
When Skanderbeg Meets Clinton: Cultural Landscape and Commemorative Strategies in Postwar Kosovo

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Summary

The paper is devoted to studying current strategies in the transformation of cultural landscape in postwar Kosovo. I regard cultural landscape, i.e. a piece of Earth's surface deliberately shaped by man, as an extension of the so-called *socially constructed reality* (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In some cases this symbolization is a strategic part of a nation-building project, or just a way to declare one's own presence, identity, or affiliation. The creation of new heroes is one of the initial steps within the strategies of a nation-building process, as it forms an essential prerequisite for the feeling of a common and shared history. This article analyses the spectrum of personalities symbolically welcomed in Kosovo since the 1990s. The Republic of Kosovo is *de jure* a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian, Serbian, and other communities, and is presented as such to the international community. However, the current strategies of symbolic nation-building deeply contradict the declared aspirations to build a common state and national identity among all of the peoples living in Kosovo. My aim is to negotiate the strategies of memorialization in postwar Kosovo with a focus on this balancing between civic (as desired) and ethnic (as *de facto* realized) models of nation-building. The data for the study were collected during several fieldwork trips in Kosovo (2010-2014).

Keywords: Kosovo, Pristina, Symbolic Nation-building, Cultural Landscape, Commemoration

Introduction: Symbolic Nation-building and Cultural Landscape

Since Kosovo declared independence in 2008, the capital city of Pristina has taken the lead in shaping the image of the country as a multiethnic and secular state that guarantees the civil rights, freedom of expression, and preservation of cultural identity (such as religion, language, and traditions) of all its citizens (Article 6 of the

Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo). The emphasis on the multiethnic character of Kosovo was necessary in gaining the support of international organizations for the Kosovan bid for independence (Ingimundarson, 2007: 97–98).

On 17 February 2008, the same day the Republic of Kosovo declared independence from Serbia, the State Assembly voted on the most important state symbols: the flag and the emblem.¹ The Assembly chose the variant proposed by Mentor Shala and Besnik Nuli, and after a few adjustments by designer Muhamer Ibrahim, the symbols were officially adopted. The new flag features a gold map of Kosovo and six white stars on a blue background. The stars are officially meant to symbolize Kosovo's six major ethnic groups: Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Gorani, Roma, and Bosniaks. Three days after the voting, the new blue-white-gold flag became an official symbol reflecting Kosovo's multiethnic character (Article 6 of the Constitution). In fact, this flag was a response to Martti Ahtisaari's proposals in which he advised the creation of state symbols that could reflect Kosovo's multiethnic character (Obučina, 2011: 35). However, the great majority of Kosovo Serbs do not identify their community with these Kosovo state symbols (Krasniqi, 2014: 161). Under such circumstances, one of the most important aims of the newborn country is to build an effectively working model of civic nationalism, so that all ethnic communities could live peacefully within one state, enjoy their human and civil rights, and preserve their cultural identity.

Since the events of 1987 and 1989 (the speeches of former Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in Kosovo Polje and at Gazimestan) and especially after the Kosovo War (1998-1999), Kosovo's cultural landscape, both urban and rural, has changed dramatically. No doubt these changes correlate in many ways with the disintegration of Yugoslavia and political shifts from the former socialist regime of the federation to the independent Kosovo state.

This article aims to explore the current strategies in this type of transformations in Kosovo. I regard cultural landscape, i.e. a piece of the Earth's surface deliberately shaped by man, as an extension of the so-called *socially constructed reality* (after Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This transformed land is often filled with symbolic meanings readable by those who know the right alphabet and diacritics – be it a milestone, cenotaph, or other historical marker by the road or in a central square.

In some cases this symbolization is a strategic part of a nation-building project (erecting and maintaining memorials, monuments, and flags, or naming public spaces), or just a way to declare one's own presence, identity, or affiliation (includ-

¹ The Republic of Kosovo is a partially recognized state: as of September 2014, 108 member countries of the United Nations recognized its sovereignty. The countries that have not recognized the independence of Kosovo (Serbia, Russia, China, Spain, etc.) still continue to refer to it as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija within the Republic of Serbia.

ing “bottom up” symbols such as graffiti, tombstones, names of shops, cafés, and restaurants). Nevertheless, this symbolic field tends to reflect current social processes involved in the present-day reality, sometimes marking the *spiritual space of the nation* that implies the set of symbolic borders and outposts of the community (Čolović, 2011: 60–62). In this respect any monument can be regarded as a part of spiritual space of the nation that not only notes the presence of a given community, but also functions to entrench it and serve as proof of its antiquity, or even autochthonous origin. Čolović gives the example of the transporting of Serbian poet Jovan Dučić’s ashes from Libertyville (Illinois, USA) to his native town Trebinje in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since his grave represents the spiritual space of the Serbian nation (ibid.).

Taking into consideration the transitive and postwar nature of Kosovo society, we may suppose that under such circumstances the semantic space of collective memory (such as monuments and memorials, cemeteries, macro- and microtoponymy, museums, state symbols, etc.) becomes the battlefield for identity – national, ethnic, religious, political, and historical. Moreover, the Republic of Kosovo, as Europe’s newest state, has found itself at a crossroads. One of the main uncertainties being faced is the controversy between the promising expectations of Euro-integration and the intoxicating feelings of Albanianess (*Shqiptaria*). However, unlike in the 1990s, nowadays the overwhelming majority of Kosovo Albanians support the project of European integration and are no longer so enthusiastic about a union with Albania.² This balancing, however, is still perceptible even on the ground: the two flags – the official one described above and the red and black Albanian national flag (*flamuri i kombit*) – are often used in tandem, even though several years ago the usage of the latter was overwhelming. The Serb communities remaining in Kosovo, meanwhile, use Serbian flags as identity markers.

Moving beyond the symbolic meanings of the flags used in Kosovo, I will focus on the numerous figures and personalities symbolically welcomed in Kosovo – both hosts and guests, real and imagined, contemporary and historical – that have been introduced and commemorated in the cultural landscape, because heroes often personify the state (Krasniqi, 2014: 153). As Michael Walzer noted:

The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived (Walzer, 1967, quoted in Krasniqi, 2014: 153).

My aim is to negotiate the strategies of memorialization in postwar Kosovo, with a focus on the balancing act between civic (as desired) and ethnic (as currently

² According to the quantitative results of the project “Strategies of symbolic nation-building in West Balkan states” in Kosovo (Kosovo, 2011: 52, 56).

de facto realized) models of nation-building (Obučina, 2011: 30–33). As this topic is extremely wide and deserves more attention than possible in this article, I will support my ideas with examples taken mostly from Pristina (Albanian *Prishtinë*, Serbian *Priština*), as this city, being the capital and the largest city, most aptly defines and shapes the processes which have taken place in Kosovo's cultural landscape.

The empirical data for this article were collected during six short visits from 2010 to 2014. The main research method used in the field has been the content analysis of visual and textual information that are represented in the cultural landscape – names, inscriptions, and images. In other words, I regard these fragments of reality as a text with certain rhetorical messages transmitted in it. Besides walking through Kosovo's urban spaces, I conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews (in Pristina) with the Commune of Pristina administration representatives, scholars, architects, and ordinary citizens, both native-born (*Prishtinali*) and those who arrived more recently. The special segment of my fieldwork was devoted to interviewing Serbs (June 2014, Pristina; September 2014, Niš, Serbia) who used to live in Pristina prior to 1998–1999, but were forced to leave the city during and after the last war and are now scattered around Serbia (mostly in Niš and Belgrade). Not surprisingly, their experience of Pristina is very different, especially during the 1990s. For this particular research my interlocutors helped me considerably in describing past events as well as with the former microtoponymy in Pristina, since I did not manage to find a city map printed earlier than 1996. Even the urbanization plans I worked with in the Archive of the Commune of Pristina do not contain the complete set of street names, making reconstruction of the former symbolic topography considerably challenging.

I will focus on several tendencies of recent alterations in the cultural landscape of Pristina with special attention to those of them which have explicit nationally-oriented connotations. Before going into details discussing the contemporary cultural landscape in Kosovo, we should keep in mind the argument that the creation of a new pantheon of heroes is one of the initial steps of any nation-building strategy, as it forms an essential prerequisite for the feeling of a common identity, a sense of unity, and a shared history (Kolstø, 2014: 3). However, in the case of today's Kosovo, this nation-building strategy mostly relies on evoking memories of the golden era of ancient Illyria and the events of the recent past: the glorious UÇK–KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) rebellion, which finally led to independence, and the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration (Kosovo, 2011: 102). In other words, there is an evident lack of memorialized history of other ethnic communities living in Kosovo (or at least their common history), and this situation violates the basic and fundamental principle on which the Kosovan nation is presumed to be based upon, as the Constitution of Kosovo does not recognize one particular ethnic group as the dominant nation.

Street Names: No Reason to Keep, No Reason to Change

One of the most prominent tendencies of impact on the *cultural landscape* is the centrally managed change of toponymy, i.e., the names of streets, neighborhoods, villages, cities, and even the country – for instance, some Kosovan and foreign intellectuals use the Albanian variant ‘Kosova’ even in the international context. While discussing present-day Kosovo, this policy has been aimed at switching from the previous ideological or national denominations, whether Yugoslav (1945-1990) or Serbian (1990-1999), into new (Albanian? Kosovan? European?) ones.

From 1945 until 1990, Pristina was a typical socialist Yugoslav city with a corresponding toponymy. As in any Yugo-settlement, streets and squares were named after Marshal Josip Broz Tito, Brotherhood and Unity, the Yugoslav People’s Army (*Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija*), the Liberation [square] (*Trg Oslobođenja*), and other figures and events from the National Liberation War. However, during the 1990s, as a consequence of the SANU Memorandum (1986) and the Gazimestan Speech (1989), Pristina said farewell to the socialist past and received a new, Serbian nationalist face: legendary rulers Tsar Dušan, King Milutin and Prince Lazar, diplomats and writers Branislav Nušić and Milan Rakić, poetess Desanka Maksimović and many more Serbian scholars, doctors, and artists gave their names to streets, squares, and schools. Moreover, from 1995 to 1997 the University of Pristina was decorated with monuments to linguist and philosopher Dositej Obradović, the “father” of the Serbian literary language Vuk S. Karadžić, and Montenegrin Prince-Bishop and poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš.

This form of cultural hegemony on the part of the Serbian community predictably angered the majority of Albanians, who were treated as second-class citizens during the Milošević regime. On 2 November 1999, after Kosovo was placed under transitional UN administration (UNMIK), a new project of urban toponyms was proposed by the Commune of Pristina, and was then published by the news agency Kosovapress two days later for an open discussion. Even the classics of Serbian culture in the form of statues didn’t manage to survive within the University premises – they were replaced by monuments to Kosovan political activist and analyst Fehmi Agani, one of the ideologists of independent Kosovo (since the 1960s) who was killed in 1999 under puzzling circumstances, and Hasan Prishtina, an Albanian politician of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who also struggled for the rights of the Albanian population in the Ottoman Empire and later in the first Yugoslavia (1918-1941).

As a result, the capital got one more face – predominantly inspired by the history of Albanian civilization and culture, with an accent on fighting for Kosovo independence throughout the twentieth century. The newest and most reliable map of Pristina (OrGIS, 2012) contains a list of official street names which reflects this aspect of symbolic nation-building.

Political and militant activists (Hasan Prishtina, Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri, Azem Bejta, and others) who fought against Belgrade's rule during the 1920-1930s and demanded social, economic, political, and educational rights for Kosovo's Albanians have been honored with personal streets or boulevards. People's Hero Ramiz Sadiku,³ who was posthumously glorified during the Yugoslav period (see below), did not receive a personal street, while Emin Duraku, another fallen Partisan, did. So did Xhafer Deva – a person with a controversial reputation, as he allegedly worked for German military intelligence during the inter-war period and was extremely active in collaboration during the Axis occupation of Kosovo (1941-1944). He was honored alongside Rexhep Mitrovica, another collaborationist of the occupying Nazi administration. Another political force from the Second World War which fought against Tito's forces – *Balli Kombëtar* (the National Front) – is represented in Pristina's semiosphere by Midhat Frashëri. The former Partisan Shaban Polluzha, a leader of a revolt against communist troops, likewise received his own street. In brief, all the predominant forces in the complicated history of the Second World War in Albania and Kosovo (communists, Ballists, collaborators, "reactionaries") finally have been mentioned in the contemporary cultural landscape of Pristina.

Besides multiple Albanians (both from Kosovo and Albania), it is possible to encounter foreign scholars from the field of Albanian studies on street signs: Gustav Meyer, Henrik Barić, Holger Pedersen, Johann Hahn, Milan Šufflay, Norbert Jokl, and Miss Edith Durham. Other individuals who are somehow connected to Albanian lands or contributed to them are also present, such as Justinian I (a Byzantine emperor who was born in Dardania), Edward Lear (an English painter that worked in Albania), Lord Byron (once a guest of Ali Pasha of Tepelena), Saint John Kukuzelis (a medieval Orthodox Byzantine composer), and Jeronim de Rada (an Arberesh writer).

Unexpectedly enough, Pristina found some place for a dozen Yugoslav, pre-Yugoslav, and international celebrities: Kosta Novaković (a Yugoslav journalist), Lazar Vučković (a Serbian poet from Kosovo), Milan Budimir (a Serbian scholar), Nikola Tesla (a worldwide famous physicist from Croatia), Radovan Zogović (a Montenegrin poet), Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (a Serbian composer), Svetozar Marković (a Serbian political activist), Alexander the Great, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Johann Goethe, William Shakespeare, and Victor Hugo. Last but not least, tribute has been paid to contemporary US and UK politicians and diplomats who provided crucial support to Kosovo's independence bid: Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Richard Holbrooke were all honored with streets in Pristina.

³ The designation of People's Hero (*narodni heroj*) was the most prestigious honor for a Yugoslav Partisan.

Despite all of the efforts in symbolically demarcating streets and other public spaces in Pristina, the fact is that most people do not even know the official street names in this city (or, generally speaking, in other cities in Kosovo and Albania). Based on my experiences in Kosovo, people most often orient themselves according to other points of reference, such as mosques, shops, old factories, bakeries, hotels, restaurants, and other landmarks. This phenomenon is brilliantly shown in the documentary “Blue Wall, Red Door” (2009) by Kosovan artists Alban Muja and Yll Çitaku. So, as we may see, these numerous changes (at least three times during the second half of the twentieth century) of street-naming have apparently had little effect on the lives of ordinary citizens, and could be considered as only politically-determined manifestations.

The Sacred History: from Goddess on the Throne to Mother Teresa

One of the most famous and widely-known archaeological findings ever excavated in Kosovo is a small, 6000 year-old terracotta figurine from the Neolithic Vinca Culture referred to as the *Goddess on the Throne* (*Hyjnesha në fron*). This anthropomorphic specimen cannot exactly be called unique, but the fact that it was dug up not far from Pristina made the figure a popular character in the context of national mythogenesis. The depiction of the figurine, or at least its silhouette, was included in a number of proposals for the Kosovo state flag. It can be found on the coat-of-arms of Pristina, is the symbol of the annual International Seminar of Albanian Language, Literature, and Culture, and serves as a source of inspiration for numerous artists and silver filigree masters. The Goddess graces the covers of tourist guides published both in Kosovo and abroad. It is interesting to mention that in the guide *Kosovo* (published in 1978), this figure is just called the “Sitting Statue” (*Shtatorja e ulur*), with no connotation to its divine nature. There is no doubt that such symbolization of antiquity is determined by the idea of Illyrian-Albanian continuity (i.e., Albanian autochthony and their direct descent from Illyrian, especially Dardanian, tribes). This theory is widely used by Kosovo politicians and intellectuals when they claim the historical rights of the Albanian population for Kosovo. The Illyrian theory is extremely popular and fully supported by Albanians regardless their place of living, as it is broadly transmitted by means of education, science, and culture. To support this discourse, a number of streets in Pristina were named after glorious Illyrian rulers – King Bardhyl, King Genc, King Longar, Queen Teuta – of whom, in fact, we know just very little. Moreover, during the late 1990s and 2000s, the first President of Kosovo Ibrahim Rugova tried to include the term “Dardania” in the official name of the Kosovo state and the newly-created “flag of Dardania” as the state symbol.

Any discussion of the history of the Albanian nation is not complete without a reference to Gjergj Kastrioti “Skanderbeg” (1405-1468), who nowadays is regarded

as the example of braveness and fearlessness in front of any invader or enemy of the Albanian people. The monuments paying homage to the hero have been erected all over Albania (the most prominent ones are located in Tirana, Kruja, and Lezha), as well as in other Balkan cities with Albanian population (Skopje, Debar) and even in Rome and Brussels.

In Pristina the monument to Skanderbeg appeared in 2001 on the busiest and crowded pedestrian street – the Boulevard of Mother Teresa (formerly Marshal Tito and Vidovdanska streets).⁴ Nowadays the image of Mother Teresa (1910-1997, a Catholic missionary of Albanian descent) has steadily taken its place as one of the predominant symbols correlating with the idea of Albanianess – the unity of all Albanians regardless their place of origin, religious affiliation, and social background (Endresen, 2014). The monument to Mother Teresa was erected on the Boulevard, on the same location where the statue of the Kosovo Maiden⁵ (unveiled before 1959) once stood. In the Republic of Kosovo, which seeks to draw closer to the West and willingly welcomes European values and political pluralism, the image of Mother Teresa is frequently included in the public discourse and cultural landscape. One of the most prominent and discussed symbols of this new epoch in the history of Kosovo is the immense “Mother Teresa” Catholic cathedral in Pristina, which drew considerable criticism because of its “unreasonable”⁶ size (Kraja, 2011: 234–237). It seems that the recent promotion of Christianity, especially its Roman Catholic

⁴ St. Vitus’ Day (*Vidovdan*), celebrated on 28 June, commemorates the Battle of Kosovo (1389), in which Serbian Prince Lazar was slain in battle fighting against the Ottoman Empire.

⁵ The Kosovo Maiden (*Kosovka Devojka*) is the central figure of a poem with the same name, part of the Kosovo cycle in the Serbian epic poetry. The fate of Kosovo Maiden, whose beloved fell in the Kosovo field, is thought to symbolize the fate of Serbia and its martyrdom after the battle.

⁶ According to the latest data, the estimated number of Catholics in Kosovo is between 65,000-70,000 or 3-4 per cent of the total population, including a residual group of Croatian Catholics in Janjevo (Barjaktarović, 1971: 31–55; Nušić, 1986: 234–238; Elsie, 2004: 36–37; *Kosova*, 2011: 607). We also have some fragmental information about the demographic changes of this confessional group during the Ottoman period. For instance, in 1623/4, according to Mazreku, in Prizren the Catholic Albanian community was numbered as many as 200 souls (Rizaj, 1987: 403). We also know the Albanian names of the heads of seventy-nine Christian households in Prizren from the seventeenth century (Pulaha, 1983: 489–490). In 1858, the Prizren Catholics reached about 800 individuals, out of a total population of 25,000 people (*Kosova*, 2011: 115). At the same time, in the middle of the nineteenth century, we also know about twenty Catholic Albanian households with about 100 persons mentioned in Pristina (*ibid.*: 403). Serbian consul Branislav Nušić stated that according to the Ottoman statistics in the beginning of the twentieth century, in the Kaza of Pristina there were 1,633 Catholics (Nušić, 1986: 80). Catholic communities have been existing as well in some other cities in Kosovo, such as Peja/Peć, Gjakova/Dakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, and some others.

branch, could be regarded as a step towards a more European political, cultural, and social identity for Kosovo (Obučina, 2011: 37–38). For example, several years ago rumors swirled that former President Rugova had been baptized and died as a Catholic.

Path Towards Liberation: Heroes and Victims

The processes of contemporary mythogenesis in Kosovo rest not only on the idea of the Golden Illyrian Age and pan-Albanian National idea, but also on the recent struggle for independence (1990s-2000s) as the key state-building moment. Keeping in mind that any national idea has to include a pantheon of new heroes (as well as enemies), we see that in Kosovo this mainly results in the glorification of KLA fighters. Municipal authorities named streets after KLA soldiers and erected monuments in their honor, their graves became sites of political pilgrimage, and their exploits were widely celebrated by means of popular songs and poetry (Homazh, 2012).

The most famous and venerated place of this kind is the memorial “Adem Jashari” in the village of Prekaz (Schwandner-Sievers and Di Lellio, 2007; Obučina, 2011: 36–38). This memorial consists of fifty-eight graves of Kosovo Albanians who, together with their leader Adem Jashari, fought Yugoslav Police and Special Anti-terrorist forces 5-7 March 1998. In the contemporary discourse the Jashari memorial is regarded as being the most holy site of memory related to Kosovo’s independence (Krasniqi, 2014: 153), while Jashari himself was transformed into an immortal hero (the inscription at the memorial reads *Ai është i gjallë – He is alive*). This site of memory enjoys the second position in the chart of attractions in Kosovo according to the guide *Kosova Top 10* (without year, approx. 2010). This booklet includes a description of the memorial complex, a brief history of the event, and quotes from well-known Albanian writer Ismail Kadare and UN Mission Administrator Bernard Kuchner after they visited the site. In addition to the Prekaz memorial, monuments to the Legendary Commander, as they call Adem Jashari, have appeared all around Kosovo and in neighboring Albania. The Pristina International Airport “Slatina” and the military barracks (formerly named after Josip Broz Tito) were renamed to honor Jashari.

Apart from memorials dedicated to the Legendary Commander, Pristina (and the whole country) is full of tributes to fallen KLA fighters. One of the present-day landmarks and common meeting place in Pristina is called *Të Pajaziti* after the monument to Zahir Pajaziti (a KLA commander killed in 1997), situated in the Boulevard of Mother Teresa opposite the imposing Grand Hotel Pristina. One of the main streets in the capital bears the name of KLA commander Agim Ramadani (formerly “Tsar Dušan” in the 1990s and “Ramiz Sadiku” before that). The road leading to the memorial “Martyrs’ Cemetery” features a monument to Isa Kastrati,

Afrim Vitia and Sokol Sopi who were killed together in April 1999. Besides the statues, monuments, and busts there are also many plain marble or granite plaques all around the cities with the names of the fallen KLA members inscribed on them (Halimi-Statovci, 2008: 171–187; Di Lellio, 2013).

However, the KLA's vigorous rebellion with Kalashnikovs in hand was not always popular among the Kosovo intelligentsia who stood for peaceful resistance and bloodless processes of achieving liberty and political independence for Kosovo. The first president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, was also a glorified leader, and after his death in 2006 his grave likewise became a site of worship (Stroehle, 2006). Even now this political division is visible – for example, in the halls and offices of the University of Pristina and the Academy of Sciences and Arts we can mostly see the portraits of Rugova and never that of Jashari. The respect and admiration for this hero of the Kosovan nation is also expressed in the cultural landscape. The Boulevard of Mother Teresa at the heart of public life hosts not only the monuments to Skanderbeg, Zahir Pajaziti, and Mother Teresa herself, but a huge banner with an image of Rugova at the beginning of the street, and a statue, situated in the square named after him (erected in the autumn of 2013), at the end of the promenade. After Rugova's death in 2006 there was a vigorous debate about the proper place for his burial, and it was finally decided to inter him in the memorial “Martyrs' Cemetery” (see below).

However, witnessing and analyzing the current political orientation of Kosovo, one may understand that nowadays Rugova's democratic, peaceful, and humanistic model of freedom-fighting is much more attractive for the image of Kosovo both inside the country and abroad than the memory of the KLA campaign, which is often stereotypically associated in the minds of local intellectuals with the rural and sometimes undereducated class of people.

One more hero of the newborn Kosovan nation is the forty-second US president, Bill Clinton, who was honored in Pristina with a large billboard overlooking the boulevard named after him. The boulevard used to be named after Vladimir Lenin (until the 1990s) and Serbian King Petar I Karadjordjević (who enjoyed the title of Peter the Great Liberator) in the 1990s. We can even draw a semantic correlation between all these names, as Kosovo Albanians consider Bill Clinton to be one of their liberators due to the US role in the NATO campaign against Serbia. Directly below the billboard there is a three meter high statue of Clinton (unveiled in 2009). The statue, depicting Clinton waving the 1999 agreement that permitted US troops to enter Kosovo, was paid by the “Friends of the USA” association (Pristina, 2011: 33). No doubt that Clinton is one of the most-welcomed foreign politicians in Kosovo – for example, on 19 August 2013 the center of Pristina was full of posters congratulating Bill Clinton on his sixty-seventh birthday. His colleague, former

Prime Minister Tony Blair also received some recognition – his name appears on the map of Pristina in place of the former “Kosovo Film Street”.

However, in the contemporary Kosovan mythology the victim role is very prominent. The narrative that Albanians have been suffering throughout history (especially under Serbian rule) can be heard from both official historic sources and from ordinary citizens. The most pronounced spatial objectification of this state of victimhood as the evidence of pain and sorrow took its place in Pristina soon after the end of the war. Dozens of portraits of Kosovo Albanians who disappeared during the operation of Yugoslav forces and the subsequent NATO intervention during the late 1990s were placed by the relatives of the missing on the fence of the Assembly of Kosovo. In almost fifteen years this gallery had become a real place of interest for tourists and a site of memory for local people. However, in August 2013 all the photographs were removed, and on 30 August (The International Day of the Disappeared) alongside the Assembly a big electronic screen was unveiled where the photos of the missing are intended to be displayed. Although this high-tech means of commemoration is still functioning (as of August 2014), ordinary portraits have also been appearing on the fence behind the screen. A similar project aimed at commemorating missing and kidnapped people was realized in the Serb-majority city of Gračanica/Gračanicë in May 2014: the two-meter-high composition forming the word “MISSING” was covered with the photo-portraits of Serbs who disappeared during the war. As the organizers say, the project is intended to be exhibited all around Europe.

The Times of Brotherhood and Unity: To be Forgotten or Not?

One of the most painful questions for those who are responsible for the image of the new Kosovo deals with the future of the Yugoslav monumental legacy. This issue became actual and is now discussed among architects and local administrators because the future of the Yugoslav monuments will define the way in which memory of the past should be interpreted.⁷ The core idea of socialist Yugoslav social politics could be expressed by the popular communist motto “Brotherhood and Unity” (*Bashkimi dhe Vllaznimi, bratstvo i jedinstvo*). In Pristina the monument bearing that name still exists (built in 1961, designed by architect B. Jovanović), although there have been plans to remove it and redesign the square. However, the actual brotherhood and unity of two heroes – Boro and Ramiz – has been broken. Boro Vukmirović and Ramiz Sadiku were celebrated as heroes during the Yugoslav period. The two Partisans, a Montenegrin and an Albanian, were killed together in 1943, and already in 1945 they were proclaimed People’s Heroes of Yugoslavia

⁷ See Sahatçiu, 2013.

(posthumously). In Yugoslav Kosovo their deeds and death symbolized the unity of all peoples, nations, and nationalities of Yugoslavia and the common aspiration towards the communist future. The monument to the heroes was erected in Pristina City Park in 1961, but in 1999 Boro's head disappeared. My fieldwork observation shows that nowadays the monument, fallen into oblivion and defaced with graffiti, is used as a playground for local youngsters. Another monument of the Yugoslav epoch is the huge social-cultural, sports and trade center "Boro i Ramiz" built in Pristina in 1978 (designed by architect Ž. Janković). After 1999 it was renamed the "Palace of Youth, Culture, and Sports", but the overwhelming majority of citizens still keep in their everyday usage the original name, which is used as a city landmark. Interestingly enough, the center has not lost its "heroic" nature, as the facade of the building is decorated with an enormous banner of Adem Jashari.

The memorial "Martyrs' Cemetery" (*Varrezat e Dëshmorëve, Spomen groblje palim borcima*), located in the center of Pristina, plays another role in the spatial context of collective historical memory. The topographical and semantic focus of this complex is the monumental composition made of metal and concrete by Svetislav Ličina that was erected in 1960/61 and serves as the final resting spot for fifty-eight Yugoslav soldiers and Partisans fallen in the Second World War. In recent years, however, this time-worn⁸ monument of a past epoch does not draw the attention of local and foreign tourists and "pilgrims" – the center of commemorative practice has switched to the grave of Ibrahim Rugova, one of the dominant symbols of Kosovan independence, which is opposed spatially and notionally to the graves of fallen KLA fighters (Stroehle, 2006). But even now the importance of this Yugoslav monument for Kosovo cannot be overstated – it took its place in the list of *lieux de mémoire* of postwar Kosovo together with the memorial complex of Adem Jashari in the village of Prekaz, the Newborn memorial in the center of Pristina, and the billboard and monument to Bill Clinton (Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers, 2006: 518–522; Schwandner-Sievers and Di Lellio, 2007: 32–51; Homazhe, 2012). Generally speaking, within the past fifteen years Yugoslav memorials in Kosovo have tended to fall into oblivion, while those that survived are gradually deteriorating.

All of these drastic changes in the cultural landscape of Pristina reflect current political and national interests of the Republic of Kosovo; however the critical voices of the citizens – actual and former – are heard quite well:

They killed the city... All those monuments – who needs them? I lived in the center of Pristina for almost forty years [then she moved to another neighborhood], and now I can't orient here. Here it used to be "The Youth" cinema, and here – by the monument to "Kosovo Maiden" – we used to meet for our evening promenades...

⁸ In August 2014 I witnessed the monument being restored.

(M. J., female, Albanian, born in Pristina in 1942, recorded in August, 2014 in Pristina, Kosovo).

When I come to Pristina, I can't recognize the city. I didn't learn the Albanian street names, I use old ones deliberately – those from my childhood: the streets of Aleksandar Ranković, the Yugoslav People's Army... I'm used to them, these are the names of my Pristina, the Pristina that doesn't exist anymore... (N. J., male, Serb, born in Pristina in 1950, recorded in September, 2014 in Niš, Serbia).

Even the professionals in the field of architecture and spatial planning claim that one of the main characteristics of contemporary Pristina is that it is “a city that got rid of the past, both physically and psychologically” (Hoxha, 2013: 127).

Conclusion

In less than twenty years Pristina has freed itself of almost the entire memory of socialist Yugoslavia and Serbian regimes. Instead, the capital of Kosovo has become full of visual tributes (by means of monuments and street names) to Skanderbeg, Mother Teresa, President Ibrahim Rugova, independence fighter Adem Jashari, US President Bill Clinton, and others. In other words, this action could be regarded as a symbolic act of release from both the imposed Yugoslav and Serbian history and memory in favor of the currently constructed Kosovan history. There is also a strong orientation towards Western Europe and European values, as memory is an integral component of the official culture and an effective tool of legitimization of the existing social and moral order, encoded in official history books and school textbooks (see the example of Kosovo in Krasniqi, 2014: 152–154). Common history, in its turn, produces common feelings and strengthens the nation around its political elite, especially if this history is associated with still vivid emotions (in the case of Kosovo Albanians this memory is connected, by all means, to their suffering in the 1990s and the struggle for independence) (Obučina, 2011: 34).

As Maoz Azaryahu argues, using the example of German and Austrian cities, history and representations of the past, being constructed phenomena, are transmitted in the actual space by the current actors from the political and intellectual elite who choose the heroes and their antagonists (1990: 32–34). In order to become a part of socially constructed reality, a given interpretation of the past should be included in the existing semiosphere, and the changing of street names, as well as erecting monuments and other memorials, is one of the most effective ways of doing it. However, in Kosovo there is no place for the antagonists (Marshal Tito or Slobodan Milošević) left. Moreover, the chronological perspective is also deliberately violated: all the heroic events and historical epochs (from the Golden Illyrian Age to the glorious KLA resistance) are presented in a singular historic context, without any differentiation between “now” and “then”.

After this brief analysis, we can list some of the observable trends that serve as the basis of the contemporary nationally-oriented agenda in Kosovo and can be read in the cultural space that is being constructed:

- Widespread support of the Illyrian-Albanian theory, with the key point of Kosovo Albanians as being immediate successors of Dardanians;
- Unity of the Albanian nation regardless of past differences of Albanians in the former Yugoslavia and Albania;
- Emphasis on memorialization of events from the 1990s and early 2000s, and a glorification of the people who have been involved in the struggle for Kosovo's independence;
- Affirmation of the new Kosovan nation that lives in a newly built democracy which alleges to be free of any ethnic or confessional discrimination, and where integration into the Western-oriented cultural and political discourse is willingly accepted.

The Republic of Kosovo is *de jure* a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other communities, and in this way it is commonly represented to the outer world (Kosovo, 2011: 87). Consequently, the pantheon of national heroes should reflect this state of affairs, while in today's Kosovo, as we have seen, the main heroes of the nation are ethnic Albanians and their international allies, so that the existing pantheon is flooded with either pan-Albanian ideas or the memory of the struggle for Kosovo's independence from Serbia. However, this commemorative strategy deeply contradicts the declared aspiration to build a common state and national identity among all of the peoples of Kosovo (the ethnic communities symbolically represented by the six white stars on the official flag).

If the government of Kosovo has the aim to build a truly democratic and multi-ethnic society where all civil rights will be observed and respected, the current strategies of memorialization cannot be called adequate – they should either exclude all references to Albanianess (as in the case of state symbols) or add to this spectrum the historical and cultural symbols of other ethnic communities living in Kosovo in order to build a necessary sense of unity and belonging (Kolstø, 2014: 6). Taking into account the contested history of Kosovo, nowadays it seems impossible to erect, for example, a monument to Prince Lazar or Miloš Obilić that would face the statue of Skanderbeg, even though the two heroes sacrificed their lives fighting one and the same enemy – the Ottoman invaders. In other words, symbols (with characters and personalities among them) may serve at the same time as the ideal tool for social integration or division and even disputes (Kolstø, 2014: 10).

To prove this idea we can simply observe that in the territory of Kosovo predominantly populated by Serbs, they have constructed their own cultural landscape

that is parallel to the current tendencies in the rest of the country. In June 2014, a monument to Miloš Obilić was erected in the city of Gračanica. The monument had been torn down in the city of Obilić in 1999, and for over a decade it had been preserved in the monastery of Gračanica. The event was attended by several dozen locals and was secured by the Kosovo Police. Another example is the statue of Russian consul Grigoriy Shcherbina (1868-1903) in Kosovska Mitrovica/Mitrović. Shcherbina was killed by Albanians in 1903, and in 1928 the monument to the Russian consul was unveiled in the southern part of the city, but was demolished in 1999. The statue was restored in 2007 in the Serbian (northern) part of the city. Another Russian consul, Ivan Yastrebov (1839-1894), was honored with a monument in Prizren in 1996, which likewise was pulled down in 1999.

The only possible way to build a civic nation that will unite all the peoples in Kosovo could be found in their common past – nowadays the level of nostalgia for the Yugoslav period among Kosovo Serbs and Albanians is quite high: my interlocutors often remembered the times when Serbs and Albanians used to live, study, and work together peacefully (both in cities and in the countryside)⁹, helped each other in repairing houses and cars, supported the same football clubs (be it FC Pristina or Crvena Zvezda), and listened to Yugoslav rock-stars.

As I see it, this common memory of co-existence which functioned for centuries in many neighborhoods¹⁰ should be supported and transmitted by the restoration of all (including Yugoslav) monuments, represented in museums, and fostered by the educational system. In other words, the image of Serbs as occupiers and enemies symbolized by such negative personalities as Vaso Čubrilović, Aleksandar Ranković, Dobrica Ćosić, and Slobodan Milošević should be moderated with examples of cooperation and co-existence. At first glance this idea seems foolish and even utopian (especially considering the troubled history of the twentieth century), but nothing is impossible, especially when people are tired of war, hatred, economic crises, and social instability. Finally, if the project of multiethnic Kosovo is intended to be more than a big facade, people should learn once again what “Brotherhood and Unity” mean.

⁹ The tradition of good-neighbor relations was especially strong among the so-called *starosedelci* (‘old-settlers’). My interlocutors, both Serbs and Albanians, constantly claim that most troublesome were the relations with new-comers (regardless of ethnicity) – be it Serbian and Montenegrin colonists (of the 1920-1930s) or just peasants (*katun(d)ar*, *seljak*) who “came down from the mountains”. See also Zlatanović, 2011.

¹⁰ For example, it is a well-known fact that for centuries Muslim and Catholic Albanian families guarded the most important Serb Orthodox monasteries, such as Peć, Visoki Dečani, and Dević.

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