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The struggle over memory hidden
in the contemporary cityscape:
the example of Skopje 2014, Macedonia

Abstract

A city is a product of not only urban planners and architects, but also of politicians, writers and members of various groups who treat it as theirs. The struggle over memory is visible in many places. However, I claim that various „symbolic wars" are especially visible in the case of the post-socialist urban revival. The city of Skopje is a case in point. Nowadays, Skopje can be perceived as a symbolic battlefield through which diverse exclusive and inclusive myths are created and negotiated. The aim of the „Skopje 2014" project analyzed in this article is to restructure the city center of Skopje in style of the Antiquity by renovating facades, raising new buildings and establishing a number of new monuments. I claim that, through various meanings of nostalgia, this project conceals the nationalizing policy of the Macedonian government on the one hand, and the search for a new urban identity and its connection with the European heritage on the other hand.

Keywords: memory and place, urban nostalgia, nationalizing policy, Skopje, Macedonia

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Miasto jest produktem nie tylko urbanistów i architektów, ale również polityków pisarzy i członków różnych grup, które postrzegają miasto jak własne. Walka o pamięć jest widoczna w wielu miejscach. Jednakże uważam, że na post-socjalistycznym gruncie różne miejskie „wojny symboliczne" są szczególnie widoczne. Skopje jest jednym z takich przykładów. Celem analizowanego projektu „Skopje 2014" jest przebudowa centrum miasta w duchu antyczności poprzez odnawianie fasad, projektowanie nowych budynków i stawianie ogromnej liczby pomników. Jak postaram się wykazać, w projekcie tym, poprzez różne znaczenia nostalgii ukryta jest zarówno polityka zorientowanego narodowo rządu macedońskiego jak i próba stworzenia nowej tożsamości miejskiej Skopje, związanej z europejskim dziedzictwem.

Słowa kluczowe: pamięć i miejsce, nostalgia miejska, polityka zorientowana narodowo, Skopje, Macedonia

After 1990 a number of „little Viennas", „Romes", „Venices", and „Parises" emerged in the post-socialist region1. Neither the size of the city, nor its significance mattered when it came to the reshaping of local urban memory and identity. From Sulina – a small Romanian borderland city to megalopolises such as Moscow, Belgrade and Sarajevo, one can face processes of urban restoration, dynamic local urban politics and simply a reshaping of local urban topography. It seems like we face the rediscovering of „lost" memory and „white holes"2 in the history of Central and East European societies. One of the most important questions in this process is that about the future of socialist signs in the post-socialist urban landscapes, as well as the search for a new urban identity which would break with this heritage3.

Although it has been more than 20 years since the beginning of the new era in the region, I believe that societies here still face the transition. One of the best mirrors for this is the development of cities, which is perceived as a series of power struggles between citizens or groups in order to gain access to resources4. The urban revival which we face in the region has particular political content. It is used by governments in order to shape and implement their vision of not only history, memory, traditions but also attachments and emotions5. Nevertheless, what is common to all these places is nostalgia, understood as a longing for a home that does not exist anymore – or has never even existed. Nostalgia is a feeling, emotion of loss and displacement as well as a kind of fantasy6. In the post-socialist region it is nostalgia for empire – in the case of Central Europe it is the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Russia – the Great Russian Empire and in the Balkans mostly the pre-Yugoslav time.

„Skopje 2014" which is the Macedonian government-sponsored project, is one of the examples of the recent for the region city restoration. Its aim is to reconstruct the city center of Skopje in order to remove the Yugoslav signs and replace them with those which refer mostly to the style of classical antiquity and image of Alexander the Great from the middle ages to the times of Macedonia's struggle for nationhood. However, „Skopje 2014" is not a usual example for the region, its momentum, cost and ideological basis makes it a very special case for study. A lot has been written about Skopje

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[1] In the following paper, I used „the post-socialist region" label to describe the post-Soviet area, post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as post-Yugoslav territories. Although I know that socialism differed in particular parts of the region or even in given countries (and thus the patterns of post-socialist transition are different), I claim that there are cultural features that are similar for the whole region. One of the examples, discussed in this paper, is an urban revival and the politics of urban memory observed throughout the region.

[2] Gruber 2002, p. 107.

[3] Wanner 1998, p. 171-200.

[4] Abitz 2006, p. 13.

[5] Niedźwiedź 2009, p. 209.

[6] Boym 2001, p. 10.

and its transformations. Different authors stress the nationalistic discourse hidden in „antiquzation"[7], specific narratives of Macedonian identity[8], nation-branding[9], security dilemma[10] or even Macedonia's frustration[11]. Thus, rather than rewriting other authors' ideas and comments, I will focus on the urban topography of „Skopje 2014" itself in order to show the city's divisions and power struggles within it. As I argue, contemporary Skopje can be perceived as a battlefield of a hidden symbolic war between different groups[12]. The mirror of this situation is given by the ethnic Macedonian – minority Albanian conflict, which has dominated the public discourse in Macedonia for more than twenty years. However, I claim that the contemporary reconstruction of Skopje reflects also another element connected with the post-socialist urban revival. In this regard, the rebuilding of Skopje is connected with the search of the new urban identity. From now on Skopje supposed to be a modern European capital open and attractive for tourists. Thus, the visible in the cityscape, nostalgia is connected with the question of redefining the identity of the Macedonian nation and state, its history, continuity, and distinctiveness but also the need of being perceived as a comprehensive part of the European heritage. Methodologically, I follow the agenda of Maximilian Hartmuth for „the reading of cities" – an investigation of how buildings, squares, or monuments can be perceived outside the material word and in connection with feelings of nostalgia attached to them[13]. It this sense, my main conceptual framework is provided by the relation of memory and place in cityscape.

The Macedonian National Question

Together with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, several new states emerged in the Balkans. One of them was Macedonia[14]. The country and its people faced the same

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[7] Vangeli 2011, p. 13-32.

[8] Kubiena 2012, p. 78-99.

[9] Graan 2013, p. 161-179.

[10] Sazdovski 2013, p.16.

[11] Sinisa, 2.02.2014.

[12] This article is based on my fieldtrip to Skopje in September 2013 financed by the Department of Humanities, Maria Curie-Sklodowska University's grant for young scholars. At this point, I would like to thank Aleksandar Sazdovski for being my guide in Skopje and an excellent „gatekeeper" for understanding the modern Macedonian politics and society.

[13] Hartmuth 2010, p. 19.

[14] It is worth mentioning that Macedonia as a state does not have a long history. When in 1944 The People's Republic of Macedonia as one of the Yugoslavia constituent republics was created, it was the first time in the history when the existence of Macedonia distinct nation and territory was officially recognized. In the past Macedonia used o be a part of the Ottoman Empire. This period was marked by numbers of anti-Ottoman revolutions led by Macedonian national elites. This was also a period of constructing Macedonian language and work of the most prominent writers and poets (all of whom are now commemorated in the framework of Skopje 2014 project). As a result of the Balkan wars (1912-13) Macedonian's territory was divided between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. During the Second World War, Macedonian national

kind of political and economic transition problems as all the former republics did. The relocation of authority from Belgrade to Skopje, privatization of the market, and the economy shortage were the main issues which Macedonian people shared with other post-Yugoslav states[15]. However, from the very beginning, the country confronted several internal and external problems, which were distinct from its neighbors. First came with the question of the recognition of the Macedonian state and nation. No single neighbor fully supported Macedonian independence. Although Bulgaria recognized the state, it denied the existence of a separate Macedonian nation and language; Greece questioned the use of the name „Macedonia", which for her was closely related to the Greeks' heritage; and finally Serbia could not agree to the existence of an autocephalous Macedonian Church. A security threat[16] was also posed by Albania „kin-state" through its relationship with ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia. The census of 1991 revealed that 65 percent of the country's population defined themselves as Macedonians, 2.2 percent were Serbs and other smaller groups as Turks and Gypsy, but almost 21 percent were Albanian living largely around the city of Tetovo and in Skopje[17]. What is more, Albania had an ethnically homogenous population of at least 3 million, then in Kosovo and Southern Serbia lived another more than 1.5 million – all groups with strong economic and family ties with their kin in Macedonia[18]. In this regard, the idea of Greater Albania crashed with the sense of Macedonian south Slavic solidarity.

In such a context, it was obvious that Macedonia from the very beginning has had clearly nationalizing goals[19]. There were strong attempts to change this multinational country into a nation-state in favor of ethnic Macedonians living here. These efforts met a resistance mostly from local Albanian minority who inhabited the Western part of the country as well as Skopje. Moreover, Albanians had largely boycotted the Republic's referendum on sovereignty in 1991 and organized their alternative one in 1992 supporting

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elites struggled for recognition and self-determination which were successfully achieved in the borders of Yugoslavia. Today's members of Macedonian people speak a Slavic language codified after 1944 and are members of the Orthodox Church whose authority was established in 1968.

[15] Brown 2003, p. 29.

[16] Sazdovski 2013, p. 24.

[17] What is interesting, the 1953 census showed that there were only 12 percent of Albanians in the People's Republic of Macedonia. This shows that the majority of the contemporary Albanians living in Macedonia came here as seasonal workers engaged in the rebuilt of Skopje after the earthquake. Another wave of migration was connected with the situation in nearby Kosovo.

[18] Brown 2003, p. 32.

[19] By „natonalizing goals" I refer to Brubaker's idea of nationalizing states which appear after the dissolution of empires (for example Soviet Union or Yugoslavia) and are directed towards building a nation-state. The idea of nationalizing states is pointed to the unfinished and ongoing nature of nationalist projects and processes. It is characterized by five motifs: the idea of the existence of the core nation, its claims to ownership the state, the existence of a weak/titular nation and specific state's action to strengthen its position and finally the number of remedial actions. See: Brubaker 1996.

the idea of creation of an autonomous Albanian political entity in Macedonia[20]. For ethnic Macedonians it was a clear sign of Albanians' disloyalty towards the newly emerged state.

The tense relations of nationally oriented politicians led to a civil war in 2001, which was ended by the Ohrid Framework Agreement[21]. According to it, the Macedonian government was forced to change the constitution and in this way transformed the country from an ethnic nation-state to a civic multiethnic one. This change had the biggest influence on the condition of the Albanian minority living there. As a result of it, Albanian became a second language in the country. Moreover on the symbolic level the important change concerned national flags, which from this moment were officially allowed to be waved[22]. In this context, the nationally oriented Macedonian government needed to find a new way for expressing the state's distinct identity and sovereignty in favor of ethnic Macedonians. In this regard, Skopje was chosen as a new place of a multi-faceted national memory-space[23].

The City as a Mirror

The city of Skopje itself several times in its history experienced massive disruptions and catastrophes. First, the city developed as a trade center located on the Vardar river, then was burned down in 1689 and did not recover until the end of the 19th century[24]. Its state's belonging changed several times – from ancient settlement, through Bulgarian, Serbian and Ottoman direct rules, finally it became a capital of the mentioned People's Republic of Macedonia in 1944 as one of Yugoslavia's constituent republics. At that period, Skopje slowly transformed from the rather peripheral trade city to the regional, highly industrialized capital.

However, the most dramatic changes in the cityscape came in 1963, when a dramatic earthquake took place[25]. Most parts of the historic city center were destroyed and soon the remains of old buildings were replaced by typical modernist architectural style of

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[20] Brown 2003, p. 35.

[21] The conflict had its beginning in the city of Tetovo, a predominantly Albanian town, in which the mayor decided to fly the Albanian flag on the municipality building. Also, in Tetovo was established the first Albanian-language university in the country, see: Sazdowski 2013, p. 47.

[22] This element is especially visible in the modern symbolic landscape of Macedonia. Travelling from Skopje to Ohrid Lake, one can notice the growing number of Albanian flags located on both public building, private houses and next to the streets. There are especially significant in the city of Tetovo, which is considered as a center of Albanian community in Macedonia. Also in the old part of Skopje, one can find a denser accumulation of Albanian flags, which are put on restaurants, private houses and nearby mosques.

[23] As Keith Brown shows until the mid of the 1990s, the most important national space of memory was located in the city of Kruševo which in the past was a field of the most important anti-Ottoman revolutions. See: Brown 2003.

[24] Ragaru 2008, p. 527.

[25] Petrovski 2004, p. 28.

the time[26]. The unique of its time the so-called Master Plan demarcated nearly 300 hectares for the new city center located on the right bank of Vardar river. In the result of an international design competition, the jury of architect-planners in 1965 divided the prize between Japanese architect Kenzo Targe and Zagreb-based firm of Miscevic and Wenzler[27]. Until 1980, Skopje remained a huge construction site.

Moreover, the reconstruction process highlighted certain divisions of the city, whose center was located on the Vardar river. The left bank was the oldest part of the city, whose foundation goes back to the Ottoman time. One could find here a typical for this region architecture with small craftsmen shops, cozy cafes, and narrow cobblestone streets. The right bank was the place where most of the damaging effect of earthquake became visible. Old architecture was replaced by a socialist one, streets were widened and huge squares created. The Stone Bridge (*Kameniot Most*) divided the city into Ottoman and modern, historic and socialist parts[28].

The unstable period of the Macedonian State in 2001 was later reflected in the Skopje cityscape, which after 2001 became a truly symbolic battlefield. The first actions were taken by the prime minister Ljubco Georgievski who, in an attempt to win some support for the upcoming elections came with an idea of raising a Millenium Cross in Skopje. This was supported by the Macedonian Orthodox Church which in 2002 initiated the establishment of the 66 meters New Millenium Cross. For its location was chosen the top of a hill in the *Mount Vodno*, a mostly ethnic Macedonian inhabited district in Skopje. The cross dominated the landscape of the city. It became visible from almost every part of the city as well as a first thing that hits eyes when one enters it[29].

The Albanians' response came five years later. As the result of the initiative of the local Albanian elites, a huge bronze statue of an Albanian national hero – Gjergi Kastrioti Skenderbeg was raised in the middle of *Old Bazaar*. An attentive observer will notice that the statue is positioned in a very specific way. The bronze eyes are staring at several kilometers away point to the right bank part of the city and its main hill on which stands the Millenium Cross. The location of the statute in the middle of the Ottoman part of the city, inhabited mostly by Albanians, were a clear sign of Albanians' struggle to mark their symbolic presence in the city[30]. Moreover, by placing the horseman statute in Skopje, the

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[26] Ragaru 2008, p. 535.

[27] Home 2007, p. 16.

[28] The huge-scale re construction of Skopje attracted seasonal workers who came here from different parts of the Balkans. One of the biggest group formed Albanians (also from Kosovo) who after the reconstruction decided to settle in the city.

[29] The Millenium Cross has existed till now, and still it is the most noticeable element in the Skopje's landscape as well as the best observation point of the city itself. This is why nowadays it is one of the most important touristic sights in the city.

[30] Ragaru 2008, p. 535.

city became a third Albanian capital in the Balkans[31]. In this way Macedonia's Albanian national elites were completing the shared Albanian imagination and the mental map of the Balkans. From now the Vardar river divided the city not only into Ottoman and modern, historic and socialist but also Albanian and Macedonian parts and an individual of certain nationality would think twice before crossing the symbolic Stone Bridge situated in the middle.

Musealizing the city – „Skopje 2014"

„The city imagines its future by improvising on its past"[32]. The name of the city and its particular parts is a multi-faceted symbol which represents certain meanings, interests and values[33]. The post-2008 manifestation of the new policy in Macedonia began with the renaming process. The Skopje stadium was renamed the „National Arena Philip II", and the main highway as well as the airport was renamed after „Alexander of Macedonia". Moreover, the new ancient symbols were proclaimed in the campaigns used by both the governmental organizations (such as the Agency of Youth and Sport) and popular ones.

In 2009 the nationally oriented government led by the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski announced the „Visions of Skopje 2014". In the official campaign, through promotion materials and short movies, the architects of „Skopje 2014" stressed that their main goal was to popularize the city and Macedonia for foreign tourists. From now on, Skopje should be associated with modern, cultural European city. However, the other goal was to strengthen the Macedonian identity by stressing the connection between modern state and ancient Macedonia[34].

In the process of „musealizing the city"[35] under the project „Skopje 2014" more than 30 statues have been erected in the city center. What should be mentioned is the fact that none of it was dedicated to Albanian and Muslim historical figures. One can find here monuments in commemoration of, for example, ancient figures such as Alexander the Great and his father Philip; figures from the Middle Ages such as Justinian I, Tsar Samuil; anti-Ottoman activists such as Dimitrija Čupovski (a writer from the 19th century), Goce Delčev (a revolutionist from the 19th century), Dame Gruev (a revolutionary leader from the 19th century), and also religious figures like Mother Theresa (who was born in Skopje) and Saints Cyril and Methodius just to mention a few examples. Thus, the „Skopje 2014" from the very beginning was an exclusive ethnic Macedonian project.

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[31] Ibidem, p. 550.

[32] Boym 2001, p. 75

[33] Another interesting point of symbolic struggle between Macedonians and Albanians in Skopje is posed by the process of streets naming. According to Nadége Rogoru (2008) around city's street are named after Albanian heroes and historical figures. This might be another way, how Albanian national elites want to mark their presence in the cityscape.

[34] http://www.skyscrapercity.com, 20.02.2014.

[35] Kubiena 2012, p. 86-92.
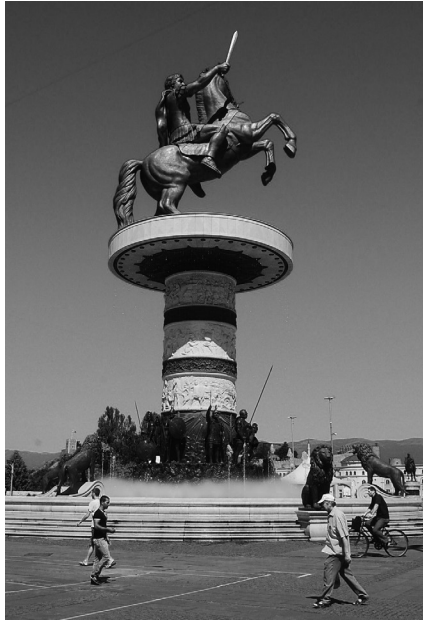
1. The statute of the Warrior on a Horse, which represents the figure of Alexander the Great
(photo made by author on September 2013)

2. The stature of the Warrior, which represent the figure of Philip II.
The statue is directed towards the Millenium Cross and the Warrior on a Horse's statue
(photo made by author on September 2013)

3. The building of the Court of Justice, state's archive and archeological museum
(photo made by author on September 2013)

The epicenter of most actions was the main square located next to the Stone Bridge on Vardar river. In the past, it was a part of the city almost completely demolished by the earthquake and later restored in the modernist style. But transformations touched also the left bank (Albanian) part of the city. Not only were certain monuments located there but also the most important administration and cultural buildings. It was another side of the project, which aim was to revitalize *Stara Čaršija* and make it more open for local Macedonians and tourists.

Almost all monuments are made of bronze and marble and represent the key figures in Macedonian history. The most important is the nearly 30-metre-high statute of the Warrior on a Horse, which represents the figure of Alexander the Great – a symbol of the „Skopje 2014" project itself. It was completed in 2011 to commemorate 20 years of Macedonian independence. Its fundaments are designed as a fountain pool in which is located bronze solders and lions. Then on 10 meters cylindrical column stands 14.5 meters bronze sculpture[36].

The monument is located in the center of Makedonija square, in close distance to the Stone Bridge. The warrior holds a sword in his right hand and poses as preparing for attack. Behind him appears the Millenium Cross, and the statue itself is directed towards the old part of the city. Metaphorically, it may be suggested to an observer that the Warrior is just about to attack the other part. Taking few steps towards the Stone Bridge one would see that Alexander is directed towards his father – Philip II, who is located on the opposite side of a river. The monument of the Warrior stands in the middle of the Karpoš's Rebellion Square, which serves as an entrance to the *Old Bazaar*. On the basis of it, there is also a fountain pool in which are put the sculptures of the Mothers of Macedonia. The Warrior stands with his right hand raised and faces the monuments of the Warriors on Horse and a mentioned Cross behind him. One can have an impression that the Warrior is welcoming and supporting the attack of Alexander. Both monuments are the axes of the main scene as well as its main actors. Other monuments surrounded them, and although being important are let in the shadows. They represent important personalities connected with different periods of struggle for Macedonia independence, from ancient times, through middle ages, Ottoman and modern periods. This compilation of national figures on one square brings a certain feeling of continuity and distinctiveness of Macedonian identity through time and territory.

Besides monuments, architects designed several new bridges[37] in close distances between each other, reconstructed facades, and created the Porta Macedonia, a triumphal arch situated near Macedonian Square which supposed to commemorate the long struggle for Macedonian independence. Moreover, „Skopje 2014" involves the construction of more than 20 public buildings, including museums, theatres, concert halls, administrative

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[36] The total cost of the monument is 7.5 million Euros: see: www.trtmacedonian.com, 20.02.2014.

[37] For example: Art, Eye and Freedom Bridges.

offices all built in the style of classical antiquity[38]. What is interesting is that the Court of Justice and main archives are located in the same building as the archeological museum. By this, the architects of „Skopje 2014" wanted to establish another link between the past and presence, antiquity and modernity, ancient tribes and modern Macedonian nation.

Anastas Vangeli sees the beginning of the „antiquization"[39] of Skopje, as a kind of link between modern and ancient Macedonians in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, mostly in the opposition to the Greek scholars and Greek Orthodox Church. However, the concept „antiquitization" remained rather salient; the exception was the narrative around the concept of the ancient Kingdom of Macedonia under the rule of Philip II. It gained its power during Tito's regime and the idea of the expansion of Yugoslavia. It is worth mentioning here that in the case of Macedonia throughout the Yugoslav period, the nation building process was stronger than Yugoslavism. The VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) was one of the first to promote the nationalist rhetoric in modern Macedonia which would link the present with the past.

The narratives of the ancient Macedonia remained after the collapse of the Yugoslav state or even grown in power. In 1992 the new independent state adopted the Star of Vergina, an ancient Macedonian symbol invented in the late 1970s, as the new state flag. Moreover a number of historians, writers, and publicists started to promote the ancient Macedonia narrative in their activity and work (and as Vangeli writes even believed in it!). „Greater Macedonia" entered school textbooks, national history and, as it soon released, the urban landscape.

Towards the Urban Nostalgia

Nostalgic and anti-nostalgic visions can be found in the physical spaces of city ruins, construction sites, renovations, heritage places, in concrete buildings and architectural style. The urban landscape is the product of city planners, architects, politicians but also writers and scholars.

According to David Lowenthal, a common vision of the past is a necessary element in the process of identity building of those who treat the past as theirs. Thus, the question „who are we?" refers to the question „who were we as a group in the past; who were our ancestors"[40]?

A similar relationship can be perceived between memory and space. On the one hand, space accumulates historical experiences – past events, which were so powerful, that are still present in the landscape. In this sense, space is a kind of *model of* a representation of the remembered past[41]. On the other hand, space can be consciously created by those

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[38] Sinisa, 2.04.2014.

[39] Vangeli 2011, p. 15.

[40] Lowenthal 1985, p. 42.

[41] Geertz 1973, p. 90.

people who have the power to shape it and thus showing only the elements of the past, which somehow serve their needs. In this sense, space is the *model for*: a kind of instruction of our memories, in which some of them are more visible and powerful.

Relationships between space, identity and memory are especially visible in the case of the cosmopolitan myth, which consists of present imagery of past glory and empire nostalgia[42]. The production and reproduction of the cosmopolitan myth always refer to particular places in a city's space. The landscape is full of the „significant places" which mirror its concrete features[43]. The open question in the case of every city is how do people remember (or rather how should they remember) these places and thus perceive their present residence? The methodological problem, which stands behind such questions, is how to measure people's bonds with places. In this sense, two factors seem to be the most important: place attachment and place identity. By the first one, Lewicka understands „relations people develop with places"[44]. For her, historical sites create a sense of continuity with the past, which embody the group traditions. The second one, place identity, has a dual meaning. It refers, on the one hand, to a set of place features that guarantee the place's distinctiveness and continuity in time, and on the other, an individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment[45]. This existence of these „urban reminders" depends on the social memories connected with them, which tend to be biased. Some events or historical features are remembered, some absent and still some are created in order to make a "better story"[46]. Thus, history here is not an objective fact, but an intellectual construct, in the cityscape visible in forms of the „concretisation of history"[47].

To translate the variations of the „cosmopolitan myth" into nationalist ideology two things are highlighted. The first one is the belief that one's own nation is in the center of the universe and the second one's own nation is the first one on a given land[48]. As such, myths served the nation's claim to be the most important in their land, have the right for own state and in consequence stress one's own significance and uniqueness. However, in order to stress all these points, a nation needs to have a point of reference in the form of significant Other. The Other here is always less developed, backward and left in the margin.

In Macedonia, the process of rereading the history in order to serve nationalist claims was visible on many levels. The most important history books included chapters on Ancient Macedonia and „Aleksandar Makedonski". Although Alexander the Great is

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[42] Van Assche 2009, p. 7-19.

[43] Edensor 2002, p. 65.

[44] Lewicka 2008, p. 212.

[45] Ibidem, p. 215

[46] Ibidem, p. 229.

[47] Rihtman-Auguštin 2004, p. 180.

[48] The role of cosmopolitan myth in national ideology was stressed by several authors. See Smith 1997, Schöpflin 1997 and Wilson 1997.

a common hero for different Balkan nationalities (Bulgarians, Greeks and so on) in this case the myth of him was created exclusively for Macedonians[49]. The symbols of Ancient Macedonia were also reused by the Macedonian diaspora for their representations. The myth served on the one hand to highlight the uniqueness of Macedonian nation and on the other to differentiate them from Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians and other Balkan nationalities.

As it can be concluded the Macedonian national identity and the project of nation-state building under the label of „antiquization" was the product of national elites who in different periods used it for a different purposes. In this sense the Macedonian example can be put in the wider context of intellectual struggles in the creation and maintenance of nationalist rhetoric observed in the region[50]. Whether it was a national product in contrast to Greek politics in the 19th century, subnational category in Yugoslavia or modern nation-state process were mostly directed to ethnic Macedonians and in contradiction to minorities living in the country (Albanians) or neighborhood states (Greece, Bulgaria). The myth served elites in hard times of Macedonians' struggle for independence, establishing state's borders and international recognition. As Schwartz concludes „Macedonia is a word that has been placed between quotation marks throughout the modern history of the Balkans"[51].

Conclusion

The urban revival in contemporary post-socialist Europe is a fascinating topic for anthropological investigation. It has many faces, narratives, myths, and ideologies depends on the part of the region. „Skopje 2014" is definitely one of the most interesting examples. Its size, budget and ideological basis is stronger than in any other places. One can place it in the modern Macedonian nation-state building process, government politics, effort to strengthen the ethnic Macedonian identity, anti-Greek, Albanian or Bulgarian propaganda, a useful project for promoting Macedonia abroad, and attempts to recreate the old city after the earthquake in 1963. Nevertheless, as for me „Skopje 2014" is an exemplary of different projects which since 1991 pass through the post-socialist region. They manifest the struggle to create new regional identity and place attachments very often in contrast to the past socialist era.

In the same way as modern cities are polymorphic and can have different layers of narratives, myths and imaginations, in the same way they can be read and understood. The observed „urban revival" in the region can be interpreted from different theoretical angles. One can discuss its aesthetic value, ideological background, role in local and state politics in shaping memory and citizen's identity. Their form of course differ in particular parts of the region. In some there are rather cosmetic changes in other huge and

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[49] Kubiena 2012, p. 88.

[50] Verdery 1991.

[51] Schwartz 1993, p.110.

expensive projects – as in the case of „Skopje 2014". In this regard, the project itself can be perceived bias. On the one hand, it is clearly anti-Albanian in its content, and as such is the culmination of the post-1991 struggles between Macedonians and Albanians over the shape of Macedonian state and its identity. However, on the other hand, it seeks a way to promote the city abroad, and through meanings of nostalgia restored its uniqueness which was lost in socialist time.

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