

## TOURISM – A NEW FUNCTION OF POST-SOCIALISTIC CITY CASE STUDY OF NOWA HUTA (CRACOW)

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**Abstract:** *The paper discusses the possibility of tourism development of Nowa Huta (Krakow) – first communist city in Poland, built in the 50-ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It describes the heritage of socialist period as tourism attractions and present initiatives of local community for tourism development of Nowa Huta.*

**Key words:** *Nowa Huta, post-socialist city, tourism*

The period when socialist ideology dominated left numerous traces not only in the minds of inhabitants in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in the their geographic space. Socialist cities are one of the distinctive traces of that period (Liszewski 2000). The term 'socialistic city' appears particularly appropriate to cities built from scratch, on a greenfield land, with their specific spatial arrangement following all the ideological postulations and guidelines of socialism. Usually, a new socialist city was set up around a special core, which was a large industrial plant, in the most cases a heavy industry works. In its background, commonly, housing estates were built for workers, the "leading" social class in that political system. The primacy of industry over other functions of city generated disproportions, and, in consequence, people received a totally adverse image of the city with an industrial plant that constituted the predominant feature and key import in terms of culture and landscape.

Economic transformation, associated with the transition from a centrally planned to a free market economy, fundamentally changed the basic conditions of the city's functions during the period of socialism. Industrial plants, focused on the mass production, were forced to turn on to profits. And this step meant a necessity to reduce over-employment, appearing typical for the period of socialism, as well as to remove those specific branches from industrial plants which were not directly linked with the plant's basic production. The socialist city had to choose new directions for its economic development. Tourism was one of the many options. Now, the question is whether or not a socialist city, perceived as a typical industrial place, and marked by the socialist ideology, is able to become more appealing to native and foreign tourists. Yet, there are a few examples proving that the socialist heritage becomes more and more attractive to tourists. Additionally, the gradually increasing attractiveness of the socialist heritage is favoured by 'industrial tourism' linked with efforts to acquire more information about the history of industrial development.

The objective of this paper is to present possibilities of the tourist development in Nowa Huta, the first socialist city in Poland, and, presently, a district of the City of Cracow. For this purpose, the historical past of Nowa Huta and its material evidence are analysed in the light of tourist attractiveness. There are also represented actions and projects implemented and carried out by diverse institutions and bodies including local authorities in order to promote this particular district of the City of Cracow.

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### **Tourist Potential of Nowa Huta**

Nowa Huta is the first Polish city of a typical socialist origin. It has been built on a greenfield land, according to guidelines of the doctrine of real socialism. In the past, the city was considered a symbol of modernity and industrialisation, however, now, it is mainly associated with the industrial past and social problems (unemployment, crime).

In 1949, it was decided to build, in the vicinity of Cracow, both the biggest iron and steel plant in Poland, and a city surrounding this plant. As early as during the designing phase, the whole project was called Nowa Huta, and, from the beginning, it had considerable propaganda value. According to Lorek (1997), the essential purpose of this absolutely new city was to persuade Polish citizens that a new era had begun, i.e. a period different from the previous postwar time of reconstructing the entire state; a new era of constructing something entirely novel and worthy of the new, socialist Poland. Many authors accentuate that it was a political decision to choose Cracow as the location for the largest industrial investment project of those days. According to Górka (2005), the important motive, though concealed by the authorities, was an idea to "improve" the social structure of Cracow since its inhabitants were hostile to the political order imposed on Poland after WW II. A large industrial plant employing masses of newcomers formed a new community of people that were more loyal to the new authority than the born Cracovians representing the opposition.

Nowa Huta was planned to be a very modern town, an opposite of the capitalist city, a bastion of socialism. The city's conceptual design and construction arrangements were, to a great extent, impacted by the real socialism, a trend existing and developing in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, and introduced in Poland in the mid 1940s. The real socialism was particularly manifested in the architecture and urban planning, the two domains which the ideologists of socialism perceived as the most influential on the people's consciousness and minds (compare Jędrzejczyk 2004). Through its specific architectural design, a soc-realistic city was supposed, according to Lorek (1997), to stir up enthusiasm in hearts of millions of people, to induce a bolshevik's passion, sort of a positive obsession overwhelming them, and making them excited about the new challenges and victories.

Mr. Tadeusz Ptasiński was the chief architect of the city. He supervised the development of the general urban concept of Nowa Huta, and thanks to him, this conception made explicit reference to the best European solutions in the domain of city planning. Now, specialists find a certain affinity between the Nowa Huta city project and the architectural solutions applied in the projects by Hausman in Paris. The structure of the city originated from the American idea of the neighbour's unit regarded an organizational nest of social life in small housing estates.

Nowa Huta is built on the plan of a star based on a system of five avenues radiating from the Central Square (Plac Centralny), the main spot in the city. Pursuant to the soc-realistic doctrine, this location had an outstandingly ideological character. It was the place where, during national events and political manifestations, people should have been gradually transformed in an ideologically uniform mass, in a Communist society totally subordinated to authorities (Lorek 1997).

A characteristic feature of the whole urban composition of Nowa Huta is its axial symmetry. Aleja Róż (the Roses Avenue), radiating from the Central Square, is the axis of symmetry. The exact symmetry is well-defined only within the Central Square; all the other parts of Nowa Huta city are highly similar to each other (Komorowski 1997). Buildings in individual parts of the city vary in their heights. The highest buildings are situated around the Central Square (here, the following housing estates are situated: Centrum A, Centrum B, Centrum C, and Centrum



D) and at the Andersa Avenue and Solidarności Avenue. They form closed quarters with specific gates leading into their interiors. The farther from the centre of Nowa Huta, the lower and the more scattered the buildings are. Unfortunately, this layout has been disturbed by some subsequent dwelling projects with high-rise (usually 10-storey) apartment buildings made of concrete slabs.

Architectural details have a very suggestive effect, especially in the central part of Nowa Huta. Many constructional solutions refer to the Renaissance, for example attics, turrets, and galleries arranged on the buildings. There is a function ascribed to Nowa Huta and worth mentioning. The housing estates situated close to the Central Square are densely built-up; they are often arranged as the screen-like routes divided by covered passage ways and arcades. According to Miezan (2004), such structures served both the aesthetic and the defense purposes.

In general, the buildings in Nowa Huta are an interesting example of how a socialist city developed. The oldest part of Nowa Huta is especially interesting owing to its very well-thought and compact urban plan. The contemporary urban planners and art historians have realized and recognized this extraordinary, cognitive quality of Nowa Huta, and on their initiative, the historic part of Nowa Huta was entered into List of Vintage Buildings. Since 2005, that part of Nowa Huta has been officially recognized as a monument, and, as such, incorporated into the legal protection system. Additionally, an application has been submitted, and is in the process of being proceeded, on inscribing the urban composition of Nowa Huta on the WORLD HERITAGE LIST OF UNESCO.

Nowa Huta does not only mean urban buildings constructed within the frame of real socialism. Buildings of the iron and steel plant can also lure tourists. In the past, owing to its scale, this plant was rated among the largest metallurgical plants in Europe.

This iron and steel plant was the most important industrial investment in Poland, and it became a "communist tourist attraction" as early as at the beginning of its construction. Now, it has been made accessible for tourists, although the organized groups of tourists are preferred. Tourists are attracted by both the monumental soc-realistic buildings in the Administrative Centre of the plant (the Italian Renaissance style, with attics as decorative elements; the Nowa Huta residents use to call them the Ducal Palace or the Vatican) and the typical industrial plant buildings. The tourist route comprises different phases of the steel production process; visits in the buildings: rolling mill, cogging mill, department of iron blast furnaces, converter, and oxygen melt shop, slabbing mill, and hot rolled mill are also scheduled.

Paradoxically, this specific object that, most frequently, induces negative associations (landscape transformation, environmental pollutions) can be interesting to tourists, owing to its dimensions, and the character of production. Moreover, it should be emphasized that some buildings and departments can serve as recreational and/or cultural facilities since some production lines in the plant are stopped, and, generally, the production is decreased. For example, concerts were held in the former rolling mill building.

Nowa Huta is remembered by many Poles as a city of revolt and resistance against the then political system. This city is associated with strikes of workers and labourers, with the Solidarity, and the fight over the Church. The latter element of the city's history is tremendously important and represents a complex relationship between the state and the Church during the period of socialism. From the very beginning, Nowa Huta was planned to be "a city without God". The authorities did not give their permission to erect any temple, in consequence, the residents were extremely disappointed by this refusal and loudly expressed their vital objection. Fights over the 'Holy Cross' in Nowa Huta are still remembered by the public (this cross was situated exactly

in the same place where the prospective church was planned) as is the church in Bieńczyce, the first church built in Nowa Huta during the period of socialism.

The heritage of Nowa Huta includes past traces that are younger than the iron and steel plant. According to Beiersdorf (1997), the fact that an average Pole hardly sees any historic values in Nowa Huta should be attributed to a specific stereotype-like connotation between Nowa Huta and the largest iron and steel plant located in this city. However, in Nowa Huta there are plenty of historical sites, and if it wasn't for the vicinity of the old town Cracow, Nowa Huta could be a separate historical site, indeed. There are not only pre-historical sites such as the Mound of Wanda, but also interesting and precious sacral and secular buildings such as Opactwo Cystersów (The Cistercian Abbey) in a village of Mogiła, old churches, Manor House of the famous Polish painter Jan Matejko (now, housing the museum of Jan Matejko), Lamus and the Branice Palace, or a fortified fortress called 'Twierdza Kraków'.

When speaking about the tourist attractiveness of Nowa Huta, museums should be pointed out. Right now, there are three museums in Nowa Huta. Muzeum Czynu Zbrojnego (the Museum of Armed Actions) is the oldest; it has a collection of memorabilia from the independence fights during WW I and WW II. In the Czyżyny district, there is a Museum of Polish Aviation. The third museum is the Museum of Nowa Huta, a branch of the Museum of the City of Cracow. Worth mentioning is the theatre 'Teatr Ludowy' in Nowa Huta that is famous in Poland and abroad.

#### **Nowa Huta within the Development Strategy of Tourism in Cracow**

The city of Cracow is visited by round 4 million tourists from Poland and abroad. (*Bada-nie ruchu...* 2004). The cultural potential of this city is the most appealing factor, although, now, pilgrimages and business visits are becoming more and more important in the structure of the tourist traffic. However, the tourist space in Cracow, and, thus, the array of tourist offers as developed and presented by the relevant institutions, include just several districts and points of interests in Cracow: the historic downtown with the Old Market Square and the Wawel Castle, the Jewish district of Kazimierz, and the Łagiewniki Sanctuary. Yet, Nowa Huta should also have an vital place on the tourist map of Cracow since it is a unique city on the world scale, and this fact has been often emphasized (when speaking about Nowa Huta). The most distinctive feature of Nowa Huta, essentially contributing its special position in Cracow, is the socialist heritage of Nowa Huta, and its material evidence in the form of urban and industrial buildings. Ms. A. Stenning, an English researcher, states that Nowa Huta offers to tourists a model of the real socialist urban planning unmatched by any other city throughout the world, furthermore, a unique collection of buildings from the period of the Stalin's regime, and a gigantic iron and steel plant that still dominates both the district and the life of its residents.

When developing a tourist offer for Nowa Huta, it is fundamental to properly represent and show its socialist heritage. For many years, Nowa Huta has been perceived by the locals as an uninteresting place. What is more, there was nobody in Nowa Huta who was 'proud' of their place. The residents in Nowa Huta are concerned about the possibility that tourism in this district might stop any transformation processes, thus, the district could be somehow petrified as a relict of the past era, and become a typical backwater, sort of the ethnographic 'open-air-museum' presenting 'achievements' of the soc-realism (compare Puchalska – Miętus 2004). The local district authorities try to dispel those fears and concerns. However, it has to be clearly emphasised that the local politicians are generally focused on the industrial development of the entire district, and a special economic area in the surroundings of the iron and steel plant exemplifies those attempts.



By now, there are some initial results of the mobilization activities in the domain of tourism in Nowa Huta. In the mid of the year 2005, a museum of the history of Nowa Huta was opened. There is quite a story connected with this museum. The initiative to make a museum appeared as early as in the mid 1990s. In 1997, the association 'Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Powołania i Rozwoju Muzeum Nowej Huty and HTS' (Association to Establish and Develop a Museum of Nowa Huta and Tadeusz Sendzimir Steelworks) was established. Both the locals and the managers of the iron and steel plant were involved in this project. Unfortunately, there were neither funds nor exhibition space, thus, the Association could focus only on collecting exhibits. The exhibits were temporarily presented in the cogging mill, however, the location of the cogging mill made the access to the exhibition quite difficult. In 2000, the 'Soclan' Foundation from Warsaw wanted to make a temporary exhibition. Soclan made an interactive exhibition "One Day in the Polish People's Republic" (Jeden dzień w PRL'u) using the exhibits supplied by the inhabitants of Nowa Huta. The exhibition was very well received, and popular. The formula of the exhibition was similar to the idea of Disneyland. The main idea of it was to amuse people by showing the oddities and absurdities of the existence under the socialist system. Visitors could see real-life situations, such as: shopping, (more specifically, queuing up, limited amount of goods, boorish shop assistants); life in the opposition (printing anti-government leaflets, scenes of presenting ID cards to policemen, and searches in flats). Though, people interested in erecting a Nowa Huta museum, especially members of the Association as mentioned above did not approved the way of presenting the recent history of Nowa Huta. So, a new idea of 'ecomuseum' (a scattered museum) was created, and it has won. The essence of this idea was to exhibit different objects in different parts of Nowa Huta. The Central Square 'Plac Centralny' was to be the showroom and heart of this museum. In this way, a sort of map of tourist routes across Nowa Huta (Puchalska – Miętus 2004) would be developed. In 2005, the Nowa Huta Museum was established as a part of the Museum of the City of Cracow. It comprises the exhibition in a building in the Słoneczne Scheme (osiedle Słoneczne), and several theme tours along the tourist routes marked out. The chief objective of this museum is to present the entire output of the present Nowa Huta district including the prehistoric periods and the most recent history of modern Nowa Huta. This museum is going to play a leading role in the development of tourism in this area, in the years to come.

Pursuant to guidelines of the strategic development of Cracow, the historical part of Nowa Huta is to be incorporated into the revitalization programme. The external appearance of Nowa Huta has been given more and more consideration. Since 2004, the modernization of the Central Square (Plac Centralny) and its vicinity has been carried on, and, among other things, the municipal green areas have been modernized, and the lighting system has been replaced. In 2004, the budget for the renovation of Nowa Huta amounted to one million zloty. A similar amount is to be spent in 2005. Now, the work in progress includes the restoration of the previous colour scheme of individual housing estates, based on a special Study on the Colour Scheme of Nowa Huta.

Among other mobilization activities, worth mentioning are tourist routes arranged throughout Nowa Huta. In particular, there are two interesting offers. The first was developed by the Promotion Department in the Cracow Municipal Council. It comprises the key cultural sites in Nowa Huta. This route is presented on the official websites of the city. Sorry to say, but it is still not completely marked out within the city. The second route was designed by an external institution under the frame of a project "Greenways". The aim of this venture called "Greenways Nowa Huta - Dłubnia" was to establish a new sightseeing route in Nowa Huta for hiking and cycling tourists. The routes are arranged in the form of three loops: the old Nowa Huta, Dłubnia

River, and the fortress 'Twierdza Krakow'. Contrary to the previous route, the three looped routes comprise historic monuments situated in this part of Cracow and highly valuable nature objects. This project of the Nowa Huta greenways constitutes a part of the international route Cracow - Vienna. In this project, there is also provided a water connection between the centre of Cracow and Nowa Huta (among other things, there is a canoe marina at the 'Skarpa Wiślana' on the Vistula river bank in Nowa Huta).

Both the tourist institutions & organizations in Cracow and the local organizations of the Cracow residents actively participate in developing the tourist offer of Nowa Huta, although their activities are still of a spontaneous character. Some travel agencies in Cracow offer guided sightseeing tours in Nowa Huta. Some information about that area is distributed by hoteliers and accommodation distributors. The Cracow transportation companies are also involved in the process of organising tourist traffic in Nowa Huta. The Polish State-owned Railway Company 'Polskie Koleje Państwowe' has established a train connection between the main Railway Station in Cracow and the railway station Nowa Huta; a retro train goes during the summer season only. And the Municipal Communication Company 'MPK' offers a ride around Nowa Huta on a historic bus from the socialist times.

Regrettably, there is no premeditated, planned promotional campaign on the part of the municipal authorities in Cracow that would accompany all the tourism activating actions in Nowa Huta. The majority of promotional activities are carried out on the local Nowa Huta level by associations, cultural institutions, and the residents of Nowa Huta. In 2004, Mr. Maciej Miezian published the first guidebook about Nowa Huta. That was a stone mile for the district. The book can be regarded an important instrument of promotion, and, at the same time, a directive for the further development of tourism in Nowa Huta. In this guidebook, a few tourist routes are described; they represent the socialist past of Nowa Huta (for example: the troublemakers' route, the iron & steel plant route), and many others.

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## **TURIZMUS – NOVÁ FUNKCIA POSTSOCIALISTICKÉHO MESTA PRÍPADOVÁ ŠTÚDIA MESTA NOVÁ HUTA (KRAKOV)**

### *Zhrnutie*

Nová Huta má veľký potenciál umožňujúci rozvoj tohto regiónu. Pokusy aktivizovať Novú Hutu v oblasti turizmu sú doposiaľ viacmenej spontánne a málo koordinované. Miestne úrady v Krakove neprispievajú k turistickej propagácii Novej Huty, ako keby nerozumeli, resp. neidentifikovali šancu rozvíjať jedinečné turistické atrakcie Novej Huty. Zdôrazňuje sa rozvoj nízko-nákladových prapracov, vybudovanie konferenčného centra, propagácie starého mesta, pričom sa zabúda, že dnešný turizmus neustále potrebuje nové pamiatky. Socialistické dedičstvo Novej Huty by sa mohlo stať prednosťou Krakova. Avšak bez reálnej participácie miestnych úradov sa turistický rozvoj v Novej Hute bude brzdený.

Jedným zo základných problémov vyžadujúcich si rýchle riešenie je zlepšenie v oblasti turistických stravovacích a ubytovacích zariadení. V Novej Hute sú len štyri hotely lokalizované ďaleko od centra. Tieto hotely však ponúkajú ubytovanie radšej turistom Starého Mesta než turistom Novej Huty. Reštauračné siete, rovnako ako kluby, nočné bary a pod. sú reprezentované malým počtom prevádzok.

Nádavno otvorené rekreačno-komerčné zariadenia (Aqua Park in the Czyżyny district, Plaza Mall a Cinema City) sú lokalizované na predmestí Novej Huty (a blízko historického centra Krakova), teda nemajú vplyv na celkový obraz tohto okresu.

Pri diskusii a plánovaní rozvoja turizmu v Novej Hute by malo byť na zreteli, že turizmus tu nikdy nebude prevládajúcou ekonomickou oblasťou z dôvodu blízkeho suseda – mesta Krakov. Ten bude pre turistov stále silnejším magnetom. Čo sa však musí zmeniť je predovšetkým postoj obyvateľov Novej Huty k mestu, v ktorom žijú, kultúrnemu znovuoživeniu a estetickému vylepšeniu.

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