**Permeating the Walls of the Castle:**

**Exploring the Potential of VR and AR for a Contested Heritage Site**

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“By their nature, castles are dominant localities that define boundaries that tell us who has the right to be inside, within the centre of power and in control, and who is outside, on the periphery. Castles are a dynamic presence, places that produce movement between home and abroad, sites for the construction of narratives of time and narratives of space. […] Who owns the castle? Who has the right to tell their story?” (Edward M. Bruner (2005) Culture on Tour: Ethnography of Travel. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press: 122-123)

In a small tourism resort on a beautiful peninsula surrounded by the lakes of Masuria in Northeast of Poland the walls of a once majestic manor house are crumbling, its roof bales creaking. Not that the “Pałac”, manor house, was treated like a princess in the preceding four decades of socialism where it served as a leisure centre, but the arrival of democracy and capitalism has outweighed the damages of socialism and not done the building much good: once designed by a gentry family to serve but one owner and his purpose of cultivating and governing his lands, now too many stories and too many visions have clouded together over it, weighing the building down with the burden of multiplicity, lack of consent, and competing visions of the future. Tourism investors, transnational heritage activists, ancestors of the last owner of the place, regional politicians, local residents, and long-term tourists hold different ideas about its development. Naturally, these visions and the stories and values they imply do not have the same weight, some have more backing than others: financial, political, or both.

How can an ambivalent, evolving heritage site be rescued materially without being lost virtually to some of its marginalized heirs and the stories that connect them to the place? Based on observations from over six years of ethnographic fieldwork at the manor and with a Masseyan approach to space, this paper reconsiders the parametres of place, ownership, materiality, and virtuality, and the modes of place-ness with regards to the manor house. And it elaborates possibilities for the future: By exploring the creative potential of old and new technologies of reality augmentation and virtual worlding, it prototypes different ways of permeating the walls of the castles and stretching it to make space for different, competing stories. Augmented Reality devices allow visitors to add layers of information, and meaning to the reality they perceive, Virtual Reality technologies facilitate (audio-) visual, and soon also corporeal immersion into a virtual place. Both principles can be used as creative tools for designing more permeable castle walls and allowing for a stretched space, in which stories, different senses of ownership, and place can be accommodated.

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Hannah C. Wadle (PhD) is a Social Anthropologist, Researcher and Artist, affiliated with the University of Manchester. She finished her PhD in 2015 in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester with the thesis “The Moral Work of Tourismship. Ethnographic Tales about Post-Socialism from the Masurian Lake District, Poland”. It focused on changing tourism cultures, heritage making, and moral work in post-East Prussian, post-socialist Northeast Poland. She peer reviews for the *Journal for Tourism and Cultural Change*, *Hospitality and Society*, and *Folia Turistica*. She is a member of the *EASA* and of the *Centre for Imaginative Ethnography*, York, CA.

**Ongoing projects**

Producing accessible research outputs in collaboration with local and tourism communities of Northeast Poland. From part of her research and in collaboration with local residents, tourists, and transnational heritage activists, Hannah developed the forthcoming exhibition “The People’s Palace and its Legacies. The Manor of Sztynort 1946-2016.” It will be on display in Szytnort, Poland, in summer 2017. Another project is the collaboration with the local sailing activist and artist Jerzy Tyszko on an illustrated ethno-fiction story about the changes in contemporary sailing tourism in the Masurian Lake District of Northeast Poland. The work – a fictitious logbook of a sailing journey based on ethnographic observations - will be published as a book for a broader audience in 2017.

Finalising the co-edited book (with Bianca Hoenig) “Eden for Everyone. Tourism Places of Longing/ Sehnsuchtsorte in Central and Eastern Europe”. Through the lens of empirical studies from across Central and Eastern Europe, the twelve contributors to the book explore the idea of tourism places of longing and the complex character of touristic yearnings in a geo-politically ruptured and ideologically governed area. The book will be published with Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in 2017.

Developing a postdoctoral research project on new and old cultural technologies of virtual worlding and reality augmentation in tourism performances and in heritage production.

**Key Publications**

 (forthcoming Jan. 2017) Encountering Tourism in the Masurian Lake District: Locating the Moral Self in the New Rural Poland. In: Journal for Tourism and Cultural Change, Special Issue: “Tourism in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe”, ed. by Magdalena Banaszkiewicz and Nelson Graburn.

 (2016) Towards an Anthropology of Virtual and Augmented Realities. Social Anthropology/ Anthropologie Sociale 24(3), 376-378. As part of: Re-Thinking Anthropology: Part Three. Early Career Scholars Forum. pp. 353-79 Ed. by: Francisco Martínez.

(2016) In One Boat with Komandor Tyszko: Comics, Collaboration, Place-Making, and Knowledge Exchange on the Theme of Postsocialist Transformations of Polish Sailing Tourism. In: Imaginings project. Comics and Ethnography. Blog ed. by Stacey Leigh Piggs and Cristina Moretti, Centre for Imaginative Ethnography. URL: http://imaginativeethnography.org/imaginings/comics/

with M. Verschaeve (2014) Tourism and Post-Socialist Heterotopias: Eastern Europe as an Imagined Rural Past. In: Tourism and the Power of Otherness. Seductions of Difference. Ed. by David Picard and Michael Di Giovine, pp. 74-94.