EU standards rather than adapting them to local circumstances, which, understandably, raised protests among those parts of society who felt most affected by the introduced changes. Later in the 1990s and in the 2000s, after a few years of experience in democracy, decision makers realized they had to pay more attention to the local peculiarities while launching new EU or EU-inspired laws.

After 1989, municipal and regional governments in Central European capitals have been appointed in free elections instead of being centrally designated as they had been in previous decades. The mayor finally started representing the interests of citizens against the state rather than the other way round. Inhabitants began to show more interest in their cities now that they were allowed to decide who manages them. Although civic society has been generally slow to develop in Central Europe — mostly owing to obvious distrust in all organizations inherited from the time of Soviet domination —

the 2000s saw some community groups, urban activists, nongovernmental organizations, and artist collectives influence successfully the municipal politics in Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw. Berlin, again, was an exception: activists in the German capital had been co-shaping local affairs ever since the early 1990s, partly thank to the tradition of civic activism that spread from West Berlin over the whole city and party because many East Berliners perceived the reunification as colonization and felt they had to stand up for their rights.

As Milan Kundera remarks, even under Soviet domination Central Europe was located culturally in the West. With political independence (re)gained formally in 1989, this conviction turned into a quest and Central Europe set out to "return to Europe." Central European cities wanted to catch up with Western metropolises as soon as possible and one of the ways to achieve their aim was quick economic transformation largely based on adaptation of Western standards. In the 1990s, economic Westernization was taking place both from within and from outside: "many of the CEE countries, dedicated to the cause of reform, embraced a strategy that became known as 'shock therapy,' [whereby] for some of them, it provided a lot of 'shock' with little 'therapy'" (Stanilov 22). The Polish minister of finance Leszek Balcerowicz — fascinated by Milton Freedman's theories and working closely together with Freedman's disciple, Jeffrey Sachs — eliminated all price controls and state subsidies, which led to gigantic inflation, bankruptcies of formerly state-owned companies, and, consequently, unemployment. The negative effects of economic transformation were unavoidable. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether "shock therapy" was necessary or if the changes could have been introduced gradually. Naomi Klein, known for her critique of capitalism, claims that the economic transformation in Poland was merely another trick of the United States, who took advantage of the post-1989 state of emergency in Central Europe and introduced the type of economy that best served their own goals (180-81). The new democratic governments in Central Europe had few experts in Western economics who could show them alternatives and the intellectuals in Prague, Warsaw, or Budapest who negotiated reforms, had little knowledge of economy and chose to rely on the few available advisors and/or Western specialists such as Jeffrey Sachs.

With the exception of Budapest and Hungary, Central European economies were completely unprofitable and their technologies and work methods outdated and inefficient. The young democratic governments opted for financial help from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and, consequently, had to act according to the policies of the Western and/or increasingly global capital: Western financial guidance and control was simply another form of colonization and

> external pressure was applied by Western powers on national governments to adopt a market system, through the medium of experts appointed by international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The operation of both forces was facilitated by the demise of communism in the USSR and by the break-up of the USSR itself, while the seizure by President Kohl of the unique political opportunities to reunite eastern and western Germany (partly by "buying off" east German voters) led to the rapid integration of the former East Germany into the economic, political, and social space of Germany and the European Union. The replacement in a very short time of the stark old "Iron Curtain" by a perceived glittering "Golden Curtain" between Eastern and Western Europe probably also coloured local opinion in Central and Eastern European countries that following the West European model and closer integration with the European Union could lead to the "promised land." (Hamilton 91)

Berlin, as the capital of reunited Germany, has received most financial help not only from international organizations, but also from the West German federal states in the form of the solidarity tax (*Solidaritätssteuer*). Furthermore, the city attracted enormous amounts of foreign investment due to cheap labor and land; however, this ended as soon as the mid-1990s, when foreign companies decided to move — in search of yet cheaper labor and land — further east to other Central and East European cities and towns. Budapest also experienced an investment boom until the mid-1990s, when it received "far more FDI than other cities in the Central European region (except East Berlin)" (Tosics, "Post-socialist Budapest" 248). The beauty of Prague and its closeness to Munich and Vienna made it one of the most favorite locations for the subsidiaries of international and/or Western companies in Central Europe. Warsaw was neither as economically advanced as Budapest, nor as alluring as Prague, but Poland's capital also drew Western capital due to its relative closeness to the yet to be penetrated former Soviet republics. On the surface, all of the mentioned cities experienced economic progress in

the early 1990s; nevertheless, it was only the privileged few who entered the "promised land," while the vast majority of the population struggled to survive in the new conditions, or simply quit the race. Unemployment and its direct consequences such as an increase in crime, homelessness, hunger, alcoholism, drug abuse, and other social pathologies reigned in Central European capitals presenting a hitherto unknown phenomenon. While it is true that in the 2000s, general economic and social conditions did improve across the region, the first few years of the processes of transformation brought about a drastic pauperization of society. Next to increased poverty, the urban masses of Central European cities became socially confused. The switch from central planning to free market economy meant a loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, sometimes whole industrial sectors were wiped out as unprofitable, and their former employees were forced to retrain and look for new jobs in completely new corporate environments. Also the services hitherto sponsored by the state, such as daycare, sport centers, medical care, subsidized summer vacation, etc., had to be paid for and many people could no longer afford them. The effects of the "shock therapy" of the early 1990s fulfilled John M. Keynes's prophesy that "rapid transition will involve so much pure destruction of wealth that the new state of affairs will be, at first, far worse than the old, and the grand experiment will be discredited" (Keynes qtd. in Stanilov 22).

To Hartmut Hässermann and Andreas Kapphan, the transformation taking place in Central European cities after 1989 "can be described as 'marketization,' which is the opposite of [their] development for 40 years between 1949 and 1989 — 'demarketizing' or 'decommodification'" (190). State ownership decreased rapidly, which affected both corporate and private areas of life in the city. Freshly privatized companies often fell under foreign — predominantly Western — ownership that introduced their own modes of management, production, and marketing. New working hours and Western corporate culture decisively changed the rhythm and nature of city life: rush hours changed, lunch restaurants opened in the vicinity of new or renovated office buildings, business people started communicating in a peculiar combination of business English and new stores opened to answer the needs of the fast growing class of corporate managers. Moreover, mass privatization of public housing had a diversifying effect on urban population: while the poor dwelled in prefabricated buildings, everyone who could afford moving out escaped to the newly renovated turn-of-the-century houses in the downtown areas or built brand new residential homes in the suburbs. In Budapest, for example, "the prosperous parts of the inner districts (within the central business area or in its immediate vicinity) privatization has been almost wholesale and the rehabilitation of houses is under way, as a large majority of the population can afford to invest in renovation. In the less advantageous high-density areas, private apartments also prevail, but as the low-quality rental units are concentrated in this zone, there is hardly any hope that the new condominiums with mixed ownership will create the uniform will of the owners which is required for reconstruction. Thus, the moving-out of the middle class is quite predictable and it will eventually lead to the deterioration of these areas" (Tosics, "Post-socialist Budapest" 270). Similar trends were also observable in Prague, Berlin, and Warsaw, where the city centers and the neighboring areas were strongly gentrified and the suburbs crowded with family houses. Like the housing projects in US-American cities and the high-rise suburbs in France, many prefabricated apartment blocks in Central European capitals have experienced ghettoization that, in turn, has led into a further social ostracism of those areas and the people who inhabit them. Naturally, not all communist housing tenements turn into ghettos. In Warsaw, despite the construction boom, "nearly 30 per cent of inhabitants still live the pre-fabricated apartment blocks that form large housing estates in all districts" (Węcławowicz 231).

All Central European capitals experience(d) social polarization. Gated communities and suburban villas contrast with the decaying prefabricated apartment blocks; salaries of corporate professionals (a remarkable number of them from the West, sent over to run Central European subsidiaries of international and/or Western concerns) are many times higher than the wages of the majority of the population; only very few can afford shopping at designer clothing stores and organic food shops, while the rest rely on discount supermarkets and international chain stores. Already in the mid-1990s, huge shopping malls appeared in Central Europe, first in the capitals, which had "the biggest purchasing power," then in other cities and towns (Tosics, "City Development" 64). As Iván Tosics argues, "the retail sector has special importance in the restructuring of post-socialist cities. On the one hand, retailing was very underdeveloped in the socialist cities both in quantitative and qualitative terms. ... On

the other hand, this sector exhibits in market economies the fastest restructuring in accordance with a high level of capital concentration and rapid globalization. … The new retail sector is more based in car use, needs bigger buildings, and is therefore more oriented towards the transitional zones and outskirts of cities and to suburban areas" (Tosics, "City Development" 64-65). The construction of large shopping centers (mostly owned by the Western and/or global capital) on the outskirts of cities meant a substantial change for Central European capitals. First of all, "the administrative centre of the city was traditionally also the centre of retail activities" (Tosics, "City Development" 65). Since the 1990s, urban consumers have shopped less in the downtown areas and more on the outskirts. Berlin and Warsaw are important exceptions due to "numerous vacant open spaces" in the centre (Dimitrovska 161) that create opportunities for construction of shopping malls and huge parking lots for their customers. The centers of Prague and Budapest, on the contrary, are densely built-up and protected as cultural and historical heritage, which, in turn, seriously limits any possibilities of mass retail development. Moreover, owing to the fast growing cost of rental properties in the center and the surrounding gentrified neighborhoods, only very rich (and, hence, expensive) retail chains, designer stores, coffee shops, and delicatessen can afford central locations; most small family-owned businesses are forced to move out to poorer areas of the city.

Shopping malls created a demand for a different kind of transportation and, consequently, a growing need for changes in urban infrastructure: "The explosion of automobile ownership" increased personal mobility, which can be seen as a positive development; however, it has had negative side effects: "the level of public transportation services has decreased considerably" (Stanilov 11), while traffic jams and air and noise pollution increased significantly. Suburbanization of offices and housing made the situation even worse. The urban developments in Central Europe in the 1990s call to mind the growth of US-American cities in the 1960s and their reliance on and addiction to automobile transportation (see Berman). What Kiril Stanilov does not mention is that Central European capitals follow also the newest developments in North American (US and Canada) cities, namely those of "reclaiming downtown": whereas in the 1990s rich people moved to the suburbs of Central European cities, in the 2000s they prefer to live in the luxurious high-rise apartment buildings or gentrified historic houses in the city center, closer to entertainment, government and corporate offices, designer boutiques, and gourmet delicatessen. Interestingly, it was Westerners who introduced this trend and rich locals followed.

The internationalization of Central European cities had numerous consequences that have been mostly visible in city centers: "The growing number of Western employees working in CEE capital cities (e.g., 50,000 in Prague) is an important force on the residential market, demanding new or reconstructed 'up-market' housing and thus contributing to change in the built environment" (Dimitrovska 162). Thousands of Western managers and entrepreneurs who moved to Central European cities in the 1990s sought to make their working and living environment more similar to what they had been used to, which more often than not meant a higher standard of housing, infrastructure, and retail. Therefore, whenever they could, they bought apartments and/or houses as well as office space in the city centers and renovated them. New stores, restaurants, and schools appeared in the area to serve the needs of Westerners and other high-income tenants, while the people who had lived in the center for decades ("mainly old and relatively poor" [Musil, "Prague Returns to Europe" 307]) were forced to spend long hours in traffic to shop at discount markets located on the outskirts of the city. In Prague, "although rents are still partly regulated, these long-time residents are nonetheless being forced out as buildings are bought, sold, and renovated for expanding commercial and tourist-related activities" (Musil, "Prague Returns to Europe" 308). These and other developments are clear signs of gentrification, which eventually creates rich and poor enclaves within the city and, hence, intensifies social stratification.

Gentrification and commercialization of central areas would not have been possible without the restoration of private ownership. Budapest and Prague introduced restitution right after the system change. Since it was not always possible or socially desired to give back the land or houses to their original owners, in both cities restitution was often combined with compensation. In Prague, 70% of the buildings in the center returned to their proprietors by 1994 (Dimitrovska 161). Berlin passed the *Investitionsvorranggesetz* ("priority of investment law") that enables the political authorities to grant the land in the city centre to high capital investors, and merely remunerate the former owners"

(Dimitrovska 161). Consequently, Berlin underwent a construction boom throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s, while disputed property rights in central Warsaw largely limited developments in the 1990s (Dimitrovska 161). Only the 2000s brought a real boom on construction market not only in Warsaw, but also in other Polish cities. The internationalization and Westernization of city centers is also mirrored in architecture. Central European capitals follow the example of other big cities and invite world-known architects to design extraordinary buildings in the centers, which increase the prestige and tourist value of the cities. Frank Gehry in Prague, Zaha Hadid in Budapest, Daniel Liebeskind in Berlin and Warsaw, I.M. Pei in Berlin, Norman Foster in Berlin, among others, create edifices that immediately join the ever longer list of world's most admired buildings. The same architects, who design architectonic symbols of New York, Los Angeles, Paris, and London, create symbols of modern Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw.

Ever since 1989 Prague has been one of the most favorite tourist destinations in Europe. Hardly damaged in World War II, Prague could offer historic architecture, scenic views, and, at first, cheap accommodation and food; however, after almost two decades of Westernization and capitalizing on tourism, the Czech capital is hardly a bargain anymore. Nevertheless, owing to cheap flights by budget airlines, it still attracts large numbers of tourists: "With 3.7 million tourist arrivals a year, Prague constitutes Europe's seventh most visited city, an enormous number for a city with a 1.2 million population" (Dujisin 9). Naturally, the growth of tourism has serious economic, social, and cultural implications. On the one hand, Prague's prosperity greatly depends on tourism; on the other hand, the inhabitants feel outnumbered by tourists and annoyed by the negative side of tourism, namely "rises in crime, crowding, noise, loss of privacy, gambling casinos, and various types of informal economic activities, such as prostitution and street vending" (Musil, "Prague Returns to Europe" 308). Similar drawbacks are visible in the cities with Habsburg history such as Vienna, Budapest, and Kraków. Tosics argues these cities should cooperate "to increase the joint capacities of their infrastructure (e.g. cooperation between airports, fast rail link, split of tasks instead of direct rivalry)" ("Post-socialist Budapest" 276-77). While it is true that overseas tourists often choose to visit all these cities during a one- or two-week vacation, Budapest and Prague attract visitors also separately, either as conference centers, historical capitals, or simply as party zones still cheaper than the Western cities. To Jiří Musil, the decisive factor behind the increasingly international role of Prague has been "its rediscovered attractiveness as a beautiful city" ("Prague Returns to Europe" 291). The same can be argued with regard to Budapest although the Hungarian capital had been a popular tourist destination already before the fall of the Wall. Berlin also draws millions of tourists every year, however, not necessarily due to its disputed beauty, but rather because of its troubled history, outstanding museums and galleries, fascinating architecture, relatively cheap night life, and world famous events such as the Berlinale, Love Parade (from 1989 until 2004 and then again, for the last time, in 2006), and, recently, the soccer World Cup in 2006. Warsaw is the least touristy of all the cities discussed here, which can be explained by its visual unattractiveness and its Eastern-most location, among other factors. Compared to other Polish cities, Warsaw plays the role of a business and political center, while Kraków, Wrocław, and Gdańsk are visited for their beauty and culture.

Next to tourism, the inflow of Westerners is important force that has been changing the social, economic, cultural, and national structures of the discussed capitals. While Westernization is mostly associated with urban professionals, it is important to remember that CEOs and lower managers constituted only one of many groups of newcomers. After 1989, young people from the West, mostly from the United States, streamed to Central European cities in search of the unknown, the unspoiled, or — unromantically — the cheap. Prague in the 1990s was the "new Paris": "avant-garde publications, coffee houses, pubs, and foreign language journals" (Musil, "Prague Returns to Europe" 300; in his satirical novel, *The Russian Debutante's Handbook*, the Russian-born US-American author Gary Shteyngart, who had lived in Prague in the 1990s, created an insightful and at the same time ironic portrait of expatriate communities in the Czech capital) were significant aspects of social and cultural life in the Czech capital in the 1990s. Furthermore, US-American universities opened their branches in Prague, which attracted even more youth. In the 1990s, expatriate communities bloomed also in Budapest, Berlin, and even in Warsaw. Many Western newcomers were (or at least called themselves) artists: they came to Central Europe not only to take advantage of cheaper accommodation, ateliers, and general costs of living, but also to find inspiration in the cities undergoing thorough transformations.

In Berlin, many of the young newcomers stemmed from the West German states. Unsatisfied with the petit bourgeois atmosphere of their hometowns, they settled in the run down Mietskasernen of East Berlin (mostly in the districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Friedrichshain) and busied themselves with art, activism, and various alternative ways of living (Häußermann, Holm, and Zunzer 54-58). Remarkably, two decades after their arrival, Prenzaluer Berg has turned from an artistic enclave (before 1989 the district had been popular among GDR bohemians) into a copy of a peaceful and rich small town. As Musil observes, "the growing number of Western employees and tourists, along with the growing import of Western consumer goods, American movies, and Western television programs, started to change the consumption patterns, fashion, lifestyles, and values of the local population. Most of these changes in cultural patterns, mainly those symbolizing the links to the West, are already reflected in the architecture semiotics of the city, the streets, and other public spaces" ("Prague Returns to Europe" 299-300).

In conclusion, the (post)colonial situation of Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw — based on the previous Soviet colonial and "in-between peripheral" — location of the region and its culture(s) was experienced most intensively in the first decade after the system change. Later, the cities have become increasingly used to Western standards and started perceiving them not as foreign elements, but something related to their own culture. This is not to suggest that Westernization from within was absent before and during the transformation processes. There has been a strong social will to catch up with the West, to "come back to Europe," and the West has been and remains associated with progress, and, hence, understood as a positive force. Thus, nearly all post-1989 political, economic, social, and cultural developments bear traces of colonial practices. In the 1990s, the colonization of Central European cities equaled predominantly Westernization, in the 2000s it has been more closely connected to globalization. Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw are affected by globalization processes, but themselves play only limited roles in creating the new global order. Furthermore, whereas the early reforms could be depicted as "an attempt to make a desperate leap from totalitarian existence to capitalism in a matter of only a few years" (Stanilov 7), later developments have been more moderate and adjusted to local specifics. The fact that the intensity of Western and/or global influences seems to fade away, may also be partly explained by the fact that the differences between the local culture and the Western and/or global cultures have decreased and are less striking. Nevertheless, the impact of the West and globalization continue to be crucial in shaping and re-shaping urban cultures in Central Europe.

Note: The above article is an excerpt from Agata Anna Lisiak, *Urban Cultures in (Post)Colonial Central Europe*. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2010.

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