

BURDENSOME PAST: CHALLENGING THE SOCIALIST HERITAGE IN MACEDONIA

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Analysis of the project “Skopje 2014”, a major symbolic reconstruction of Macedonia capital, points towards establishment of ethnocratic regime in the country. Juxtaposed to the treatment of the socialist monuments it reveals the major shift in the historical narrative. This symbolic appropriation accompanies the neoliberal capitalist appropriation of space and is in its service by shifting the debate away from the capitalist accumulation by means of dispossession. The neglect of socialist monuments is indicative of grey-zoning, a governmentality technique easily abused in ethnocratic regimes that allows neoliberal practices to flourish unhindered by any productive public debate. Article concludes with a discussion of the possibilities for articulated resistance.

Keywords: Macedonia, Skopje 2014, ethnocracy, public space, socialist heritage/monuments

INTRODUCTION

Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, is undergoing a total reconstruction of the urban symbolic landscape. The notorious project “Skopje 2014” has altered the symbolic landscape of the capital beyond recognition. Once a showcase of international solidarity and brave urban resilience, rebuilt after the catastrophic earthquake in 1963, Skopje has been turned into a copy of a nineteenth century central European capitals with fake Neo-classical and quasi-Baroque architecture. Buildings in “Skopje 2014” are made of plaster facades and fake marble that hide and cover the modernist architectural heritage. These changes of the built environment reflect the nationalistic efforts to erase the memory of Macedonian citizens and to construct a new historical narrative.

Socialist monuments, modest and unobtrusive in appearance are neglected, removed and dwarfed by new nationalist monuments. The ill fate of the socialist modernity is further emphasised by an orchestrated dissolution of monuments and memorial sites from the socialist period throughout the country. The new ethnocratic regime establishes itself in the public space by redefining the symbolic landscape. This is achieved with étatist appropriation of the public space for the purpose of symbolic reordering. By contrasting the new symbolic order with the unfavourable treatment of the monuments from the socialist period we gain insights into the greater political shifts and broaden our understanding of how ethnocracy uses public space to achieve its agenda.

Although focusing on the city of Skopje, this article is embedded in the wider socio-economic processes of capitalist transformation. Under the circumstances explained in the text, this transformation in Macedonia resulted in a specific form of ethnocracy. This particular political system is a subspecies of hybrid democracies. This is a form of electoral democracy where ethnicity is the key tool for political mobilisation. It is a political order that yielded under the pressures of political particularism and succumbed to sectarianism and divisions. It is in the cities of post-socialist countries where these transformative processes are most apparent.

“Therefore the cities of capitalism and socialism both shape and are shaped by their respective forms of economic organization, class formation and political structures. The socio-spatial organization of cities, their politics and administration, their housing and property markets, their patterns of social interaction are directly linked to the major features of the socialist and capitalist orders.” (Harloe 1996:2).

Accepting that cities, their form, shape and organization are a direct expression of the social order and by adding the important sphere of symbolic representation to the public space we will see how Skopje and the treatment of socialist monuments and the modernist built environment from the socialist period provide ample evidence about the current social transformation.

We will first examine how and why political particularism gained momentum, then the expression of political change in the public space

will be explained followed by a discussion on the rise of ethnocracy in Macedonia and how the symbolic reordering of the public space was used to change the established historical narrative. Later in the article the entanglement of symbolic and capitalist appropriation of space is explained. The article closes with a discussion on the articulation of resistance to those neoliberal policies.

A full quarter of a century after the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the struggle to establish stable democracies is yet to be concluded. In this paper, by close examination of the Macedonian case, it will be demonstrated how the changes in the symbolic landscape reveal the changes in the political landscape. In the midst of the great post-Cold War transformation, while the disintegration of the two confronted globalizing ideologies of capitalism and communism was felt most strongly, Laclau (1994) recognized the crisis of universalism and the rise of political particularisms. The politicisation of social identities on particularistic postulates provides for populist political mobilisation. The absolutist and exclusive rhetoric of populism is often accompanied with totalitarian tendencies. Instead of consolidated democracy and flourishing civil culture we ended up with authoritarian leaders, self-proclaimed saviours of national causes who see enemies lurking from every corner, home and abroad. Hence, today we witness the emergence of illiberal democracies (Zakaria 1997), hybrid democratic regimes (Bogaards 2009) and authoritarian practices throughout Europe and across the globe.

SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SPACE UNDER THE PRESSURES OF POLITICAL PARTICULARISM AND HISTORICAL REVISIONISM

Post-socialist countries have been falling prey to the allure of political particularism ever since the first days of the great political transformation. The violent dissolution of former Yugoslavia in early 1990s was a dramatic warning about embracing this worldview, but not strong enough to repudiate it completely. Even in those post-socialist countries which were spared the war, nationalism and right wing populism were still on the rise. The necessary substantive democratic reorganization of state administration and institutions was deferred at the expense of venting nationalist sentiments and

frustrations, fabricated, exaggerated and encouraged by the ruling political elites. The need for collective cathartic experience following the collapse of the Soviet empire can only partly explain the vehemence of historical revisionist acts against socialist institutions, rituals and symbols. Kirn defines this mixed bag of neoliberalism and nationalism as “anticommunism at any price” (Kirn 2012:252), which opened the processes of ‘national reconciliation’ (ibid.:253) by means of revision of history to accommodate for the losers in the antifascist struggle, regularly of nationalist prominence and collaborators with Nazi and fascist occupiers. Those turns of history are not easily reconcilable per se. On the other hand, the emergence of new nation states, fifteen out of Soviet Union and seven out of Yugoslavia and the division of Czechoslovakia, dictated swift processes of ‘national reconfiguration’ (Danzer 2009) on these new state territories.

The relatively sudden change of the political system failed to establish the desired progressive political culture. Instead of, as suggested by Laclau, developing forms of radical innovation to deconstruct the sedimentary political practices in order to establish the new political; instead of progressing towards participatory political culture, we ended up with entrenched Subject political culture (Almond and Verba 1989); instead of approaching participative political culture we ended up with passive citizenship whose political life is limited to having expectations of the policy outcomes, rather than actively participating in policy-making. Political particularism with its abuse of nationalist sentiments narrows the political field and chains the public sphere to futile identitarian debates, thus preventing the development of a system of checks and balances necessary for the democratization processes to gain traction. In other words the ‘democratic consolidation’ (Diamond et al. 1997), that should have complemented the transition to electoral democracies, has been intercepted and interrupted by political particularism.

These national reconfiguration processes were essentially characterised by a frenzied search for political legitimacy, both internationally and domestically. The role of the nation-state was emphasised by the processes of post-Cold war regional and global repositioning on the Westphalian political map. Populists, who quickly came to dominate the political spectrum in the former East, abandoned the socialist modernist

project and instead constructed the nationalist political imaginary based on their anti-globalist, anti-cosmopolitan, xenophobic platform. Thus, the socialist monuments, as visible and tangible material objects representing the internationalism, cosmopolitanism and modernism of the socialist project (Kim 2012:265), were the obvious targets for symbolic reordering. The polysemic quality of these monuments oriented towards the future (ibid.:264) was in collision with the more straightforward symbolic markers of nationalist monuments that glorify the nation's past in their need to (re) create continuity.

A new political order requires a new symbolic order and the symbolic landscape has to be rearranged as well, or as Begić and Mraović put it, there is a need for change of the 'symbolic regime' (Begić and Mraović 2014:15). This is part and parcel of the reshaped 'cultural program' that underlies the social organization (Schmidt, in Horvatinčić 2011:83). The interdisciplinary literature is unanimous in detecting the importance of linking the organization of the public space, especially the symbolic landscaping, with the ideological underpinnings of social organization. These processes were well noted in literature and great many conceptualisations and metaphors were produced, i.e. 'disposable past' (Lisiak 2009), 'uncomfortable past' (Uskoković 2013), 'battles of symbols' (Harutyunyan 2008), 'war on monuments' (Burch and Smith 2007) and many other. Capturing the essence of this interplay, Danzer (2009:1562–1563) describes this process as a 'symbolic appropriation of space'. By destroying the socialist monuments, or leaving them to decay, the forces of the new political order were able to mark the end of the previous system and demonstrate the new priorities.

The rebirth of the nation, or the processes of national reconfiguration calls for the (re)instalment of other national historical figures in the symbolic landscape, change of street names and change of monuments also. These adjustments are aptly named 'memory work' by Burch and Smith (2007). These semantic changes of the built environment characterised the transition throughout East Europe in the 1990s. In the countries that emerged from the dissolution of Yugoslavia, burdened with fresh and highly unpleasant memories of civil wars, socialist monuments came to represent oppression. In Croatia alone more than half were destroyed between 1990 and 2000 and in recent years only 100 of those have been restored, which accounts for only 3% (Uskoković 2013:87). Bosnia and Herzegovina

suffered the worst effects of ethnic wars, thus Begić and Mraović, remind us that we must incorporate a more sensitive perspective of not just the post-socialist framework, but also the post-war situation in our analysis of the fate of socialist monuments (Begić and Mraović 2014:22). In Macedonia, belatedly, the incumbent ruling elite undertook a change in the symbolic landscape of the capital city, since capital cities are representative spaces for the nation (Therborn 2006). The project “Skopje 2014” not only redefines the socialist past, but also offers a glorified ancient past in its place and as such aims at rewriting history in the public space, directly.

Attention to socialist heritage in the built environment gained prominence in Macedonia only with the onslaught on the public space launched by the right-wing nationalists during the last decade after they entrenched themselves firmly in all administrative and political offices of state institutions. They engaged in spreading a perception that socialist modernism was a communist device intended to erase separate national identities. The authors of *Modernism in between* (Kulić et al. 2012), demonstrate the opposite. First they argue that turn to modernism and quick abandonment of socialist realism was actually a turn towards the West away from the Soviet influence (ibid.:32–40), and secondly, that architecture in socialist Yugoslavia expressed particular and separate national developments in each of the constituent republics (ibid.:76). Nevertheless, the ethnocratic regime rushed to erase that past and provide a better version of history in the public space, a version more suited to the nationalist worldview.

The analysis of those processes of symbolic landscaping allows us to move up and down the international, national and local level. We can thus pursue the analysis of the symbolic reconstruction of Skopje in relation to the nation-wide processes of symbolic and capitalistic transformation of space. In order to genuinely understand those processes that are not just vertically ordered, as the notion of scaling tends to suggest, and to account for the horizontally produced processes, human geographers introduced the relational aspects and networking as corrective conceptualizations (Cox 2013). Power is used as the main analytical vehicle here, but most often related to the accumulation of capital. While this is the central part of our analysis it will be combined with the uses of symbolic power that those networks of power manipulate.

The symbolic transformation of the public space is therefore a direct expression of those social relations produced and brutally introduced in Macedonia under neoliberal capitalism. The local networks of power, the business elites and ethnic political parties dictate those symbolic confrontations, maintaining the appearance of political struggles while successfully allowing unchallenged accumulation of capital by appropriation of a common good, the urban land for construction. The emphasis on both aspects, symbolic and capitalistic, of spatial transformation will help illuminate the devastating effects of persistent nurturing of political particularism that coexists in synchronicity with neoliberal capitalism. The existence of two strong ethnonationalist political blocks (Albanian and Macedonian) promoting their own version of separate national history, with symbolic markers scattered around the space to territorialize the ethnicity, actually works against the accommodation of social plurality in a country with strongly pronounced long-standing diversity. At the same time while the public sphere is detained in those identitarian debates, the capitalist appropriation advances unhindered and public space disappears either by symbolic appropriation by the state or by capitalist appropriation.

ESTABLISHMENT OF POLITICAL PARTICULARISM IN MACEDONIA: THE RISE OF ETHNOCRACY

The emergence of the triplet of intertwined ethno/national, patriarchal and religious chauvinism in South East Europe was noted already in the early 1990s (Ramet 1994). As Laclau (1994) commented on the general tendencies, the preference for particularistic identities over abandoned universalism was already taking shape in the Balkans. The rise of conservative and right-wing ideology took a little bit longer to gain strength in Macedonia, but when it finally arrived it came with a vengeance. In power since 2006 until May 2017, the IMRO-DPMNU¹ anachronistically, leads an anti-communist and anti-Yugoslav campaign.

1 IMRO – DPMNU stands for Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity or Vnatesna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makednosko Nacionalno Edinstvo.

The above-mentioned comparative analysis of Ramet (1994) only references Macedonia in the role of a victim of the rising right-wing sentiment in the region at the time for a reason. However, an update of the findings two decades later would provide ample evidence to qualify Macedonia as equally saturated with such appalling political transgression. Burdened with many problems, Macedonia managed to avoid ethnic conflict from emerging between the dominant Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority residentially concentrated at the border with Albania and Kosovo. The political answer to ethnic balancing reinforced the importance of ethnicity and its politicisation and instrumentalization. Politicised ethnicity in turn only furthered the existing divisions and helped little if anything to mitigate the ethnic conflict.

The instability in the region came too close to Macedonia in 1999 with the Kosovo crisis when over 300,000 Albanians moved across the border escaping from the Serbian army that has been in return bombed by NATO forces. A few years later in the early 2001 the remnants of the Kosovo Liberation Army led military actions against the Macedonian security forces. The controlled and limited military confrontation in 2001, during the first period of the IMRO-DPMNU led government (1998-2002) interrupted the habitual peaceful coexistence. In order to prevent further escalation, Macedonia was reorganized based on the ethnopolitical logic that laid the foundations for the rise of ethnocracy. The power-sharing mechanism implemented to warrant peace and territorial integrity of the country, institutionalised the ethnic key and encouraged firm establishment of parallel society (Bieber 2004). Ethnonationalist politicians on both sides were constantly abusing the system of institutionalised ethnicity and efficiently turned Macedonia into ethnocracy.

Moreover, the symbolic aspects of the nationhood were redefined in the Constitution in order to accommodate the new regime (Bliznakovski 2013). It should be expected that such political exercises that emphasize political symbolism would only gain in importance in the period that follows.

Ethnocracy is a form of electoral democracy where ethnic identity is turned into major, single most important tool for political mobilisation and main organizational principle of the political system.² I adapt

² I developed the concept independently from Yiftachel, to whom I unquestionably owe a great deal in refining my understanding of the concept.

Oren Yiftachel's (2006) concept of ethnocracy to explain the recent developments in Macedonia. Unlike Yiftachel's definition that emphasizes the responsibility of the dominant ethnic group for the establishment of this regime, I find both ethno-political groups to be responsible, not just the dominant one. The Macedonian ethnocratic regime that I explore has been in the making for over two decades, ever since Macedonia gained independence with the collapse of the Yugoslav federation. In the difficult years of early transition with collapsing economy and political instability as a norm, ethnos quickly substituted demos. The only community of importance became the ethnic community. This ideological shift demands altered political discourse, that in turn requires purified and exclusivist reading of the historical narrative.

In ethnocracy a system is created where the alleged protectors and defenders of ethnic privileges are the most important political actors. The power sharing has been an unwritten rule since the first days of Macedonian independence, but it is now firmly embedded in the Constitution and in national legislation. Even worse, the political particularism reifies social identities and creates separate political constituencies based exclusively on ethnic origin. This clustering purports the system of clientelism and patronage in which ethnic parties are the main power holders. By controlling the access to resources, the existing networks of power emerge and maintain themselves. Certainly, this ethnocratic regime needs a symbolic maintenance that must be materialized in the public space.

SHIFTING THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE BY CHANGING THE SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPE

Ethnocracy had to be established by all means and perhaps the easiest way to provide substance for those historical claims is to materialize them in the new symbolic landscape. All things socialist and modernist had to be removed and hidden behind new buildings and even grotesquely covered with superimposed plaster facades. We can see how the neglected socialist monuments therefore were not just a collateral, but were subjected to a direct action of removal and disappearance. Encouraged by strong popular support, affirmed in a series of electoral victories, the nationalist government decided to alter the image of the capital beyond recognition.

This total symbolic reconstruction garnered its fair share of criticism and this project soon became the most controversial topic (Čausidis 2013; Vilić 2013; Kolozova 2013; Marina 2013; Janev 2011). Most frightening are the authoritarian tendencies that the implementation of Skopje 2014 exposes.

At the very beginning of the building offensive the government proposed to build a church at the main square. A group of students, mainly from the Faculty of Architecture were banned from protesting against the idea. This attack against the grass-root “First Archibrigade” happened on 29 March 2009. Next year the government presented a CGI video pompously portraying the project “Skopje 2014”. The proposed church was still there, but this time along with many other objects, monuments and a Triumphal Arch. This video quickly became a laughing stock, until those virtual objects started materialising in the real world. Counter-protesters were not joking when they were throwing punches, just like the government was not joking when they started constructing those buildings and monuments and kept on ordering new ones through public procurement tenders that defined the building style as Neoclassical and Baroque.

More than a dozen of new buildings, couple of dozen of redecorated facades around the central square, two new pedestrian bridges, three fake wooden ships on the Vardar river (that operate as restaurants and/or hotels) and hundreds of sculptures and monuments now decorate the public space of what was once a modern city. The church square was relocated from the main and now dominates another pedestrian zone nearby. The urban plans were changed so frequently, one could say on a daily basis, according to the whim of the rulers of Macedonia. It was not just the urban plans that were changed whimsically, but also the national history as those symbolic markers rehabilitated dubious political figures from the past without a public debate. Generally, a new version of history was imposed according to the ruling party’s needs and vision. “Skopje 2014” remade the public space, changed the symbolic landscape of the Macedonian capital, but most of all intended to insert new history.

The ethnocratic regime claims this space without pardon, disregarding the vivid public sphere and reactions of interested citizens, NGOs, experts’ opinions and even circumventing legal procedures and changing the legislation when possible. Stubbornly pursuing the project that insatiably

swallows public funds in one of the poorest European economies is a testament to the fact that the Republic of Macedonia is a democracy in name only. The project costs overshoot the initial estimate of 80 million Euros almost tenfold, with current expense at 670 million Euros, according to the available public procurement data (Prizma 2016). The aggressive and at times even violent pursuit of the project clearly indicates that an undemocratic regime has been established.³ The ethnocratic regime divides its citizens not only as members of different ethnic groups, but also creates a division within the separate ethnic groups by proclaiming true patriots and traitors, thus silencing critical debate, all of which resembles the development of totalitarian regimes (Baumann and Gingrich 2004). Territorialisation of ethnicity through symbolic markers in service of the ethnocratic regime materialises ethnic divisions and creates borders that run through the heart of the city, proscribing the movement of Skopje citizens within safe and secure ethnic territories.

ETHNOCRATIC REORDERING OF SPACE OR HOW SPATIAL ANALYSIS HELPS US UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL PROCESSES

During the last decade the ethnocratic principles to which both Albanian and Macedonian nationalist political parties in power devotedly adhere to, were transformed into urban spatial organization. Yiftachel's conceptualisation of ethnopolitics is useful for this analysis because he connected the term ethnocracy with spatial analysis (Yiftachel 2009). Such ethnopolitically informed analysis of state spatiality expands and enriches Brenner's (2004) analytical account of the interplay between state and space, assessed through political economy. In our case the politicization of social identities gave rise to populist parties that turned the country into an ethnic battlefield where conflict is stoked by manipulating the symbolic realm. Internal dynamics in Macedonia are particularly open to external

³ The special riot unit was dispatched to clear the little park, from the defenders of the park by the informal group called Parkobrani. The small patch of greenery was designated the construction site for several administrative buildings in central Skopje. <http://alon.mk/wordpress/archives/204718>. Today there is a quasi Neo-classical building on this spot.

influences thus calling for the careful control of scaling aspect in the analysis. However, we will keep our focus on the ethnopolitical symbolic struggles within the titular ethnic group and interethnic relations to a lesser degree while the international concerns will be mostly bracketed, for our main interest is the treatment of history and its materialisation in immovable and monumental heritage as a tool for political manipulation.

The frenzied ethnic symbolic appropriation of public space certainly has a negative impact on the previously constructed symbolic landscape. It should be noted that not only is the overtly symbolic content being covered, dwarfed, removed or relocated, but also is the modernist architecture sentenced to disappear under the impact of redecorated facades. Apart from the aggressive symbolic landscaping in the capital it is worth paying attention to how the socialist monuments are treated not just in the capital, but all over the country in general. The socialist monuments fell victim to chronic neglect and silent destruction, removal and relocation to enter oblivion and disappearance. Based on the field research conducted in five different locations, Skopje, Kavadarci, Veles, Kumanovo, Prilep and Kruševo it is obvious that this heritage is largely unprotected and forgotten.

The findings of the research team⁴ in these different locations confirm that the socialist monuments were almost derelict, with few exceptions. The City of Prilep boasts of having one of the best commemorative sites designed by the great Bogdan Bogdanović that is well integrated in the public space in the city and as such it is well protected and maintained in comparison to other locations. The coat of arms of the city carries the illustration of the monument. The city of Prilep was even designated a Hero City because it was the place where the uprising against the fascist occupiers in Macedonia originated. It is very likely that the deconstruction of that identity would meet stronger resistance. Another example of a place where some care and attention is paid to the memorial site is the memorial complex of the Macedonian struggle in Kruševo. In this case the monument is also quite central for the identity of that small city. However, it is perhaps

⁴ Sonja Stojadinović, Adela Gjorgioska, Zdrako Stojkoski and the author, all members of the Leftist Movement Soldarnost, contributed.

protected by the importance for the nation maintenance as observed by anthropologist Keith Brown (1998). This memorial complex is popularly known as “Ilinden” for it also commemorates the uprising against the Ottoman Empire on that day in 1903 and this carries crucial importance for the Macedonian national construction. However, the adjacent museum dedicated more specifically to the People’s Liberation Struggle during the WWII on the other hand has been left at the mercy of the elements.

In other locations the situation fluctuates between bad and worse. The monumental building of the Partisans’ crypt in Veles received some funding to stop the leaking of the roof and got renovated. The crypt, that is of tremendous architectural and aesthetic value is now used for cultural events unrelated to the antifascist struggle, but at least puts this space on the map of the city again. The monument in Kavadarci has been totally forgotten, it is damaged and in great need of repair and is not the only example of a site that is treated unfavourably. The neglect and outright abandonment of socialist monuments and memorial complexes around the country is a common practice. Hence, the fact that socialist monuments in Skopje were dwarfed, removed, and relocated for the sake of “Skopje 2014” should come as no surprise at all. While there is no more first-hand evidence to be provided on research base, everything points towards validity of a generalisation that socialist monuments are neglected by and large. Therefore, we can confidently claim that this is not a coincidence, but the result of a shifted historical narrative that cannot use the internationalist language of socialism and must insist on a narrower nationalist reading of history.

USING GREY SPACE FOR CAMOUFLAGING THE CAPITALIST APPROPRIATION UNDER THE VEIL OF SYMBOLIC APPROPRIATION

By focusing on the reorganization of the symbolic landscape we can better grasp the complex processes of social transformations. For Yiftachel, who draws on Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe, and the works of Critical Urban Theories, the power relations are the central, organizing principle for social analysis (Yiftachel 2009). Analysis of the power relations through the transformations of the space, public space in particular, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic transformations

of post-socialist societies. The recent advances in human geography problematized these relations of scale, territory, flows, networks, space and place. Summing up the debate and the emerging impasses Cox (2013) concludes that a serious engagement with the capitalism is necessary to disentangle those conundrums. In the Macedonian case establishing this connection allows for capturing of the extended, second phase of privatization of societal resources. The land was left unexploited in the first wave of the so-called privatization, more aptly named organized plunder that took place under the banner of capitalist transformation during the initial phase of the transition period.

Attention to the appropriation of space refines our understanding of capitalist appropriation in post-socialist societies as the same mechanisms were employed during the privatization of industrial and natural resources. Under the close watch of political parties in power, with weakened public sphere and imposition of authoritarian hybrid democratic regimes, first the industrial and other economic capacities were transferred into private ownership and now in the second phase the process of privatisation is finishing with the unfair transition of the space that has been commoditised as construction land in private property. Applying Yiftachel's (2009) analysis of spatial appropriation from the centralised power position allows for analytically connecting the two phases of privatization. It provides perspective to observe the operating of power mechanisms at state level in ethnocracies. Furthermore, rather than simply applying the social analysis to urban phenomena, the analysis of urban phenomena becomes a tool for comprehending larger social processes, not the end in itself.

Yiftachel (2009) introduces the term of *grey space*, a space discarded, neglected, and left to decay purposefully. The grey space that is thus constructed creates legal uncertainty and calls for a governmental intervention, revealing the whole process as a cunning governmentality technique. Similarly, in the first phase of privatization, the neglect of the societal enterprises was used as grey-zoning of the sectors and parts of the economy until the well-connected managers and new businessmen accumulated enough capital to buy out the failing enterprises at discount. The fate of the commoditised common land turned into a construction site is comparable. The grey-zoning of socially owned socialist property, the

factories were targeted in the first phase of privatization. In the second phase the land needs to be transformed in the hands of private capital holders. The symbolic appropriation of space is therefore just a smokescreen for capitalist appropriation and shifts the debate away from the questions of property rights.

Grey-spacing is a governmentality tool used to delegitimize the previous users and owners of space and to render them vulnerable to the new regulation as illegitimate, unlawful etc. Thus, the grey-spacing of socialist monuments, socialist architecture and the very urban planning renders them unwanted, unnecessary and as such in need of state intervention. Once pronounced incompatible with the new system it opens them for further reinterpretation. Under the neoliberal policies hidden behind identitarian politics the grey-zoned space becomes available for capitalist appropriation. The symbolic appropriation is accompanied with capitalist appropriation of space, but the fact that the two aspects of this spatial transformation are simultaneous should not deter us from recognizing the prioritization of the second over the first, although the public debate is constructed as it is the other way around. Certainly, getting away with such blatant dispossessing and privatization of public goods is also indicative of underdeveloped public sphere and captured state as well as authoritarianism.

Thus the trick of grey-spacing in Skopje was utilized for more mundanely motivated appropriation, but hidden from the public eye in light of the noisy criticism about the symbolic appropriation, it went on largely unnoticed. The price paid by Skopje citizens is overcrowding, burdened infrastructure, crowded streets with no parking space, overexploited water and sewage systems, record high air pollution, disappearance of urban greenery and public spaces for leisure time, to name just a few. These are the consequences of inexistent or disorganized resistance to the neoliberal policies. Harvey (2005) uses the term “accumulation by dispossession”. In the Macedonian case we can see that all of the mechanisms which Harvey mentions were applied, almost by the book: commodification and privatization of land; conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights, etc. (*ibid.*:32). To stop, avert, or prevent such practices under the conditions of an ethnocratic regime is almost impossible as the discussion is diverted

to identitarian issues and the essence of capitalist accumulation by dispossession is hidden well.

It is important to connect both the symbolic and capitalist appropriation of space in order to understand the effects of neoliberal policies that dispossess the urban communities of public space and privatize the space for capitalist property developers. In Macedonia, most of the attention and resistance went to objecting the symbolic appropriation, letting the capitalist appropriation pass unnoticed. Only recently in Skopje, small pockets of urban resistance, self-organized and informal groups, started to appear in the neighbourhoods under attack by urban mafia that works in coordination with corrupt local governments. However, while the public was obsessed with the new symbolic order, the capitalists benefited from the general confusion.

ARTICULATING RESISTANCE

If the wars and destruction in the 1990s and the dominance of the nationalistic discourse in the public sphere quashed any other debate about the nature of privatization and its consequences, now the time has come to consider other aspects of transition as well. Critical voices are multiplying all over cities, at least larger cities, all over former Yugoslavia. The ideas like the right to the city have become louder and better articulated in Zagreb, Belgrade, and in Skopje, too. The small pockets of urban resistance in Skopje are getting increasingly better organized to challenge the decisions made by local authorities. I return to Yiftachel who elegantly explains in Gramscian terms the resistance to the hegemonic discourse as articulation.

“Articulation is a key concept in Gramscian-inspired approaches, alluding to the process through which class position and cultural forms are combined in the making of collective identities, during the ongoing struggles and negotiations over power and resources.” (Yiftachel 2009:247).

Here we see in Yiftachel’s interpretation, the processual nature of unfixed, emerging changing identities, a most valuable approach allowing for analysis that takes into account the observed reality in our fast changing

and unstable post-socialist societies. On the one hand, we have the manipulation of nationalistic discourse that insists on the essentialist logic, and we witness emergence of urban, cosmopolitan, interconnected, open youth that challenges the straightjacket of national identities rethinking the class positions of the capitalist economic order.

This opens the door for the reassessment of the direction and scope of historical revisionism that were experienced all over Eastern Europe and in the Balkans in particular. While the ideologically burdened national historiographies were in great need of reassessment, the total onslaught against anything leftist did not do justice to that need. The realization that not everything was evil during the socialist period calls for a more cautious approach that would filter the universal humanistic achievements and measure them separately from the abuses of power in one-party regimes. The articulation of resistance on the grounds of community interests and care for common goods, therefore, is a suitable concept for assessing new urban social movements throughout the region. In Macedonia there are new social actors who are readily engaging with the socialist past. The ethnonationalist pressure that aims at total control of the social sphere becomes obsolete as a growing number of activists and intellectuals challenge it. There are more and more grass-roots movements for whom the basis for community creation is no longer invested in ethnicity, or nation, but appears to be based on wider, universal understanding of humanity and urbanity.

“Skopje 2014” encountered a great amount of resistance articulated in various ways. The fact that this project is a symbol of authoritarian government was most clearly demonstrated during 2016 summer of anti-governmental protests, when the protesters kept on colouring the new objects and kitsch facades of ethnocratic power. The splashing of paint over the Triumphal Arch, the redecorated Neo-classical façade of the government building, the monument to the Unknown Hero (a variation of the Bradenburg gate) showed contempt at this lavish, unnecessary and divisive symbolic makeover that came to represent the ruling party. The resistance can also consist of a simple act of walking, transgression of the ethnically prescribed spaces as well, to which the Skopje Old Bazaar, forgotten and avoided for decades, now revisited and enlivened, stands as a monument. Number of civil initiatives became more active in challenging

new urban plans that provide for new construction shifting the debate from symbolic to capitalist accumulation.

The critical analysis of historical revisionism that tended to obliterate everything ideologically on the Left can no longer be accepted without questioning. Recently, a number of serious historical and theoretical works reflected upon the “political uses of the past” and the popular albeit unscientific manipulation of the trendy negation of national historiographies all over former Yugoslavia (Samardžić et al. 2013). This process of objective re-examination of the popular historical revisionism that is best described as a revision of history, helps reintroduce the positive aspects of the socialist revolution and the national Liberation struggle to the mainstream. This revalorization in turn allows for a renewed positive understanding of the socialist past. Moreover, it allows for a sceptical reception of the exaggerated nationalist claims and calls for a critical reading of the nationalist interventions in the public space and the symbolic order of the ethnocratic regime. A special role is reserved for the socialist monuments in re-evaluating that period as something more nuanced than the absolutely negative image which nationalist particularism projects. This leads to the emergence of new kinds and types of articulating resistance against both symbolic and capitalist appropriation that bring about the development of new kinds of communities, imagined differently, free from the confines of ethno-politics.

“Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often impoverished. Theorizing about this experience aesthetically, critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice. For me this space of radical openness is a margin—a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a ‘safe’ place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance.” (hooks 1991:149).

Articulation is a particularly apt notion for the study of peripheral and insurgent identities, due to their rise through resistance to patriotic subordination and ethnonationalist oppression. Evidently, there is a newfound readiness to reassess the value of those monuments, reminders of the socialist past and the anti-fascist struggle. On those bases, I invite us to consider the possibility of the advent of new forms of resistance to the hegemonic nationalist discourse. As Boris Buden (2010) suggests in

his famous essay *Children of Post-communism*, the citizens of former Yugoslavia and the former Eastern Bloc are not incapacitated for democracy and the protests against the nationalist monuments in Skopje in 2016 are a fine example of their democratic capacity for not observing their own society through the nationalist lens. The quest for the new forms of resistance, now free from anticommunism hysteria should not be directed towards a recognition of institutional shift towards the socialist legacy, but to a genuine bottom-up resistance to all forms of state and capitalist appropriation of space. The socialist modernist monuments, with their vision of the possibility for a new world, contain the potential needed for expanding the imaginary horizon beyond the narrow nationalist scope. As the space, the identities too, are a multitude, changing and developing constantly, being shaped by and drawing its energy from experiences, lived and remembered, layered and emerging.

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TEGOBNA PROŠLOST: PROPITUJUĆI SOCIJALISTIČKO NASLIJEĐE U MAKEDONIJI

Analiza projekta *Skopje 2014*, velike simboličke rekonstrukcije glavnoga grada Makedonije, upućuje na stvaranje etnokratskog režima u zemlji. U suprotnosti s načinom na koji se tretiraju socijalistički spomenici, otkriva se velik pomak u povijesnoj naraciji. Ovo simboličko prisvajanje popraćeno je neoliberalističkim, kapitalističkim prisvajanjem prostora i služi za okretanje rasprave od kapitalističkog gomilanja putem obespravljenosti. Zapuštenost socijalističkih spomenika pokazatelj je uvođenja sivih zona, tehnike governmentalnosti koja se lako može zlorabiti u etnokratskim režimima koji neoliberalističkim praksama dopuštaju da uzmu maha, neometane bilo kakvom produktivnom javnom raspravom. Rad završava diskusijom o mogućnostima pružanja artikuliranog otpora.

Ključne riječi: Makedonija, Skopje 2014, etnokracija, javni prostor, socijalističko naslijeđe/spomenici



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