



Plants and (post)socialist cities: entangled narratives.

Call for chapters

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Deadline for abstracts: end of April 2025

Narratives constructed in relation to plants in urban ecosystems (Gandy 2022) are already a well-established theme in the social sciences and humanities. Plants with their symbolic, totemic value (Leach 1964) can be treated as entities of history intertwined with collective memory. Biohistories allow us to trace the relationship between societies and ecosystems - the epoch that interests us in this context is post-war (global) socialism and its subsequent transformations.

Despite the significant achievements of literary plant studies, the presence of green spaces - whether as elements of the urban plan, symbols of the modern architecture of the socialist city - remains a largely unexplored dimension of urban life. How did plants shape the experiences, memories and transformations of urbanity under socialism, and how do they continue to influence the ongoing development of post-socialist cities? What were the ways in which urban narratives of greenness were constructed in the urban built environment?

We would like to include an analysis of cultural and textual representations of nature on the example of (post-)socialist cities, hence it would be proper when they are using the conceptual frame of geopoetics, ecocriticism, and eco-feminist. We are interested in the relationship between literature and the environment, reading the semiotic codes inscribed in green urban areas through the prism of narratives belonging to different genres.

We invite scholars of various academic disciplines, but we are more interested in the perspective of literary and cultural studies than in urban, geographical or environmental analysis. We would welcome works on different forms of cultural narrative texts: from guidebooks and non-fiction to literary fiction, but all texts should remain related to the period and context of the (post)socialist city.

We propose the following working set of themes:

1. Green utopias: conceptualisations of the ordering of urban nature and the natural environment in socialist urban imaginaries. The place of plants in avant-garde utopias. Greenery in the (re)construction process of the socialist city
2. Breaking up the concrete. Post-socialist transformation and the new roles of urban greenery. Transforming the post-authoritarian landscape. Using plants in green remembrance projects.

3. Green resistance. Plants and their significance for anti-communist opposition. Symbols associated with plants in the iconography of opposition to authoritarian power. Parks as spaces of political expression in socialist and post-socialist cities.
4. Scale and perspective: or the ecological position and (in)equality.
5. Out of control. Green wastelands and fourth nature (Kowarik 20025) in the (post)socialist city. Plants in everyday life. The importance of plants and green spaces in residents' daily life, recreation and non-political social practices.
6. The twilight of urban order. Vegetation in post-apocalyptic humanism and other visions of the bio-future.
7. Behavioural change: in the service of green order - politics and ecological order past and present on the example of (post)socialist cities. The urban process and the cultural context.

Abstract Submission Guidelines

Length: Extended abstracts should be between 500 and 800 words (excluding references).

Structure: Title, Abstract Body, Keywords (provide 4-6 relevant keywords), Author Information: (name(s), affiliation(s), and contact details).

References (if any): Use APA style.

Formatting: Submit as a Word document (.docx), using 12-point Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing, and standard margins.

Language: English

Review and Selection Process

All submitted abstracts will undergo a peer review by editors.

Authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to submit full chapters.

Timeline

Abstract Submission Deadline: 30th April 2025. Files should be sent to w.pessel@uw.edu.pl.

Notification of Acceptance: mid-May 2025.

Full Chapter Submission Deadline: TBA after publisher's evaluation, but no later than end of 2025.

Allowed length of the text: app 6000 words (30,000 - 40,000 characters including spaces).

Expected Publication Date: end of 2026.

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