

PLACES OF TRANSITION

Welcome to "Places of Transition", an exhibition that explores the profound changes experienced in six countries of the former so-called Eastern bloc: Bulgaria, Croatia, East Germany, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. These nations have undergone significant transformations that have not only altered their political and economic landscapes but have also deeply impacted the daily lives of their people.

Transition is both a global and local phenomenon, and this exhibition seeks to reconnect the threads that link these places and their stories. By showcasing typical locations from the Soviet time, we aim to highlight how these areas have evolved or, in some cases, been abandoned.

"Places of Transition" features six unique places. This allows us to illustrate the diverse ways society has navigated the transition process. You'll discover how new generations have reappropriated some places, while others remain poignant reminders of the past.

Through this exhibition, we invite you to explore the evolving identities of these places and the people connected to them. Each piece we present is a step towards understanding the complex tapestry of change, memory, and identity that defines these regions. We hope you find this journey through transition as fascinating and enlightening as we have.

**GERMANY
WITTSTOCK**

**LITHUANIA
VILNIUS**

**POLAND
LODŹ**

**UKRAINE
ZAPORIZHZHIA**

**CROATIA
ZAGREB**

**BULGARIA
BELENE**

BELENE



Belene, Persin Island (06 June 1994) | On Persin Island near Belene took place the 5th national gathering organized by the Union of the Repressed after September 9, 1944.

Persin island, the town of Belene. Belene is a town in Northern Bulgaria, situated on the bank of the Danube river. Belene's history stretches from the late Neolithic period, through becoming the Roman fort Dimum in Moesia to converting the settlement to Catholicism during the Ottoman period. Declared a city in 1964, Belene was the location of Bulgaria's largest labor camp during the communist era. The Belene labor camp existed from 1949 to 1989 with several interruptions, and more than 15,000 prisoners passed through it, most of them without trial or sentence.

In the 1990s, Belene experienced significant social and economic changes following the end of communism. The closure of the Belene labor camp, which had been a prominent feature during the communist regime, left a complex legacy in the town. The local economy faced challenges, with high unemployment and economic instability which were common as Bulgaria transitioned to a market economy



Belene, Persin Island (04 July 2023) | Participants from summer school "Why should we remember?"

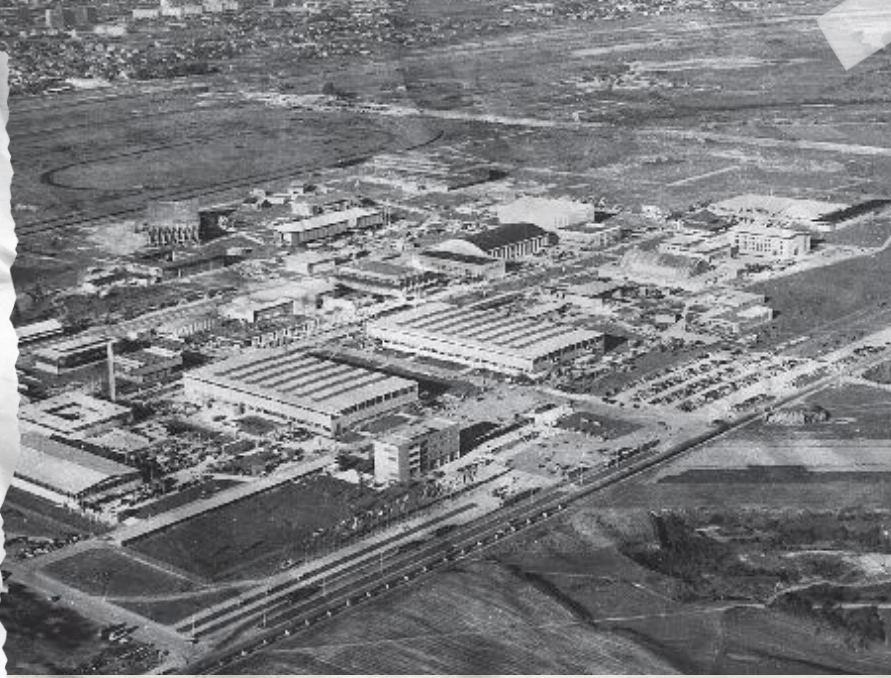


"Belene is a place of memory, reminding all Bulgarians and Europeans that political repression cannot be justified. It is also the hometown of Catholic bishop Evgeni Bosilkov, who was canonized as a martyr of the faith by Pope John Paul II. Belene, a city with beautiful nature and an ethnically and religiously diverse population, deserves its rightful place in European memory." In the 1990s, Belene experienced significant social and economic changes.

— Prof. Momchil Metodiev Institute for Studies of the Recent Past

ZAGREB

Construction of the new Zagreb Fair complex started in 1956, close to the newly emerging neighborhoods in Novi Zagreb and it played a decisive role in the development of the city. The Autumn International Zagreb Fair had a huge importance for Yugoslavia's industry, economy and society in general during the 60's and the 70's. It showcased Yugoslavia's geopolitical aspirations aiming to be the trade bridge between the Eastern and the Western Bloc and the Third World countries. The Zagreb Fair was the place where East and West boosted with the latest technological achievements, but it was also a place where citizens had the opportunity to see and learn about modern lifestyles and western consumer goods. From the 90s onward, the need for fairs declined following the decay of Croatia's industry and reflecting the global crisis. Today, it's a place stuck in the transition trying to find its new purpose.



Late 80s in Croatia were the period in which the dissolution of Yugoslavia started (pre-transition period) and early 90s were marked by the Croatian War of Independence (1991-95). Even if the Zagreb Trade Fair did continue to work during this period, its international importance rapidly declined and became more nationally oriented. The devastation of the county's industries (due also to unsuccessful privatization processes) and subsequent change from an economy of producers and exporters to an import-oriented consumeristic economy, the fair lost much of its significance, importance and glory. Many of its buildings (40 pavilions in total) were abandoned, some repurposed, others turned into warehouses. Only few continued with its original aim and continued to host fairs and trade exhibitions.



I worked as a hostess for Italian companies at the International Zagreb Fair in 1990. It was the last fair before the war broke out. It was the biggest fair I have ever been to — it was crowded with people and exhibitors from more than 60 countries.

— Kristina Markić





Over the past 30 years Zagreb Fair buildings/pavilions were used for different purposes: as recruiting center during the Croatian War of Independence; a doubtful night-life location; as a shelter for the 1st wave of immigrants (2015); as a vaccination point during C-19 pandemic and as warehouse for archives and exhibits of museums and institutions which buildings were damaged during the big earthquake that shook Zagreb in 2020. Today, even if it continues to stage some specialized fairs (mainly of national importance) in just a couple of its pavilions, some of them were turned into warehouses and some repurposed for recreational activities (carting and gyms) or leased to amusement and film industry. Unfortunately, some of the most beautiful pavilions (like Italian National Pavilion (picture 1a and 1b) or Pavilion 28 (picture 2a and 2b)) are left abandoned and surrendered to the unknown fate without a clear vision of the future.

I was born here in the 70s and I used to come here regularly with my family, to mingle around, to see what's new on the market or to buy something. The place changed a lot — it looks abandoned and empty most of the times now, it's a pity

— Nataša Bregoš

The workshop was held on June 18th 2024 in the form of a historical walk through the Zagreb Fair complex. The participants (students and other citizens) had the opportunity to hear about the history of the place – from its beginnings and glory days of the 60s and 70s when it played a significant role in regional and global geopolitical and economic relations, through the 80s and 90s which were marked by the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Independence War in Croatia, up to current times.

This historical walk pointed out the significance of the architectural and historical heritage of the Zagreb Fair which once was an active participant in the economic and social life of Yugoslavia, but also a witness of the unsuccessful transition process of the modern Croatia.

A walk along the once-magnificent Alley of the Nations which gathered many international pavilions, left us thinking about its significance then and now.



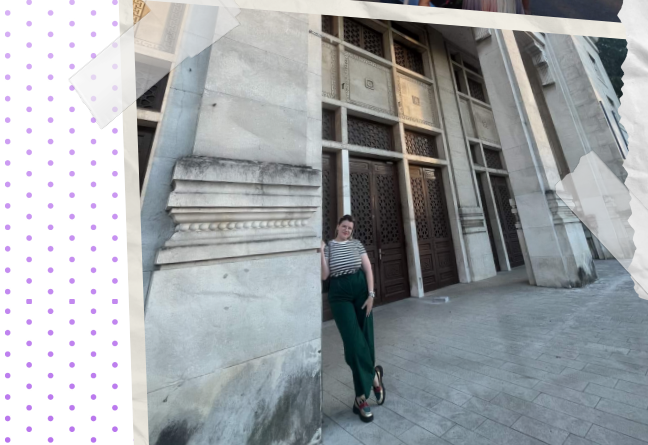
Now that I know more about the history of this place, I really hope it will regain at least some of its importance. I hope that in the future, whatever its new purpose will be, it will pay tribute to its glorious past even if it was during Yugoslavia

— Tereza Vujošević, student

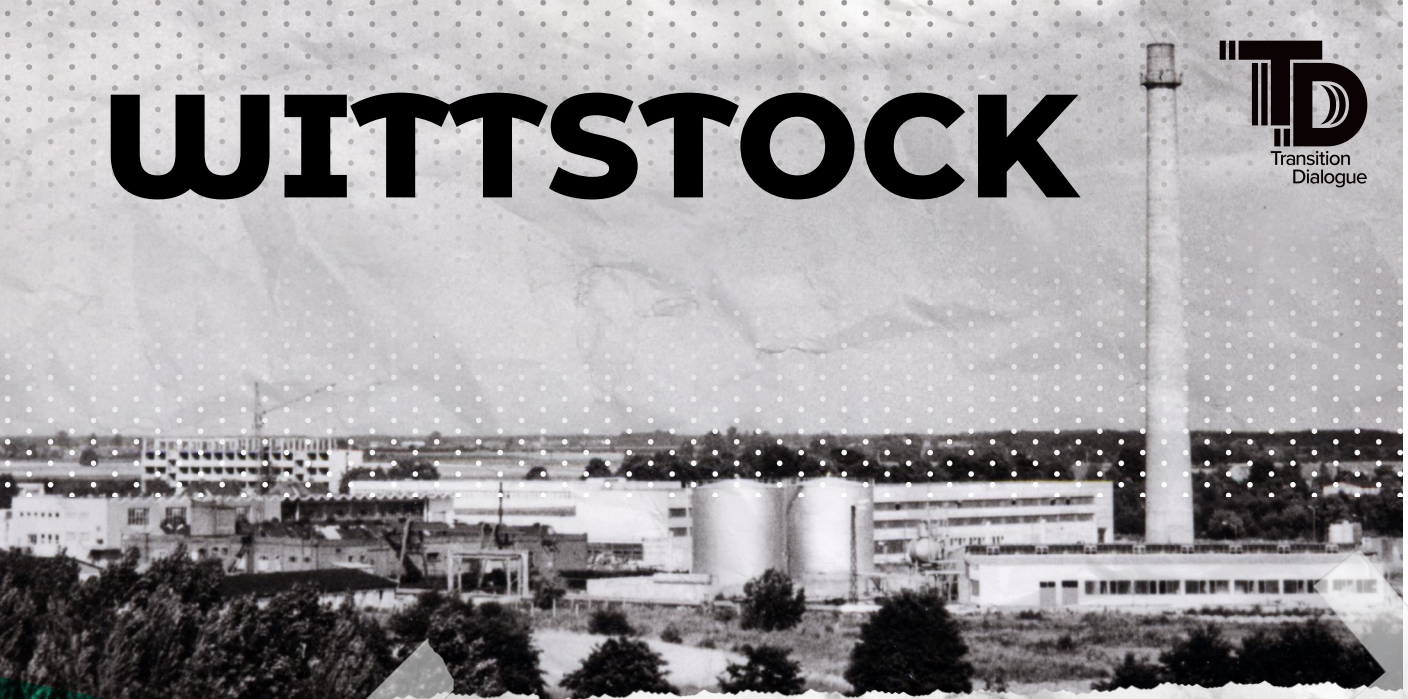


The feedback from participants was very positive: they actively participated in the walk, asked questions and offered their personal insights and stories about the place. Many of them said that only now they realize the extent of the damage that the transition period has left on this place. Many of them expressed sadness that the local government have not yet find a way to revitalize the place without destroying it. The most important output of this workshop was raised awareness among the participants about the transition period and its aftermath. The availability of participants to interact with the guide on this topic also showed the need to talk about it openly. Only through the recognition of the past (good or bad) we will be able to build a better future.

The importance of the heritage of this place stands also in the architecture of some of its pavilions. In the first two years of its construction (1956-57), altogether 21 exhibition pavilions were built, many of which were dedicated as pavilions of foreign countries and were engineered by selected architects of those countries. Beside Yugoslavia, the following countries had their own pavilions: SSSR, Czechoslovakia, DDR, Western Germany, Austria, Italy, USA, India, China etc.



WITTSTOCK



In the small town of Wittstock an der Dosse in Brandenburg, there was one of the largest and most modern textile factories in Germany, the Obertrikotagenbetrieb Ernst Lück, or OTB for short, in the time of GDR. As part of the GDR's decentralized economic policy, the OTB was founded on the site of the Wittstock cloth factory, which dated back to the Middle Ages in 1968 to strengthen the structurally weak Prignitz region. By the 1980s, the number of employees had risen from 400 to almost 3,000 - with a population of just under 14,000 in Wittstock. The OTB became one of the most important employers in the region. It primarily produced outer jerseys for kids and youth fashion and exported clothing to Western Europe and the Soviet Union. For Wittstock, however, the OTB was more than just a place of work: with many important social institutions - from childcare to company sports groups, brigades, an indoor swimming pool and company and kids holiday camps — it created a sense of identity. Today, the site is in ruins, and it leaves a large, painful gap for the residents of the town.

Between 1990 and 1992, the company was gradually downsized. For a year and a half, former OTB employees worked for the British company Fred Perry. Finally, like so many others in East Germany, the company was wound up by the Treuhand and finally closed its doors in 1993. In total, around 3,000 people lost their jobs. The consequences: Long-term unemployment, emigration, alcoholism, violence and a social upheaval that had a lasting impact on the city and the region. In 1994, the site was bought by an international businessman who sublet individual buildings to various businesses. But even then, large parts of the approx. 112,000 m² site were increasingly falling into disrepair, becoming the scene of parties by adventurous young people and vandalism.



I wish I could have worked at OTB until I retired, I really enjoyed my time there.

— former seamstress at the OTB

Since the end of the 1990s, the interim use has become less and less, and the site has increasingly fallen into disrepair. The owner abroad can hardly be reached by the town and is not interested in either developing or selling the site. As a result, the former factory became an adventure playground for young people and a sad eyesore for the older residents of Wittstock. The memory of what was once the town's largest employer and at times the most modern textile factory in the GDR remains. Even as of 2024, nothing is happening on the site — the issue is polarizing in local politics and administration. Only the former employees are keeping the memory of the OTB alive. The workshop participants have created a Wikipedia page (OTB Wittstock) and an Instagram channel (otb_wittstock).



It was very touching to become active again in this beautiful town after many years since I left Wittstock in 1992. The venue in the town museum brought the long and varied history into our workshop with young people from Wittstock and brought back memories of my own school days here. At the same time, visiting the ruins of the textile factory with the contemporary witnesses and hearing the biographies and memories associated with the factory on site, as well as seeing the place through the eyes of others, felt like a journey through time. It was heartbreaking to learn that some had not been to this place for decades and were entering it again for the first time through our workshop. The great emotions associated with the history and the course of the transformation period in the 1990s and 2000s came very much to life in the workshop

— Dr. Judith Enders, moderator





On July 4, 2024, around 20 students from Wittstocker Gymnasium attended our workshop on the OTB at the Alte Bischofsburg City Museum. After a short introduction by the museum director Dr. Zeiger, the young people took a tour of the site of the former textile factory guided by four former employees. They explored the history of the site and gained an insight into the personal memories and experiences of the contemporary witnesses. Following the tour, they created an Instagram account about the factory and edited the Wikipedia page about the OTB (see above). This hands-on approach helped them to understand the impact of the factory on their community and the importance of preserving its memory.

The workshop was led by Dr. Judith C. Enders from our partner organization Perspektive³. She grew up in Wittstock herself and as a schoolchild she was supported by the group in the OTB.

We would like to see something developed for us on the site — for example an outdoor pool, a club or a shopping center.

— 9th grade students at Wittstocker Gymnasium

The most important result of the workshop was the coming together of three generations of people from Wittstock. The young people experienced a new perspective on the company premises, which they were familiar with but only knew in a destroyed state. The former employees and older Wittstock residents were able to pass on their knowledge and share their memories. It quickly became clear how important the exchange was to them: the conversation lasted late into the evening and became very emotional. It was agreed to set up a regular get-together for a cup of coffee for the former OTB employees in Wittstock.



VILNIUS

The Palace of Concerts and Sports (Vilnius, Lithuania) construction began in 1965 and was completed in 1971. Designed by Eduardas Chlomauskas and his colleagues, the palace stands out with its wave or ship-like roof shape.

Built in the Brutalist style, the originality lies not in the building itself, but in its supporting vane roof structures. The architecture of the palace reflected the global modernist trends of the 1950s and 1960s, while the Lithuanian vane roof construction, designed by engineer Henrikas Karvelis, achieved an impressive soaring roof effect. This construction was officially recognized as a discovery.

Palace was built in the middle of the very old Jewish cemetery in Šnipiškės, which had been in use since the 16th century, closed in the 18th century, and the land with the cemetery was sold to the city. After World War II, the cemetery was completely liquidated. The last monuments were demolished in 1955. Due to the building's location, there are many ongoing discussions that prevent a final decision on its use.

The Vilnius Sports Palace was built as a versatile structure, adaptable for cultural, sports, entertainment, and public events. The Palace was primarily used for volleyball and basketball, later the largest sports events, concerts, and gatherings that attracted crowds of people took place in this hall. In October 1988, the arena was the site of the Inaugural Congress of Sąjūdis, the Reform movement which led Lithuania in achieving independence from the Soviet Union. It was also the site of the public funeral of 14 Lithuanians killed by Soviet troops at the Vilnius Television Tower during the January Events of 1991.

After 33 years of use, it was deemed unsafe for use due to the poor quality of the concrete used and was closed in 2004 and despite being located in the center of Vilnius, it remains abandoned, and the ongoing discussions for several decades about the possibilities for its use have yet to yield any results.

The palace remembers many events during which the crowd of spectators was dense. After all, where else would you go during the Soviet era? People would come dressed up, as if to a celebration. There were never such crowds as in the current arenas, because the hall and other rooms were designed perfectly. According to her, there is no other building in Lithuania whose walls have absorbed so many good emotions.

— Nijolė Ruzgienė

The Palace was primarily used for volleyball and basketball events, but later, during the 1980s and 1990s it became the largest sports events, concerts, and gatherings place that attracted crowds of people not only from Vilnius, but from smaller cities as well. In October 1988, the arena was the site of the Inaugural Congress of Sąjūdis, the Reform movement which led Lithuania in achieving independence from the Soviet Union. It was also the site of the public funeral of 13 Lithuanians killed by Soviet troops at the Vilnius Television Tower during the January Events of 1991.



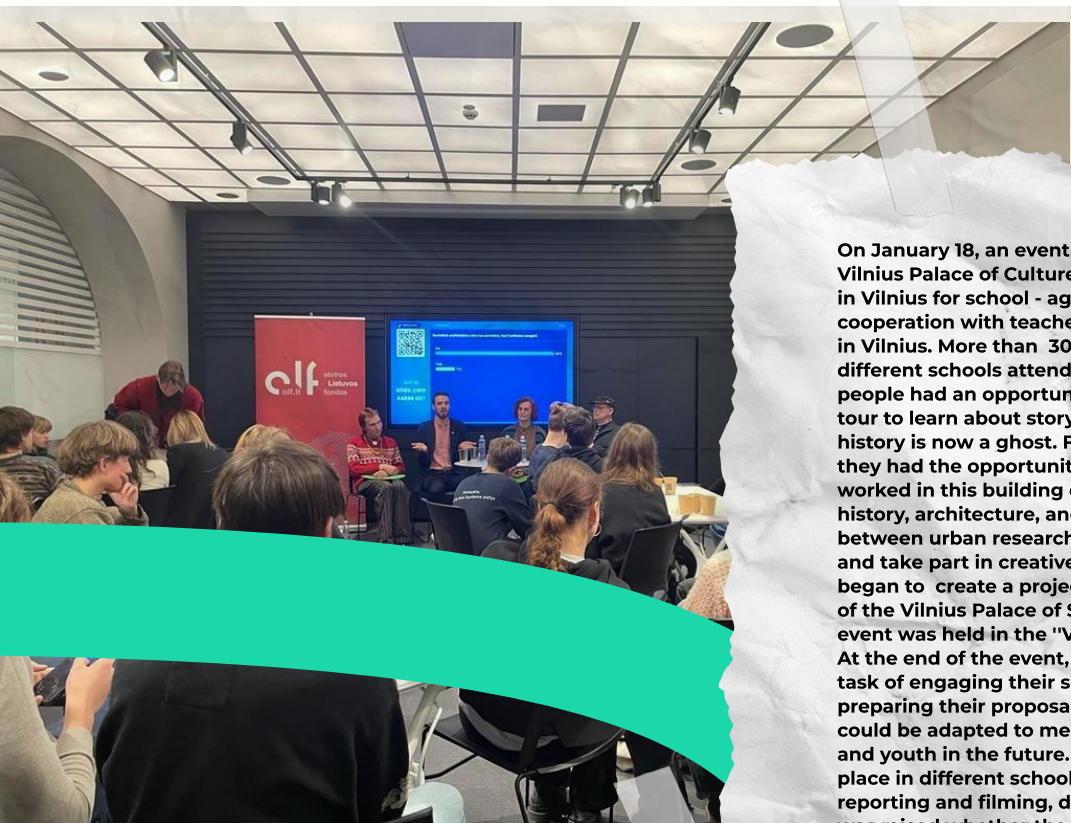


Vilnius Concert and Sports Hall, once a place that gathered thousands, where major sports competitions and the biggest concerts took place, where crowds assembled, where important issues for the restoration of Lithuanian independence were addressed, and where the victims of January 13th were honored, has now become an abandoned, closed space in the city center. Often, the younger generation does not even know what was in this building or its social and cultural significance. To them, it is a ghost building.

— Sandra Gaučiūtė

The arena is emblematic of Communist Modernism. It is one of the few remaining sports arenas in this architectural style. During the first decade of independence, the building was still in use, but its popularity and prestige declined. At that time, it was commonly viewed as a relic of the Soviet era and it was closed in 2004. In 2006, the building was listed in the Register of Cultural Heritage, thus protecting it from demolition. Plans to reconstruct the venue received significant opposition from the Jewish community as the site is located on the grounds of the oldest Jewish cemetery in Vilnius. Overgrown with grass and abandoned — such is the fate of the Vilnius Concert and Sports Hall today. This situation exists because the hall was built on Jewish cemeteries during the Soviet era, and subsequent disputes have prevented any changes. Currently, the fate and potential uses of the hall are being decided.





On January 18, an event titled "Places of transition: Vilnius Palace of Culture and Sports" was organised in Vilnius for school - age young people, in cooperation with teachers from 3 different schools in Vilnius. More than 30 participants from 3 different schools attended the event. Young people had an opportunity to participate in guided tour to learn about story of the building whose history is now a ghost. Following the guided tour, they had the opportunity to meet people who have worked in this building or have knowledge of its history, architecture, and listen to a discussion between urban researchers, historians, architects, and take part in creative workshop where they began to create a project for the future of the Vilnius Palace of Sports and Culture. The event was held in the "Vilnius Houses of Histories". At the end of the event, students were given the task of engaging their school community and preparing their proposals on how the building could be adapted to meet the needs of the public and youth in the future. Different activities took place in different schools - there was video reporting and filming, debates where the question was raised whether the building should become solely a museum, and a third school conducted a survey among 9th and 10th grade students about what they know about the building and its history, and how the building should be adapted in the future. The final workshop took place on May 9, 2024. Students, along with their teachers, came to the Open Lithuania Foundation office and presented their completed projects and prepared ideas.

Despite the fact that the building is located in the very center of Vilnius, many of the young people who participated in various activities, as well as other students from their schools, were unaware of its history and that it was once the largest gathering place for cultural and sports events, hosting events significant to Lithuanian history and the transitional period. During the different activities, the event introduced both the direct target group and the young people studying in their schools to the Vilnius Concert and Sports Hall, its importance in Lithuanian history, and its role in the social life of Vilnius. The young people participating in the first event met individuals who shared their personal stories and memories and had the opportunity to discuss the building's potential and adaptation possibilities today, addressing the needs of youth and society, presenting their ideas, and meeting students from other schools in Vilnius.

Since the restoration of Lithuania independence, the Sports Palace has changed many functions before finally becoming a project that is now awaiting its next phase. This state of the building is an opportunity for reflection, and I am delighted to be part of the project and to lead students through the spaces of Vilnius, raising questions about the future of these places.

— Tomas Vaitkūnas



LODŹ



From the beginning of the transition, after 1989, textile factories in Łódź began to decline en masse, leading to widespread job losses. The crisis also affected machine manufacturers such as Wifama and chemical plants such as Anilana. For many families, the 1990s were times of poverty and family tragedies. In 1992, unemployment in Lodz reached almost 20%. Sociologists point to transition period Łódź as an example of the feminisation of poverty. Former female textile workers not only faced economic challenges, but also witnessed a dramatic shift in the way their work was perceived.

Once valued, bolstered by communist propaganda, during this period they began to be presented as symbols of the failures of a centrally planned economy. The factories they worked in, such as the 'Uniontex' Cotton Industry Plant, fell into disrepair despite efforts to maintain and revive them after 1989. The last entry in the Uniontex plant's chronicle reads, 'What a pity!'

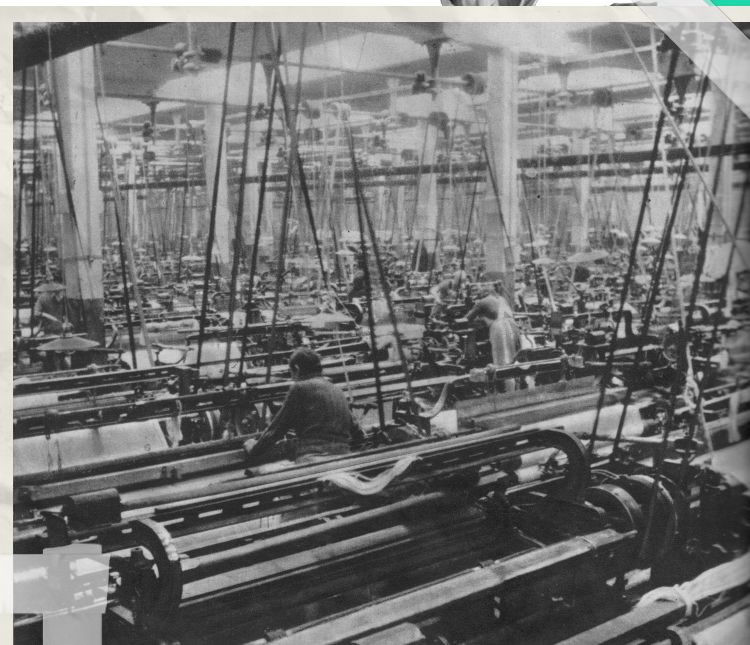
(author Ewa Kamińska-Bużałek, cultural animator from the Łódź Women's Trail)

My grandfather told me about his childhood and youth up to 1989. He said that Lodz was an industrial city, primarily oriented towards textiles. It was home to factories producing textiles and clothing, and there was much less traffic, no traffic jams. Residents mainly used trams and buses, as there were few private cars. New districts were being created, such as Chojny Zatorze, Dąbrowa, Retkinia and Teofilów. The old part of the city, with its town houses, remained unchanged. There were about 30 cinemas, and television was mainly black and white with two channels. My grandparents have very fond memories of those years.

— Fabian Jaros, student at no. 81 Primary School in Bałuty, Łódź

Łódź is a city with a short but remarkable history. Originally a small settlement among peat bogs, it was granted city rights during the reign of Władysław Jagiello in the 15th century, but it was not until the 19th century that it flourished as a centre of textile industry and trade, becoming a 'promised land' for entrepreneurs and a place of work for thousands of settlers. Under communism, the huge factories and stately townhouses of their owners fell into disrepair. Instead, new factories and large, often sub-standard, workers' housing estates were built, including in suburban Bałuty, which was transformed in 1954 into a new district of Łódź. (author Alicja Pacewicz, expert from the Centre for Civic Education and SOS for Education)

The textile industry was officially described as 'light', but the work in the factory was hard: it required enormous effort - putting strain most of all on the hands, it was carried out in awkward positions, and in a noisy environment. There is a striking similarity between the approach of nineteenth-century factory owners and those managing weaving and spinning mills during the People's Republic of Poland: both relied on the continuous operation of machinery, which meant that many textile labourers worked night shifts. Another similarity were the low wages for weaving or spinning. Nevertheless, for more than 100 years, Łódź was a bustling industrial city, with the rattle of the textile workers' shoes and the sound of thousands of looms echoing from the factory windows. Even up to the mid-1980s, communist television praised the Łódź factories for breaking new records, including in the production of hosiery. A bright future was predicted for the textile factories, with the only complaints concerning staff shortages... (author Ewa Kamińska-Bużałek, cultural animator from the Łódź Women's Trail)



Many of the buildings selected by the students for their photographs date to the 19th and early 20th century. The buildings have survived the passage of time better than those from the communist period. In the photographs, crumbling red brick ruins contrast with the meticulously restored buildings transformed into modern residential, public, and office spaces. The Łódź 'diptych' shows that it was these contrasts which fascinated young participants the most. Grey doors, which will soon meet their end if they are not saved, stand next to newly restored ones. The photographs vividly reflect the spatial transformations and express admiration for how much of the city's past has been preserved.

— Alicja Pacewicz, expert from the Centre for Civic Education and SOS for Education



Together with project participants, we visited Księży Młyn, the historic industrial district founded by Karol Scheibler in the 19th century. Thanks to their photos, we captured the recent changes to this post-industrial site. Despite the renovations, in the photos it gave the impression of being quiet and disconnected from current urban life, deserted.

We also saw the former spinning mill towering over the workers' houses (famulas) in Księży Młyn. This huge, imposing building now houses residential flats, lofts. Meanwhile, the disused railway siding, which once served the factories, is now just a tourist attraction. We also had the opportunity to see industrialist Ludwik Grohman's villa, which was nationalised after World War II and transformed into a nursery, and later into a 'Uniontext' employee kindergarten. During the transition, this facility was closed, as were many other kindergartens. In communist Poland, efforts were made to promote the model of the working mother, but in the 1990s some politicians argued that this was a socialist aberration, and it was time to put an end to it, sending women home to look after the children themselves. Many such voices can be found in the transcripts of parliamentary debates of the time.

(author Ewa Kamińska-Bużatek, cultural animator from the Łódź Women's Trail)





The result of the workshop is the album 'Lodz Diptych. An expedition into the past'. Photographs taken by students of the no. 81 Primary School in Bałuty document their perception of changes in the city - from the 19th century, through the times of the People's Republic of Poland and the turbulent transformation, right up to the present day. The album is accompanied by the remembrances of the students' grandparents and parents, as well as texts describing the photographic expedition to the past and the educational activities associated with it. The materials were presented at school and served as inspiration for teachers participating in workshops on effective and attractive ways of teaching young people about the transition. The album is also presented in the virtual library of educational materials 'Civic HIT'.

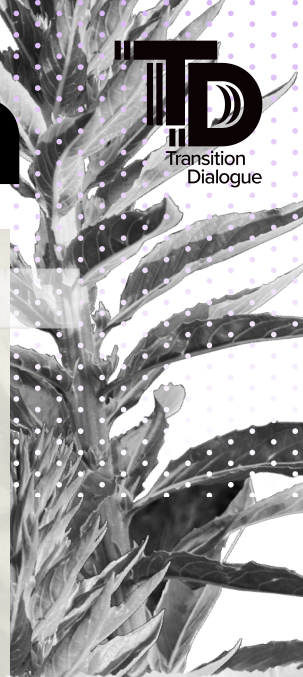
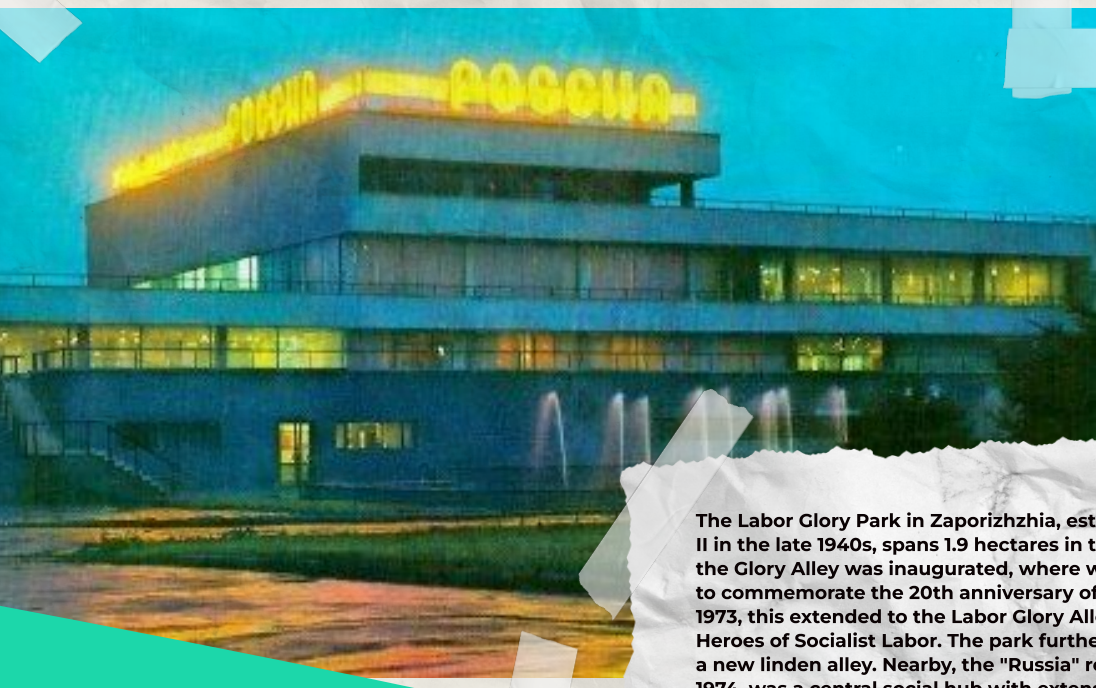


The link to the album can be displayed as a QR code.

Students from Bałuty primary schools researched the transformation of Łódź, collecting stories from their parents, grandparents and neighbours about life before 1989 and after the fall of communism. They photographed urban spaces, old textile factories, residential buildings, railway sidings, streets and lamp posts. These photos and stories, collected in an album, are the souvenirs of the young people's journey through time. The guides were teacher Anna Gołosz, historian Adam Rębacz from the Polish History Museum and educator Justyna Dominiak, coordinator of the Transition Dialogue programme. During the photo walk, Ewa Kamińska-Bużałek from the Łódź Women's Trail and photographer Aneta Wawrzóła helped select and develop the photos. The workshop was conducted in cooperation with the Lodz Women's Trail Foundation, which for years has been uncovering human histories, or rather herstories, often overlooked in official narratives.



ZAPORIZHZHIA



The Labor Glory Park in Zaporizhzhia, established post-World War II in the late 1940s, spans 1.9 hectares in the city center. In 1965, the Glory Alley was inaugurated, where war heroes planted oaks to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Victory in WWII. By 1973, this extended to the Labor Glory Alley, with trees planted by Heroes of Socialist Labor. The park further expanded in 2009 with a new linden alley. Nearby, the "Russia" restaurant, opened in 1974, was a central social hub with extensive dining facilities and bars. It thrived during the 1970s but declined with the Soviet Union's economic downturn, closing in 1992. Briefly revived in 1995 as a rock café, it eventually fell into disrepair. Today, these sites reflect the historical transitions from Soviet times to the present, embodying Zaporizhzhia's cultural and social evolution.

In the 1990s, the Labor Glory Park and the "Russia" restaurant in Zaporizhzhia faced significant decline. As the Soviet Union's economy worsened, maintaining the park became challenging, and the once-popular "Russia" restaurant struggled to attract patrons. By 1992, the restaurant closed, succumbing to the economic hardships of the era. In 1995, it briefly reopened as a rock café, drawing a different crowd, but this venture also failed to sustain. The park and surrounding areas, including the now-defunct restaurant, began to deteriorate, with maintenance neglected and facilities falling into disrepair. Despite these challenges, the site remained a symbolic reminder of the city's vibrant past and its transitional phase from the Soviet era to post-independence Ukraine.



In the 90s, Labor Glory Park and the 'Russia' restaurant embodied the economic struggles of post-Soviet Zaporizhzhia, shifting from bustling social hubs to symbols of decline and neglect

— Valentina Vinichenko, a local historian



In the past 30 years, Labor Glory Park has gone through phases of stagnation, decline, partial renovation, and revitalization. Yet, a complete overhaul has not occurred. The remnants of decayed public spaces from the past still constrain the park's contemporary appearance and functionality.

— Vitaly Babenko



From 1990 to 2024, Labor Glory Park and the "Russia" restaurant in Zaporizhzhia have undergone significant transformations. The 1990s saw the park and restaurant fall into disrepair due to economic hardships. By the early 2000s, community efforts and municipal initiatives began reviving the park, restoring its pathways and green spaces. The "Russia" restaurant, once a rock café, remained largely abandoned, its dilapidation reflecting the city's transitional struggles.

In the 2010s, renewed interest in urban renewal saw further improvements in the park, including new plantings and recreational areas. The addition of a linden alley in 2009 marked a significant enhancement. By 2024, the park has become a vibrant community space, symbolizing resilience and renewal. In 2021, the WWII Combat Glory Alley was significantly updated; it saw the removal of all Soviet names and memorial plaques, and dates were corrected from 1941 to 1939. Two new statues were erected in honor of Zaporizhzhia's Olympic champions Punkin and Zhabotynsky. A monument to internationalist soldiers who died in Afghanistan and local wars abroad, created by Vladlen Kostiantynovych Dubinin, was added in 1995. The alley annually updates to include the names of new honorary citizens and local heroes of Ukraine. While the "Russia" restaurant still awaits a comprehensive redevelopment, its adjacent areas now host various community activities, showcasing a blend of historical remembrance and contemporary urban life.



The workshop titled "Transit Dialogue: City and Community" was held on July 20th, 2024, in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. Hosted along the bustling Shevchenko Boulevard, Labor Glory Park and near the "Russia" restaurant, this two-hour event brought together city residents, historians, journalists, and urban planners. Participants engaged in a deep dive into the 30-year transformation of Eastern European countries from communism to democracy, focusing on the impacts of architectural and societal changes within Zaporizhzhia. Discussions revolved around key transitional events since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The interactive session included exploring significant historical and architectural sites in the city's central area, facilitating a generational dialogue about the shifts witnessed by the community and addressing current challenges like Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The workshop concluded with a casual gathering, offering refreshments and a space for informal discussions, fostering community engagement and understanding.

The "Transit Dialogue: City and Community" workshop concluded with vibrant and meaningful discussions, revealing a strong public interest in Zaporizhzhia's historical transitions. Participants decided to reconvene to delve deeper into the issues raised, underlining the community's commitment to addressing these transitional challenges. Additionally, the discussions identified critical areas in public spaces that urgently need ideological and political attention to facilitate effective change. These insights are set to shape the future discussions and actions planned around the city's evolution.

We're hopeful about Zaporizhzhia's transformation. This dialogue has set a foundation for meaningful changes in our public spaces, ensuring they reflect our collective history and aspirations. I'm excited to see how our discussions today shape tomorrow's cityscape.

— Olga, a workshop participant

The city truly benefits from this kind of structured and well-prepared discussion about our historical heritage and the transition period. We definitely need more dialogue-driven tours to ensure that more community leaders and opinion shapers are involved in this process. By engaging a broader segment of our community, we can deepen our collective understanding and appreciation of our past, which is crucial as we navigate our way towards future developments.

