SVALBARD'S HAUNTED LANDSCAPES

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Abstract

Cultural landscapes represent social structures, interests, and values. At the same time, the observer can derive, interpret, reinterpret, and inscribe new meanings to the landscape. Landscapes that are saturated with ideologically charged symbols dictate to the viewer what can and cannot be seen and derived from them. On the other hand, landscapes that are abandoned, ruined, partly erased, and deprived of actors, activities, and political context present a different sort of setting. What can be derived from them? What or whom do they represent? Can the current conceptualisations help to capture their meanings? This paper attempts to expand the debate on cultural landscapes, by exploring the linkages to the concepts of haunting and ghosts. It uses the Russian settlements of Barentsburg, Pyramiden, and Grumant, located in Svalbard (Norway), as an example. The paper argues that ruined and abandoned landscapes are 'haunted', and that the viewer can engage with a haunted landscape through interactions with 'ghosts' – fictitious agents that fulfil two roles: i) allowing the viewer to associate with the ghost, and ii) reminding the viewer of the bygone actors, forces, and contexts that shaped the landscape.

Keywords

Introduction

The idea of representation has been central to current conceptualisations of cultural landscapes. It implies that the observer can see the landscape and retrieve and interpret its meanings. According to Mitchell, cultural landscapes "are made to actively *represent* who has power, certainly, but also to *reinforce* that power by creating a constant and unrelenting symbol of it" (Mitchell 2000, 109). Transformed by human activities, landscapes function as an imprint of socio-economic relations in society. Studying a landscape would mean to "describe what a given landscape stands for… what cultures and histories it expresses or symbolises" (Wylie 2007, 92). The observer interprets what can be seen through their 'trained' eyes and makes judgements about what is seen.

This conceptualisation is well suited to symbolically rich, ideologically charged, and ordered landscapes formed by monuments, heritage sites, and places of remembrance. In contrast, within less organised, less visual, abandoned, or ruined landscapes, the relationships between their elements are obscure and the messages they send are confusing. According to Edensor (2005, 834), ruined places are characterised by "an excess of meaning, a plenitude of fragmented stories, elisions, fantasies, inexplicable objects". Through their opaque symbolic value and multiplicity of possible interpretations, such landscapes provoke further thoughts and questions concerning their meaning and the extent to which current conceptualisations of cultural landscapes can help to capture these meanings.

Landscapes that are ordered, or symbolically or ceremonially rich, present very different settings than landscapes that have been abandoned due to environmental or

economic change, or cleared due to resettlement programmes or military conflict. In the latter, the people who previously cultivated land, ran businesses, or filled the streets have either left or been forced out, leaving a void comprising abandoned buildings, ruins, and erased signs and monuments. What used to represent the relationship of power, economic and social order, and identities has disappeared, fragmented, or become hidden under the new cultural layers created by new actors in a palimpsest-like structure (Kinossian and Wråkberg 2017). As buildings, monuments, and signs become ruined and erased, the associated landscape fails to convey its message and represent the underlying social and economic fabric that created the landscape in the first place. Representation gives way to multiple interpretations, imagination, and contested memory work by actors who inherited the places. Instead of dictating or conveying meanings, fragmented and partly erased elements of landscapes can provoke thoughts about the past and stimulate imagination and reflection among present actors and observers.

This article aims to expand the debate on cultural landscapes by exploring the linkages to the concepts of haunting and ghosts. It aims to demonstrate how these concepts can help to analyse partly abandoned, erased, and decontextualised landscapes. The Russian/Soviet coal-mining settlements of Barentsburg, Pyramiden, and Grumant present an interesting case because of their location on the Norwegian territory, partial abandonment, and the current attempts to revive them through tourism. References to a romanticised Soviet past, distinct Soviet imagery, and associated 'otherness' are used in the current tourism development strategies as 'selling points' (Gerlach and Kinossian 2016). The apparent uniqueness of the Russian/Soviet settlements (compared to their Norwegian counterparts) provokes further questions concerning the meanings hidden within landscapes, the connections between the observer and the landscape, and the ways in which conceptualisations of cultural landscapes could be attuned to capture a broader diversity of landscape settings beyond those that are ordered and symbolically rich.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 discusses the conceptual aspects of cultural landscapes and introduces the concept of 'haunted landscape' as a frame for analysis. Section 3 presents the case of Svalbard's Russian settlements. Section 4 discusses the role of haunting and ghosts in the cultural landscape of Svalbard. The final section summarises the paper's argument and draws conclusions.

From Cultural to Haunted Landscape

Cultural landscape. According to materialist interpretations, cultural landscapes represent the relationships of power, economic production, durable social orders, and collective identities. Here, the idea of representation plays a central role (Duncan and Duncan 1988; Mitchell 2003). A structuralist conceptualisation of landscape suggests that landscapes can give rise to multiple possible interpretations, which "are the product of social contexts of historically and culturally specific discourses; they are constructed by interpretive communities" (Duncan and Duncan 1988, 120). Nevertheless, observers should not be seen as passive recipients of messages written in landscapes; instead, observers are burdened by their cultural baggage that conditions various expectations and interpretations of what can be seen. Cosgrove (1998), for example, conceptualises landscape as "the way of seeing", implying a mutually constitutive relationship between viewers and landscape. The idea of representation can play out differently in different settings.

The state plays a central role in the formation of organised, symbolically rich landscapes. State-run institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives select and preserve specific narratives of the past, and at the same time remove from official memory registers those elements of the past deemed unnecessary (Ashworth et al. 2007; Zerubavel 2003). Heritage management arrangements and related planning policies are based on Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) – an authorised way of interpreting the past that establishes a 'canon' and cuts off other, competing interpretations (Smith 2006). Establishing a heritage site requires the planning work necessary for organising transportation, ensuring safety, providing services, and developing established ways of narrating historical events.

People can challenge the official narratives by engaging in public debates and protests, by demanding recognition, or by participating in pilgrimages to specific unrecognised locations. The processes of creating cultural landscapes involve various actors, and can lead to tensions and conflicts over conflicting interpretations of the past and present uses of cultural landscapes and their elements, such as specific monuments and buildings. Recent clashes over monuments dedicated to Soviet soldiers in the Baltic states, and those commemorating Southern generals in the USA, clearly demonstrate that cultural landscape is a contentious topic that can provoke broader societal debates regarding specific readings of history and more fundamental values (Fortin 2017; Lehti et al. 2008).

Persons engaged in memory debates may be attached to a specific cause through personal connections, family history, or a collective level of association. "Mnemonic communities" unite their members on the basis of a shared understanding of certain historical events and of what should be remembered and forgotten (de Brito 2010, 362). More immediate connections to the past, for instance through family ties to the victims of the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany or the USSR, imply that the observer has an 'obvious' reason to be interested in specific memorial sites or landscapes. Such special interest gives one side of the story, whereas other individuals may visit a site through serendipity, curiosity, itinerary design, or authoritative recommendation (Lennon and Foley 2010, 23). Not everyone visits places with a programme in mind; many visits cannot be explained by the need to achieve recognition, restore justice, or search for truth.

What if landscapes are less visual, visible, and articulated? The associated cultural landscape may not represent a power structure or bear visible elements, since these may be absent. The traditional sociological approaches, based on seeing and describing "the reality of certain obvious things", may blind us "to the ways in which those things are expressly produced and fundamentally enabled by a history of loss and repression. Sociology does not well attend, then, to the living traces, the memories of the lost and the disappeared" (Radway 2008, ix). Is there a way in which the 'true' meaning of a landscape could be recovered? Daniels and Cosgrove (1988) suggest that perhaps there is no such way, citing "the inherent instability of meaning" and "our ability to invent signs and symbols, to recycle them in a different context and thus transform their reference" (pp. 7–8).

The concept of "left-over" cultural landscape partly addresses this issue. It argues that landscape represents legacies of previous regimes (Light and Young 2013; 2014). This implies that the living may still associate themselves with a past regime by rejecting or accepting it, which can explain their interest in its cultural landscape. The concept of left-over landscape exposes transformations caused by dramatic societal changes, for instance the collapse of state socialism (Czepczyński 2008). There is a time lag between changes

in political institutions, which often change overnight, and changes in material structures, including land-use patterns, buildings, and symbolic architecture. Elements of a cultural landscape representing a bygone era remain in place, become abandoned, relocated, or repurposed, but remain visible despite the severing of links with the societal context that created them.

Memories are place-specific; creating memory-spaces and spectacles is an important way of commemoration and remembrance (Johnson 2012; Till 2005; Ladd 1998). Erasing monuments and buildings is a way to de-memorise a discredited past (Light and Young 2015, 236). Relocating monuments can reformulate narratives of their legitimacy (Forest and Johnson 2019, 130). However, there is a risk of essentialism in equalising memory with its material context. Although material objects bear links to historical events and persons, they do not 'contain' memory. This focus on the tangible draws attention from the mechanism of collective and individual memory. In situations where the material elements of a landscape are erased, repurposed, or modified, memory can still persist and continue to shape identities and inform choices among the living. Instead of focusing on material factors, research should pay greater attention to how memory discourses are produced and reproduced.

There are various reasons why the visible elements of a cultural landscape should not be taken at 'face value'. Landscapes are constantly transformed through erasure, the repurposing of existing elements, and new additions. Narratives of the past are also in perpetual flux. The production of heritage involves both remodelling the physical shell through demolition and new construction, as well as forgetting specific pasts while fabricating new versions that better fit the interests of modern elites (Kinossian 2012).

Haunted Landscapes. When a landscape is abandoned or cleared, the function of representation is obstructed, and the landscape cannot be seen as a 'messenger' communicating meaning to the observer (Kinossian 2018). The observer's own imagination and interpretations therefore play more prominent roles. While current conceptualisations of cultural landscape employ the idea of representation, there is a need to better accommodate concepts of 'haunting' and 'ghosts' in landscape studies.

Haunting means the unexpected and unwanted presence of persons who are deemed not to belong, albeit they may have the right to be there. According to Avery Gordon, haunting is "neither premodern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalizable social phenomenon" (2008, 7). Through haunting we become aware of "a repressed or unresolved social violence", the victims of which have not been recognised or commemorated or have been forgotten (2008, xvi). People who have suffered violence, been forcibly removed, or murdered are not present or visible. They would have remained in their habitat, had they not suffered such violence. They have the right to claim their place, the right to be recognised, comforted, and remembered; yet they appear as ghosts:

> The ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us… Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the

structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition (Gordon 2008, 8).

Ghosts are not material objects, they are considered part of our imagination. Being imagined figures, they play an ambiguous role when they return to haunt the living. On the one hand, they are part of a place's identity: ghosts help to "constitute the specificity of historical sites, of the places where we feel we belong and do not belong, of the boundaries of possession by which we assign ownership and nativeness" (Bell 1997, 813). On the other hand, such 'visitations' are unwanted. People want to avoid contact with such ghosts, as they revive traumatic memories of a direct and second-hand nature. The trauma longs for attention; victims of violence and injustice demand peace and justice. The living have to take notice of such ghosts and listen to them. Ghosts are not free of politics. The question of who is haunting whom involves a power structure that can hamper the visibility of a group (make it ghost-like) or expose its visibility in an emancipatory act (Cameron 2008, 390). Reconciliation is possible when the trauma is publicised, when the victims and perpetrators are named.

Engagement with the haunted landscape of an abandoned town generates fascination and amusement that visitors (consciously or unconsciously) seek to experience. Such engagement involves various senses, including vision, audition, and olfaction. Haunted landscapes fail to represent or communicate a message, except for disconnected, fragmented signals that the observer has difficulty reading. Consequently, imagination kicks in, thereby opening the landscape for interpretation. The idea of the ghost as a fictitious interlocutor links the observer and the haunted landscape. The ghost haunts visitors, disturbs them, begs for attention, engages in conversation, and provokes questions. The ghost's workings are two-fold. Firstly, it allows the observer to associate with it via "corporeal empathy" (Edensor 2005, 840). People who visit abandoned or haunted places contemplate what the lives of the former residents might have been like. Places of hardship, violence, or death provoke thoughts about what people may have experienced, and how they survived or perished. This involves reflection on the possible behaviour of an individual put in similar conditions or facing similar existential choices. Secondly, the ghost reminds visitors about past events and persons that have been forgotten, ignored, or erased from memory. These two mechanisms stimulate self-reflection and thinking about identity and belonging, causing one to ask questions such as, "If I was here and then, what would I do?" This may lead to broader reflection, such as concerning the nature of human experience and humanity under inhumane conditions of oppression, forced labour, or starvation.

Urbanised Svalbard offers interesting cases for studying the interplay between cultural landscapes, the ghost, and haunting. A place of hardship, starvation, and death in the early years of colonisation, nowadays Svalbard is being transformed into a tourist resort and research base (Viken 2011). Although Svalbard remains a place of hard labour and unforgiving nature, the Norwegian and Russian settlements seem to compete in offering tourist services, and sometimes restaurants, representing an almost hedonistic style of consumption. In this pursuit of modernity, 'normality', and comfort, something seems to be lost of Svalbard's true nature. The Russian settlements show how loss and the void make themselves felt in a haunted landscape.

The Russian settlements on Svalbard

The examples of the Soviet/Russian coal-mining settlements on Svalbard (Pyramiden, Barentsburg, and Grumant) illustrate both the physical and symbolic transformations of cultural landscapes. The physical changes in Pyramiden and Grumant were abrupt: the former was abandoned in 1998 and the latter in 1961. Coal mining in Barentsburg has continued since the 1920s (with an interruption during WWII). The three sites now have unique symbolic roles. While Grumant is a typical ruined landscape, Pyramiden and Barentsburg have recently undergone a "recycling" of their images (Gerlach and Kinossian 2016). The former now represents the Soviet Arctic, and the latter the modern Russian Arctic, while both respond to the curiosity of Russian and foreign tourists who seem to be puzzled by the presence of former Soviet settlements on the Norwegian territory.

The Russian settlements on Svalbard appear somewhat alien within the island's Norwegian context, not least because they are the products of different political systems, planning principles and urban development rules. Soviet companies started acquiring coalfields and mining settlements on Svalbard during the late 1920s, including Grumant City, the Pyramiden coalfield, and Barentsburg (Avango et al. 2011, 36). In October 1931, the Soviet Government established the S*tate Trust Arktikugol'* (hereafter, *Arktikugol'*) to conduct mining activities on Svalbard and supply coal for the industrial centres of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk (Zinger 2014, 185). The Russian settlements are still governed from Moscow, by the Russian Government via Arktikugol', which is in charge of running the mines, maintaining the technical and social infrastructure, sourcing labour, and – increasingly – developing new economic activities such as tourism to replace coal mining as the base for the Russian presence on the archipelago.

Mining activities near Pyramiden were started in 1911 by a Swedish company (Arlov 2016, 292). Following the Second World War, in 1946 Arktikugol' began constructing a mine and a settlement (*ibid*, 417). As a Soviet settlement on Norwegian territory, it was on the 'front line' of the Cold War and at the same time constituted the westward-oriented façade of the Soviet system. Besides propaganda purposes, there were fundamental differences between the approaches used by the market and centralised economies. For example, a Norwegian visitor cannot hide his admiration for Pyramiden, which was built as an exemplar Soviet town. Splendid Palace of Culture. Good library. Modern hospital. Sport hall. Swimming pool. School. Kindergarten. Hospital. Museum. Pyramiden looks like it was built forever, or at least, to last until the Victory of Socialism, not for the purpose of temporarily accommodating people who, over the course of several decades, will empty one mineral deposit field and will move on to empty the next one (Fløgstad 2008, 92).

Figure 1. The bust of Lenin in front of the House of Culture in Pyramiden. Photo by the author, 2018.

Tourists can reach Pyramiden by boat, snowmobile, or helicopter. Upon their arrival, boat operators pass tourists over to the Russian guides from the *Arctic Travel Company Grumant* – a subsidiary of Arktikugol' – who take them on a guided tour. A two-hour tour typically includes a walk through the settlement and visits to several buildings, including the hotel *Tyulpan* (Tulip) – home to a souvenir shop, the post office, and a bar. Many other buildings, including the hospital, school, workshops, and workers' dormitories, are not accessible during a short tour.

A bust of Lenin overlooks the central square and a massive lawn – a favourite grazing pasture for Arctic reindeer (Figure 1). The tour guide informs visitors that the soil was brought from Ukraine to ensure the grass grows well. The former House of Culture accommodates the convention hall / cinema theatre, a basketball court, library, and various studios. The building is undergoing a slow renovation, with some parts being refurbished and others remaining in a state of disrepair. Visitors walk through dark corridors, entering studios where music, dance, and fine-arts classes once took place. There are numerous 'artefacts' present: books, musical instruments, Soviet propaganda posters, pieces of equipment, empty bottles, items of clothing, dead plants, and timetables announcing various activities (Figure 2). The former sports complex stands next to the House of Culture and accommodates a swimming pool and indoor firing range – all disused. The lobby of the dining hall hosts a large mosaic representing natural Arctic themes such as the polar bear. The kitchen is full of rusting equipment and broken furniture. The cooking equipment, installed to prepare hundreds of meals per day, was not evacuated – as if the Russians were planning to return.

Figure 2. Inside the Pyramiden House of Culture. Photo by the author, 2018.

The settlement of Barentsburg was established in the 1920s. In 1932, Arktikugol' purchased Barentsburg from a Dutch company (Arktikugol' 2018). In sharp contrast to the abandoned settlement of Pyramiden, Barentsburg seems to be full of life. Here and there, workers repair the façades of buildings and elevated overground pipes, mine-workers walk to and from their shifts, women go shopping, delivery vehicles bring goods to shops and hotels. Tourists – in groups and individually – walk around, take pictures, and wander into the museum, tourist office, souvenir shops, bars, and restaurants.

Over the last five years, Barentsburg has undergone visible changes. Many buildings have received face-lifts. New façades use modern materials resilient to hostile Arctic conditions. Colourful and shiny, the new façades lighten the environment during the dark period of the polar winter. There is a new souvenir shop selling merchandise with Arctic, Svalbard, and Arktikugol' themes. Some items are produced in Barentsburg, in a workshop where miners' wives can find employment.

Barentsburg's *Krasnyy Medved'* (The Red Bear) brewery opened in 2012. Until 2015, it was the northernmost brewery in the world, until *Svalbard Bryggeri AS* started producing beer in Longyearbyen. The *Krasnyy Medved'* restaurant offers a remarkable choice of dishes and beverages, including the locally brewed Red Bear draughts *Belgium Blond*, *Amber*, and *Dark*. The restaurant offers the *Hot Arctic* drink menu designed in retro-style, with themes of: Pure Arctic, Soviet Arctic, Boat Cocktails, and International Arctic (Figure 3).
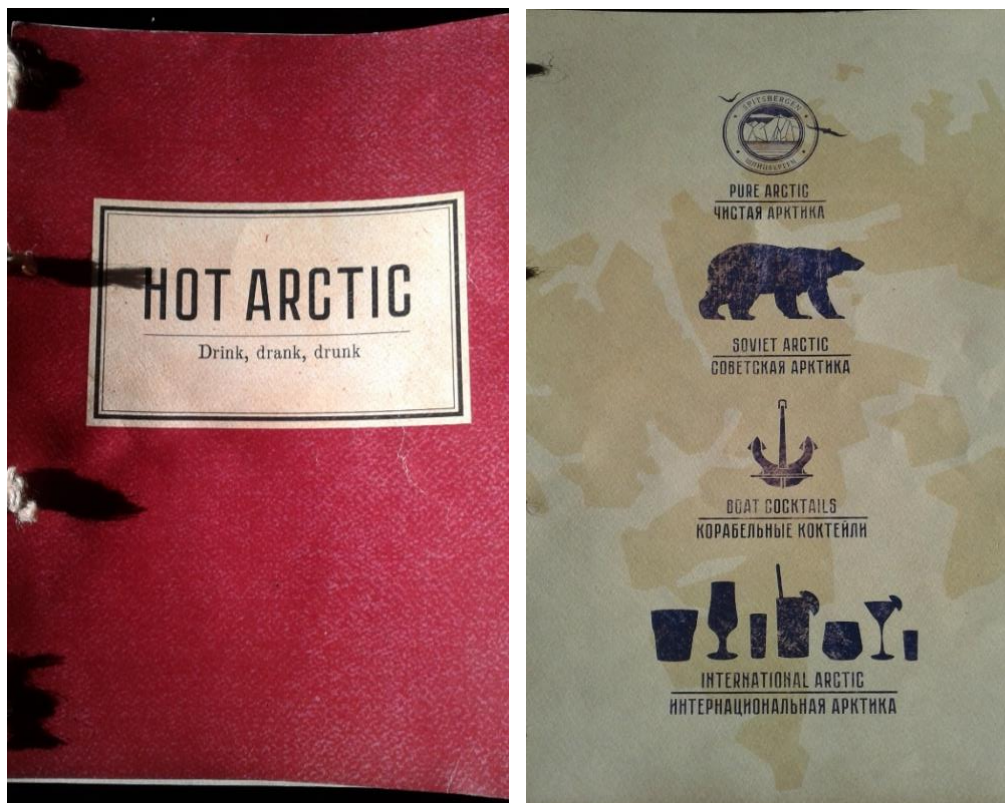
Figure 3. The 'Hot Arctic' drink menu of the Krasnyy Medved' restaurant, Barentsburg. Photo by the author, 2018.

Taken over by the pursuit of modernity and economic viability, Barentsburg is losing its unique Soviet aura. Refurbished façades resemble those anywhere else in provincial Russia. Some elements of Communist monumental propaganda have recently disappeared – either intentionally demolished or covered up by new façades. For instance, a concrete obelisk that stood next to the "Miner's Labour" monument was demolished. The monument itself is under threat of demolition, having been deemed unnecessary. Figure 4 shows the monument in 2013 and Figure 5 in 2018.

Figure 4. The "Miner's Labour" monument in Barentsburg in 2013. A concrete obelisk, symbolically topped with a chunk of coal, stands alongside a stela depicting a miner in an industrial landscape. Photo by the author.

Figure 5. The "Miner's Labour" monument in Barentsburg in 2018. The obelisk was recently removed. Photo by the author.

A large mural on the façade of Barentsburg's sports hall portrayed three workers (two men and a woman) in the centre of a larger composition depicting 'Soviet' themes of industrial landscapes and images of engineers and workers. Figure 6 shows the façade in 2013. This prominent mural disappeared after the building received a modern façade,

thereby depriving the renovated sports hall of its unique Soviet look. A number of buildings have been demolished; only the rectangular footprints of former buildings, covered in brick rubble, show that the sites were previously occupied. The town's Soviet heritage is disappearing not only as a result of purposeful demolition and modernisation, but also due to the harsh natural conditions. Abandoned buildings fall apart, monuments built on permafrost suffer subsidence, and once-colourful murals lose their vibrancy.

Figure 6. A mural depicting three workers. Photo by the author, 2013.

The managers of Arktikugol' seem to have found a Solomonic solution to the issue of Soviet heritage: Pyramiden was designated as a 'Soviet' town and Barentsburg as a 'modern' Russian town, which means playing down the 'unnecessary' Soviet symbols. Nevertheless, this is not a clear-cut division. If tourist marketing of Pyramiden is clearly based on exploiting its Soviet image, Barentsburg as a destination does not have such a clear 'selling point'. Instead, it has a more complex image, based on narratives of Pomor trade, Arctic exploration, a heroic Soviet past, and modern opportunities for outdoor activities and recreation.

In both Barentsburg and Pyramiden, Soviet symbols and narratives are clearly present. A concrete stela with the inscription "Our Goal is Communism!" is still located in the centre of Barentsburg. Busts of Lenin remain in place at both settlements. Souvenir shops sell various merchandise bearing Soviet symbols, including "*Back to USSR*" T-shirts; "Welcome to our Arctic time machine" reads the message printed on the front.
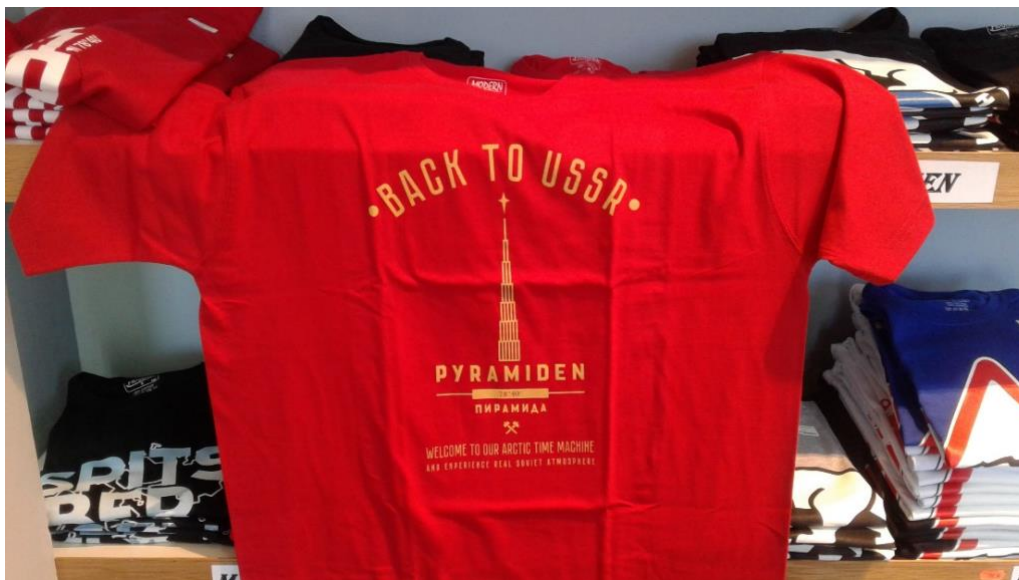

Figure 7. "Back to USSR" T-shirt available in souvenir shops at Pyramiden and Barentsburg. Photo by the author, 2018.

The guides employed by the *Arctic Travel Company Grumant* repeat verbatim an identical script, explaining the prestige of working at Svalbard during Soviet times. The guide – who in all likelihood was born after the USSR collapsed – announces: "After a couple years of working here, miners could save enough money to buy an apartment on the mainland". This claim is questionable, given the absence of a real estate market in the USSR, although it is true that miners at Svalbard were somewhat better paid than those working on the mainland.

It is difficult to imagine Grumant as a popular tourist destination, considering its poor accessibility and the structural instability of its buildings. It will seemingly remain abandoned, slowly giving way to the harsh climate. As its coal deposits were exhausted, the Soviet Government decided to halt operations in 1961. Nowadays, only several buildings in a bad state of disrepair remain. Most tourists only see Grumant from boats operating on the tourist route between Longyearbyen and Barentsburg. More dedicated tourists may book tours that provide an opportunity to disembark at Coalsbay and walk to Grumant along the disused railroad that previously linked the mines of Grumant with the coal-exporting terminal at Coalsbay (for there was no suitable harbour at Grumant).

The haunted landscape of the Russian settlements sends a confused message whereby narratives of the Arctic, the history of exploration, and the Communist workers' paradise appear in a palimpsest-like form. Some symbols of state socialism have been removed; others are being reproduced and commercialised. Myths about state socialism in the USSR have formed the foundation of the modern narratives about Soviet/Russian settlements on Svalbard. Ghosts from the past seem to fight their way through the latest attempts to create a modern image of these Russian settlements.

Reflections

The Soviet/Russian settlements on Svalbard bear elements of ordered, ruined, partly erased, and remodelled landscapes. This ambiguity opens avenues for (re)interpretation by various actors, including curious visitors, local actors, policy-makers, and researchers. The concepts of the ghost and haunting can help to explore the depth and temporal dynamics of the Svalbard landscapes by remembering and commemorating actors who once formed them, and by relating to them from the position of the present. Such experiences give rise to multiple readings of the past; new interpretations and narratives can be created and promoted by observers who select some (and forget or erase other) elements of the past.

The Soviet/Russian settlements on Svalbard differ both architecturally and symbolically from their Norwegian counterparts. The Soviet planning tradition is clearly visible in Pyramiden, and Soviet monumental propaganda is visible in both Pyramiden and Barentsburg. Nowadays, this appeared to be a part of the "recycled" image of the Russian settlements (Gerlach and Kinossian 2016). The Communist ideology praised working-class people, celebrating their heroism and dedication. Monumental propaganda has created a romanticised image of the Soviet worker: triumphant, young, and strong, (s)he celebrates the achievements of the Communist system. (S)he is depicted within the imagined industrial landscape, which says little about the actual working conditions of most workers, who were tasked with difficult and often dangerous physical labour.

By contrast, depictions of Norwegian workers are less graphic but much more realistic. One sculpture in Longyearbyen depicts a miner working at a coal seam; he lays on his side, being squeezed into a narrow pit. The monument to the *Unknown Miner* in front of Longyearbyen's *Lompen Senteret* depicts the miner as a humble figure in his working gear. The interior of the *Karlsberger Pub* (http://www.karlsbergerpub.no/) is decorated with photographs of local miners. The 'Norwegian' way of depicting the working man is more natural, realistic, and warmer than the idealised and stylised heroic images of the Soviet worker. Considering that working conditions in Norwegian and Soviet/Russian settlements were similar, these differences in depicting the working man are purely ideological. In modern Barentsburg, the Board of Honour (in Russian, *doska pocheta*) has empty placeholders that once displayed pictures of the best workers (Figure 8). It appears that the modern managers of the mine do not have a 'vision' of the working class under the current conditions. The absence of the pictures becomes 'ghostly' when it is noticeable/anticipated (the whole idea of visiting a place that has been abandoned) and when current occupants of the place become increasingly marginalised and decontextualised as the mining activities lose economic relevance.

Figure 8. 'Ghostly' looking board of honour, Barentsburg. Photo by the author, 2018.

The Soviet settlements were a product of the USSR's planned economy – unlike other places on the Archipelago. Even after the end of the Cold War, the old borders seem to defy globalisation. While the Russian settlements remain 'Soviet' by the population composition as the majority of workers come from Ukraine and Russia, Longyearbyen remains Norwegian (although there is a large immigrant population). In that sense, globalisation in Svalbard takes place unevenly, governed by the regimes established during the Cold War.

The local workers and visitors represent the two parallel worlds that seemingly do not overlap. Those who came to Barentsburg to earn money – versus to spend it – belong to different professional and social strata and often to different countries. Prices in tourist bars and restaurants are well beyond the means of an average mine worker. One night out in a restaurant catering for tourists can cost as much as a local worker's monthly salary. On the other hand, tourists may hesitate to wander into the workers' canteens or shops, although they operate on a non-discriminatory basis. Therefore, the places created to generate currency-flow from tourism, and those intended for the workers, largely stick to their own clientele.

The tourist guides (or the script they follow) repeat a single narrative of the happy and unproblematic life of workers during Soviet times, and of the continuation of such a life now. "Despite the fact that there may be a war between Russia and Ukraine on the *mainland*, *here* we live peacefully" – explains the guide, continuing: "It is a politics-free territory. We do not have political discussions here". Clearly, this cannot be interpreted as an invitation to ask any further questions about the relationship between Russian and Ukrainian workers. Promoting this somewhat naïve take on the absence of politics in such a politically structured geographical setting cannot be the guide's personal interpretation, since it is repeated verbatim by different guides and by the *Russian Bulletin of Spitsbergen*, a magazine published by Arktikugol'.

These identical monologues of the tour guides, the narrations presented in the local museum, and stories published by the *Bulletin*, suggest that the Soviet/Russian settlements are not only a 'heritage' or 'ruined' landscape but in many ways an "officialised" landscape designed according to the vision of the Russian presence in the Arctic imposed from Moscow. As part of that narrative, not only are the past daily life, hardships, and state-provided living mythologised (if not faked for the sake of the authorised discourse), but the current and future presence and uses are also subject to equally disingenuous representations, exploiting the old narratives of the Soviet workers' 'paradise' and that of different Svalbard communities living harmoniously without tensions or differing personal opinions.

As mining is increasingly replaced by other forms of economic activity, such as tourism and research, the value and necessity of mining activities become questionable. In real or imagined competition for Arctic resources, the presence on Svalbard is considered as a strategic advantage. Both Russia and Norway (as well as other countries) strive to maintain their presence on Svalbard, even if mining is no longer viable. This transition makes the remaining miners another class of spectators to the real function of Svalbard: to provide a gateway to the Arctic. In the past the Soviet settlements on Svalbard created the image of the Soviet 'paradise', whereas under the new conditions the remaining mining activities are themselves a sham, as the real value has already shifted to tourism, while the mining communities simply provide a backdrop as 'living ghosts' observed by curious visitors. The previous mining landscape was a reflection of the communities' real functions and purposes (albeit ideologically motivated), whereas the current landscape is an anachronism. The mines have turned from an asset to a liability, but they are kept on as a means of maintaining a presence on the Archipelago.

Conclusions

Visiting Pyramiden and Barentsburg creates an ambiguous impression. On the one hand, it is part of the Arctic – relatively recently discovered by Europeans, even more recently colonised, and remote from major cities. All Arctic settlements have emerged due to one goal – the extraction of natural resources. In that sense, Svalbard still exists in a scalar 'limbo' – serving the interests of external centres of political power and hosting struggles originating elsewhere. Despite the similarities in physical conditions, the identities of settlements on Svalbard are still shaped by the Cold War divides. Political and cultural differences mean that the Russian settlements do not 'belong' to Norwegian Svalbard. Designed and built according to other principles, they were once populated by workers sent there by the Soviet Government to 'build communism' – both locally and (as ultimately envisioned) on the planetary scale. After the collapse of communism, the loss of the overall political and economic context, and the physical abandonment of some settlements, created a specific feeling of a haunted place.

This paper argues that the current ways of conceptualising cultural landscapes as 'text' or as a 'left-over' landscape imply that the observer is still led by the 'original' or 'inscribed' message, albeit in a distorted, subdued, or muted way. That viewpoint may be best suited to landscapes that are symbolically rich, ordered, or associated with memorialisation. However, landscapes that are abandoned, ruined, and partly erased represent a different setting. They may be symbolically opaque, decontextualised, void of actors, heritage claimants, or victims demanding remembrance and justice. While such landscapes may not invoke memories of triumph or trauma, they nevertheless offer an

interesting setting for exploring the relationship between observer and landscape. Ruined landscapes may offer greater freedom for imagination and interpretation, including by engaging with bygone authors now represented by ghosts.

The Soviet workers of earlier times have disappeared along with the USSR. Their memories are gradually being erased, giving way to written accounts and official records. The narratives of the Soviet workers' paradise in the Arctic – although devoid of much substance – have become a central element of the officialised cultural landscape created by current policy makers and tour operators as authorised narrators. As mining is losing (or has already lost) its economic viability, both Norway and Russia consider it strategically important to maintain their presence on Svalbard. Norwegian doctrine implies transforming the transitory ethos of Longyearbyen in favour of a more stable community. The Russian Government, acting through Arktikugol', is implementing a restructuring programme to introduce new economic activities such as tourism to replace coal mining as the 'anchor' activity there.

Commercialisation is transforming urban Svalbard: there are increasing numbers of hotels and dining places in Longyearbyen and Barentsburg. Longyearbyen merchandise appears entirely dominated by the polar bear theme – as if Svalbard was nothing but a polar bear colony. Apparently, there is more imagination on the Russian side, as in addition to the omnipresent polar bear there are products depicting the Soviet past. The commercialisation of the past, and especially of the Communist past, can be seen as a disturbing and uncritical use of a narrative of totalitarianism for marketing purposes. Soviet-styled merchandise is intended to contribute to the new economy of the Russian settlements. Remaining miners and paying tourists belong to different universes, being strangers – if not ghosts – to each other.

Being surrounded by an environment once full of life and meaning places observers in an interesting position. On the one hand, observers are 'intruders' in the material settings to which they do not belong, which they have not created, and with which they are only partly familiar (if at all). Despite the abandonment and void, the observers are constantly reminded of the presence of a ghost, by various buildings, ruins, left-over objects, images, and narratives. On the other hand, visitors/intruders may like to occupy the void by associating with the ghost, feeling empathy, and imagining themselves as those who previously lived and worked in that environment. The presence of the ghost is felt, giving the intruder a chance to contemplate the destiny of a place and the fate of the bygone residents who once occupied it. This engagement or a dialog with the ghost as a fictitious character may be a way to answer the questions invoked by the haunted landscapes of Svalbard.

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