# Urban Politics and the Geopolitics of Heritage: 'Branding' the Post-Socialist State

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## The new geopolitics of image and reputation: 'styling' nation states

In October of 2001, U.S. international affairs monthly *Foreign Affairs* published an article by Dutch political scientist Peter van Ham entitled "The Rise of the Brand State: the Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation". In it, van Ham argued that in the post-Cold War, post-Fordist world, questions of image-building and representation had become paramount, with a profound shift in the international political paradigm, in what he termed "a move from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence". Citing recent image-building campaigns by Belgium (hoping to reverse the negative depiction of the country in the wake of government corruption and child-pornography scandals), as well as Tony Blair's 'Cool Britannia' campaign, van Ham argued that:

> these days, individuals, firms, cities, regions, countries and continents all market themselves professionally, often through aggressive sales techniques. Indeed, having a bad reputation or none at all is a serious handicap for a state seeking to remain competitive in the international arena. The unbranded state has a difficult time attracting economic and political attention. Image and reputation are thus becoming essential parts of the state's strategic equity (2001).

The importance of 'branding', van Ham suggested, has been of particular importance in the reconstitution of Europe's geopolitical landscape after 1989, particularly on the part of the ex-state socialist states, eager to 'return to Europe'.

Van Ham may not be a household name, but his claims deserve attention - if only for the notoriety granted the author by *Foreign Affairs*. Besides acting as the *de facto* voice of the American strategic studies and foreign policy communities, the journal is one of the prime *fora* for the articulation of ideas about the 'proper' conduct of international politics today. It proclaims itself 'the most influential periodical in print' and it is on its pages that both Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington honed their views; it is also *Foreign Affairs* that pioneered the 'rogue state' idea (see the discussion in Minca and Bialasiewicz, 2004). Indeed, the journal's ideas very often 'make policy', providing the supporting ontologies for U.S. geopolitics. Van Ham's assertions regarding the emergence of 'brand states' thus call for careful examination, for they can tell us much about the political and geopolitical ideologies implicit in this interpretation of post-Cold War Europe.

As Dalby (1991, 274) as well as others have stressed, all geographical narratives, all representations of space, are "specifications of political reality that have political effect". The 'branding' of states described by van Ham is thus hardly an innocent act. In this chapter, I will look to the contradictions underlying the 'state-styling' process by examining the ways in which such strategies have been enacted in the place highlighted by van Ham as the ideal site for such endeavours: post-1989 East Central Europe. Although a variety of 'branding' strategies can be observed all across the post-socialist world, in the pages to follow I will focus largely on the specific case of Poland and, in particular, on the ways in which the Polish state has attempted to create a new 'brand' image for itself in the post-1989 era by relying upon a distinct representation of its past. My analysis will look, above all, to the construction and valorisation of certain urban heritage landscapes, designated to embody Poland's new place in the world and, in particular, its status as a 'fully European state'. I will analyse the metaphorical but also material geographies of these representational endeavours, looking to *the ways in which a carefully selected set of urban spaces have become the designated icons of the post-1989 Polish state's new vision of itself*. I will also highlight, however, the glaring disjuncture between such representative 'brand' landscapes and the spaces of what Smith and Pickles (1998) term "actually-existing transition": the spaces of the increasingly divided and privatised post-socialist city.

## The transition and the meaning of Europe

Before beginning a discussion of the 'branding' strategies of the Polish state in the post-1989 years, several important points must be made about the general nature of the transitions in East Central Europe. Apart from their social, political and economic implications, the revolutions of 1989 were also a profound identitary sea-change. As many commentators have pointed out (see, above all, Dahrendorf 1990 and 1999; Garton Ash 1999) for the countries of East Central Europe, 1989 also signified a chance to 'return to Europe', a symbolic but also material reunification with the European civilisation from which they were 'unnaturally' wrenched - 'kidnapped', to use Milan Kundera's (1984) term - by the state socialist regimes.

Asserting a European belonging in the post-1989 era amounted to a rejection of the past 45 years of 'historical wrongs', and a restitution of these nations "to their proper place [in Europe]" (Shaw 1998; Heffernan 1999). 'Europeanness', as Ralph Dahrendorf (1997, 1999) has repeatedly argued, came to denote in every way the 'way in': the *étoile polaire* guiding the post-socialist democracies processes of self-identification and self-representation. Indeed, as countless surveys over the past decade have demonstrated, acceptance into the 'European cosmos' came to be marked with profound symbolic - almost emotional - significance for the citizens of the East Central European states (see Rose and Haerpfer 1998; Amato and Batt 1999; as well as the 1998-2000 Central and Eastern European Eurobarometer surveys).

European belonging, however, also carries a whole series of geo-strategic, political and economic implications - the most pressing of these certainly being the post-socialist states' path towards full integration within the structures of the European Union. It is interesting to note that in the mid- to late 1990s, the rhetorical framing of the applicant states' 'full Europeanness' permeated accession talks, granted almost equal standing with negotiations for the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* (see the report of the Forward Studies Unit of the European Commission, Amato and Batt, 1999). In Poland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up a new 80 million zloty taskforce in June of 2000 specifically to promote the image of Poland as a "fully European state" among the EU15. The aim of the taskforce, according to Ministry spokespeople, was to "persuade both policy makers but also common citizens", that Poland "from a historical, moral, cultural-civilisational, economic, political and social point of view

has always been a fully European state", and to "argue that Poland's accession to the Union is a natural course of events" (Montgomery 2000).

Alongside the rhetorical pronouncements of state leaders and appointed ministerial spin doctors, the task of 'branding' (to use van Ham's terminology) Poland as a 'fully European state' has also necessitated, however, that which Gearoid O'Tuathail (1996) has dubbed a "practical geo-politics of place writing". This "practical geo-politics" has relied upon the appointment (and creation) of certain heritage landscapes which both serve to monumentalise and confirm the 'truths' of state geo-political discourses (here, about Poland's presumed Europeanness), but which also serve as the necessary symbolic repertoire *upon which* such 'geo-political truths' draw. In the sections to follow, I will attempt to describe the particular nature of these landscapes noting, in particular, the distinction made between the symbols of Poland's successful marketisation - and the selected markers of its 'European belonging'.

## The representative spaces of the transition I: embodying market success

Although Poland's capital city, Warsaw, is certainly the icon of 'transition success' - it is the country's financial, political and economic decision-making centre and it is here that the great bulk of foreign investment and new construction has been concentrated - its post-1989 city-scapes have seldom figured either in publicity brochures produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the Polish Tourist Office. While Warsaw's rapid growth may embody 'transition success', it does not correspond to the 'brand image' that the Polish state has been trying to convey to its European interlocutors.

The Polish capital is marked, indeed, by some of the most characteristic signs of the transition: the domination of multinational capital (see Figure 1) and the progressive fragmentation and privatisation of urban spaces, with exclusive corporate high rises mixing with street bazaars and decaying ex-state architecture (Figure 2). The signs of the capital's 'transition success' promoted to foreign investors on the pages of business publications such as the English-language *Warsaw Voice* or *The Economist*'s sister publication, *Business Central Europe,* are, for the most part, exclusive enclaves, within the context of a city where the standard of living for a

great portion of its inhabitants has been falling drastically since the shock reforms of the early 1990s. The increasingly pronounced marketisation of many realms of social and cultural service provision has created new social divides: between those able to take advantage of all that the market has to offer, and those whose only choice remain the rapidly shrinking public resources. As Beskid (2000) and Sikorska (2000) have documented in a comprehensive study of Poland's urban populations carried out exactly ten years after the initial reforms, along with the progressive pauperisation of the lowest income brackets, a growing segment of the urban middle class has, in the past decade, become impoverished "to the extent that their very class identity is threatened" (Beskid 2000, 217). The decline has been the starkest among the urban population of retirees, but it has also seriously affected public sector employees such as teachers, clerks and those medical personnel who, out of principle or out of lack of choice, remain solely on a public salary.

These new class divides are evident, for one, in the sphere of health care provision. The percentage of the Polish urban lower and middle classes that has been able to make use of private medical clinics in the past decade ranges between 9% and 17%. For the upper and upper middle class, this figure ranges between 58% and 89%. In Warsaw, 70% of these latter admit to using only private structures for all their medical needs (Jalowiecki 2000; see also Ostrowska 2000). The provision of leisure, recreation and cultural consumption has similarly become the province of market mechanisms, and thus regulated by people's ability to pay. Popular participation in cultural consumption has, accordingly, plummeted in the post-1989 years, with a sharp drop in theatre and movie attendance as well as the percentage of family budgets spent for entertainment, with most monies devoted towards basic expenses such as food and housing (Jalowiecki 2000). This is especially true for the lower and middle income brackets which form the bulk of the urban population: for the upper and upper middle classes, cultural consumption expenses have been, on the other hand, on a constant rise since the early 1990s, including spending for cinemas and theatres, as well as previously absent forms of consumption such as restaurants, sports clubs and foreign vacations (Jalowiecki 2000). Subsidized summer and winter holidays, previously guaranteed by state companies for all employees as well as their children, have been all but eliminated. A 1999 survey by Poland's biggest selling daily newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, found that seventy percent of Warsaw's lower and middle

class inhabitants did not go on holiday at all, and among those that did, forty percent visited family in the countryside or spent time on their *dzialka* (the small plots of land outside of cities allotted to all employees by state enterprises). Among the upper and upper middle class respondents, sixty percent spent their annual holidays in a foreign resort.

Post-1989 processes of restructuring have, indeed, produced new urban upper and upper middle classes, "perfectly socialised into international corporate culture" (Bodnar 2001, 100) and its consumption patterns. Who are these new elites? As Harloe (1996, 7) suggests, all over the post-socialist world, "it is those who have access to various forms of social capital, networks, connections and information, who have been able to benefit at the expense of those whose stock of social capital is limited". Indeed, it is largely ex-members of the *nomenklatura* (and, increasingly, their children), managers of former state enterprises and those who had been active in the black market economies that emerged as the new elites in the post-1989 era. In the Polish case, studies (Wasilewski 2000, 79) have shown that an overwhelming majority of the new urban elite held high social positions *already prior to 1989* and 51.6% of the current political and economic elites were ranking members of the old nomenklatura. Considerable differences exist in this respect, however, between rural and urban areas. As Wasilewski's (2000) figures suggest, there exists a considerable spread between urban and rural elites, with these latter twice as likely to be the heirs of state socialist privilege. In the cities, the consolidation of what Jalowiecki (2000, 40) terms the new "metropolitan class", has been tied much more to the post-1989 emergence of the high-end service sector and the employment of a large cohort of young graduates in foreign as well as domestic firms specialising in financial and legal services, information technology, marketing, sales and management. This is not to say that access to such positions of privilege has been entirely open: especially in the early 1990s, a great percentage of those hired into the highest-paying positions in these fields were previous elites or their (foreign-educated) children (see Wasilewski 2000).

High-paying employment does not suffice to gain position, however, and the richest of the new rich have consolidated their economic privilege in other ways. Their 'capture' of the processes of privatisation has been key in this respect. David Stark's (1990, 366) pioneering study of the early days of privatisation in Hungary provided a valuable illustration of the process of the post-socialist 're-cycling' of elites, showing how managers of former

state enterprises were able to manipulate the situation to transfer the ownership of assets to themselves and their cronies, "a process by which political capital is converted into economic capital". In *all* of the post-socialist states, previously dominant social groups succeeded in capturing, to one extent or another, the bulk of the assets released by privatisation for themselves: through privileged access to information (for example, purchasing shares of companies or real estate before these went on the market) but also often through the outright control and manipulation of the privatisation legislation. Indeed, the lack of a stable legal framework in the initial years of the political and economic transformations, together with the still-persistent lack of coherent systems of planning regulations (see Jalowiecki 2000) allowed actors and groups already in privileged positions to benefit from the conversion. What is more, as Harloe (1996) and Smith and Swain (1998) stress, it is the networks and 'connections' (both domestic as well as international) as well as skills and behavioural patterns acquired under state socialism that were the primary determinants of social position in the early years of the transition when knowledge of foreign languages, as well as managerial and diplomatic skills were in short supply. This was true both for ex-functionaries of the socialist state, as well as those who had been active in the black-market economy.

These new class divides and structures of privilege have had their accordant reflections in urban spaces. Along with the strong social differentiation in participation in cultural and social consumption noted above, the past decade has witnessed the emergence of distinct spaces of consumption that separate lower and middle class consumption from that of the upper and upper middle classes. The closure of many state-run theatres and cinemas has given way to the development of new entertainment poles such as corporate-owned multiplexes, many unreachable by public transport since located at the outskirts of cities within new shopping centres and prohibitively priced for post-socialist wages (see Bodnar 2001; Jalowiecki 2000). Restaurants and pubs boasting dishes and prices that rival any Western European capital are, by now, diffuse elements of the downtown landscape, catering to the staff of the glistening new downtown office complexes. Writing about the transformations taking place in post-socialist Budapest, Bodnar (2001, 92) argued that we should view these spaces as "the incarnations of symbolic power today… [If] the contribution of state socialism came in the form of party headquarters, prefab housing estates and 'houses of culture'… post-

socialism's symbolic building is the office centre in the inner city and the multifunctional service centres, known as the shopping mall, on the outskirts and in the inner suburbs".

The same is true of large Polish cities, where downtown business centres are, indeed, the most visible and prestigious architectural forms within the new post-socialist urban landscapes. What should be noted, however, is that these constructions are much more than simply office space. They are the multi-functional spaces of the new elites - where they work, eat, shop, entertain themselves and even visit a private clinic. An illustrative example is the Atrium Plaza on the Aleja Jana Pawla II in Warsaw, built in 1995 by the Scandinavian consortium Skanska and one of the first such constructions in Warsaw. Within its doors are located foreign and domestic insurance companies, investment banks and securities traders, Arthur Andersen's Polish headquarters, two Austrian banks, the Japanese Embassy and the Japan Information and Culture Centre. There are also three restaurants (including a sushi bar) and two cafes, as well as a luxury clothing store called the 'Royal Collection'. Employees and patrons can leave their cars in an underground parking lot, accessible only by elevator from within the main lobby. Gallup Poland's polls in 1999 (cited in Jalowiecki 2000, 51-57) revealed that spatial concentration of 'ancillary services' and isolation were highly prized by potential investors, whether foreign or domestic. The primary criteria of location choice listed by those polled were: 1) access to media and telephone/internet connections; 2) location - either central or within a peripheral 'office zone'; 3) underground parking; 4) private security; 5) 'high prestige' of the building or building complex; 6) the presence of additional services on the premises; and 7) air conditioning. The new spaces faithfully reflect these desires.

Another example worth citing is that of the new library of the University of Warsaw, opened in 2000. It is a worthy example because it embodies many of the processes of social, cultural and economic fragmentation noted thus far. The library (which also houses the University's new Law School) is a gargantuan building in green copper designed by Polish architect Marek Budzynski on the banks of the Vistula river. It was built on credit by University authorities (albeit with a substantial donation from the Fulbright foundation) and considered by many a gigantic financial gamble (see the debate in the special insert of the Warsaw *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 2000). But the library has also become a key symbolic site in processes of urban 're-fashioning'. Its exterior and interior iconographies were

purportedly designed to "recall the spirit of the nation and the place of Poland within a world cultural heritage" (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 2000). Exterior panels on the building's walls feature, in fact, reproductions of four epochal texts, in four different alphabets - Latin, Cyrillic, Ancient Greek and Arabic. The entrance to the enormous glass atrium within is presided over by four columns crowned with the 'masters' of Polish literature.

According to University officials, the library was to provide a 'living testimony' to Warsaw's 'global city' status, as well as the competitiveness of Polish higher education. The furthering of knowledge and culture is only one of the functions of these 42,000 square metres, however - and certainly not the most lucrative one. The upper floors house the Central European headquarters of biotech giant Monsanto, marketing gurus Ernst and Young, as well as two law firms. The glass-covered internal courtyard (complete with trees and benches) through which students pass to enter into the library also boasts a high-end Italian restaurant, two cafes, two bookstores, a travel agency, a bank, and franchises of Poland's three mobile phone distributors. On the lower level, there is a post-office branch and a 'Family Entertainment Centre' and bowling alley called 'Hula Kula' where, for the price of half of an average Pole's monthly pay, you can drop off your kids for the day. Under it all, an enormous underground parking garage, guarded by private security agents (and, considering the cylinder power of the cars present, not destined for the student patrons of the library). In other words, all the services required by the post-socialist "metropolitan class" (Jalowiecki 2000), conveniently contained in one space and guarded over by private police. The public function of the building (as a library) is, in fact, rigorously patrolled and access is restricted to university students and staff only; the library's opening hours are also at the mercy of the building's commercial tenants who use its spaces for fashion shows, the taping of television programmes, and promotional spots.

The spaces of these new self-contained urban 'centres' are, undoubtedly, willingly segregated; their *very prestige* derives, indeed, from their ability to guarantee a certain sort of internal environment for their clients and the patrons of these same, "where everything is Western" as one visitor to the library commented to the *Gazeta's* journalist (October 2000). In fact, these new spaces of consumption, just as the brand name stores and high-class boutiques on the most prestigious streets of East Central European cities are absolutely exclusive (despite their frequent adoption as symbols of the

success of free-marketisation by national governments and transition experts) and *highly clustered in space*. As studies of contemporary Polish cities cited by Jalowiecki (2000) suggest, bank branches, high-end restaurants, shopping 'galleries', gourmet grocery stores and health clubs (all signs of a city's 'global' status and all markers of service class consumption) are concentrated in only certain downtown areas and in the new high-end suburban developments (with a very similar patterning noted by Bodnar (2001) in the Hungarian case).

As in most other large urban areas in Eastern and Central Europe, the bulk of Warsaw's inhabitants still lives within the endless high-rise housing estates on the city's peripheries, and not in the exclusive condominiums being built in the centre and certain suburban areas - most of these heavily fortified and surveilled by video cameras and private police (such as this condominium complex in the centrally-located *Zoliborz* quarter in Figure 3), presumably to keep out the growing homeless population on the streets just outside the walls. The urban enclaves of the new rich also have their associated retail spaces, such as this delicatessen (Figure 4), also in Warsaw's *Zoliborz*, selling a variety of imported food products and called, appropriately enough, 'Mini Europe'. But just as the corporate enclaves noted above, these are the spaces of consumption of the very few: as recent studies in Poland reveal, only 8% of urban dwellers population use such stores for their regular purchases, while 40% of the urban population purchases the bulk of their food, clothing and personal hygiene items at urban bazaars (Klodecka 1999), from a growing population of Vietnamese and Chinese entrepreneurs (such as the ones running the food stalls on Warsaw's central streets - see Figure 2), as well as shuttle traders from the ex-Soviet states. Street vendors, migrants of varied nationalities, and the homeless are the indeed the new 'mobile' elements of the post-socialist urban landscape; people forced unto the streets with the growing privatisation of the spaces of their social reproduction (see Katz 2001).

It is the above-described fragmented and privatised urban realities that constitute the spaces of what Smith and Pickles (1998) appropriately term "actually-existing transition": these are the spaces lived by the bulk of the urban populations of Warsaw and most other large Polish cities. They differ significantly, however, from the *representative spaces* of the post-1989 transformations highlighted by the Polish state. In the section that follows, I will try to identify these latter and the message(s) that they are being

'groomed' to transmit, as well as what the construction of such spaces can tell us about the 'state-branding' process and its dangers.

## The representative spaces of the transition II: the locus of national (and European) re-definition

The increasingly fragmented and privatised urban spaces of the capital may be icons of free-market success, but they have seldom figured within the Polish state's attempts at (re)branding. Perhaps the contradictions of the transition are too evident here; the representative landscapes too plainly corporate, 'foreign'. In their post-1989 'Europeanising' rhetorics, Polish national-representational strategies have focused, indeed, on a different site altogether: the country's ancient royal seat and spiritual capital, Krakow.

Krakow has always played a vitally important role within the national imaginary. It had been seen the symbolic custodian of Polish national identity since the time of the partitions that had erased the Polish state from the map of Europe in 1792, a role that persisted through the years of state socialist rule. After 1989, Krakow underwent a revival. No longer relegated to a second-rate provincial city (as it had been by the party state), the city was free to assert its place in Poland - and in Europe. Although much could be said about the ways in which Krakow's urban elites have attempted to promote the city in the past decade (with strategies of urban boosterism modelled on similar such endeavours in the 'post-industrial West'), I would like to focus here on how Krakow became the favoured site for the material confirmation of the representational strategies of the Polish *national* state as well.

In 1994, Krakow was declared by then-Polish President Lech Walesa "Poland's Monument of History", the "most Polish of Polish cities" as well as the marker of Poland's place "within a common European cultural heritage". All through the 1990s, promotional campaigns by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have highlighted Krakow as the "cradle of Poland's European culture" (1997), "a place in which Europe still lives, uncorrupted by time" (1998), "a place which offers to Europe that which is most representative in European history and culture" (2000). Krakow's key role in confirming Poland's European status got a further boost in 1998, with the city's nomination as a European City of Culture for the year 2000. The honour bestowed upon Krakow by the Council of Europe had paid off

several years worth of lobbying on the part of municipal authorities to re-create Krakow as a 'City of Culture and Heritage' in the post-1989 era. The then-City Council used the City of Culture nomination as the focus of a three-year long 'urban Festival' of European Culture, leading up to the grand celebrations in 2000, and made the initiative a launch-pad for a comprehensive urban renewal programme focusing on Krakow's role as a centre of the arts, culture and learning. As I noted above, the ways in which Krakow's urban boosters used this initiative to 'sell' the city were quite similar to other such initiatives in the post-Fordist 'West' (see the contributions in Kearns and Philo 1993; Jewson and McGregor 1997; Jonas and Wilson 1999). Within what follows, I would like to focus, however, on an aspect of this urban-marketing project that was quite unique: looking to the *how a symbolic and representational structure conceived by local growth elites as a strategy for urban redevelopment* - the idea of Krakow as a 'culture city' - *was 'captured' by national elites towards state and nation-building purposes.*

As was suggested previously, ever since the early 1990s, Krakow was appointed by national state actors the ideal representational site for affirming Poland's European credentials in the post-1989 era. The city's nomination as a European City of Culture provided an ideal platform for such national geo-representational endeavours. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the newly created Ministry of Art and Cultural Heritage undertook a massive effort in 1999 and 2000 to promote the initiative as an emblematic expression not only of Krakow's but of *Polish* 'cultural heritage' - and its European belonging. Polish embassies and consular offices across Europe were showered with information about the Festival, including a new edition of a volume published by prominent Krakow urban historian Jacek Purchla entitled *Krakow in the European Core* - a beautifully illustrated text tracing Krakow's multiple ties to European culture and learning through time. Krakow's heritage landscapes highlighted by the Festival became, for the year 2000, the representative landscapes not only of Krakow's European heritage but of *the European heritage of Poland as a whole*; they were appointed as the representative landscapes of the new, 'post-transition' Poland. It is on these landscapes that I would like to focus my attention because, as I will argue, they belie a distinct spatial ideology and a distinct set of messages about post-transition Polish society.

## Marking Krakow's urban spaces

The City of Culture Festival's narrative of Krakow's (and thus Poland's) European heritage was, undoubtedly, primarily articulated within the variety of events, performances and exhibitions gathered under the Festival umbrella. Yet the initiative was also materially inscribed into Krakow's urban geography. This was done not merely through the signification and appropriation of the spaces of the events themselves (such as the variety of museums, galleries and theatres hosting 'Culture2000' performances). The Festival's organisers also inscribed its narratives into Krakow's city fabric more broadly - and it is on this re-writing of Krakow's urban spaces for the purposes of the Festival that I would like to focus.

The first way in which the Festival marked those spaces within the city that were the object of its celebration of Krakow's role as a European City of Culture was by means of a number of 'heritage trails'. These trails were signed both on the map of the city produced by the Festival Bureau for the initiative (and distributed at all Festival events, as well as all major tourist sites and large hotels), but also inscribed on the ground, by means of a specially-erected series of signposts that led visitors along the designated pathways through the city. The Festival's city map (reproduced in Figure 5, courtesy of the Festival Bureau), just as any tourist map, highlighted above all the 'points of interest in the city: the Krakow that should be seen' (as the map's legend suggested). In the case of Krakow, the city 'that should be seen' was to be found mostly within the walls of the *Stare Miasto* (Old Town), the Wawel Castle and its surroundings, the religious complex on the *Skalka*, and a portion of the ex-Jewish quarter of Kazimierz. These areas were signed by a proliferation of what the map legend described as 'monumental buildings', indicated in bright red. Ochre coloured spaces denoted residential districts, while light purple, industrial areas. The map did not only point out the important sites or monuments of the city, however. It also suggested four distinct itineraries to lead the visitor through these same spaces. The 'heritage routes', as they were termed on the map, served to grant meaning to the highlighted monuments and to emplace these sites within the Festival's symbolic geography of the city.

The four routes were, indeed, intended to "trace the four axes of Krakow's culture", as the map's producer and director of the Festival's Cultural Information Centre Grzegorz Slacz (Slacz, personal interview, March 2000) himself confirmed. The first of the four was the Royal Route

(*Droga Krolewska*), leading from St. Florian's Church outside the *Stare Miasto's* northern wall, through the remaining segments of the town's mediaeval fortifications (the Barbakan and Florianska Gate) into the *Stare Miasto* proper, down Florianska (its best known street), past its 'representative buildings' housing a variety of well-known cafes and small museums, into the *Rynek* (the Market Square), passing by St. Mary's Basilica, the *Sukiennice* (the ex-cloth merchants hall, now lined with local handicrafts and souvenir stands), the old Town Hall tower, and down Grodzka street towards Wawel Castle. This itinerary, as the name suggests, celebrated Krakow's role as a 'Royal Capital', highlighting "the landmarks that most people identify with Krakow" (Slacz, personal interview, March 2000).

The second suggested path through Krakow was the University Route (*Trasa Uniwersytecka*) which began at the Academy of Fine Arts by the Barbakan and proceeded past a succession of Krakow's pantheons of learning and culture: the Polish Academy of Sciences building and the Krakow Academy (the *Akademia Umiejetnosci*), St. Ann's University Parish, the Jagiellonian University's 15$^{th}$ century Collegium Maius, the Collegium Physicum and Collegium Novum, on to the Papal Theological Academy, then along the *Planty* (the ring of gardens surrounding the Old City) to the Archaeological and Geological Museum of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Collegium Iuridicum, ending at the Jagiellonian University Institute of Geography (located in the old Arsenal). This route was meant to emphasise Krakow's function as an important centre of learning through the ages, as well as its place within a broader European university tradition.

The third itinerary was the St. Stanislaus Route (*Trasa Sw. Stanislawa*) that, on the other hand, offered a journey through Krakow's spiritual landmarks. The route began at Wawel Castle's magnificent Cathedral, moving past St. Bernard's Church and Monastery and then along the Vistula's embankments towards the *Skalka* ('the Rock') religious complex, which extends in a series of Churches and monasteries from the river's banks in the direction of Kazimierz. This route through the city's religious landscapes spoke both to Krakow's role as key centre of Western Christianity, as well as its important place in national-patriotic martyrology. The fourth and final itinerary through the city suggested by the Festival's map was the Kazimierz Route (*Trasa Kazimierska*), leading from the historical centre into the ex-Jewish quarter of Kazimierz. The route began at the newly constructed Centre for Jewish Culture, and led through

the small streets of Kazimierz past the district's synagogues, Museum of Jewish Culture and on to the new Jewish cemetery. This last trail aimed to highlight Krakow's "lost Jewish heritage" that "was once an integral part of Krakow and its city life" (Slacz, personal interview, March 2000).

The Festival's cartography of Krakow was not only identifiable, however, on the above-described map of the city. The Festival's organisers also carefully marked *the physical spaces of the town*. Indeed, the monumental 'city to be seen' highlighted by the above mapping was also delimited on the ground by banners, posters and other signs of distinction. The Festival's banners marked, for example, the entrances to all Old Town streets leading into Market Square (see Figure 6), as well as the 'entrance' to Kazimierz and the Skalka area. Such banners served both to advertise the Festival as a whole, as well as promote on-going events. Market Square, as the symbolic heart of the city and also the heart of the Festival2000 initiative, was marked in especially visible fashion, framed on its four corners by stands of the Festival's blue and gold flags.

The Festival's Krakow was also marked by specially created circular kiosks, displaying posters and announcements of current and upcoming Festival attractions. These kiosks were an almost exact replica of the kiosks owned by the Krakow municipality that also serve to advertise various events and initiatives in the city. The Festival's kiosks, however, were reserved for the Festival's use only and, indeed, sported the ominous warning: "private property: not for public posting". Besides serving as advertising venues, however, the kiosks (just as the Festival banners) also served as markers of Krakow2000's spaces. The kiosk depicted in Figure 7 marked the 'border' of Kazimierz, directing visitors to the recently re-developed parts of this ex-Jewish quarter highlighted by the Festival's initiatives.

The Festival's 'paths' through 'the four axes of Krakow's culture' were also physically marked on the landscape, guiding the visitor and her/his gaze through the city's streets. Alongside itinerary maps, the Festival Bureau also erected new sign-posts, pointing to individual landmarks and indicating their name and distance in metres. Street maps were particularly numerous on the streets of Kazimierz. This was perhaps due to the fact that this quarter of Krakow is still a place of many contrasts. Although considerable effort and monies have been devoted to the reconstruction of the most important landmarks of its Jewish past - such as the Old Synagogue where the Krakow Museum of Jewish Heritage is now located

and the newly-constructed Centre of Jewish Culture - many parts of the quarter remain some of the most degraded areas within the central districts of Krakow. Indeed, the rows of new kosher cafes and restaurants (Figure 8) are just a street away from Nowy Square, once the bustling market centre of the quarter, now only the site of two dilapidated mini-marts.

The Festival did much to highlight the revitalisation of Kazimierz and through the months that followed, one could spot the progressive reconstruction of buildings and their transformation (if not gentrification) into up-scale bars, cafes, restaurants and art galleries - most only vaguely recalling the quarter's Jewish heritage. It should be noted that the Festival's emphasis on Krakow's Jewish heritage was seen as a vital marker of the city's multi-cultural, multi-religious past - and thus its cosmopolitan, European, heritage. 'Multi-culturalism' is popularly seen as a 'European thing' and the valorisation of Poland's multi-national past has formed an important part of the post-socialist elites' Europeanising rhetoric in recent years. A re-evaluation of the place of Jews and Jewish heritage in Poland has been a particularly important tool to this end (though not without provoking a variety of protests from the (Euro-phobic) nationalist Right, which in recent years has vocally contested this re-interpretation of national historiography). The re-appropriation of Poland's Jewish past by national elites (and savvy entrepreneurs, in the case of Kazimierz) has also raised protests, however, from numerous Jewish organisations, in Poland and abroad, warning against a facile 're-styling' of Poland's troubled past relations with its Jewish community. It is a 're-styling' that has relied, in large part, upon the *physical* (re)construction of "virtual Jewish worlds" in cities without Jews: Kazimierz is a stunning example. Within these spaces of "museum Judaism" as Ruth Ellen Gruber (2002) has called them, the 'Jewish experience' becomes simply 'specific things to buy, eat and drink': sipping chicken soup in gentrified 'kosher' cafes or purchasing pseudo-religious souvenirs. This is just one of the dangers inherent in such 'branded' heritage that I will attempt to highlight in my conclusions.

## The spatial ideology of Krakow's representative landscapes

I would like to return now, however, to the question of the 'spatial ideologies' (Harvey 1973) of the Festival's urban re-fashioning. As I have noted above, the spaces of the city selected by Festival organisers were

quite limited - and strictly *de*-limited on the ground, with the Festival's banners, flags and kiosks. As some local commentators caustically observed, for the purposes of international promotion, Krakow's European heritage was neatly packaged into 'the candy-box of its historical core'. Indeed, other, less desirable, Krakow landscapes did not make it into the Festival's promotion - whether those marking the unwanted heritage of the state socialist past, such as the planned town of Nowa Huta where a large part of the city's population still resides, or even the new developments on Krakow's outskirts where the bulk of post-1989 investment has flowed, replete with new housing developments, hyper-markets and super-stores (for assessments of the Festival, see Czuchnowski 2000; Majkowski 2001; Szarek 2000).

Much could be said about the 'appropriateness' of the representations of post-1989 Krakow conveyed by the City of Culture Festival. Certainly, just as any other city-marketing initiative, the Festival highlighted and promoted a distinctive and necessarily selective image of the city. I would like to retain my focus, however, on the use made of such city-promotional representations by the national state.

What does the adoption of the Festival2000 initiative tell us about van Ham's point about 'branding' as a new pre-occupation of state leaders? In his article, the author argues that

> the traditional diplomacy of yesteryear is disappearing. To do their jobs well in the future, politicians will have to train themselves in brand-asset management. Their tasks will include finding a brand niche for their state, engaging in competitive marketing, assuring customer satisfaction, and most of all, creating brand loyalty. Brand states will compete not only among themselves but also with super-brands such as the EU, CNN, Microsoft, and the Roman Catholic Church (boasting the oldest and most recognised logo in the world, the crucifix). In this crowded arena, states that lack relevant brand equity will not survive. The state, in short, will have become the State® (van Ham 2001).

Polish leaders over the past decade have certainly done their best to 'sell' Poland by appeals to several of the 'superbrands' described by van Ham - the EU, of course, but also the Catholic Church (invoking Poland's long history of Catholicism as a marker of its belonging to the 'community of European values'). Such representational strategies have also been common to many other post-socialist states: Estonia's official parlance, prior to its

accession to the EU, dismissed any 'Baltic' or 'post-Soviet state' terminology, favouring rather the descriptors 'Scandinavian' and 'pre-European' (see Smith 2000), while a number of Central European states (Hungary and Slovenia most visibly, but also Poland itself) were lovingly resurrecting their Habsburg heritage as a symbolic pathway into Europe (see Bialasiewicz 2003). It is therefore difficult to dispute van Ham's *description* of these phenomena, clearly evident within post-1989 East Central European politics. I take issue, however, with the author's *interpretation* of such branding and, especially, its effects.

I would like to focus my first critique on the assertion that the rise of the brand state heralded by van Ham is somehow a 'new' phenomenon, displacing 'geopolitics and power' by the politics of 'image and influence'. As a long tradition of critical geopolitical writing has stressed (see, among others, Dalby 1991; O'Tuathail 1994 and 1996; O'Tuathail and Agnew 1992), the construction of geopolitical world-views has *always* been about 'image and influence'. Reagan's America was also a 'brand' state, as was the 'Evil Empire' rhetorically constructed in its opposition. Power politics on the world stage has *always* relied on the construction of geographical representations.

My second critique goes to the conclusion of van Ham's article, that is, the author's claim that the rise of the 'brand' state is normatively a 'good thing':

> although no doubt unsettling to conservative thinkers, this is actually a positive development, since state branding is gradually supplanting nationalism. The brand state's use of its history, geography, and ethnic motifs to construct its own distinct image is a benign campaign that lacks the deep-rooted and often antagonistic sense of national identity and uniqueness that can accompany nationalism. By marginalizing nationalist chauvinism, the brand state is contributing greatly to the further pacification of Europe (van Ham 2001).

As I have tried to argue for the Polish case, the country's 'branding' as a 'fully European state' is certainly not an innocent process. First, because the construction of dominant geographical representations and identities relies – *always* - upon the erasure of others. The privileging of certain aspects of the Polish past or of the country's 'cultural heritage' necessarily relies upon the (at least temporary) silencing of other more problematic pasts - whether it is the legacy of communism or the country's long-standing troubled

relationship with its Jewish population. What is more, all such attempts at 'branding' - exactly as the politics of nation-building that van Ham considers transcended - rely upon their material inscription within the spaces of the state. They rely upon the construction of certain spaces to embody the 'brand': in the case of Krakow and Poland, 'European' spaces or 'Western' spaces.

The extent to which the construction of such 'brand' landscapes is somehow more 'open', more 'pluralistic' than the representative landscapes appointed to signify national belonging in the past is highly contestable, however. According to van Ham, the 'open' nature of branding stems from the fact that it speaks to a 'global consumer', with 'customer satisfaction' a primary goal. This, to my mind, does not make the target any more democratic or pluralistic - the signification is simply targeted at a *global* elite of decision makers (whether investors or politicians) - rather than a *national* one. The representations of identity and status (and the material spaces within which these are concretised) remain highly *exclusive* and, as in the case of the symbolic core of Krakow's City of Culture initiative, tightly policed (see Figure 9 below). The role of the private security firms hired by city businesses to patrol Market Square was, precisely, to protect the brand image from incursions by elements that might disturb and disrupt this idealised (and presumably 'European') space.

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