



HAL
open science

Seeing and Imagining the Land of Tito: Oscar Waiss and the Geography of Socialist Yugoslavia

Agustin Cosovschi

► **To cite this version:**

Agustin Cosovschi. Seeing and Imagining the Land of Tito: Oscar Waiss and the Geography of Socialist Yugoslavia. *Balkanologie*, 2022, 17 (n° 1), 10.4000/balkanologie.4033 . hal-03959100

HAL Id: hal-03959100

<https://hal.science/hal-03959100v1>

Submitted on 29 Mar 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Seeing and Imagining the Land of Tito: Oscar Waiss and the Geography of Socialist Yugoslavia

Voir et imaginer la terre de Tito : Oscar Waiss et la géographie de la Yougoslavie socialiste

Agustin Cosovschi



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/4033>

DOI: 10.4000/balkanologie.4033

ISSN: 1965-0582

Publisher

Association française d'études sur les Balkans (Afebalk)

Brought to you by Bibliothèque de l'Ecole française d'Athènes



Electronic reference

Agustin Cosovschi, "Seeing and Imagining the Land of Tito: Oscar Waiss and the Geography of Socialist Yugoslavia", *Balkanologie* [Online], Vol. 17 n° 1 | 2022, Online since 30 September 2022, connection on 29 March 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/4033> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/balkanologie.4033>

This text was automatically generated on 16 February 2023.

All rights reserved

Seeing and Imagining the Land of Tito: Oscar Waiss and the Geography of Socialist Yugoslavia

Voir et imaginer la terre de Tito : Oscar Waiss et la géographie de la Yougoslavie socialiste

Agustin Cosovschi

- 1 After its break with the USSR in 1948 and in the framework of a wider strategy to multiply its allies beyond the Eastern bloc, socialist Yugoslavia set out in the early 1950s to develop closer relations with left-wing and nationalist forces in the non-European world. In a context characterized by the spirit of the Bandung Conference and the rise of the “Third World” as a global actor, left-wing militants and intellectuals from Asia, Africa and Latin America became regular visitors to Yugoslavia from the mid 1950s onwards. Attracted by ideas of self-management and non-alignment, most of them came to familiarize themselves with the singular features of the Yugoslav socialist experiment, perceived by many as an alternative model for small nations in the context of the bipolar world. The Yugoslavs made the most of these visits, using these occasions to promote their ideas, their narrative of national liberation, and their prestige as a democratic and popular alternative to Soviet-style socialism.
- 2 In Latin America, one of Belgrade’s most important partners was the Chilean Popular Socialist Party (*Partido socialista popular*, PSP). In the 1950s, Chile became one of the footholds of Yugoslav activities in Latin America: the country was systematically included in Yugoslav tours in the continent, a Yugoslav-Chilean cultural center was active in Santiago, and the PSP regularly printed and distributed many editions in Spanish of Yugoslav authors such as Edvard Kardelj and Boris Zihelr.¹ Relations between the PSP and the Yugoslav regime gave way to regular visits by Chilean socialists to Yugoslav soil, with party leaders Raúl Ampuero, Salomon Corbalán and Salvador Allende visiting Yugoslavia during the 1950s and 1960s. Yet perhaps the most illuminating of these was the visit carried out by party intellectual Oscar Waiss and senator Aniceto Rodríguez in 1955. The experience was extensively described in Waiss’s

1956 book *Amanecer en Belgrado* [Dawn in Belgrade], which became one of the first and most exhaustive works about the Yugoslav socialist experience available in the Spanish language to Latin American readers. In the pages of the book, Waiss extolled the Yugoslav partisan struggle against fascism; he expressed his admiration for the Yugoslavs' courage and independence vis-à-vis the USSR; and he articulated a strong defense of socialist self-management as a democratic socialist model.²

- 3 As I have claimed elsewhere, *Amanecer en Belgrado* made of Waiss almost a speaker for the Yugoslavs in Latin America: his admiration for the Yugoslav model, as well as his respect for the Yugoslavs' moral values, made him a perfect vehicle to convey a positive image of Yugoslav socialism to Latin American readers.³ Yet the book is not only remarkable for these overtly programmatic components, but also for its potent portrayal of Yugoslavia as a mesmerizing land of cultural, historical and topographical diversity; an unknown territory full of wonders and surprises, much captivating for a foreigner coming from across the ocean. In his book, Waiss devotes extensive passages to describing his experience of the cities, the towns and the natural landscape of the Balkans, and he repeatedly conveys the image of a multicultural Yugoslavia in which the diverse traditions of the kingdoms and empires of Southeast Europe coexist in peace and harmony under the umbrella of socialism. In other words, *Amanecer en Belgrado* is not only a work about the Yugoslav model, it is also a portrayal of the political, economic, social and cultural geography of socialist Yugoslavia.
- 4 Historical scholarship on Yugoslavia has given considerable attention to the problem of space. Several works have analyzed the political, social and cultural dynamics of space and its imagining in the Balkans. Drawing on Edward Said, works such as Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* and Milica Bakić-Hayden's analysis of "nesting orientalisms" have shown the political and cultural uses of space in the region, showing among other things that ideas and images associated with the Balkans have often served to reinforce internal borders, spatial hierarchies and regional disparities in the Southeast European region.⁴ Moreover, tensions between the city and countryside have also been posited by many authors as a key dimension in the analysis of Yugoslav history,⁵ and the problem of regional and republican disparities has also been at the center of several works dealing with the crisis of Yugoslav socialism.⁶ More recently, the works of Igor Tchoukarine about the history of tourism and Brigitte Le Normand's research on the history of housing and urban policies have also attended to the dimension of space, and especially to its political and social construction through different policies emanating from the Yugoslav communist regime.⁷
- 5 In this article, drawing on some of these works and inspired by what authors have called "the spatial turn" in humanities and social sciences,⁸ I analyze the book *Amanecer en Belgrado* primarily from the perspective of spatiality. I read it as an instrument of spatial imagining and use it to shed light on the political, economic, social and cultural construction of space in socialist Yugoslavia. I examine Waiss's portrayal of Yugoslav geography and I interpret these perceptions against the background of socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s. Moreover, in order to enhance my interpretation of Waiss's visit, I draw on a number of tools for digital mapping to visualize his itinerary in the country. This allows me not only to give a concrete picture of his journey, but also to analyze it against the background of other phenomena such as the distribution of mass tourism, existing natural and economic differences among Yugoslav regions, and to compare it with the itineraries of other Chilean socialist travelers who came to

Yugoslavia in later years. Thus, visualizations allow me to raise new questions concerning Waiss's experience of Yugoslavia's geography, and more generally about the communist regime's use of space as a political and ideological tool.

- 6 In the first section, I offer a brief historical account of relations between Chilean socialists and the Yugoslav regime and I situate Waiss's visit in the context of these blossoming transnational connections. In the second section, I extensively analyze Waiss's portrayal of Yugoslavia's physical and social landscape. In the last section, I examine these perceptions against the background of the 1950s and I suggest that his portrayal was much in tune with the multicultural image that the communist regime attempted to convey during those years, which presented Yugoslavia as a rich land where diversity of landscape and diversity of cultures, religion and languages went hand-in-hand, all harmoniously coexisting under Yugoslav socialism. Thus, I contend that that the book is telling of the ways in which the Yugoslav regime strove to construct an image of the country, and of its geography, for itself and for the world. I also claim that, although his visit was foremost political, Waiss's voyage followed to a great extent the typical routes of tourism in Yugoslavia. Finally, as a corollary, I also suggest that the Chileans were kept away from regions that could somehow challenge the image that the regime sought to convey, and that Waiss's account is thus also a testimony to the long-lasting regional disparities that characterize the history of Yugoslavia.

Between Santiago and Belgrade: Bridging the Distance

- 7 After the split with the USSR in June 1948, and facing not only economic isolation but also the immediate threat of a Soviet invasion, socialist Yugoslavia set out to develop an autonomous foreign policy mainly with the aim of securing political, economic and military assistance from Western powers, and particularly from the United States.⁹ In parallel, Belgrade started to develop its first systematic contacts with recently decolonized Asian and African nations on the basis of a neutral position in international affairs, thus setting the grounds for an international network of alliances that would later lead to the creation of the Non Aligned Movement in 1961.¹⁰ Yugoslavia's policy of establishing wider and stronger connections with governments and progressive movements in the non-European world also reached Latin America, a region of special interest not only because of its economic potential, but also due to the presence of a large Yugoslav diaspora.¹¹
- 8 The Southern Cone was one of the regions where Belgrade invested great effort. Yet, in spite of Argentina's economic prevalence and the importance of Buenos Aires as a regional center notwithstanding, it was Chile that rapidly became the main focus of Yugoslav activity, mostly due to the very fruitful relations that were established with the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) in the early 1950s. In many ways, Chilean socialists constituted almost an ideal partner for the Yugoslavs. With a history of active institutional participation in government and a fairly good electoral record, the party entered the 1950s in a political crisis following internal divisions. As a result of such crisis, the PSP began a process of ideological transformation and radicalization: under the leadership of Raúl Ampuero and under the intellectual influence of people like Oscar Waiss and Eugenio González, the party moved toward the adoption of anti-imperialist and nationalist positions and early forms of "Third-Worldism," including

strong expressions of solidarity toward movements of national liberation in Asia and Africa and a growing interest in Yugoslav socialism.¹²

- 9 As a result, when the Yugoslavs started to invest growing efforts into building a network of allies in Latin America in the early 1950s, the context was ripe for the development of a strong friendship with the Chilean socialists. According to Yugoslav archival sources, the first contacts between the Yugoslav regime and the PSP took place in August 1951 at the Yugoslav delegation in Santiago and due to the Chileans' initiative.¹³ In following years, relations between Belgrade and the Chileans developed apace, giving way to numerous mutual visits on both sides of the Atlantic and to a constant and fruitful political dialogue. Contacts were mostly channeled by the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Jugoslavije*, SSRNJ), an umbrella organization of the communist regime that gathered sociopolitical organizations in the country, and which was also responsible for establishing links with progressive forces abroad. Veljko Vlahović, the President of the Commission for International Relations of the SSRNJ, played a key role in the development of these relations: his experience as a freedom fighter in Spain, his personal charisma, and his understanding of political diplomacy rendered him an ideal agent in the knitting of such bonds.¹⁴
- 10 On the Chilean side, several leading figures of the socialist party actively promoted relations with the Yugoslavs, with party leader Raúl Ampuero often expressing his admiration for socialist Yugoslavia, condemning Soviet pressures, and supporting his party's rapprochement with Belgrade.¹⁵ Moreover, one of the key agents in the development of these connections was party intellectual Oscar Waiss. A Marxist thinker of Jewish background and earlier Trotskyite leaning, trained as a lawyer and a journalist, Waiss was a critic of the Soviet brand of centralized socialism and a detractor of Soviet foreign policy. Sensitive towards Latin American forms of popular nationalism and wary of all that reeked of bureaucratism, Waiss was particularly sensitive to Yugoslav ideas of neutralism and workers' self-management. Thus, when the time came for the Chileans to visit Yugoslavia for the first time, it was decided that Waiss would be one of the members of the delegation.

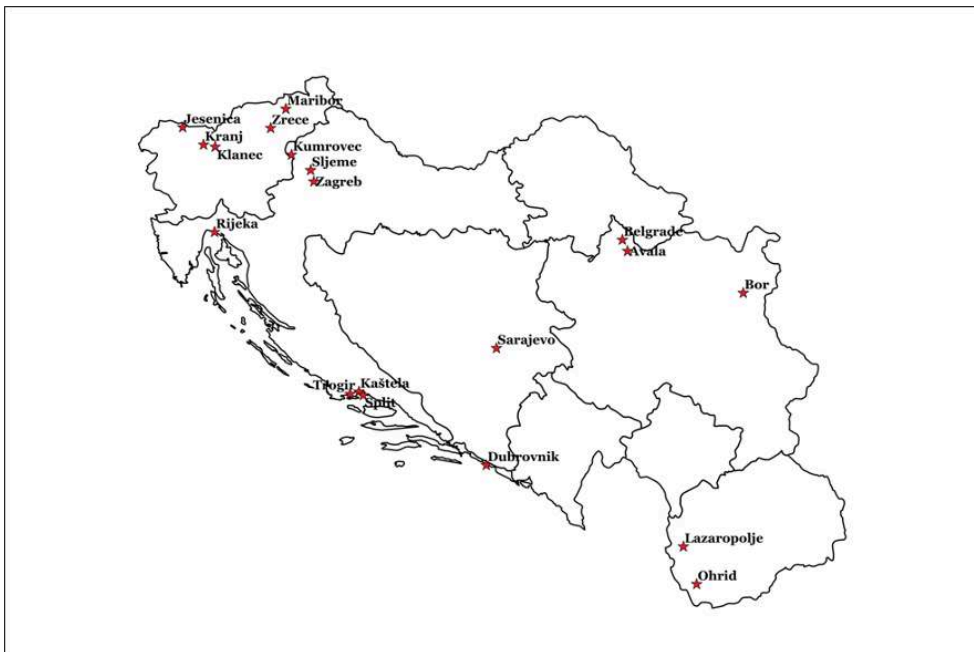
"The Unknown Land of Marshall Tito": Yugoslavia in the Eyes of Oscar Waiss

- 11 In 1955, following an official invitation from Belgrade, Oscar Waiss took a plane in Santiago together with socialist senator Aniceto Rodríguez, to "peregrinate to the unknown land of Marshall Tito."¹⁶ His experience during the month-long sojourn in Yugoslavia is told meticulously in the book *Amanecer en Belgrado*, published in 1956 by the PSP's publishing house, Prensa Latinoamericana. Waiss's book is certainly not one of a kind: as analyzed by authors such as Michal Zourek, tours and visits sponsored by Eastern European states played a key role in the diffusion of communist ideas among Latin American intellectuals, and this "revolutionary tourism" resulted in numerous testimonies that reflected the changing perceptions of Eastern European socialism in the eyes of Latin American visitors.¹⁷ Waiss's book is part of this larger trend and, as I have claimed elsewhere, it constitutes a rich testimony of the appeal that the Yugoslav socialist model had on Latin American left-wing intellectuals who sought an alternative to Moscow in the context of the Cold War.¹⁸ Yet *Amanecer en Belgrado* not only attests to

Yugoslavia's sway on account of its political and economic feats, but also to the fascination that the country elicited through its rich and diverse cultural and physical landscape, and it shows the powerful influence of the multicultural image that Yugoslavia fashioned for itself in the eyes of foreigners.

- 12 Waiss's account is extremely thorough and rich in its descriptions of the Yugoslav cultural and physical landscape, bringing the reader right to the ground of 1950s Yugoslavia. From the very beginning, the author sets for himself the mission to understand and "know" Yugoslavia through this journey, although he admits the difficulties of such a task. "Knowing a country," he claims, "is, to a certain extent, like knowing a person. There are qualities and flaws that come out immediately. Later one begins to dig deeper and gets to understand the whole in its entirety."¹⁹ According to the author, he and his comrade travelled across Yugoslavia visiting numerous locations in most of the republics and in diverse regions, going through cities and towns, visiting the mountains and the seaside, and stopping by agricultural cooperatives and foundries. The destinations mentioned and described in the book are indicated in Figure 1:

Figure 1



The destinations mentioned and described in *Amanecer en Belgrado*.

Source: visualization created in QGIS.

Credit: Agustín Cosovschi; authorization: CC-BY 2.0.

- 13 In these pages, Waiss describes every city and every region with much detail, underlining their particularities, giving useful information on their history and creating a particular identity for every place visited. In his words, Belgrade is characterized as a site of officialdom, a place for meetings and discussions, a city "with a feeling of coldness" and with buildings that are often "uncommunicative without expression" and with "monotonous commerce."²⁰ Conversely, Maribor in Slovenia is portrayed as "a typical Austrian city, with streetlights that drop their bulbs in bunches and hundreds of bikers in the streets," and the author takes the time to describe the

Velika Kavarna, a coffee house with “wide, comfortable and antique with cream-colored walls, angled tables with red seats and big lamps on the ceiling and hanging from the walls,” and with “a wide room of Renaissance style, with yellow panels and cream-colored curtains.”²¹ Conversely, the town of Bor in Eastern Serbia is characterized with the typical appearance of mining towns, with narrow streets the endings of which get lost between the mountains, and men wearing sweaters and helmets marching with the calculated slowness of those who come back or go to the Earth’s insides,²² while the small town of Trogir near Split in Dalmatia is described as an antique site, “with narrow streets that still have a typical aspect from the Middle Ages.”²³

- 14 With each of these descriptions, Waiss gradually creates the image of a Yugoslavia that is made of multiple and converging pasts. Moreover, he repeatedly underlines the importance of geography and he stresses that history has left traces in the landscape, not least because the communists themselves have made systematic effort to leave materials traces of past struggles. The space, he claims, is imprinted by history all around: “in a bridge, a plaque in the memory of the executed; in the corner of any road, a monument to those who fell there; in the factories, tributes to those who gave their lives.”²⁴ Space is thus seen as a materialization of history, and nowhere is this clearer than in the passages where he describes Sarajevo, a city that Waiss sees as a civilizational crossroads and a graveyard of fallen empires:

In Sarajevo, crossroads of the East and the West, History takes us by assault in every building, with its trail of centuries and invasions [...]. An old city that was already a trading center centuries before Christ: the Turks occupied it until 1878 and the Austrians until 1918; of the former, houses have remained made of cob, one-story high, the oriental streets of the craftsmen [...] and a hundred mosques or more, of which seventy-two are still open to the faithful; of the latter, the big and imposing and right-angled blocks of barracks, symbols of an imperial power that History swept away relentlessly [...] The old city is dirty, noisy, commercial, mysterious, multicolored.²⁵

- 15 A similar tone appears in his description of the Historical Museum in Kalemegdan in Belgrade:

Its current aspect comes from Austrian domination, in the 18th century, but inside are Roman bridges, baroque doors, Serbian feudal towers, Turkish mausoleums, statues by Mestrovic (*sic*) and Rosandic (*sic*) and monuments that were built after the liberation to the revolutionary fighters Ivan Milutinovic (*sic*), Ivo Lola Ribar and Dura Dakovic (*sic*). Such is Yugoslavia, in the heart of the Balkans, road to all invasions, place of transit during the Crusades, battlefield of Serbs, Turks, Bulgarians, Austrians, Hungarians, Germans, Russians and Italians, once a camp for the Romans, afterwards under Napoleon, and more recently under fascist hordes. Crossroads for all routes, showcase of all cultures, clash of the East and the West.²⁶

- 16 Still, the diversity that Waiss notes in Yugoslavia is remarkable because it composes for him a colorful, yet harmonious mosaic. Waiss conveys an image of Yugoslavia as a fascinating land where diverse histories, cultures and landscapes have been brought together and coexist peacefully thanks to the amalgamating action of the antifascist struggle. The mosaic effect is reinforced by a telling detail: after describing their departure from Santiago and their successive stops in Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Geneva, Waiss never gives the reader a sequential itinerary of his tour around Yugoslavia. The author presents all these experiences in Yugoslavia attending to a thematic angle and avoiding any reference to the order of the sites or to the general itinerary of the tour. He presents the particularities of each region and each local

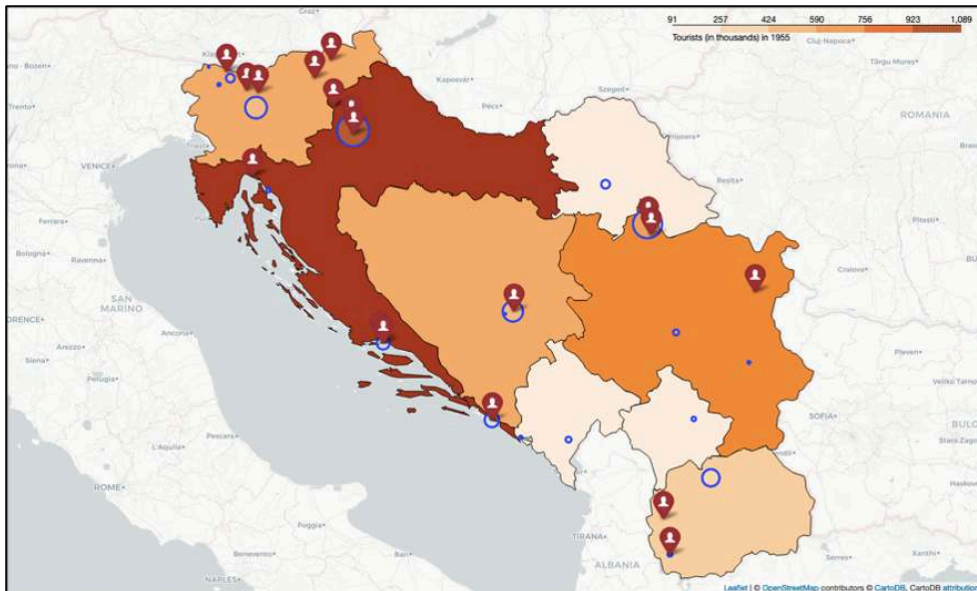
scenery, he delves into the history of each town, but never does he address interregional connections, nor does he describe the experience of travelling from one place to the other. At some point, ironically, he even claims to have a lack of awareness of space: “I get lost even in the symmetrical streets of the city where I was born,” he claims, “and when I travel, I never know in which direction my hotel is.”²⁷ Waiss’s conception of space is somehow intangible and abstract, yet lively and strongly imprinted by historical sensitivity and an awareness of cultural difference. Thus, he conveys the image of Yugoslavia as a meeting space where history, or rather *histories*, materialize in the form of diverse social and physical landscapes and coexist unproblematically making up a fascinating mosaic.²⁸

Hide and Seek: Multicultural Tourism, Regional Inequalities and the Ambiguous Geography of Socialist Yugoslavia

- 17 As I have shown, Waiss’s perceptions of Yugoslavia were characterized by an impression of physical, historical, cultural and linguistic diversity and richness. Yet this image of Yugoslavia as a multicultural land was not exclusive to his experience. It was rather the result of a systematic policy of space imagining and self-fashioning that socialist Yugoslavia developed for itself and for the outer world from the 1950s onwards.
- 18 As attested by several scholars of Yugoslav cultural history, following the ideological transformations of the 1950s, the adoption of the principles of socialist self-management, and the implementation of republican decentralization, the communist regime increasingly renounced the amalgamating idea of Yugoslavism, and started instead to promote a multicultural concept for Yugoslavia.²⁹ In the words of Andrew Wachtel:
- Cultural policy changed to meet the new decentralized vision of Yugoslavia as well. Significantly, for the first time in its history as a state, Yugoslavia gave up the goal of creating some form of unified culture for all its citizens, embracing instead what could be called a multinational self-image.³⁰
- 19 This multicultural conception had an impact on the ideas that the country conveyed through its cultural and educational policies, but also on the image that it diffused through tourism, an activity that played a key role in Yugoslav economic life and which was also an important channel for the diffusion of Yugoslavia’s image abroad. As analyzed by Igor Tchoukarine, the 1950s were precisely the decade in which Yugoslavia’s foreign tourism witnessed a boom, with the country becoming a well-established world tourist destination. And in such a process, the image of Yugoslavia was fabricated as that of a multicultural land with a rich and multilayered historical and cultural heritage, with a diverse physical and social landscape and a rich mosaic of diverse traditions and national identities.³¹
- 20 Some of these notions seem to have also imprinted Oscar Waiss’s perception of Yugoslavia. An interesting fact is that, even though Waiss’s tour was mainly motivated by political reasons rather than by a desire for leisure, his itinerary coincided significantly with the routes of mass tourism in Yugoslavia. Figure 2 (also accessible

online as an interactive map) shows that the stops in Waiss's voyage considerably overlap with the map of tourist distribution for Yugoslavia in the year 1955:

Figure 2



Waiss's destinations (*man icon*), distribution of tourists by republic (*color scale*), and the most popular destinations by importance (*blue circles*)

Source: visualization in Python on the basis of data extracted from *Jugoslavija, 1918-1988, Statistički godišnjak*, Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1955.

Credit: Agustín Cosovschi; authorization: CC-BY 2.0.

- 21 As showed in Figure 2, the stops in Waiss's voyage were concentrated primarily in Croatia, the most popular touristic destination for foreign and local tourists, followed by Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia, and with the total exclusion of the Republic of Montenegro and the Serbian provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. Moreover, many of his destinations coincide with the most popular touristic destinations. This indicates that the images of Yugoslavia offered to Waiss must have coincided considerably with the ones available for other, less politicized visitors. It also suggests that forms of "revolutionary tourism" could coincide in some aspects with traditional mass tourism as it was developed in Yugoslavia.
- 22 Finally, it is worth underlining that Waiss's journey also sheds light on certain problems and gaps in the harmonious image that socialist Yugoslavia fashioned for itself. The distribution of his destinations clearly shows a tendency to privilege areas in what has traditionally been termed the "peripheral belt" (*rubni pojas*) in Yugoslavia, that is the band that surrounded the country and followed its borders with neighboring countries and with the sea, and which held the main political, economic and cultural centers of the country. This region stands in contrast with what has traditionally been called the "mountainous core" (*planinska jezgra*), a zone of key historical importance because it often served as refuge in face of external invasions, but of minor economic importance and in general terms, considerably less urbanized and less developed than the belt. Figure 3 shows Waiss's stops against a map of regions elaborated by Yugoslav geographer Josip Roglić in 1954,³² the year before the Chileans' visit:

Figure 3



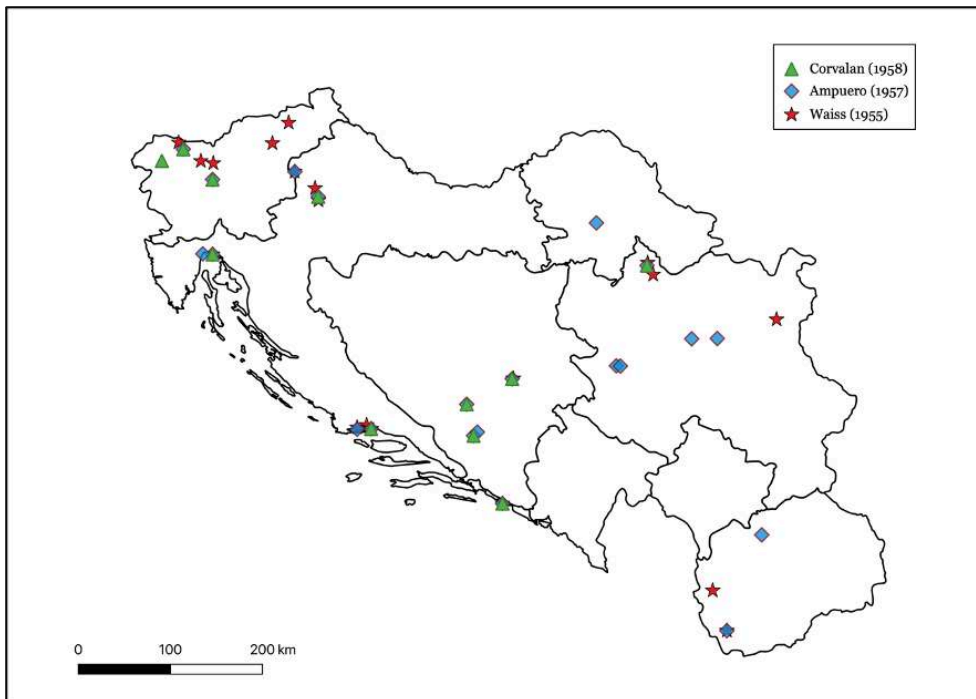
The sites in Waiss's tour against the layer of a map elaborated by Josip Roglič in 1954 and showing a classification of Yugoslav regions. Roglič's classification as follows: "I) Mountainous core and borderland mountainous areas; II) Peripheral regions: A. Plains of Vojvodina, B. Croatian-Slovene region, C. Central Serbia, D. Northern Bosnia and Posavina, E. Regions of Metohija and Vardar, F. Coast."

Source: visualization created in QGIS.

Credit: Agustín Cosovschi; authorization: CC-BY 2.0.

- 23 The exclusion of regions such as Central Croatia, the Sandžak, Southern Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and all of Bosnia with the exception of the charming Sarajevo, shows that as a general rule, less economically developed regions and areas were left out of Waiss's itinerary. Although we do not dispose of sufficient elements to examine the nature and meaning of these omissions in Waiss's account, considering the heavy regional inequality that characterized the Yugoslav federation,³³ this omission suggests the possibility that in circuits of "revolutionary tourism," certain areas were excluded in order to avoid weakening the picture of Yugoslavia as a successful experiment in economic and social modernization. This idea is reinforced when we examine Waiss's journey next to the itineraries of other Chilean socialist travelers who came in later years, namely party leaders Raúl Ampuero and Salomón Corbalán, that I have reconstituted here on the basis of Yugoslav archival sources. The following map shows that Waiss's journey was not at all exceptional and that other travelers in the 1950s were taken to the same or similar sites, with itineraries that often favored touristic areas, and which mostly circumvented regions that could potentially challenge the official narratives of Yugoslav success.

Figure 4



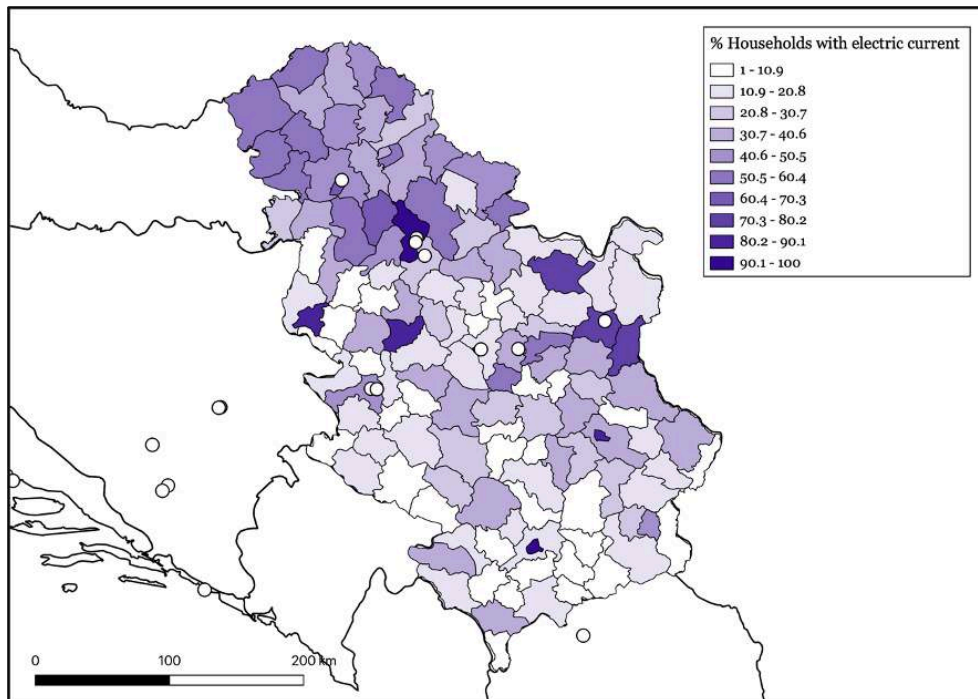
The sites in Waiss's tour (1955) next to the sites in the tours of Raúl Ampuero (1957) and Salomón Corbalán (1958).

Source: visualization created in QGIS on the basis of data from the Archives of Yugoslavia, Fond 507 Comission for International Relations of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, "Chile".

Credit: Agustín Cosovschi; authorization: CC-BY 2.0.

- 24 It is important to stress here that the itineraries of political guests were not decided by the visitors themselves, but by their hosts, who also provided translators to accompany foreign delegations throughout their sojourn.
- 25 Last, the impression that the itineraries of these travelers might have been designed to avoid certain areas that could potentially challenge the official narrative is reinforced when we take a look at where some of these sites stood in the context of regional infrastructural development. Having retrieved census data from the Republic of Serbia in the 1950s, for instance, we notice that the sites visited by the travelers were among the most developed ones in terms of infrastructure, as shown by a visualization of counties in Serbia by domestic access to electric current:

Figure 5



The sites visited by Waiss, Ampuero, and Corbalán (all in white) on a visualization of counties by percentage of household with access to electric current in the Republic of Serbia (1953).

Source: visualization created in QGIS on the basis of data from the Archives of Yugoslavia, Fond 507, Commission for International Relations of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, "Chile" and from *Statistički godišnjak N. R. Srbije za god. 1953*, Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1955.

Credit: Agustín Cosovschi, authorization: CC-BY 2.0.

- 26 As we see in Figure 5, in a republic full of areas with no, or very little access to electric current, the travelers mostly visited areas with exceptionally good electric networks, and never stepped foot anywhere where fewer than 40% of households had access to electricity.
- 27 All in all, several elements suggest that Waiss's perceptions were probably shaped by the communist regime's conscious efforts to manufacture a certain image in the eyes of foreigners, and that the fabrication of a certain experience of space played an important role in the Yugoslav regime's political and ideological strategy vis-à-vis foreigners.

Conclusions

- 28 In this article, I have analyzed Oscar Waiss's book *Amanecer en Belgrado* from the perspective of spatiality, reading it as an instrument of spatial imagining and using it to shed light on the political, economic, social and cultural construction of space in socialist Yugoslavia. I have offered a historical account of relations between Chilean socialists and the Yugoslav regime, situating Waiss's visit to Yugoslavia in the context of global left-wing solidarities in the early decades of the Cold War. Moreover, I have extensively examined how Waiss portrayed Yugoslavia's physical and social landscape, seeing space as a materialization of history and culture and conveying the image of Yugoslavia as a rich multicultural mosaic where the diversity of history, culture and

physical landscape went hand-in-hand and in harmony. Finally, I have examined Waiss's perceptions against the background of the 1950s, especially underlining how his experience reproduced some of the typical routes of Yugoslav mass tourism and how his itinerary was similar to those of other later travelers, and I have also claimed that his portrayal was much in tune with the multicultural image that the communist regime itself attempted to manufacture at the time. Finally, I have also underlined that several underdeveloped areas and regions were left out of his itinerary, and I have suggested that these gaps might point to an intentional omission on the part of Yugoslav authorities to exclude areas that could potentially challenge the official narrative.

- 29 All in all, I contend that *Amanecer en Belgrado* sheds light on some of the mechanisms through which the Yugoslav regime strove to construct an image of the country and its geography for itself and for the world. Revolutionary tourism appears here not only as a platform for building transnational alliances and channeling a concrete political agenda, but also as an instrument capable of putting the power of images at the service of the regime. Oscar Waiss's account of his experience in Yugoslavia reminds us that even in the rational and often calculating field of political alliances, much of what happens ultimately relies not so much on ideas and theories, but rather on the workings of sensual perceptions.
- 30 As a corollary, this article also suggests that the use of mapping tools can enhance our understanding of the political and social production of space in the Balkans. By analyzing the itinerary of Waiss and other Chileans in socialist Yugoslavia against the background of geographical data concerning income, tourist distribution and infrastructural development, I have attempted to shed light on the multiple factors that converged in the political production of space. Although space and its uses have been analyzed often in the literature concerning socialist Yugoslavia, and more generally in the historiography dealing with the history of the Balkans, the digital visualization of geographical data can help us raise new questions and open new avenues for future research.

NOTES

1. FERNÁNDEZ Joaquín, "Nacionalismo y Marxismo En El Partido Socialista Popular (1948-1957)," [Marxism and Nationalism in the Popular Socialist Party] *Izquierdas*, n° 34, 2017, p. 26-49; COSOVSKI Agustín, "Searching for Allies in America's Backyard: Yugoslav Endeavors in Latin America in the Early Cold War," *The International History Review*, vol. 43, n° 2, 2020, p. 281-296.
2. WAISS Oscar, *Amanecer en Belgrado* [Dawn in Belgrade], Santiago de Chile, Prensa Latinoamericana, 1956.
3. COSOVSKI Agustín, "A Voice for the Yugoslavs in Latin America: Oscar Waiss and the Yugoslav-Chilean Connection in the Early Cold War," in Jeremy Adelman and Gyan Prakash (eds), *Inventing the Third World: In Search of Freedom in the Postwar Global South, 1947-1979*, London, Bloomsbury, forthcoming.

4. TODOROVA Maria, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009 [1997]; BAKIĆ-HAYDEN Milica, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, n° 4, 1995, p. 917-931
5. BOUGAREL Xavier, "Yugoslav Wars: The 'Revenge of the Countryside' between Sociological Reality and Nationalist Myth," *East European Quarterly*, vol. 2, n° 33, 1999, p. 157-175; ALLCOCK John B., *Explaining Yugoslavia*, New York, C. Hurst & Co. and Columbia University Press, 2000.
6. ALLCOCK John B., "Rural-Urban Differences and the Break-up of Yugoslavia," *Balkanologie*, vol. 6, n° 1-2, 2002, p. 101-125; PLEŠTINA Dijana, *Regional Development in Communist Yugoslavia: Success, Failure, and Consequences*, New York, Routledge, 2019 [1988].
7. LE NORMAND Brigitte, *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism in Belgrade*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014; *Idem*, "The House that Socialism Built: Reform, Consumption and Inequality in Postwar Yugoslavia," in Paulina Bren, Mary Neuberger (eds), *Communism Unwrapped: Cultures of Consumption in Postwar Eastern Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012; TCHOUKARINE Igor, "Un espace offert au tourisme : représentations de la Yougoslavie dans les guides touristiques imprimés français et yougoslaves au xx^e siècle," *Études balkaniques. Cahiers Pierre Belon*, n° 12, 2005, p. 221-251; *Id.*, "Playing the Tourism Card: Yugoslavia, Advertising, and the Euro-Atlantic Tourism Network in the Early Cold War," in Sune Bechmann Pedersen, Christian Noack (eds), *Tourism and Travel during the Cold War: Negotiating Tourist Experiences across the Iron Curtain*, London-New York, Routledge, 2019, p. 159-174.
8. ETHINGTON Philip J., "Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History," *Rethinking History*, vol. 11, n° 4, 2007, p. 465-493; WITHERS Charles W.J., "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 70, n° IV, 2009, p. 637-658; KNOWLES Anne Kelly, HILLIER Amy (eds), *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship*, Redlands, Calif, ESRI Press, 2008; BODENHAMER David J., CORRIGAN John, HARRIS Trevor M. (eds), *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010; TALLY Jr. Robert, *Spatiality*, New York, Routledge, 2012.
9. JAKOVINA Tvrtko, *Američki komunistički saveznik: Hrvati, Titova Jugoslavija i Sjedinjene Američke Države : 1945-1955* [The Communist Ally of the Americans. The Croats, Tito's Yugoslavia and the United States of America: 1945-1955], Zagreb, Profil, 2003; RAJAK Svetozar, "No Bargaining Chips, No Spheres of Interest: The Yugoslav Origins of Cold War Non-Alignment," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 16, n° 1 January 2014, p. 146-179.
10. JAKOVINA Tvrtko, *Treća Strana Hladnog Rata* [The Third Side of the Cold War], Zagreb, Fraktura, 2011; RUBINSTEIN Alvin, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970; MIŠKOVIĆ Nataša, FISCHER-TINÉ Harald, BOSKOVSKA Nada (eds), *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade*, London, Routledge, 2014.
11. PAJOVIĆ Slobodan, "La emigración yugoslava a América latina," [The Yugoslav Emigration to Latin America], in Moisés Miñambres (ed.), *Acerca de las migraciones centroeuropeas y mediterráneas a Iberoamérica: Aspectos sociales y culturales* [On Central European and Mediterranean Migration in Latin America: Social and Cultural Aspects], Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo, 1995, p. 83-92; BERNARD Sara, COSOVSKI Agustin, "Cooperation, Migration and Development: Yugoslavia and the Southern Cone in the Postwar Period," in Maria Damilakou, Yannis G.S. Papadopoulos (eds), *Migration and Development in Southern Europe and South America*, London, Routledge, 2022.
12. CASALS ARAYA Marcelo, *El alba de una revolución. La izquierda y el proceso de construcción estratégica de la "vía chilena al socialismo," 1956-1970* [The Dawn of a Revolution. The Left and the Strategic Construction of the "Chilean Way to Socialism", 1956-1970], Santiago, LOM Ediciones, 2010; FERNÁNDEZ, "Nacionalismo y Marxismo en el Partido Socialista Popular", art. cit.; DRAKE Paul W., *Socialismo y populismo: Chile, 1936-1973* [Socialism and Populism: Chile, 1936-1973], Valparaíso, Instituto de Historia, Vicerrectoría Académica, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, 1992.
13. "Šifrovano pismo," 27 August 1951, Archive of Yugoslavia, Fond 507, "Chile," IX, 21/III-1.

14. COSOVSKI, "A Voice for the Yugoslavs in Latin America", art. cit.; COSOVSKI, "Searching for Allies in America's Backyard", art. cit.
15. See his interview for the Yugoslav weekly *Borba* in 1953: "Živo pratimo iskustva Jugoslavije" [We lively follow Yugoslavia's Experience], *Borba*, 1-3 January, 1953. Also see Ampuero's writings: AMPUERO Raúl, *El socialismo chileno* [Chilean Socialism], Santiago, Ediciones Tierra Mía, 2002.
16. WAISS, *Amanecer en Belgrado*, op. cit., p. 5.
17. ZOUREK Michal, "Los viajes de los intelectuales latinoamericanos a Europa Oriental 1947-1956: organización, circuitos de contacto y reflexiones," [The Travels of Latin American Intellectuals in Eastern Europe, 1947-1956] *Ars & Humanitas*, vol. 11, n° 2, 2017, p. 331-347.
18. COSOVSKI Agustín, "A Voice for the Yugoslavs in Latin America", art. cit.; COSOVSKI, "Searching for Allies in America's Backyard", art. cit.
19. WAISS, *Amanecer en Belgrado*, op. cit., p. 13.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 106-108.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 111-112.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
28. In order to visualize the way in which each site of his tour becomes entangled with a unique experience in his account, the following interactive map indicates the stops in Yugoslavia's political map together with Waiss's comments and historical pictures of the locations.
29. COSOVSKI Agustín, "Between the Nation and Socialism in Yugoslavia. The Debate between Dobrica Ćosić and Dušan Pirjevec in the 1960s," *Slovanský Přehled*, year 101, n° 2, 2015, p. 41-65; WACHTEL Andrew, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998; JOVIĆ Dejan, *Jugoslavija, država koja je odumrla: uspon, kriza i pad Kardeljeve Jugoslavije, 1974-1990* [Yugoslavia, the State that Withered Away: Rise, Crisis, and Fall of Kardelj's Yugoslavia, 1974-1990], Zagreb, Prometej, 2003.
30. WACHTEL, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, op. cit., p. 174.
31. TCHOUKARINE, "Un espace offert au tourisme", art. cit.; TCHOUKARINE, "Playing the Tourism Card", art. cit.
32. ROGLIĆ Josip, "Prilog Regionalnoj Podjeli Jugoslavije," [Contribution to a Regional Division of Yugoslavia] *Hrvatski Geografski Glasnik*, vol. 16-17, n° 1, 1954, p. 9-20.
33. ALLCOCK, "Rural-Urban Differences and the Break-up of Yugoslavia", art. cit.; PLEŠTINA, *Regional Development in Communist Yugoslavia*, op. cit.

ABSTRACTS

In this article, I analyze the book *Amanecer en Belgrado* [Dawn in Belgrade], a travel journal written by Chilean socialist intellectual Oscar Waiss after his visit to Yugoslavia in 1955, from the perspective of spatiality. I read the book as an instrument of spatial imagining and use it to shed light on the political, economic, social and cultural construction of space in Yugoslavia. I examine his portrayal of the local geography and I interpret these perceptions against the background of

Yugoslavia in the 1950s, complementarily drawing on tools in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to visualize his tour around the country. I claim that his portrayal of Yugoslavia was much in tune with the multicultural image that the communist regime attempted to convey, which presented Yugoslavia as a land where diversity of landscape and diversity of histories and cultures went hand-in-hand, all harmoniously coexisting under Yugoslav socialism.

Dans cet article, nous analysons le livre *Amanecer en Belgrado* [L'Aube à Belgrade] écrit par l'intellectuel chilien Oscar Waiss, journal de son voyage en Yougoslavie en 1955, du point de vue de la spatialité. Nous lisons ce livre comme un instrument d'imagination spatiale et nous nous en servons pour analyser la construction politique, économique, sociale et culturelle de l'espace en Yougoslavie socialiste. Nous examinons sa représentation de la géographie locale et nous interprétons ses perceptions dans le contexte de la Yougoslavie des années 1950, en nous servant également des méthodes des systèmes d'information géographique (SIG) pour visualiser son itinéraire en Yougoslavie. Nous affirmons que le portrait que Waiss fait de la Yougoslavie est en phase avec l'image multiculturelle que le régime communiste visait à transmettre, qui présentait la Yougoslavie comme une terre où la diversité des paysages et la diversité historique et culturelle allaient de pair et coexistaient harmonieusement sous le socialisme.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Yougoslavie socialiste, histoire transnationale, voyage, humanités spatialisées, SIG

Keywords: socialist Yugoslavia, transnational history, travel literature, spatial humanities, GIS

AUTHOR

AGUSTIN COSOVSKI

École française d'Athènes et CETOBAC

agustin.cosovski[at]efa.gr