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International Scientific Conference of the University of Latvia



MemoTours

DIFFICULT HERITAGE: COMMUNICATION AND INTERPRETATION

Friday, 26 February 2021, 10:00 AM, online conference session

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Technology meets Heritage – Interactive 3D testimonies at a German memorial site

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Since a couple of years interactive 3D testimonies are presented in Holocaust museums and are on display at memorial sites. The characteristic of these media formats is the filming of survivors – answering 1,000 to 2,000 questions – in a multiscopic or stereoscopic way for 3D presentation. Supported by voice recognition, these questions and their corresponding replies are then processed so that users receive a stored answer from the survivor if their question can be matched to one of the pre-recorded ones. Independent of time and location, visitors to museums and memorial sites can ask their questions to genocide survivors.

To gain insights into the effects of such media formats, we have empirically evaluated two German speaking interactive testimonies of Holocaust survivors at a memorial site in Germany (10/2020). Of central concern is to what extent the audience (1) connects with the survivors' stories, (2) integrates the space into the perception, and (3) how visitors evaluate this form of communication at a place of Nazi torture.

Miscommunicating Difficult Knowledge: “My Poland: On Recalling and Forgetting”

Margaret Tali
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In my presentation I will analyse the exhibition “My Poland: On Recalling and Forgetting” (2015) that was curated in the Tartu Art Museum by the then museum director and head curator Rael Artel. As the first exhibition touching on the topic of Holocaust in Estonian art it produced an extensive local debate on the freedom of speech and the need to include minority voices that also involved several international actors and institutions. The exhibition included works by eight artists altogether but three of them were particularly heavily disputed – two videos “80064” (2004) and “Berek (Game of Tag)” (1999) both by Polish artist Artur Żmijewski and a painting “Holocaust” (2001) by local artists duo John Smith formed by Marko Mäetamm and Kaido Ole. The two videos were eventually removed from the display due to the



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heightened public pressure and only remained available to the audience upon request. Mapping the debates that the exhibition opened locally and internationally, I will focus on the series of miscommunications that it produced in mediating difficult knowledge (Simon; Lehrer) about the Holocaust.

Mapping the Holocaust in Latvia: Previous Cases and Recent Challenges

Didzis Bērziņš, Diāna Popova, Kaspars Strods
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The report provides an insight into the Holocaust map developed for the methodological needs of the *MemoTours* project. The report explains and substantiates why and according to what principles the map is created, what data previously collected and compiled have been used, what categories, and what reasoning is included in the map. The report also includes the map's presentation and a discussion of the first conclusions it draws.

Keywords: Holocaust, memorials, mapping, information accessibility, tourist destinations

This research as a part of the project "Difficult Heritage: Between the Memorisation and Contemporary Tourism Production and Consumption. The Case of Holocaust Sites in Latvia" (MemoTours), project No. lzp-2019/1-0241" is funded by the Latvian Council of Science

Holocaust tourism in Lithuania - between interest and emotion. The case of Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum

Marius Pečiulis

Kaunas IX fort Museum

The Holocaust is a particularly sensitive topic of general interest and it does not leave anyone indifferent. But is that really so? One as a topic is reflected in the public space, when the solution of issues related to the interpretation of individual Holocaust facts gains a massive and resonant response in the society. Completely different tendencies become apparent when we look at the Holocaust as an object of tourism and when we evaluate the behaviour of the visitors. Is the topic of the Holocaust popular in general or is it popular only among those visitors who



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have an uninterrupted emotional connection to this topic? We will try to provide the answer to this question by analysing the flows of visitors in Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum.

Keywords: Holocaust, Museum, Historical memory, Tourism

Pilot study results of project 'Memotours': Challenges for the inclusion of difficult heritage and Holocaust sites in tourism

Projekta MemoTours pilotpētījuma rezultāti: izaicinājumi sarežģītā mantojuma un holokausta vietu iekļaušanai tūrismā

Maija Rozīte

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Pēdējos gados, apzinot tūristu interesi, turpinot padziļinātus mūsu valsts vēstures pētījumus, tūrismā tiek iekļauti arvien jauni objekti un pieminekļi, tai skaitā vietas, kas saistās ar drūmiem un sarežģītiem vēstures notikumiem, tai skaitā ar holokaustu. Projekta MemoTours ietvaros pagājušā gadā tika uzsākta mērķtiecīga šādu vietu izpēte tūrisma attīstības kontekstā.

Viens no projekta mērķiem ir noskaidrot, kāda ir ieinteresēto pušu un iedzīvotāju attieksme pret sarežģītā mantojuma izmantošanu tūrismā, par iespējamām problēmām, kuras var rasties to iekļaušanā, interpretējumā.

Pilotpētījuma laikā tika izmantotas lauka pētījuma, novērojuma un interviju metodes. Pētītajās vietās kā sarežģītā mantojuma vietas tika identificētas ebreju nāves vietas, holokausta piemiņas vietas un memoriāli, sinagogas, geto vietas, kapi, cietumi un ēkas, kas saistītas ar dažādiem notikumiem. Interviju rezultātā tika iegūts 20 personu, tai skaitā tūrisma informācijas centru, pašvaldību un muzeju darbinieku viedoklis. Intervijas tika veiktas Rīgā, Bauskā, Liepājā, Rēzeknē, Kārsavā, Valdemārpilī un Rojā.

Interviju transkripti liecina, ka pēdējos gados par šādām vietām nav sevišķi liela tūristu interese. Savukārt vecākās paaudzes vietējie iedzīvotāji neatceras, cenšas aizmirst smagos notikumus vai nevēlas tajos iedziļināties.

Tūrisma attīstītāji un organizatori saskata vairākas problēmu jomas, kuras jāapzinās, veidojot jaunus tūrisma maršrutus, apskates vietas, veidojot to aprakstus. Galvenās



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problēmas, kas var rasties, veicinot holokausta, nāves vietu un dažādu sarežģītā mantojuma vietu plašāku iesaisti tūrismā, ir saistītas ar konkrēto vietu novietojumu un stāvokli, to uztveri dažādu sabiedrības grupu, indivīdu apziņā, interpretējumu, arī ar pašvaldības attieksmi un iespējām. Tika uzsvērts, ka tumšais tūrisms ir ne tikai stāsts par upuriem, bet arī par nāciju attieksmi, ka sarežģītā mantojuma un holokausta vietām ir jābūt 'iedēstītām' arī vietējā atmiņā.

Atslēgvārdi: sarežģītais mantojums, holokausta vietas, tumšais tūrisms, attieksme

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Communicating Difficult Pasts

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Difficult themes such as memory of the Holocaust, Romani genocide, Soviet deportations and other violences, traumatic losses and their aftermath are the dark sides of the twentieth-century history in Eastern Europe and the Baltic region. Also region's more distant, colonial past – even though it's not always have been reflected as such – is a part of the violent history of global colonialism. For a long time these themes have been unspoken and silenced past although through the field of literature and academic disciplines like memory studies and trauma studies they have become increasingly visible. Also through the visual arts these difficult aspects of past slowly become part of the public consciousness and thus acknowledged and worked through.

In my presentation I will focus on the project, titled Communicating Difficult Pasts and the exhibition Difficult Pasts. Connected Worlds that before the lockdown was and after reopening of the museums will be on view at the Latvian National Museum of Art. This international and interdisciplinary project engages with the uncomfortable and often forgotten sides of history in order to understand their influence in the region. It has fostered collaboration and synergy between artists, curators and researchers who seek new approaches to study difficult legacies. The exhibition Difficult Pasts. Connected Worlds calls for reflection on the relationships between difficult pasts, their impact and presence today



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through the perspective of a shared history – offering dialogues, forging connections and foregrounding solidarities between the different difficult histories that are often perceived as incompatible or in competition with each other.

Keywords: Difficult past, memory, trauma, communication, shared histories

Holocaust Memorial as a Place of Memory and Historical Text: Examples of Latvia

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Analysing the symbolic language of Holocaust memorials, the author will use the concept *lieux de mémoire* widely used by French historian Pierre Nora. According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire* are the places where “memory is crystallised, in which it finds refuge” (Nora 1997, 1). Nora emphasised that in these places “residual sense of continuity remains” and what is even more important – these places “exist because there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience” (Ibid). Nora has devoted many articles to this concept, especially from 1984 to 1992. In these works, he also highlights the essential differences and even a rupture between history and memory. For Nora, memory and history in many aspects are opposites. If memory is life, if it is remembering and forgetting, if it can sleep for years to wake up with new power suddenly, then history is only a reconstruction, always problematic and unfinished, because it tries to reconstruct what is and will remain the past. Showing these opposites' irreconcilability, Nora admits that “society living wholly under the sign of history would not need to attach its memory to specific sites any more than traditional societies do” (Nora 1997, 3). This is exactly the situation when *lieux de mémoire* have growing importance because they lie between memory and history. They do not allow an event to become only a thing of the past. The task of these places is to return the event, revive it in individual memory and memory of society as well.



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Thus, we can evaluate memorials according to whether they are only topographical marks of historical places, or they are such *lieux de mémoire*. However, even if we recognise one or another memorial as such a specific place of memory, we must not forget that each memorial is a more complicated case with material, symbolic and functional significance. It can be both a place of memory and a historical text with a very complex dialectic of both sides. It can be said that in each memorial, this *lieux de mémoire* and the historical text can both complement each other, work against and even destroy.

The examples of Holocaust memorials discussed in the report will be described both as places of memory and remembrance and as historical texts, thus showing the possibility of a significantly different public attitude towards Latvia's dark heritage.

Keywords: Dark heritage, Holocaust memorial, Pierre Nora, lieux de mémoire

What does sadness make you do? Students' experience at Latvian dark tourism sites

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This study aims to explore the educational experience in dark tourism sites, with a particular focus on post-visit effects after students' exposure to dark sites – inner-directed and behavioral activities. The study is based on the longitudinal data collected after study excursions to dark tourism sites in Latvia from 2014 to 2019. Students (N=119) participated in the study visits during 6 years organized as part of the Dark Tourism study course. Students reported their emotions and provoked post-visit effects by filling in questionnaires. The excursion program included such dark tourism sites as the KGB Museum, Ghetto Museum and other sites. This study continues the strand of emotion-based studies by focusing on emotions experienced by students after the exposure to dark tourism sites, and links them to further actions such as interest to revisit the site, to research more, and to reconsider their values.

Among all the visited sites, the correlation analysis of KGB Museum (N=103) demonstrated the highest level of statistically significant correlation between the emotions and the post-visit behavioral outcomes. Explicit correlation is seen between the negative emotions and



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inner-directed processes, which obviously lead to think the KGB museum experience made the students reconsider their values, to think about the past and future. Specifically, sadness and surprise are emphasized as powerful emotions provoking the most inner-directed effects. Unlike the case of the KGB Museum where the relationship between the emotions and the post-visit behavior reflected that a painful emotional experience demotivates students to discuss the experience, students intend to revisit Rumbula memorial or recommend the visit to others. However, the level of authenticity is different, which might explain the differences. The lack of authenticity might limit the ability to relate to the tragic past and experience the extent of painful on-site emotions while the surprise and sadness provoked the students to share this experience with others and recommend friends and relatives to visit the site. The analysis of the data from Riga Ghetto Museum (N=66) case shows no statistically significant correlations between the on-site emotions and the post-visit effects. Overall, our observations of the students' on-site behavior and their comments in the questionnaires leads to think they mostly perceived Riga Ghetto Museum as a tourism object rather than a dark tourism site, which is a different perspective from the cases of the KGB Museum and Rumbula Jews Memorial.

Overall, this study confirmed that negative emotions like sadness and disgust are typical when visiting dark tourism site. The visits to the darkest sites were obviously uneasy experiences for the students, but still these were the ones having the greatest post-visit effect. The correlation analysis suggests statistically significant correlation between the emotions and the post-visit behavioral outcomes, which are to rethink experience, re-value personal values, reconsider responsibility, and these effects are specifically obvious in the darkest sites. Lighter dark tourism sites are perceived as entertainment sites rather than educational places. Authenticity of the place also significantly affects the post-visit behavior and helps to overcome the psychological desensitization.

Keywords: dark tourism, emotions, study excursion, post-visit effects



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Role of tourism guide in communication of the difficult heritage

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Tour guides can be found at every tourism destination and in every topic of exploring theme connected with the chosen destination, and nearly everyone both within and outside the tourism industry is familiar with this term. (Betty Weiler and Rosemary Black, 2015)

In nowadays, “alive guides” are replaced with the virtual ones, but still the context is the same: guide is the source of knowledge, presenter of community and educator of society and communicator of story.

Many scholars have argued that the tour guide plays a pivotal role in the experience of visitors or tourists potentially making or breaking the tour and the experience (Betty Weiler and Rosemary Black, 2015)

According to Weiler and Black, tourism guides act like as Interpreters, Storytellers and Intercultural Communicators in the certain historical and political context, contributing to sustainability. (2014).

It is not an easy professional and emotional task to guide visitors through the story of the difficult history that are presented by cultural heritage and included into the itinerary.

In this presentation guide’s role in interpreting and communicating the difficult historical heritage will be discussed, particularly looking into the Holocaust heritage analysis worldwide and in Latvia.

Keywords: tourism, difficult heritage, guide, Holocaust

This research as a part of the project “Difficult Heritage: Between the Memorization and Contemporary Tourism Production and Consumption. The Case of Holocaust Sites in Latvia” (MemoTours), project No. lzp-2019/1-0241” is funded by the Latvian Council of Science.



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Influential interpretation and communication of the difficult past. Case study of Žanis Lipke Memorial

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Kenneth Hudson, the founder of prestigious European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA), in 1987 published his best selling *Museums of Influence*.

Here he reviewed the development of the world's museums over the past 200 years by identifying 37 pioneers in ten countries – from iconic museums in large metropolises to small but ambitious ones in remote areas of the planet. According to Hudson's account, amidst this diversity a small number can be singled out who have fundamentally influenced museum thinking and practice.

In the newly published (2021) *Revisiting Museums of Influence. Four Decades of Innovation and Public Quality in European Museums*, the EMYA has named a new selection of 'museums of influence'. Reviewing the nearly 1900 new or renovated museum entries to the scheme from 44 countries in 42 years, the current and past EMYA jury was asked to come up with a shortlist of institutions aspiring to this title.

The Žanis Lipke Memorial is among the 50 museums included in the list. Assessing the initially proposed 200 nominations, the editors of the book first applied such criteria as the type and geographical location of the museum so as to cover the field. Additionally, the editorial board made sure that propositions came from the judges representing different generations. The key criterion, however, was that, after many decades of working in, visiting and assessing museums, these were the ones the authors wished to write about.

In 2014 Žanis Lipke Memorial was awarded the Kenneth Hudson Award – a special prize created within the EMYA scheme in 2010 to carry forward the spirit of Hudson's work, by recognizing a person, a project or a group of people who have demonstrated the most unusual, daring and, perhaps, controversial achievement that challenges the common perceptions of the role of museum in the society.



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Summing up the innovative potential of this memorial museum, the author of scenario, Mr Viktors Jansons, has said that this place has to be seen as “a work of art”, “a metaphor”, and realization of “a pure idea”. In turn, the EMYA judge who assessed the newly opened memorial back in 2014 and wrote an essay for the 2021 edition of ‘museums of influence’, put it in the following way: “It could have been a novel but it is a museum.”

This presentation will look at interpretation and communication of the difficult heritage focusing on the Žanis Lipke Memorial. As a ‘museum of influence’, or at least one that is trying to live up to it, this memorial museum has relied from the very start on cooperation with creative personalities in shaping its communication. The question of influential communication of the difficult past through putting more effort into educational work in the planned new educational centre ‘House of Courage’ is at the heart of museum’s vision for the future.

The rich background of successful and internationally acclaimed innovation in communicating the difficult past demonstrated by the memorial over the past decade will serve as reference point prior touching upon question of its development.

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Recent Scholarship on the Viktors Arājs Trial: Possible Implications for the Discourses of the Holocaust in Latvia

Didzis Bērziņš

University of Latvia, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology

The report describes two recently published works in Latvian on the trial of Viktārs Arājs. The paper analyzes the findings and discusses the contextual significance of publications, their implications on the court system of that time, socio-political issues, and knowledge and understanding of the extermination of Jews in Latvia during World War II. The report will also pay attention to the formation of the Holocaust discourses in West Germany, Latvian emigration communities, and the Latvian SSR and the thematic and content interaction of



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these fields. The paper shall discuss the trial's impact on the formation of the memory of the Holocaust at the time and nowadays.

Keywords: Holocaust, scholarship, discourse, collaboration, Viktors Arājs

This research as a part of the project "Difficult Heritage: Between the Memorization and Contemporary Tourism Production and Consumption. The Case of Holocaust Sites in Latvia" (MemoTours), project No. lzp-2019/1-0241" is funded by the Latvian Council of Science

Accessibility of Dark Past Information in Tourism Destinations: Case of Bauska

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Tourist information provided by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), information in various communication platforms, as well as content created by other travelers, play an important role in shaping the image of a travel destination that makes an effect on the decision of potential tourists to visit it. Traditionally, these organizations use engaging content in communication with tourists, with an emphasis on creating an attractive destination image, positive attitudes and emotions. Travel destinations associated with tragic historical events, such as the Holocaust, pose challenges for DMOs on how to communicate about these places and include them in the information for tourists. The local community is often reluctant to talk about the dark past and related events and places, while visitor interest in these places is growing. As the Latvian experience shows, DMOs lack knowledge on how to communicate the difficult heritage to different groups with varying interests and attitudes, and therefore for travelers or certain groups information about tragic events and places is often very limited or not available at all.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the accessibility of information on Jewish heritage and Holocaust related sites in the tourism destination Bauska.

The study is based on a case study of the Latvian city Bauska, which is a recognizable regional travel destination, and its history is associated with tragic historical events, as the entire Jewish community was practically destroyed as a result of the Holocaust.



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The study uses desk research and field work to assess the accessibility of information on Holocaust sites and related events in the information channels used by tourists before, during and after the trip.

The results of the study reveal that although Bauska tourist routes, guided tours and tourist information include places related to the tragic events of the Holocaust, there is a lack of a broader historical narrative of the city and links to sources, where tourists interested in this topic, could obtain more in depth information and experience. The potential of the local museum to communicate and display extensive and in-depth information and experience has been insufficiently used, especially with regard to foreign tourists, as the information in their website is different for Latvian and English audiences. Besides the recently erected memorial “Synagogue garden” in the center of Bauska, in other areas both inside and outside the city there is a lack of signage and information stands about sites related to both the Jewish community and the Holocaust.

Keywords: dark past, difficult heritage, Holocaust sites, tourism destination, tourist information, Bauska

This research as a part of the project “Difficult Heritage: Between the Memorization and Contemporary Tourism Production and Consumption. The Case of Holocaust Sites in Latvia” (MemoTours), project No. lzp-2019/1-0241” is funded by the Latvian Council of Science

The silent voice of Soviet heritage. Ex collective farm’s “Vaidava” identity challenges in post-Soviet era

Laura Slaviņa
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Padomju mantojuma definēšana, segmentēšana un pārvaldības vadlīniju izstrāde ir aktuāls jautājums šodien – 30 gadus pēc Padomju Savienības sabrukuma. Latvijā periodiski tiek aktualizēta diskusija par dažādu Padomju arhitektūras ēku tālāko attīstību lielākoties stratēģiski svarīgos novietojumos. Diskusijās dominē māksliniecisko un administratīvo viedokļu līderu sadursme. Kolhozu apbūves mantojums Latvijā publiski medijos vai



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pašvaldību stratēģiskās plānošanas dokumentos parādās reti. Visbiežāk tas ir administratīvo teritoriju perifērijā un nereti uzskatīts par apgrūtinājumu novadu attīstībai. Pašreiz nav precīzas statistikas, cik Latvijas teritorijā ir kolhozu apbūves kopu. Tomēr, vērtējot datus par kolhozu skaitu 1950. gadā, var secināt, ka Latvijas teritorijā to ir vairāk nekā pusotrs tūkstošs.

Vaidavas ciems Kocēnu novadā ir viens no 1500. Sācis veidoties 20. gs 60-tajos gados kā kolhoza "Vaidava" administratīvais centrs. Tam raksturīgā kolhoza tipveida apbūve (ciema padomes ēka, kolhoza kantoris, klubs, ēdnīca, sakaru nodaļa, skola, daudzdzīvokļu mājas) veido ciema telpisko struktūru arī šodien. Ciema iedzīvotāju sastāvu vēl joprojām veido bijušie kolhoza un skolas darbinieki, ko papildina ienācēji - jaunās ģimenes, kas strādā tuvākajās pilsētās. Kas ir šīs vietas identitāte šodien un kā to attīstīt nākotnē? Vaidavas ciema apbūve un tās identitātes definēšana 21. gadsimtā var kļūt par mantojumu, kas pavērtu jaunu attīstības skatupunktu lielai daļai Latvijas apdzīvoto vietu.

Šis pētījums apraksta esošo situāciju Vaidavas ciema attīstībā, uzklusot un analizējot dažādu iesaistīto pušu stāstus, stratēģijas un vīzijas. Padomju mantojuma klātbūtne Vaidavas esošās identitātes diskursā ir kā zilonis istabā. Tas stāv pašā centrā, bet par to neviens nerunā.

Kam šis zilonis pieder? Mantojuma tēma nereti saistās ar varas diskursu. Kam pieder vara pār konkrēto mantojumu? Vai tā pieder Vaidavas iedzīvotājiem vai pašvaldībai? Vai mēs kā sabiedrība vēlamies identificēties ar kolhozu ciematu mantojumu? Un ja iedomātais šī mantojuma īpašnieks vairs neeksistē?

Apzinoties kolhozu mantojuma traumatisko efektu mūsdienu Latvijā, mantojuma diskursa maiņa un konkrētas balss piešķiršana attīstītu diskusiju sabiedrībā. Spējot kolhozu mantojumu Latvijas teritorijā identificēt un interpretēt, mēs varēsim ne tikai to labāk izprast un pārvaldīt, bet - kas pats būtiskākais - sākt kontrolēt mūsu pagātņi, kas saistās ar Padomju okupācijas posmu. Vaidavas ciema apbūvei ir potenciāls kļūt par kolhozu mantojuma stāstu - tas ir polifonisks un aptver ne tikai arhitektonisko un sociālo slāni, bet spēj vēsturi atklāt vēl personiskāk. Tas stāsta par cilvēku sapņiem, vīzijām, mērķiem un darbiem, būvējot tā laika ideālo sabiedrības dzīves modeli. Atjaunojot ciemata centra apbūves kopu, ne tikai kā funkcionālas ēkas, bet arī kā vēstures mantojumu - iegūs ne tikai Vaidavas iedzīvotāji, bet arī nākotnes paaudzes. Kolektīvo saimniecību mantojums var būt stāsts ne tikai par traumu, bet



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arī sociālo konstrukciju veidošanu, cilvēkiem, arhitektūru un visbeidzot ekonomiku 50 gadu garumā. Bijušo kolhozu ciematu apzināšana, segmentēšana un to attīstīšana ne tikai pēc ekonomiskiem, bet arī mantojuma principiem – būtu vērtīgs pagrieziena punkts Latvija lauku teritoriju attīstībai.

Atslēgvārdi: autorizētais mantojuma diskurss, padomju mantojums, identitāte, Latvijas lauku teritoriju attīstība, Vaidava.

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