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The Patterns of Urban Landscape Commodification

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***Abstract* – The article deals with several problematic issues related to the commercialization of the past in postindustrial, postmodern consumer societies. Primarily, the process of the commercialization of urban centres, especially of historical cities and their images, is analysed in the context of contemporary global cultural economics; moreover, a question on the forms and shapes assumed by this process is raised. Secondly, this article considers the meaning of this process or, in other words, – what is it telling about the condition of our society and attitudes towards the past? Undoubtedly, an adequate assessment of understanding of the socioeconomic tendencies, which are faced by the cities influenced by neoliberalism, is very important and relevant to post-colonial and post-communist countries, which, like Lithuania, are still seeking for their identity in the face of economical and cultural globalization challenges.**

***Keywords* – Commodification, consumerism, cultural tourism, heritage industry, historical cities, neoliberalism, post-industrial society.**

We are not only city dwellers, its visitors and consumers, but also its 'readers', invited to grasp and understand certain meanings that are 'inscribed' in the city [4]. One of the possibilities of such 'city reading' is trying to find and interpret the footprints of ideology that remain in it. While tracing these footprints, we can better grasp not only the ideological matrix encoded in urban spaces, but also its continuous impact on the city dwellers and its guests.

How does a certain ideological system influence and condition the development of urban shape and texture? Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes consider the city as a tool and a powerful means (although not the only means) used for mass indoctrination and transformation of the political community into a crowd, which is subordinate to the power elite [1]. Under the nationalist ideology, there is often an attempt to 'recompose' urban spaces, especially the nation-state capitals from the perspective of the titular nation; hence, they transform themselves into the arenas of sometimes obscure, but real controversies or even conflicts, where different groups of political power as well as ethnic, confessional and social communities, majorities, minorities, immigrants and especially tourists try to symbolically or literally 'appropriate', 'privatize' and interpret the city in their own way [12]. For instance, the ongoing disputes over the 'symbolic dependence' of Vilnius, the historical multicultural capital of Lithuania, provide a possibility to better reveal the features of the nationalist or nowadays fashionable multiculturalist worldview [13].

However, unlike the above-mentioned ideologies, the new ideological system of values which began to dominate at the end of the 20th century – neoliberalism – tends to mask itself or at least does not manifest in such blatant and easily identifiable forms. The manifestations of the previously mentioned ideologies in public space could easily be 'disclosed' due to their proposed monochromatic image of reality, which was imprinted in the urban landscape mostly in the form of the 'great narrative', as well as due to a clearly defined role of the individual in society and the absence of its evident alternatives. Yet the contemporary postmodern capitalism, in contrast, offers constantly growing possibilities of infinite, free and unlimited choice. However, a closer look at it shows that these constantly renewed desires and choices of consumption become self-propelled and purposeless. Thus, today cities no longer remain as spaces of the birth and development of political ideas, glorification of the heroes of the past, resolution of public issues or the areas of concentration and gathering of national and civil communities; instead, today they transform into the factories of self-propelled 'desiring machines' [37].

The indiscernibility of neoliberalism and consumerism (it is hardly credible that passersby on the street would know how to precisely explain these terms, even though all of them have had some experience of consumption and leisure), having in mind their ever-growing but non-realized power, raises a question about the impact of new socioeconomic tendencies on the urban form and image. After all, during the rise of global capitalism, cities have also become commodities, which are being evaluated, advertised and presented on the global level. Taking into consideration this fact as well as the recently evident new phenomenon of *pseudocities*, it is important to grasp the impact of all these processes on European cities and especially on their urban heritage. After all, why and what provokes the commodification of the past which in turn transforms the cities into a stage for a spectacle that is directed by economic, rather than political actors? What is the difference, except the mobilization level, between the totalitarian crowd and the crowds of buyers and pleasure-seekers wandering around "Akropolis"? The name of *Akropolis* belongs to the chain of vast and popular shopping and leisure centres that are based in the largest cities of Lithuania. Lithuanian society had endured a constant lack of goods during the Soviet epoch that was a strong factor in shaping their consumer needs without the possibility to satisfy them.

In order to answer the above-mentioned questions, first of all, it is necessary to analyse the influence of cultural globalization on the rapid transformation of urban functions and image, which has taken place over the last few decades, as well as the impact of heritage industry on urban spaces under the conditions of remarketized capitalism.

I. Cultural Globalization, Cities and Heritage Industry

Although the historical cities have always been the material reflections of certain ideologies, according to the specialists, it was not until the second part of the 20th century when the urban regeneration became an inseparable part of conscious cultural politics. In the countries of Western Europe one may distinguish a few stages of urban regeneration which have reflected certain goals of the then implemented cultural politics:

1. During the *reconstruction period* (from the postwar until the 1970s), there were attempts to reconstruct the urban structures, which had been destroyed or damaged during the war and at the same time to stimulate the appropriation of 'high' and traditional culture – many public buildings, theatres, museums, etc. were built;
2. Cultural politics of the *social integration period* (from the beginning of the 1970s until the middle of the 1980s) was strongly influenced by the situation, which developed after 1968 – the rise of social activism, which enhanced the formation of the feminist, youth, gay, ethnic minority movements etc. The latter groups questioned the traditional difference between 'high' and 'low' cultures. Therefore, the city development plans recognized the needs of various social groups and 'minorities' (formation of experimental theatres, rock clubs, alternative media etc.);
3. Finally, the contemporary period of *city management* (from the middle of the 1980s until now) is characterized by the domination of the economic development demands over the sociopolitical needs. The readjustment of the modes of production during the transition to the post-industrial informational stage of social development makes an obvious influence on the urban development strategies. A lot of emphasis is placed on the sector of multiple services; a new city image is built that is based on cultural and creative industries, particularly on tourism and heritage, which promotes domestic and especially foreign investments [8].

Many social analysts who scrutinize the phenomenon of globalization and its effect on the cities agree that it is very difficult to provide a short and clear definition of it. One of the most popular definitions of globalization identifies it with the "compression of time and space" [18]. Indeed, under the influence of contemporary innovations in telecommunications and media, 'time' ceases to be an integral, uninterrupted chain uniting the *past, present and future*; instead, it becomes a series of never-ending 'presents'. In turn, space is increasingly compressed due to mass communication and modern transport [14]. It is indeed obvious that mass tourism is one of the most significant features of globalization (Figure 1).

However, if we take into consideration the cultural heritage, it becomes obvious that in this case the definition of " compressive power of globalization" does not hold true, as we usually deal with objects that have originated in a certain historical period and which exist in a specific cultural and geographical milieu or which at least can easily be identifiable by their specific origin. Even when extracted from their natural environment and brought elsewhere, these objects or cultural references are capable of preserving the links with their area of origin and ethnic community. Thus, all heritage *is local*. At the same time, despite the seemingly obvious 'locality' of any heritage object, one may also refer to the 'global heritage', especially if we have in mind objects that are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List or the so-called 'global products of heritage', such as national cuisine, music, styles of architecture and design, etc., which have all been included in the international consumer network and, which transcended the limits of their original culture long ago and became a significant feature of growing cultural globalization [7].

Fig. 1. The occupancy of the tourist cities start to cause many problems to local residents. Prague Charles Bridge in the summer time. Photo by V. Kubilius.

Today the most significant feature of globalization is the so-called cultural homogenization, considered by some critics as a sign of cultural imperialism [32]. The formation of the Western unified mass consumer culture after World War II and its ongoing artificial reproduction on the global scale is considered to be the motor of homogenization. The globally observed 'amalgamation' and standardization of cultural signs, symbols and commodities were seen by French sociologist Serge Latouche as a radical spectre of malign 'westernization' of world cultures, which exalts Western experience, values and lifestyle, but ignores, overshadows and suppresses the expression of other cultures [23]. As a result, standardization and unification of cultures leads to the extinction of regional differences [15]. However, it is likely that this problem today also helps to raise interest in the unique natural and urban sites as well as heritage values, which have originated in specific cultures.

How does cultural homogenization affect the field of urban heritage? According to Gregory Ashworth, the professor of heritage management from the Netherlands, the tensions between local and global also embrace the fields of heritage management and tourism – "heritage as an activity, business and investment is fundamentally global, not local. <...> Therefore, those who invest in it as well as architects and designers, local planners and politicians, want to diminish the risk by launching projects that had already been successfully implemented elsewhere" [5, *55*]. The effects of such heritage management are extremely visible in the historical tourist cities. Paradoxically, the unification of various unique heritage sites takes place, as, instead of implementing creative and original ideas, methods that have been tried and tested elsewhere are chosen for the management and presentation of those sites.

Many features of contemporary culture such as commodification, simulation, fragmentation and thematization of experience are also characteristic of the so-called 'heritage industry', the formation of which in Western Europe and North America as well as the beginning of its development on a global scale dates back to the period of 1970–1980 and is considered to be an integral part of the then established mass entertainment industry [20].

Fig. 2. UNESCO World heritage site in Rhode Island (Greece) – city-fortress turned into a big bazaar. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

Fig. 3. The market of the city and a city as a market. Street market in the main square of one Mexican provincial town. Photo by Ž. Mikailienė.

The 'retreat into the past' phenomenon that lies in its origins is, according to some analysts, a consequence of incapability to adapt and to adequately respond to the challenges of the present. Eating-houses, vast shopping centres, theme parks, newly reconstructed and rebuilt city centres – all of these constitute a general mix of escapism and consumerism, merging cultural experience with consumption practice. Tourism becomes one of the most potential sources of current 'heritage growth', revealing how various cultural and leisure activities are combined with consumption, entertainment and shopping (Figure 2).

The heritage industry, which needs a wider consideration in order to adequately understand the commodification process of historical tourist cities, is ambiguously valued by cultural specialists, international tour operators, local government and city dwellers. There have been various attempts to explain its rise and boom, especially based on the so-called theories of the 'embourgeoisement of society' and 'retreat into the past' [19]. Indeed, visiting museums and heritage sites today is regarded as consumption of cultural services (along with attending concerts, theatres, visiting art galleries), which in earlier times was characteristic almost exclusively of the representatives of the social elite and thereby coincided with the consumption of luxury goods. However, during the second half of the 20th century, along with the rise of the purchasing power and the emergence of strong middle class in the developed Western countries, there was an increase of potential consumers of cultural production from the broader social circles. These factors caused not only the democratization of culture and namely of heritage, but also its *vulgarization* as it became part of mass consumption. Another explanation of this phenomenon, in contrast to the theory of economic growth influence, considers the growth of the heritage industry of the late 20th and the early 21st centuries as a 'myopic escapist nostalgia' or a reaction to the relative downturn of the period of 1960–1970 in such countries as Great Britain, where the heritage industry was best developed [34]. It is likely that, at least in the Lithuanian case (although there is still a lack of profound research on this issue; see [35]), it is possible to distinguish between stimuli of heritage industry that emerged more visibly in the beginning of the 21st century – the growth of the purchasing power among the local population during the years of economic growth (2005–2008) – and the phenomenon of 'retreat into the past' after the majority of the post-communist societies experienced the stress provoked by radical socioeconomic transformations.

To summarize, it is true to say that the tendencies of cultural heritage commercialization have both certain advantages and disadvantages. First of all, the heritage industry, as a new model of cultural production, undoubtedly gives value to the objects and territories, which "otherwise would not have any economic perspectives" [22]. This includes public, residential and industrial buildings, which have lost their functions, obsolete city blocks, spaces or artefacts, outworn technologies, desolate mines and abandoned cultures. Therefore, sometimes it is exactly the heritage industry that helps to awaken these sites from 'winter's slumber' and to make them profitable and attractive whilst also ensuring their preservation (Figure 3). One of such examples is the Pennsylvania Heritage Programme (USA), which was carried out during the 1970s and 1980s aiming to solve the social problems of mass deindustrialization, which caused the abandonment of 65 percent of the industrial districts of the state. Thus, new use was given to the buildings and the unemployed industrial workers were employed as guides who could tell visitors stories about their earlier jobs, thereby presenting the industrial heritage [23].

However, the main critics of present-day heritage preservation, such as the British specialists David Lowenthal, Kevin Walsh, Peter Fowler, Robert Hewison, etc., note that the heritage industry, produced by mass tourism, leads visitors to a confusion in time as well as an inability to distinguish between true and false, authentic and kitsch, etc. The definition of heritage, mainly from the point of view of the consumer, challenges its classical conception of authenticity and the principles of preservation. In this case, the 'authenticity' of a product is determined by the consumer rather than by the historical truth, because each consumer may regard different products as 'authentic' [2]; such a purely economic view strongly contradicts the traditional understanding of heritage preservation principles. However, in reality everything is even more complicated – in the context of

tourism it is possible to distinguish three types of authenticity: 'objective' (cognitive aspects of truth about real, authentic objects are emphasized), 'constructive' (the projection of images, beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes that tourists attribute to 'other' cultures) and 'existential' (which involves the traveller searching for the true self rather than 'other') [24].

As globalization means rapid change, this leads to accelerated social transformation and, as a result, its destabilization. Therefore, the preservation of historical environment provides city dwellers with psychological stability, security and the sense of historical continuity. Besides, the increased perception of a certain physical space is especially important in the context of deterritorialization, because virtual communities can never fully replace real ones. On the other hand, the benefits of urban heritage preservation, which is based on economic development, are most visible in the creation of new workplaces in regenerated sites and also in the promotion of old crafts and trades as well as in the local supply of technologies, materials and workers. Moreover, the old local architecture is often far more reliable in terms of ergonomics and utilization of heating and other energy sources compared to the modern international architecture; besides, old buildings are not only of higher aesthetic quality, but they can be perfectly reconstructed for a new function.

Therefore, the preservation of urban heritage and commercialization of cities are not necessarily antagonistic towards one other. As many examples from all over the world show, this can very effectively stimulate the economic growth of the cities or the entire country. As different cities have different sources of heritage, which they can use in their own way without imitating others and thus become competitive, this phenomenon, according to the American heritage management specialist Donovan Rypkema, is 'not a zero-sum game' [31]. That is why not all urban heritage specialists have a sceptical or pessimistic approach towards the perspectives of the collision between city preservation and city development.

The above-mentioned problem is, of course, more relevant to the large-scale urban sites of Lithuania and other post-communist states, where free trade makes a clear effort to subjugate public space to the logic of unrestrained profit-seeking (Figure 4). Numerous and frequent violations of the heritage preservation requirements in the Old Town of Vilnius, Curonian Spit, Klaipėda and other historically valuable urban sites of Lithuania reveal frequent defiance of laws that limit urban development; this is not so much because of juridical gaps, but rather because of the rigid dictate of capital, which raises commercial interest and profit above public demands. These sites were included in the World Heritage List in 1994 and 2000. Due to this fact, not only cultural values and natural environment are destroyed or damaged, but the interests of citizens suffer, too. Finally, the urban development itself gets distorted. For example, the overintensive and pragmatically unjustifiable development of shopping and leisure centres, which carried on until the economic crisis of 2009, obviously provoked the 'sweeping' of visitors out of historical city centres, the emptying and aesthetic degradation of public spaces; a good example of it is the second biggest city of Lithuania, Kaunas, where a shopping centre "Akropolis" was built nearby the central street, Laisvės avenue (Figure 5).

Fig. 4. Surprising consonance of the old and new. McDonald's signs on the Stalinist architecture building in Kiev, Maidan square. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

Fig. 5. Saved buildings of the industrial quarter under the roof of the new shopping center "Akropolis" in Kaunas. Photo by V. Kubilius.

However, our everyday experience proves that we live not so much in a global, but in a *glocal* world, which is a specific synthesis of both global and local, traversing different spheres of life. The concept of *glocality* is a Western adaptation of the Japanese word *dochakuka* (becoming local or native) and implies the modes of conditioning and determination that help to locally create, distribute and consume the global content [30]. In other words, we experience the effect of globalization in a specific place, that is, in a specific city. This effect is clearly visible in the large-scale urban complexes, which today, according to the sociologists, enter the international arena as independent actors and compete among themselves, taking the place of nation-states, which dominated previously [9].

Similar processes, which provoke the changing of the role of the city, are stimulated by euro integration. Mass migration and supranationality, promoted by the European Union (the European identity creation project), significantly contribute to the rapid transformation of European cities into heterogeneous, multiethnic and multicultural societies [16].

Fig. 6. Famous centres of the pilgrimage – predecessors of the tourist destinations. Paray le Monial, France. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

Following the principles of 'safeguarding' and 'spreading' the ideas of the Union founding members, the European Council currently attempts to promote the 'europeanization' of experiences and memories of the European Union members. However, it is clearly obvious that the European Union was and still is being built on the bureaucratic and pragmatic-economic rather than the cultural or consciousness basis. Therefore, these attempts may be vain as there is still no clear understanding as to what is considered 'pure European' values, visions, practices, norms of conduct and how they should be preserved and cherished [36]. However, according to Ashworth, namely urban heritage is one of the most potential elements for constructing united Europe; he claims that the city and its environment contribute to the everyday experience of many Europeans [3, *74*].

The 'European identity' creation strategy forces to break ties with heritage preservation, which traditionally emphasizes the *national* dimention of heritage. Attempts are being made to find such historical subjects, events, personalities, places or objects which would help to reveal their European meaning. Thus, the actualization of the large multicultural cities' heritage could serve this purpose very well. On the other hand, the assimilation of cities all over the world, especially enhanced by the international

Fig. 7. Iconic symbols of the cities have special attraction to tourists. The Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey. Photo by Ž. Kiesilytė.

style architecture and similar solutions in city infrastructure and communications, reveal their cosmopolitan image, which disguises their local specifics. So where does urban heritage stand in these processes, which, as we have seen, interconnects global and local levels and often excludes the national level that is left almost entirely for domestic needs?

II. The Features of the City Heritage Commodification

At first glance, it may seem that the main form of commercial utilization of urban heritage is heritage tourism (mostly foreign, although local tourism should also be mentioned). While planning tourist destinations, a lot of attention is devoted not only to the historically established images of the visited cities, which often although not always are stereotypical, but also to the tendencies that prevail in the international tourism. This implies that, due to various circumstances, certain regions or cities can suddenly become popular, fashionable and attractive for internationl visitors, or that they can unexpectedly lose their allure. This may happen despite cities' real or potential heritage sources and also despite the successes or failures of management.

Pilgrimage may be considered the earliest form of tourism, which is still relevant today (Figure 6). Although the intentions of pilgrims and tourists are basically different (e.g., the intention of being healed and praying for God's grace in the first case; or simply searching for new impressions, leisure activities and other exotic experiences in the second case), in both cases the visitors of sacred and historical places encounter authentic or the so-called historical relics that can only be found in a specific place (Figure 7).

Today some tourism researchers distinguish five development phases of tourism, which, as we will see, have significantly affected the shift in understanding the past. According to A. R. Cuthbert, it is possible to distinguish: 1) classical tourism, dedicated to seeking authenticity (until the mid-20th century); 2) 'directed authenticity' which emerged along with mass tourism and involved the reconstruction of cities, events or artefacts; 3) the so-called 'post-tourism', which abandons 'authenticity' and simply simulates it; 4) 'theme tourism', i.e., the world of theme

parks and shopping centres with no signs of authenticity; 5) 'virtual tourism', empowered by the state-of-the-art computer technologies, where authenticity (virtual experience) acquires a totally new meaning [11, *114*]. The philosophy of 'consumption for the sake of consumption' was formed in the developed countries during the 1970s [35]. Economic sociology declared the transition from a producer market to a consumer market. At the same time, the field of tourism and infrastructure underwent significant changes – the 'conveyor tourism', characterized by mass supply to meet tourist demands, which implied a certain primitivism and uniformity as well as an impersonal 'conveyor-type' mode of service production, was replaced by a differential model of tourist supply, emphasizing specialization and diversification, which responded to customers' needs and requirements and offers a variety of tourist products (Figure 8). However, during the last decade of the 20th century there was an increase in the individualized tourism, affected by the growing tendencies of economic humanization, socialization and ecologization, which brought the individual and its needs to the centre of public attention. Thus, the 'consumption for the sake of consumption' was replaced by 'affective consumption', which implied buying a commodity or a service in anticipation of new impressions or a new individual experience [28]. Thus, the greatest value of any visited site lies in its potential of reproducing effects.

Mass tourism (along with media, advertising and public relations) shows a clear example of how pseudoevents and fake experiences have begun to dominate in the life. Contemporary tourism reveals the local consumption of global content through media; thus, the global and local perspectives of heritage are not always contradictory. Information about the heritage values and objects is spread through the Internet by global organizations, such as UNESCO, as well as by local communities. It is important to mention an increase in the advertising of local holidays and festivals in cyber space, which has enabled the mediatisation and globalization of these events (the festival of San Fermin in Pamplona, Fallas in Valencia, Holy Week in Seville, Kaziukas Fair in Vilnius (Figure 9), etc.). This helps to deterritorialize local heritage resources and products and to incorporate them into the global field of tourist spectacle and consumption.

Some people consider tourists to be modern pilgrims, who are trying to escape from the superficial and unstable modern society that lost its authenticity and who are searching for imaginary 'authenticity' [21]. Others view them as people who 'charge' themselves with extra energy that they can later use in their everyday life. Still there are people who regard modern tourists as post-tourists, who do not even expect to experience something real [33, *11*]. Therefore, in the context of tourism, the issues of 'authenticity' and 'commodification' still remain highly significant. It is true to say that heritage tourism is a quest for authenticity, different cultures and places untouched by civilization [10, *114*]. Even in those cases when a tourist is not interested in heritage, he or she nevertheless is involved in the heritage industry by staying at a hotel, which is located in a historical building, by visiting historical sites for non-tourist reasons, by purchasing local products, souvenirs and by eating at restaurants that serve national dishes, etc.

Fig. 8. The SpongeBob in Red Square, Moscow. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

Fig. 9. Traditional St. Casimir's Fair organized in early March in Vilnius attracts not only local, but more and more foreign visitors. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

It is worth having in mind that mass tourism, the derivation of which is often associated with nostalgia for the idealized and stereotypically perceived 'past' and 'ancient golden times', was often criticized by specialists for its tendency to commodify and standardize the cultural experience and leisure activities (it is the so-called 'McDisneyization', the peculiarities of which were described by the american sociologists George Ritzer and Allan Liska [29]) and at the same time to vulgarize the mass consumption of cultural values.

The term 'McDisneyization' implies certain features that are characteristic of the Disney parks and McDonald restaurants, as well as tourism industry. The trademark of Disney World and McDonald restaurants are easily recognizable in every city of the world. Both companies make every effort to satisfy their customers' needs. Similarly, in the tourism industry, standardized eating-houses for tourists are usually situated near all places of interest and sometimes even within the territory of tourist objects offering standard meals that are similar all over the world. Besides, the hotels are also standardized to help tourists feel comfortable and at home. McDisneyization, if we consider the

Fig. 10. McDisneyization reaches even difficult to approach terrains. Kerak castle in Jordan. Photo by Ž. Mikailienė.

Fig. 11. "Local products" and global tourist commerce become inseparable. The shop of amber and linen in the Old Town of Vilnius. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

strict standardization of tourism services, visitor control and the predictability of their experiences, and thematization, which is associated by urban analysts with the image of aesthetic design of modern 'city for sale' [11, 194–200] – are the most visible elements of urban tourist commodification (Figure 10).

Following the model of McDisneyization, the town centres of historical tourist cities tend to resemble theme parks. One of the examples of how urban heritage is practically used for tourism purposes is the establishment of standardized hotels, restaurants and shops in old buildings that do not suit the authentic surroundings. A Disney Park visitor usually spends a smaller sum of money to buy a ticket than on various Disney products (such as foods and souvenirs), which cost a great deal more inside rather than outside the park territory. There is a similar situation in the touristy old towns as various services and products are much more expensive there than in other parts of the city. All these factors, which act as indirect ways of introducing cities to foreign tourism, sometimes contribute to the banishment of local residents from historical town centres. Although the tourist 'invasion' in the Old Town of Vilnius (especially on Pilies Street) remains seasonal, it may expand into other seasons, too. There are also other problems, such as massive tourist crowds, increased traffic and noise, which all have an adverse effect on popular tourist cities (Venice, Florence, Paris, Barcelona, Bruges, Krakow, Prague and etc.).

Moreover, visitors are often offered special products, the production of which is based on local heritage values, such as films representing heritage sites, books, various souvenirs, food products, beverages, clothes and etc., which attract tourists to purchase "an authentic item from an authentic place". Unfortunately, such products usually represent widely recognized symbols and associations, which sometimes have nothing in common with the true history of a specific city (for example, tourist-orientated amber and linen shops in the Old Town of Vilnius (Figure 11) or "traditional" lace of Bruges that is made in China...) – this provokes the misrepresentation and vulgarization of the historical truth and aesthetic values.

Similarly, the history of cities is often presented to tourists in a vulgarized manner. Although city guides are capable of presenting visitors with a well-rounded and in-depth image of the past, very often they confine their stories to easily digested facts that do not intrigue tourists to unravel the mysteries of the city's past [26]. This means that the industry of tourism services in the historical city centres and theme parks is being thoroughly organized and controlled.

Another aspect of McDisneyization, which is characteristic of the tourism industry, is the quest of experiences. Although the visiting of an unknown city, according to Aylin Orbaşli, the specialist of UK heritage preservation and management, is in itself a new experience, the tourism and leisure sector dictates a perception that, similarly as in the Disney theme park, where everything is preplanned and stage-managed, every tourist's experience must also be artificially constructed, controlled and well thought-out [27, *79*]. It seems that in any historical city, there are attempts to artificially create various leisure activities that can provide all kinds of experiences, such as demonstrations of crafts, tasting of national food or wines, shopping for local products and souvenirs, going for a ride in special local vehicles, visiting various shows and performances, etc. Therefore, all experiences in a historical city usually are, in one way or another, related to the consumption of heritage products.

G. J. Ashworth and J. E. Tunbridge distinguish certain features, which reveal what makes the historical city centres and their extensive urban heritage promote the development of various commercial activities. First of all, the old part of the city stands out for its magic atmosphere, which enshrouds all the shops and offices that are located there. The second beneficial feature of a historical city is the fact that it attracts large crowds of tourists, who are potential customers. The third feature that makes the old town a suitable place for commercial activity is a large number of shops and offices engaged in all kinds of business. In modern-day society, business is often developed in the form of a 'chain' – all enterprises are dependent on one another (usually suppliers and partners settle nearby one another) [6, *107–108*]. The above-mentioned advantages of the commercial use of the historical city also include the 'window view' aspect. The latter advantage is of significant

value to hotels as the aesthetic effect of the spectacular city surroundings helps to attract more visitors and make a bigger profit (Figure 12). However, the city and especially its visual landscape undergo various other forms of commodification. For instance, the 'window view' aspect provides a solid market value not only in the old town of the city, but also in the areas with new tall buildings, which significantly boosts the real estate prices. This is a perfect example of malevolent exploitation of heritage.

Undoubtedly, the image of the city as a commodity plays an important role in the foreign market in attracting tourists and investment; however, the 'internal' and 'external' commodification of the same city may contravene (for example, the cities of Riga and Vilnius attract British tourists not because of their heritage, but because these cities are perfect for organising cheap stag weekends). On the other hand, the same applies to visiting various literary places. Such towns are like a symbiosis of the writer's works and places where he or she used to live or wrote about. Tourists desire to take a walk down the streets of Ulysses' Dublin, have a beer in Schweik's Prague, visit Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, Pamuk's Istambul or Dostojevsky's St. Peterburg; visitors wish to imagine that they are the characters of famous writers' novels.

A parallel to the literary tourism may be cinematographic (film sites of various famous movies, e.g., "Schindler's List" in Warsaw, "Slumdog Millionaire" in Mumbai, etc.) and musical tourism, encompassing the memorial sites of famous composers (the project "European Mozart Ways" initiated by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, connecting five European cities, where Mozart once lived or gave concerts), singers (the real and virtual museums of Elvis Presley in the USA) and etc. This type of tourism often involves the so-called 'horror tourism', e.g., "Jack the Ripper" tour in London.

Although urban heritage preservation is strongly related to the legitimation and promotion of collective identity of place (national, regional or local), city presentation for the international tourist market is of equal importance, too. Both of these seemingly contrary factors may cause a similar effect – the standardization of urban forms and the so-called 'catalogue heritagization', which is especially apparent at the local level (e.g., the reconstruction of Gediminas Avenue in Vilnius), where street lamps, litter bins, pavement and street surfaces etc. are chosen to appear 'historical' and the new architecture is built in neo-vernacular or historicist style. This paradoxical phenomenon was first seen during the 1960s and 1970s in such European cities as Norwich, Colmar, Daventry and Bremen. That is how all these historically unique towns became standardized and alike although easily recognizable as 'historical' [4]. Another logical sequel of such a tendency is historical pastiche, such as the ensemble of pseudohistorical buildings in Tymas Quarter of Vilnius (Figure 13) and the so-called postmodern pastiches, which include ultramodern glass and concrete buildings constructed next to or even on top of the old authentic historical buildings (buildings on Žvejų Str., Klaipėda; the glass construction on top of the existing building on Laisvės Ave., Kaunas (Figure 14) etc.).

It all leads to the 'postmodern antiquarianism', which means that entire urban structures are built to resemble the image

Fig. 12. Visual neighbourhood of the new high-rise buildings distorts panoramas of the Old City. Tallinn. Photo by V. Kubilius.

Fig. 13. Historical stylizations frequently mislead spectators by their apparent "authenticity". The recreated Tymas Quarter fragment in Vilnius. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

of historical cities and architectural objects. One of the most prominent examples of such simulacrum city is Las Vegas, which is situated in the desert and which, thanks to the casino business, has grown into a massive theme park that resembles the masterpieces of European and world urban heritage. In such a way, cities and their symbols are deterritorialized and 'postmodern antiquarianism' allows eliminating the global geographical and chronological boundaries.

Architects and designers of large shopping and leisure centres also employ such thematization. The interiors of restaurants that are located in these shopping centres often imitate antique, gothic, renaissance or abstract 'retro' style, not to mention the country-style design of some restaurants, which never seem to lack customers. The boom of country-style restaurants, which can be attributed to the 'new ruralism' [11, *122–126*], shows the first perverse features of heritage industry. This implies the appearance of heterogeneous elements (noncharacteristic to traditional folk culture) in the city environment that is trying to imitate countryside culture (the contrast between the interior

Fig. 14. Contraposition of the different epochs and styles generates bizarre effects. Reconstructed hotel building in the Old Town of Kaunas, Lithuania. Photo by R. Čepaitienė.

and the overall look of modern buildings, television screens, pizza menus, waitresses in short skirts, etc.) – this provides customers with historically false information, not to mention the overabundance of rustic and ethnographical features in the interiors, which leads to explicit demonstration of ethno-kitsch.

On the other hand, it is questionable whether the *acropolises, babylons, eiffels, brooklyns* and *tilsits* – all modern Lithuanian shopping centres that bear the metaphorical names of historical cities and symbols – have anything in common with their prototypes. As we have seen, not only pseudocities are built [25], but also the authentic structure of historical cities is physically or symbolically recreated to meet our vision of what it should look like and to satisfy our consumption needs, even though all the latter factors may destroy the authenticity of its substance, form, functions and environment. Although the interior and exterior of old buildings have strict requirements for authenticity preservation that limit their reconstruction and installation of modern technologies (lifts, air-conditioning systems, means of communication, lighting and etc. [6, *109*]), the heritage preservation requirements are often ignored by the business people in Middle East Europe – the inner courtyards are covered with glass roofs in order to gain additional space for commercial activities, extra floors are added to the buildings, new holes are cut, premises are reconstructed, front window-cases are drastically extended, etc. [17]. Besides, the privatization of former public spaces (e.g., locked courtyards) makes them inaccessible to the city residents and its guests.

Thus, what do these sad final remarks tell about the general attitude of modern societies towards the past? In the eternal 'present', which is constantly reproduced by the neoliberal ideology, the past transforms itself into aesthetically attractive and marketable links to the indefinite 'golden age', irrespective of whether it is related to the idyll of the native place or to the masterworks of the European high culture. Hence, the heritage values can hardly resist the logic of simulation and reinterpretation, whereas the commodification of the historical tourist cities becomes the most visible field of its experimental development.

Conclusions

As we have seen, the preservation and utilization of historical cities today arise from many contradictory incentives, which can be local, national, regional and global. As a result, contemporary city utilization involves different and ambiguous motives – city commodification for 'internal needs' (the growth of land stock and real estate prices, the reproduction of pseudopublic places aimed at promoting consumption, etc.) and 'external needs' (the promotion of international city competitiveness by drawing investments, their image-making for tourism market, the development of heritage industry products as well as services sector and infrastructure, etc.). The above-mentioned facts prove that the free-trade economy and the increasing flows of information raise new economic, social and political challenges for the cities, which are forced to rapidly adjust to the constantly changing conditions in order to conform to the international tendencies and to meet the competitiveness requirements, while at the same time to create suitable living conditions for both city residents and its guests.

Today, the historical tourist cities face the inevitable effects caused by the international heritage industry. The postmodern condition is characterized by the eclecticism of styles and objects, as well as by the standardization and unification of available services achieved through mcdisneyization and thematization. Such sterile, stereotypical and commercialized representation of urban heritage creates an instant 'out-of-context' image of the city's past and, thus, denies historical processuality. This can contribute to the destruction, rather than preservation, of the place identity.

The historical cities today are often seen as places of nostalgic escape from existing problems and future uncertainties, which provide a more comforting and 'safe' experience. Thus, the manipulations with the historical past in the city refer to the inability to handle the present and to predict the future. It is certainly true that the visitors of historical cities very rarely search for scientific facts. They may be only vaguely interested in the historical past of the city. Tourists search for a new and exclusive experience as they wish to feel a different reality that is built on the tangible remains of the past; they consider it to be the essence of the perhaps artificially constructed 'otherness' that can be attained through the heritage and its images.

However, the future of the historical cities should not only be seen as pessimistic. The growth of urban heritage, promoted by the heritage industry, and the development of various forms of interaction with it enable to take a broader and more thorough interest in the past; whereas the authentic cultural values are currently seen as a counterbalance to the deterritorializing and decontextualizing of environmental changes influenced by globalization. Finally, cities not only offer their residents and visitors historical treasures, but also function as a space of diverse modern cultural communication.

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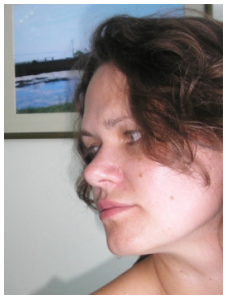

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