

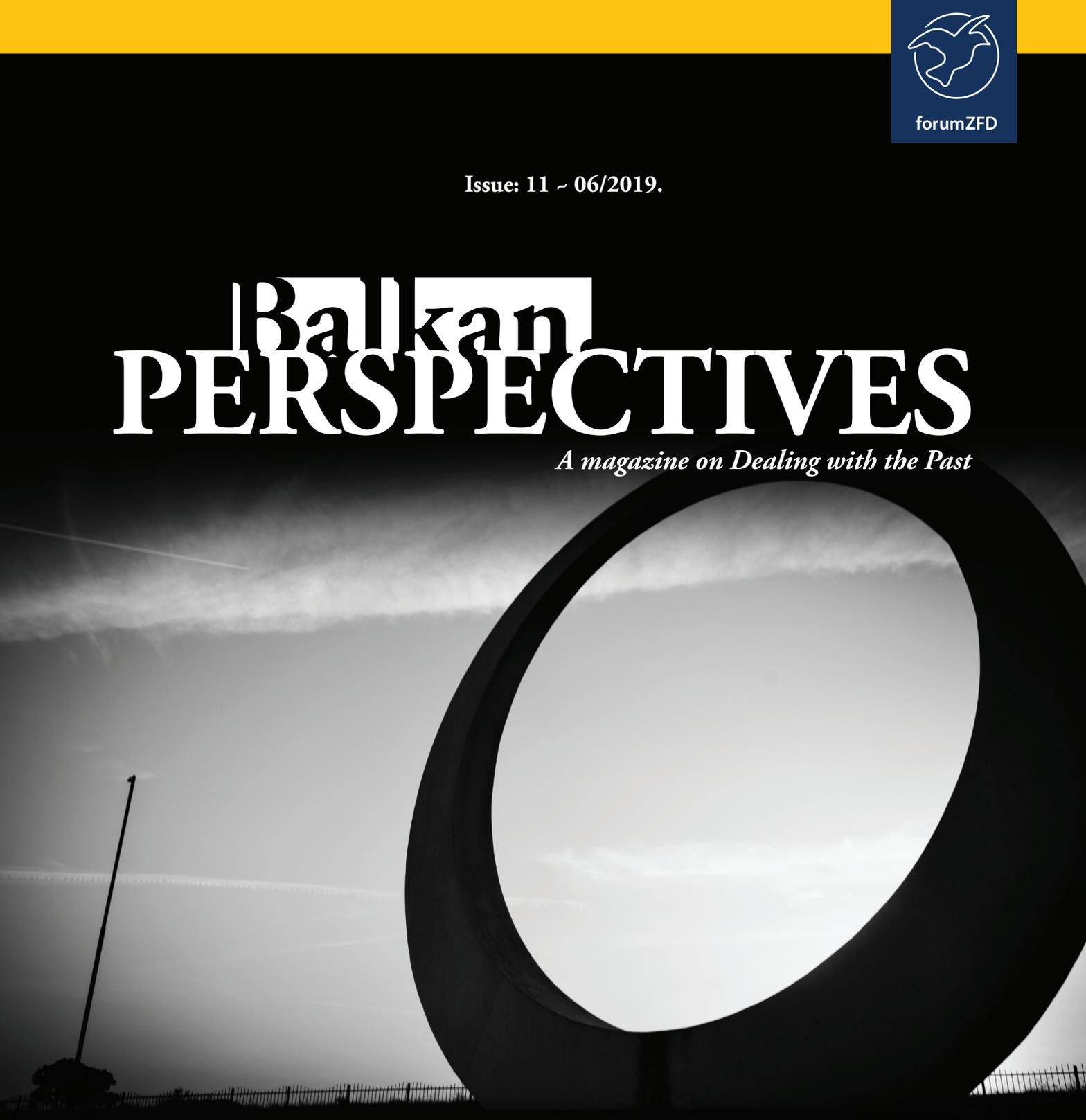


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Balkan PERSPECTIVES

A magazine on Dealing with the Past



**Two decades on:
Memorialization continues to
unify and divide us**

COVER: KORAB KRASNIQI

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EDITORIAL

Issue: 11

DEAR READERS,

It's been twenty years since the end of the wars in the western Balkans.

Diverse, complex and rich in culture and history, the region has much to celebrate.

When it comes to memorializing the recent militarized past, however, free space is limited.

This is a region both torn and united by identity, where, outside the Balkans there exists a sense of being 'Balkan', and within it there is division and jostling for 'identity'.

What role do states play in this? Do we entrust the state with constructing national identity through memorials? And how to construct a national identity in such an ethnically diverse region, without causing division?

The fall of Yugoslavia saw a change in "symbolic capital" in both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where memorials no longer commemorate victims of fascism, nor glorify the Revolution; rather new monuments refer directly to an "armed past". A new law in Serbia forbids any monument threatening sovereignty, territorial integrity, totality and the independence and freedom of the Republic of Serbia.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many monuments are seen to be sticking to a mono-ethnic or religious narrative, with memory being constructed around this. It is also brought into question whether a community is able to then publicly face its own "guilt", when the recent initiative to establish an official day of commemoration to recognize the suffering of women in the recent war was not passed.

North Macedonia saw state memorialization taken to another level with the Skopje 2014 project, whereby a society was made to 'celebrate' and identify with largely unknown heroes from an 'antiquized' past (and was thus given its very own term 'antiquization'). Now groups are trying to reclaim what they see as the authentic identity of the city.

What to do when memorialization manipulates through truisms? Does this condone and encourage collective amnesia?

Public representation of women in Kosovo is limited, outside of commemorating saints and victims. Is the space for 'heroes' and fighters reserved only for men? Or is the recent facelift given to Prishtina's iconic 'Newborn' monument, an interactive installation of 99 faces of Kosovo women, an attempt to rewrite the narrative around women and Kosovo?

Meanwhile, families of the missing are taking private measures to bring to the public sphere, the personal stories of their loved ones, giving them a voice, a face, and not allowing them to be only a number or have their memory slip into oblivion.

When memories are divided, societies are divided. What can be done publicly, to broaden our understanding of the recent past and move towards inclusion and reconciliation? How can memorialization help us to do this? What is the alternative – and is it one that we are willing to face?

Authors from across the region give their thoughts on memorialization, for this 11th issue of *Balkan.Perspectives*.

By presenting differing perspectives on topics relating to *Dealing with the Past*, we aim to encourage discussion and critical thinking. Your feedback is always welcome.

Vanessa Robinson-Conlon
Editor in Chief

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEMORIALIZATION HERE?



NORTH MACEDONIA

Looking into the past can bring positive or negative feelings, depending which memories recall. Good or bad, they're part of us, and part of our learning. For our society, history plays an important role in building our own identity and relationships with our citizens. Celebrating the past can unify people and give something to look forward to. However, it also can divide them, as is the case with Skopje 2014. This monumental representation of historical figures and the connection to antiquity through a selection of national heroes, has triggered much inter-ethnic discontent, and on top of that, it has switched the focus from a Yugoslav past to an 'Ancient' one, worsening relations with Greece. The materialization of Skopje 2014 is an example of how political elites use monuments to legitimize their authority by connecting themselves to a glorified and mythologized past. **N.R. (27)**

Painting, sculpting, music, literature and other arts very often are regarded as the repository of the collective memory of society. Art preserves what historical records, with their 'facts', cannot - and is an emotional testimony of a place, time or way of life. Nurturing memories in this way retains a communication with other times, whilst also establishing foundations for the future, whether they are paintings, sounds or stories. Good or bad; memorialization is silently present in every sphere of existence. Therefore, we should strive for the right perspective and extract some points. We can learn, we can judge whether it's justified, but in the background, memorialization will keep us moving forward as a society. **A.H. (28)**

When contemplating one's history, one actually recalls their own recent history. The memory of our ancestors comes into mind, defining how we view our society's past. This then defines another aspect of how we see our history, in which we maintain shared experiences and emotions, in a wider, generalized form. In this way, a common identity is created, which citizens use to build the present, which then will become the past. North Macedonia is a country enriched by the experiences of diverse cultures, nationalities and religions. The capital, Skopje, was and still is in the center of this diversity, but in recent years, with the project Skopje 2014, the city became a place for division due to political interpretations of our shared multicultural identity. This led to the creation of incoherent, historically marked aesthetics in the city's architecture, in order to erase a certain societal memory in order to create a new historical

context, that mostly favors a unilateral nationalistic political agenda. Instead of being created for future generations and building upon a shared multicultural past and present, in a contemporary way, Skopje witnessed changes which speak to an unknown past, creating confusion as to the true diversity of the city's cultural past and identity. **B.F. (26)**

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The role of memorialization is to prevent new conflict. Memory should be a warning, helping us to know how to act to solve a conflict. Hence, the memorialization process should be carefully designed to serve as a message to the new generation, not to create new conflicts. **S.M. (29)**

Monuments and remembrance should serve to ensure that all the evil that happened to us during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina will never happen again. We need to remember, but we need to also live for a better future. We (youth) should be more involved in the process of dealing with the past and the culture of remembrance, in order to tune the process positively. Memorials should not be constructed to create new conflicts. **A.D. (33)**

I think memorialization in a post-war society is important in order to leave a message to future generations and, at the same time, to warn them, as a society. Remembrance is important for future generations as long as it makes them better, more thoughtful people. **Š.R. (40)**

For me, the current memorialization in our country represents a continuation of the war, not with weapons, but with monuments. All three sides erect monuments in their own way and they only deal with their own victims and sufferings, and disregard other victims. That's sad. In some cities, certain monuments are not allowed, as is the case with the initiative to erect a monument for children killed in Prijedor. If we cannot dedicate a monument to killed children, we should ask ourselves what values we cultivate as a society and what kind of people we are. **A.C. (38)**

SERBIA

We should think about the generations to come whenever we think about memorials. The memories of those who witnessed crimes, in many ways, find solace in the monuments that we have, have not, or will erect. Memorial sites serve to provide survivors of suffering with a legitimate space, where sorrow and pain need not be explained, nor legitimized, but shared with those who feel it. Memorials also exist for those who will come after us, for the times when history shall add an additional layer that we, the witnesses, cannot understand, because it comes from the future. The derogatory “selfies” in Auschwitz are subject to heated debate. Are they derogatory? They are for us, who were born in the previous millennium. However, I do believe it is necessary for us to understand the language and understanding of those to whom we are leaving the monuments for, as a reminder - since it is necessary to transmit the message using their language. It would be tragic to underestimate this “new” language, because, for a message to last it needs to be spoken in the language of the future. It we want to transmit the message to the “selfie” generation, who will inherit our history, it is necessary for memorials to speak their language. **J.G. (48)**

If we were to live in a modern, democratic state, which had already dealt with its past war, then memorialization would be something completely normal. Erecting monuments to ALL war victims from the 90s would not be questioned. However, since Serbia is primarily an intolerant, undemocratic, and ignorant country, the idea of having, for example, a memorial center in Batajnica, where one of the mass graves of Albanian civilians from Kosovo was found, is still sadly unthinkable. The way we are heading, and if this leadership combination remains, in the future, we can expect that a monument to the biggest criminal from this region, Slobodan Milošević, may be erected in the center of Belgrade, instead of a monument to the victims of his monstrous regime. **H.Č. (38)**

The role of memorials in a society, is to serve as a major reminder of what the political structures did, in which events they took part and who the victims were. The main goal of memorialization should be to warn the public to not repeat such things. The best example of this is Germany, where memorial centers and monuments dedicated to victims of the Nazi regime are on almost every corner. However, this is not the case in our region. Here they are solely built to their “own” victims. Unlike in Germany, politicians in Serbia have sidestepped erecting memorials to the victims of Milošević’s regime during the 90s, and by doing so, they give legitimacy to new crimes that will be committed in the name of the state. **S.P. (49)**

KOSOVO

We only remember “heroes” from the two major ethnic groups – Albanian and Serb. We, the Kosovo Albanian majority, promote and glorify ethnic Albanians, which makes some sense, since they were the most persecuted group in Kosovo during the war. However, how we approach it today is not correct. We are still attached to figures like Adem Jashari and Hashim Thaçi, due to their contribution during the war, but many of these figures are now in the government, including the president, and are ripping our country off. There is a total lack of cohesiveness also when it comes to memorializing the war. In North Mitrovica and Gračanica, Serbs celebrate their own “heroes”. In their eyes, Serbs were murdered by Albanian terrorists. What about the perspective of the Roma community? We never talk about their side or view. We only focus on two groups and we have not acknowledged that the other groups were even there. There is no universality of remembrance here. **R.N. (23)**

In Kosovo, the idea of remembering the past was politically driven with active involvement by the main ethnic community and some outside “prompting”. Since we are skipping the step of dealing with the past, it is challenging to evoke a process of telling the truth through memorials. They should inevitably lead to reconciliation, but instead, through national politics, activists and international community, they are being allowed to be used as a tool to canonize declared ethnic heroes, whilst completely ignoring the fact that we never dealt with our past in a proper manner. Post-conflict memorials should send a message to the public that victims from all sides cannot and should not be forgotten. They should stand as a reminder to all to not repeat the atrocities of the past. I am afraid that this is not the case in Kosovo. **I.B. (35)**

Memorialization is central to justice, reconciliation, truth-telling, reparation, and coming to terms with the past. It is a process of creating public and collective memory through memorials, such as: historic sites, monuments, and museums; certain public art or conceptual art projects; and commemorative events or performances. Memorialization is manifested through publicly displayed physical representation or commemorative action that concern events in the past, to publicly acknowledge events or people. For memorialization to have a positive impact in divided societies, it should make a specific commitment to democratic engagement through programs that stimulate historical dialogue and that provide opportunities for public involvement. **K.K. (35)**

BUILDING MEMORY

ENA KUKIĆ

Post-war memorial architecture in the Balkans can be described as selective memory in material form: it mainly reflects a mono-national perspective on the event it memorializes, which is the active agent for deepening divisions and stalling the reconciliation process. By 2016, there were 2,100 registered memorials built for civil victims or soldiers from the last war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which are archived at the Central Registry for Memorials.¹ Only 2.85 percent is devoted to the suffering of different ethnic and religious communities, meaning the vast majority falsely represent events, since many victims belong to diverse ethnic and religious groups. Trivialisation of the past, with the aim to shape collective memory to suit the ruling political parties, is a process, which, for the past twenty-four years, has limited freedom of remembrance and created a fake second-hand reminiscence for post-war generations, based on ethno-religious nationalism and characterized by a general decline in culture and values, as well as intellectual and professional standards.² The link between this decline and the rise of ethno-nationalism is visible in public spaces, which is especially interesting in artistic works due to their inevitable public presence, and the various forms of visual mass manipulation that have been completely normalized over time.

Memorial architecture exists in the form of memorials, museums, sculpture, fountains, springs, bridges, galleries – these “holders” of collective memory can be grandiose complexes or small roadside plaques. It helps the communities to communicate with their past, whereby architects and visual artists are entrusted to shape communicate in a way that sensitizes, reflecting hope for a more informed humanity in the future.

Memory architecture marks, celebrates or commemorates historical



events and those involved, and stands forever, like every other document to civilization, regardless of the intention – as a memorial to barbarism³ - displaying the victory, loss or experience of one side only. Aesthetics of these objects are thus valorised in relation to their inevitable symbolic importance. Most post-war monuments in BiH have visual motifs in religious and ethno-national symbolism.

Collective identities - of religious, ethnic, national and cultural belonging - are almost synonymously materialized in monuments, and often objects of memorial architecture embody symbols of the three major religions in BiH, sometimes to such an extent that scale, proportion and materialization are used as tools to transmit their message with greater visibility, considering not the spatial context, but the social one. These monuments are not characterized by subtle expression, contemporary design, or features inducing reflection and emancipation, instead they directly represent dominant ethno-cultures. The decline in (aesthetic) criteria is enabled by the inertia of the academic community and the decline in professional standards, as well as the unproductivity of younger generations educated in a system steeped in the same ethno-religious nationalism embodied in today's monuments. The only criterion for building a monument is a strong political message, and those commissioning them are the political structures with a message to convey. Thus, we see a clear and timely link: tenders, plans and talks for new memorials intensify right before the elections.

There are many examples of problems with memorial architecture - the main one being low aesthetic quality and clear political objectives, which further spreads ethno-religious homogenisation. Others have a more direct and aggressive presentation of their honest intentions to a society which fails to acknowledge or address

¹ Memorials in numbers: BiH. <http://www.memorijali.org/novosti.html>

² Lovrenović, I., Jergović, M., *Bosnia and Herzegovina – the future of unfinished war*, 2010

³ Benjamin, W., *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1942

“He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging”

these intentions. An example was an approved plan for the construction of a monument dedicated to veterans of a Bosnian police unit in Sarajevo's municipality “Centar”, depicting a defeated Serbian tank on which Special Unit forces celebrate victory. The location of this monument was a busy and attractive park by a secondary school. Even with minimal assessment of this project, it is possible to see many shortcomings. After a public outcry, mainly due to the proximity to the school, the project was suspended, although the motives were neither evaluated, nor presented to the public adequately. Meanwhile, in the same municipality, the supervising roadworks company planned the construction of a gigantic 20-meter high ‘lily’ with no set location - meaning spatial context was neglected in the design. A well-known example is the Millennium Cross, a colossal monument to the pain and suffering of the citizens of Mostar. The largest religious structure in BiH, its location, unlike the one in Sarajevo, was carefully thought out, so that, due to its dimensions, the monument can be seen from every corner of the most ethnically divided town in BiH. The Cross addresses only 47% of its inhabitants⁴.

Architecture aside, we can analyse monuments in the context of investors, contractor selection, media promotion, and other practical parts of their creation, whilst also looking for patterns of politically driven action. It is clearly visible in their exclusivity. For example: in the centre of Brčko, there are three monuments dedicated to the main ethno-religious groups, thus the “Others” or atheists are not commemorated at all. The need for inclusive and objective monuments is neither understood, nor implemented. Although it seems our society must build a culture of memorialization from scratch, solid foundations do last longer than the transitional period was able to neglect.

The significance of memorial architecture in forming a community's collective memory was globally recognized after World War II, when dramatic progress was made in understanding the concept of collective memory and consciousness around the

ethics of memorialisation. Looking at the culture of former Yugoslavia, especially during the 60s and 70s, we see a unique moment of memorial architecture, with no predecessors and unfortunately no successors. During that time, the formation and

blossoming of culture in the very socio-political and economic conditions that enabled this, resulted in the creation of completely new values via international art, surpassing global achievements in quantity and territorial prevalence. These monuments to the People's Liberation Struggle, according to architectural theorists, have exceptional artistic value and testify to the breakthrough of modernism and the specific political position of Yugoslavia. Their dual nature commemorated victims of fascism and glorified the Revolution. The community's current relationship with these monuments aligns with today's approach to memorial architecture: many have been demolished, others neglected or considered unwanted heritage by the post-war tailors of the local political scene. To a large extent, they are local character memorials dedicated to victims from the immediate vicinity, and their neglect and desecration sends a clear message to the victims' families.

In medieval times, we considered monumental tombstones as having most importance in the Balkan culture of remembrance. Their prevalence and expression were unparalleled in Europe, and the public's attitude towards them was marked by “ownership” rights and the politicization of heritage, (again) with ethno-national purposes. Fortunately, the interdisciplinary action of a diverse team of experts from the territory of former Yugoslavia fought against this political manipulation with science and hard work, resulting in medieval tombstone necropolises being listed as UNESCO world heritage sites. This secured status is now difficult to be manipulated by daily politics.

The salvation of contemporary memorial architecture also lies in an ethical and professional approach: only the constant questioning of history and uncompromised non-acceptance of abuse of these objects allows us to work on their other values. *He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging*⁵.

⁴ Census of BiH, 2013 <http://www.popis.gov.ba/popis2013/mapa/?lang=bos>

⁵ Benjamin, W., *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, 1950

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New Public Monuments in the Region: a weapon in the civil war of memory



TODOR KULJIĆ

The fall of socialism was followed by a change in the symbolic capital of memory. By the end of the 20th century, when nations suppressed the class issue, national public monuments became dominant symbols of memory in the new states. Public spaces were marked by churches and monuments to national figures in every corner of the new re-nationalized post-socialist countries. Since a public monument is always an expression of collective piety set in stone, an individual sacrifice made for the collective requires a regular ritual of memory conducted over the grave. Moreover, monuments are places of comfort, because they symbolize the possibility of overcoming one's own crimes by remembering one's victims. After the fall of socialism and the break-up of Yugoslavia, new national monuments were erected, but in some areas (Croatia, Kosovo) old multi-ethnic monuments were also widely demolished. Memories of national victims and the victims of communism swiftly and abundantly took over the public spaces. New states and new value systems had to be fed by grand monumental symbolic capital. In order to make it more plausible, the erection of monuments to the victims of the civil war of the 1990s was diligently followed by a widespread search for the victims of communist violence. This article is a review of new monuments as important weapons in the contemporary civil war on memory in the region.

In spite of the growing criticism towards war, with the

restoration of the national in the late 20th century, national public monuments became dominant symbols of memory in the new nation states. A public grave, the unity of life and death, carried new symbolic messages. In the new re-nationalized post-socialist states, public spaces became marked by churches and national monuments. Of course, national monuments are far more of an expression of a group's readiness to remember its own victims than its own guilt.

Moreover, the new national monuments in the region appear as a spatial expression of an armed past. Nations are homogenized through the aesthetics of death. New monuments are, in a new way, a reminder of transcendental immortality. They are graves serving as an emblem of a nation's immortality and markers of established national values. The monumental and the aesthetic negate the oblivion of death, showing that it is sublime to die for one's homeland. Public and state monuments rarely depict de-heroization, which would serve as a reminder of the crimes one's own group has committed, or of a pointless death. The need for new monuments became especially acute in the newly founded states of the late 20th century, due to a thorough shift in values. Monuments were the pillars of moral and ideological values in the process of establishing

the first nation states in the region, and after the breakup of Yugoslavia, the restoration of these tendencies was, in an artistic sense, unoriginal. The demolition of communist monuments has marked the symbolization of renewed capitalism in a thanatopolitical way. Parades of corpses, as well as re-burials and the demolishing of statues, symbolize deeper restorative value twists of “dead body politics”. Religion and nationalism are being renewed everywhere over the bodies of the dead. With the demolition of old monuments in re-nationalized states during the late 20th century, monuments to standard-

bearers and horsemen and symbols of national liberation were renewed.

Over 3000 antifascist monuments were destroyed in Croatia, a part of which were destroyed by Serbs. At the same time, monuments to the Homeland War were widely erected with emphasized religious symbolism. A similar strong spatial revolution of memory occurred in Kosovo as well, only several years later. After 1999, in the place of old communist monuments here, hundreds of monuments and statues were erected in honor of the last war and its victims. Memory activists keep memories from



*Hrvoje Polan, "Stone Flower Monument",
Jasenovac, Croatia*

oblivion in a liturgical way, and tie past traumatic events to a group, through a deliberately shaped community of memory. The most active in this regard today are young states, Croatia and Kosovo, attempting to distance themselves from former Yugoslavia through the victims of the recent liberation wars. Everywhere, nationalism has suppressed transnational brotherhood and unity. In Titoism, most grand memorials were seen as a mark of the post-national approach, which aimed towards the universal. These monuments were modern and avant-garde, much more so than their civic predecessors. Modernist monuments in socialism express universal gestures of reconciliation, resistance and progress. Contrary to these, post-communist monuments express defensive semantics of ethno-nationalistic ideologies, turned towards the past. Since the 1960s, the central Yugoslav memorials to “fallen soldiers” and “victims of fascism” (Džamonja, Bogdanović) took abstract, modernist forms.

The monumental restorative turn from the universal abstract to the mostly classical national occurred, closely following the break of socialism. Post-communist monuments were immediately re-nationalized. Within the newly construed militant past, through the idea of liberation, in a space riddled with permanent wars and unstable borders, death is more glamorous and the collective pressure to respect death is more prominent. Thus, the unusually fast and abundant expansion of memories of national victims and victims of communism within public spaces. Normalized nationalism brought with it a re-traditionalization of motives and an archaic stylization of public monuments. The restored symbolism of the conjoined figures of the horseman and the horse signifies the indivisible unity of national sentiment, in which the line between liberation and conquest is blurred. The figure of the horseman placed in the ethnocentric public space of a city square is a stark symbol of a life force which, stripped of every trace of complex meaning, expresses a disdain towards non-belligerent wavering. Everything which has complex meanings is wavering, and thus politically useless. The national reactivation of the power of the horseman is an archaic symbolization and apotheosis of the power of the nation state – a compelling contrast to the communist horseless hero. The hero on horseback returning from the battlefield, establishing peace and unity, is the link to deeper medieval foundations of

the state, a visual guarantee of continuity and immortality of the nation-state. Contrary to that, in Yugoslavia, from early 1960s (when massive monuments of social realism were abandoned) monuments symbolized the universal messages of inter-ethnic reconciliation. The communist leader in an overcoat, symbolized the antifascist and class warrior, and the figures of workers were symbols of resistance of the socially oppressed, not the nationally threatened. These figures were openly dedicated to social justice and women’s rights. Socialist monuments were placed outside of city squares, in places of former battlefields, surrounded by nature, far from villages (Kadinjača, Sutjeska, Kozara), they were more open, and conveyed complex meanings through the forms of stone expressions. Such symbolism did not suit renewed nationalism. Today, this is not the case only in Croatia, in fact, hatred towards another nation is considered a reliable indicator of patriotism within the entire region, and international reconciliation is still deemed suspicious. There is no new monument dealing with the past, because nationalistic revanchism is still unrelenting. The new hotspots of tensions in the region are Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where new national monuments are also weapons in the civil war on memory.

Self-victimization as the framework of memory is a bottomless well of symbolic capital of various political forces everywhere, and it’s still difficult to see it drying up. The erection of new monuments to national liberators and national victims is also a testament to that, while a monument to victims of a nation’s own violence is unheard of. In other words, there are no anti-monuments. The complex meanings behind anti-monuments bring harm to new nation states. Monumental national memorials with simplified symbolism are much more useful. National unity does not stand for symbolic wandering because it confuses and puzzles visitors. In order to make the message more direct, they all emphasize the soldier, the cross, the crown or the state coat of arms. Today, every small town in the region nurtures the brand or the museum of the glorious past. Few recognize that the condition for de-provincialization of the present is de-monumentalization of the past.

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PERSONAL COMMEMORATION in the face of PUBLIC OBLIVION

What exactly is the difference between past, present, and future? Most of us would perhaps argue that the answer to that question is an obvious one - the time before the moment we are living in, be it one second or thousands of years ago, is the past; this moment, now, is the present; and whatever is to come after this moment is the future. But when does the past end, and when does the future start? If this moment within which we are living is so short and we are moving in time faster than we breathe, how do we even seize the “present”? How do we build a “present” and how do we live in one “present” that can somehow be detached, if not from the past then, from the future? If the present is so blurry, as some might say, and we do not know if we can really control it, then we might at least have control over future events, since we cannot change what happened in the past.

However, when faced with traumatic events from the past, those events tend to shape our present, and hence, our future. Now imagine a life not being able to find that present moment when you would succeed in detaching yourself from those painful memories of the past. Imagine living a life that is solely a reflection of painful events you have no control over, a life of endless waiting, a life in a need of finding peace. For some, time froze in one of those painful moments in the past, and they are still in that moment, waiting.

This is the meaning of time for the families of missing persons in Kosovo. For them, the past, the present, and the future exist simultaneously, altogether a painful journey of endless waiting for answers on the whereabouts of their loved ones. Ferdonije Qerkezi is a woman whose husband and four sons are among the people who went missing in

Kosovo. When recalling the events of that fateful day, she tells that what was supposed to be an hour of waiting for her loved ones to come back through the same door they had left, has turned out to be years of waiting. “That hour of those heartless criminals has lasted for 17 years now” Ferdonije says. Her hour of waiting is one that never ends, she is still living in that hour.

Two decades ago, 6,057 persons went missing in Kosovo as a consequence of the 1998-1999 war (regarded as armed conflict at the international level and as war by locals). Of these missing persons, 1,600 still have their whereabouts unknown, meaning families of 1,600 missing persons are living in the uncertainty of what happened to their loved ones. Finding answers is not their individual responsibility, although it has become their personal burden to resist the public oblivion into which the missing persons in Kosovo have been left. Under international humanitarian law, providing answers is the responsibility of the former parties involved in the conflict, however, the process of finding



MIRISHAHE SYLLA

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answers seems to have not been a priority for them.

Our nation's memory, what we call "collective memory", for the most part, is built around such traumatic events of the past. However, the hegemonic narratives of war and nationalism tend to construct and interpret a collective memory that remembers some but forgets others. The past in Kosovo, as Assmann (2010) argues, has been interpreted and used to construct a new national identity. In constructing this post-war national identity, there are only some categories that have made it to the public discourse of resistance and sacrifice. Missing persons tend to be regarded as passive victims, and hence are prone to being forgotten by the public institutions, as these institutions are the ones forming the way we construct and present collective memory. These institutions, although not denying the tragedy of missing persons, are constructing a binary storyline of collective memory that revolves around armed resistance and self-sacrifice, heroes and victims, and nothing in between, hence any other category that does not fit into this storyline is often disregarded.

The burden of commemorating missing persons and not allowing them to fall into public oblivion rests solely upon the families. They are transforming their pain into resistance, sharing their memory as a testimony of what has happened, and using their voice to make their stories heard. Their stories are proof that the missing ones are not an issue of the past. As long as they are not provided with answers about the fate of their loved ones, they will keep reminding the public institutions of their responsibility to find these answers. Individuals are not giving up even when public institutions seem to have already done so.

While on the one hand, the families of missing persons continue waiting, even hoping that one day, maybe out

of the blue, someone will eventually come back alive, the Government on the other hand passes laws that regard missing persons as "disappeared", or so the wording chosen in Albanian makes them out to be. This discourse was established in the law on missing persons in 2011 and was strongly opposed by the families of missing persons. It suggests that since the missing are considered disappeared, there is little, if any, hope that institutions can be held accountable for finding answers.

While the "missing" continue to be regarded as a number, rather than people with individual stories, and while the public institutions present their tragedy as "statistics", their families are doing their utmost to deconstruct this and humanize the approach. Each of the "missing" has a name and a face, and if it wasn't for the struggle of their families to remind us of that, we, the public, would most likely forget that one simple fact. To not let us forget the faces of the missing persons and to remind the National Assembly of its responsibility towards these persons, their families have placed pictures of those who are missing right in front of the National Assembly building. These pictures are still there on a banner - standing as a reminder of a past that is still so present. These pictures have established a concrete site



*Obelisk to missing persons (no title)
Photo: Blerta Junuzi*

for the families' memory and mourning, just as the Wall of Memory in Gjakova, just as there are empty graves in the cemetery in Krusha e Madhe. All of these sites hold a place where public remembrance is absent and represent the need of the families to have answers about the whereabouts of their loved ones, in the hope to at least be able to bury their bodies, a very important ritual in our tradition.

Due to the need to share their painful memories and to find solace, and also to intensify their call for answers, the families of the "missing" have organized in groups such as "The Mothers' Call" in Gjakova and "The Parents' Voice" in Mitrovica. These groups have engaged in many protests in Prishtina and Gjakova and have used every which way to not stay quiet in the face of public silence. Their actions speak louder than a plain white obelisk that the Government has placed in the center of Prishtina, dedicated to the missing persons; an obelisk that does not have any official inscription, that does not even show what it represents. Perhaps only those who have placed it there know what it means.

When the government fails to create a public site of remembrance for the "missing", and even regards them as a tragedy of the past, disregarding the very present tragedy of having no answers of their whereabouts, then the "missing" are deemed to be forgotten. Their families, however, are the ones who have not left this tragedy in the past, and who are still, to this day, living with the pain of not having any answers. The families are the ones reminding us about the very presence of the past. And if one might not understand anything about the missing persons from the obelisk in Prishtina, and if one might not understand how it feels to be living in the past, one would for sure understand if ever they visited the house-museum of Ferdonije Qerkezi in Gjakova. She lost her husband and her four sons in the afternoon of 27 March 1999. Still to this day, she cannot detach herself from that afternoon. She lives there, in that 6pm of an afternoon, which has lasted for so many years now. She can recall the series of events that afternoon as if they happened a day ago. When recounting her story, telling it over and over, she recalls the Serb military telling her they would only keep her family for an hour and then let them go. She did not know, though, that it was at this exact moment her endless wait would begin. If only she knew



Unofficial inscription for the untitled obelisk to missing persons (Youth Initiative for Human Rights)

that time would stop for her then. She shares details that we will not encounter otherwise in any public medium. Her youngest son, Edmond, only 14-years old, had been sleeping behind her back when they came back for him. She remembers the clothes of her sons and husband; the things they liked, their dreams, their hopes. Ferdonije has decided to use her pain and her existence to stand as a living testimony of what happened, to "live to tell" as she says. Besides her struggle to keep the memory of her family alive, she has had to face the cruel reality of being a woman in a patriarchal society, having had to also fight to maintain the property rights of the house where she established her family and which holds all of their memories. Ferdonija wanted to be able to keep her house and maintain it as it was on the day her family left for the last time, to keep it that way so she can feel like she is still living with them, and so that others can see and feel their memory more closely. Her house is currently the only house-museum of for missing persons in Kosovo. Now her house and her voice have transcended her individual struggle, and her individual journey has been brought to national and even international attention. Her house and her voice have become links to the past, reminding us how present her pain and the pain of all the families of the missing persons is. She is bringing the "past" to our present and not allowing us to forget. What public institutions have failed to do, a woman in pain is undertaking as a force of her own.

FREEING SPACE

Interview with Blagoja Bajkovski and Marina Tornatora

When we talk about memorialization in the society of North Macedonia we tend to reflect on monuments and their function in our culture. Through monuments we remember some distant times and the heroes who are memorialized. Throughout the project Skopje 2014, monuments were again a target for discussion, since we witnessed how new monuments were installed. Different heroes, from antiquity to modern history, caused a debate in the society in terms of whether we should celebrate historical figures who are largely unknown. On the other side of the debate, these monuments represented a memorialization of historical figures who have contributed to the creation of the state, and precisely because of that, supporters of the projects thought it was the right time for the citizens to get to know them.

However, when the debate for the memorials unraveled, the architectural uniqueness of Skopje's City center started to change. The modern vibe, which used to be a very recognizable feature of Skopje, gradually started to disappear. From the brutalist architecture of the Telecommunications Centre, to the modern façades of the surrounding buildings, everything started to change. The wide and open central square started to fill in and morph.

One building that was considered a genuine mark of the city was the building of NA MA. An architectural work of Slavko Brezovski from 1959, it is considered as one of the first modern structures in the city. In the memories of the older



*Macedonian ARCHitecture (MARCH),
the original building, pre 'New Baroque'.*

One building that was considered a genuine mark of the city was the building of NA MA. An architectural work of Slavko Brezovski from 1959, it is considered as one of the first modern structures in the city

generation of Skopje, this is not simply a shopping mall. For the first time in its history, Skopje had received its first “trading house”, where people from different backgrounds could freely shop and get to know each other. At its peak, the building was considered a meeting point for the citizens of Skopje, a place to meet friends, shop or simply relax.

However, with the Skopje 2014 project, the building started to change. It got a new façade and the building simply lost itself within the sea of new and refurbished buildings in the central square. To understand whether the building has lost its original mark, whether the people still recognize it, and how this building can be freed, we spoke to Blagoja Bajkovski and Marina Tornatora. Blagoja is a PhD Student at the University of Reggio Calabria and Marina is his mentor. Together they work on the project “Freeing Space” with 10 other architects from North Macedonia and Europe. The main goal of this project is to redesign part of the existing infrastructure in Skopje’s central square.

You work on the project “Freeing Space”, more specifically on the department store NA MA. During your work on the project and during your research, did you find out how this building has contributed to the collective memory of the citizens of Skopje?

For us, working on NA MA, designed by Slavko Brezovski in 1959, meant first of all to develop a research of its “writings and cancellations” in different phases of its historical development and at the same time, think of what it can become today for contemporary Skopje during this period of globalization.

NA MA represented a symbol of modernity for Skopje, designed with the then recurring architectural elements that follow European architecture of the first half of the XX century, such as free planning, large windows, cantilevers, and innovative vertical connections like the escalator.

These specific architectural qualities have made NA MA a symbol of the city’s modernization and progress, making it an “attraction” for citizens beyond the commercial function for which it was conceived.

The NA MA building is in the memory of the citizens of Skopje as one of the first modern constructions in the city. All of us witnessed the reshaping of this building as



part of Skopje 2014. How has this reshaping changed the perception for it? What will newer generations know about the impact of this building on the city?

The transformation of the modern architecture of NA MA, a remarkable example of shaping an urban block, consisted of the cancelation of its qualities by covering it with new false eclectic surfaces. This action denies the principles that characterized it and negates the dialogue it had established with the other nearby modern buildings, such as the Economic Chamber built in 1933 by Milan Zloković.

Research, publications, exhibitions and events like *Freeing Space*, that elaborate on the modern architecture in Skopje are indispensable as a testimony of the history for the newer generation, and, moreover raise awareness about the importance of the architectural heritage inherited by Skopje during its reconstruction after the devastating 1963 earthquake. These reflections are the basis for our project that, through the process *destratification '29 '65 '14 '20* tries to highlight the elements of the building, in order to narrate its own history.

If we take aside the architectural value of the building, its primary purpose was shopping. How has the refurbishment during Skopje 2014 changed its function? What does the data show about visitor numbers?

The “project” of SK2014 did not confront the qualities of the original interior spatial configuration of NA MA, which were in conjunction with a continued perception of the space, its flexibility and transformability, or the influence on social inclusion – the use of it as a vast commune space, or the qualities arising from the articulation of its volumetric composition. The question that emerges today is not so much about the number of “users”, who no longer are considered “visitors” since it became just another globalized shopping center, but about how this transformation has changed an **architectural structure** into a **mass production building** that does not belong to the history of Skopje.

Skopje 2014 exists for almost a decade now, and has become a part of everyday life for the citizens of Skopje. What would be the result of freeing the square? How could it achieve its original goal of both connecting the two parts of the city and being an inclusive place?

One of the messages that the project intends to transmit is the

idea of architecture being conceived as system of relationships. The intervention of *destratification '29 '65 '14 '20* brings in the relationship with the main square, that penetrates inside NA MA, creating a new covered public space, and thereby establishing a continuity with the back courtyard.

The inclusive potential of the project can be also be observed in the transformation of NA MA into a **cultural district**, converting it from commercial building into a **creative incubator** with the intention to create a new network between the existing museums, art and cultural spaces, scattered in different parts of the city with diverse social, cultural or ethnic background. NA MA should include temporary exhibitions, collections and productions of **digital arts & crafts** with a permanent exposition of **brutalist** architecture, perceived as an important feature of Skopje’s identity.

Let’s say that “Freeing Space” will be implemented. Can you comment on the implications that this project may have on the memorialization of future generations?

As the title of the project implies, *destratification '29 '65 '14 '20* intends to bring in evidence of the diversity of different layers that represents different historical phases of the development of Skopje and NA MA, the regulatory plan for Skopje from 1929 by J. Mihajlović, the master plan of K. Tange from 1965, and the intervention of SK2014. This process of decomposition of the layers seeks to discover the history behind them, and to emphasize, on one hand, the qualities of what once was there



“New Baroque” - refurbishment of old modernist buildings in central Skopje, covering the original form and shape of the building with 17th and 18th century style, but without the intricate details and craftsmanship of genuine baroque, Kristina Lozanovska

and on other hand the banality of the new intervention. The *destratification '29 '65 '14 '20* intervention retraces the original project as a monolithic structure, molded in transparent concrete. The actual eclectic façade is treated as a surface painted in black, to deny its plasticity, and a strong cut that insinuates the wound that the recent interventions have left on the city.

Can you give us some examples of inclusive and collective memorialization from North Macedonia?

The interventions from the post-earthquake reconstruction of Skopje have this in their genetic code, expressed through the treatment of public space. The building of the Cultural Center with the building of the *Macedonian Opera and Ballet* as a topographical articulation of the soil that penetrates inside the building, or the *City Shopping Center* of prof. arch. Živko Popovski, conceived as urban platforms that stratify the public space on different levels, are just several examples, that in their compositional articulation, the public space intertwines with architecture, or architecture becomes public space.

What is your experience of participating in the deconstruction and re-thinking of structures which were refurbished under SK 2014? What is the impact of this on SK 2014 – does it negate its meaning?

The intention of the intervention of *destratification '29 '65 '14 '20* is not to negate or invalidate the existence of all

that came before. It goes beyond the *tabula rasa* approach, that means it operates without the constraints of existing conditions, and implements part of the *tabula plena* approach (term used by Otero Pailos) that connotes to the observation of urban sites as filled with existing buildings from different time periods.

Blagoja Bajkovski is a PHD Student at the Department of Architecture and Territory – dArTe – Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria. In 2014 he gained a master degree with merit in Architectural and Urban Design at Politecnico di Milano. From 2013 to 2016, he was engaged as a teaching assistant at Politecnico di Milano, Piacenza. At this moment he is part of the research group at the research laboratory Landscape_inProgress and he is doing his PHD research on the topic of *Atlas of Brutalist Architecture in Skopje* under the mentorship of Marina Tornatora.

Marina Tornatora is a researcher in Architectural Design at the Department of Architecture and Territory – dArTe – at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria. She is a Scientist responsible of the Landscape_inProgress, research laboratory, a member of the Doctorate Board and responsible for the international relations and the double degree program. The focus of her theoretical, design and teaching activities is the relationships between the city, the landscape and architecture. Currently she is involved in the experimental project Architecture#myBook, a digital archive that uses open source systems merging the teaching and the theory of architecture.

RECENT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:

_#99FILES, an innovative and multidisciplinary platform that through an international call collects and elaborates materials for the brutalist architecture in the Balkan area. The first edition that elaborates on the city of Skopje was concluded with an exhibition that took place in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje_MoCa; *_Freeing Space*, XVI International Biennale of Architecture in Venice, 2018. Exhibiting the research and design project *SKOPJE DESTRATIFICATION '29 '65 'sk14 '2020* regarding the current transformation of the architectural modern legacy in North Macedonia.

The intervention of destratification '29 '65 '14 '20 brings in the relationship with the main square, that penetrates inside NA MA, creating a new covered public space, and thereby establishing a continuity with the back courtyard.



LAW ON WAR MEMORIALS IN SERBIA: Nationalistic monopoly over memory

Credits: Ministry of Defence, Republic of Serbia

On the 28th of June 2018, at the Government's proposal, the Serbian National Assembly symbolically issued the "Law on War Memorials". This Law foresees legal provisions governing memorialization of the Republic of Serbia's war history, starting from the First Balkan War to the last conflict in Kosovo (1912-1999). Over the past 40 years, state narratives have standardized three laws on how to memorialize wars, with particular focus on the liberation tradition of the First and Second World Wars.

After a non-transparent public proceeding, the initial draft Law on War Memorials caused both positive and negative reactions in the interested public and was withdrawn without explanation in 2015. Three years later, upon request of the Government, and following an urgent proceeding, the "Law on War Memorials" was passed.

The Ministry for Labor, Social and Veteran Affairs, in consultation with the Council for Conservation of the Tradition of Liberation Battles of Serbia and the Institute for the Protection of Monuments, makes the final decision on the building or removal of monuments. Local governments, such as municipalities and cities, may make proposals, but do not have the final say.

According to the Law, local governments implement the Ministry's decisions to erect, remove and register monuments in their area. The absolute state monopoly on war memorialization is apparent in the Council, which consists of civil servants only, without representatives from Citizens' associations (mostly for families of victims).

This Law allows citizens, legal entities and state bodies to propose initiatives for new monuments, but there are several restrictive provisions on freedom of speech and expression within memorialization culture.

It also stipulates that memorials signify a culture of memory that exclusively relates to the "tradition of liberation wars of Serbia"; it is forbidden to erect or remove a monument if it

results in a symbolic loss of sovereignty, territorial integrity, totality, independence and the freedom of the Republic of Serbia. The Law prohibits monuments dedicated to figures who represent fascist, Nazi, chauvinistic, separatist ideas or ideology, or who collaborated with an aggressor, occupier, their allies or supporters. It also superficially determines other criteria for removing monuments, creating space for arbitrary decision making, mainly by the Ministry, which has the final say. However, this provision does not include persons rehabilitated by the Law on Rehabilitation or whose process of rehabilitation is ongoing (2006-2011).

The Law requires local governments to collect data on war memorials, and the Ministry to create unique records for each, within 6 months of applying the Law. They collectively gather data on victims from World War II to the most recent (1912-1999).

This legal decision brings into question the fate of the monuments erected to the suffering of Bosniaks in Sandžak (abductions and murders in Sjeverin and Štrpci), and the possibility of marking the sites in Serbia where, in 1991, Croatian civilians and soldiers were imprisoned. What about the series of crimes committed in Srem by members of the Serbian Radical Party, for which Vojislav Seselj was convicted?

After the Law was passed, the newspaper "Večernje novosti" reported that "most likely, by autumn 2018, all monuments erected to conquerors, war criminals and terrorists will be removed", referring, for example, to the removal of memorials dedicated to the so-called 'enemy', such as the bust of Aćif Efendia in Novi Pazar, and the monument to Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđe (LAPBM) members in Preševo.

For some Bosniaks, Aćif Efendia is a national hero who prevented Chetnik units from entering Novi Pazar during World War II. For others, he is a war criminal who

collaborated with occupiers and, in January 1945, in the Hadžet neighborhood of Novi Pazar, was executed for the persecution and murder of local Serbs, Bosniaks and Jews. In August 2012, a bust of Aćif Efendia was placed in the center of Novi Pazar, on the Bosniak National Council's initiative. Local government was later ordered to remove it. To this day, however, the bust remains, and from time to time it represents the perfect polygon to test Bosniak and Serbian nationalism - only the actors change year to year.

The memorial to LAPBM fighters was erected in Preševo in November 2012, timed with the marking of one hundred years of the state of Albania. In January 2013, police "silently" removed the monument, despite an outcry from Albanian politicians. At the time, negotiations were intensifying between Belgrade and Prishtina in Brussels, and the removal of the LAPBM monument served as proof that the new government still had a nationalistic 90s political agenda, legitimized by the fight against "separatism".

In southern Serbia, there are dozens of monuments dedicated to LAPBM members, but none caused as fierce a reaction as the one in Preševo. For a long time now, in the nearby village of Veliki Trnovca, there stands a monument to Ridvan Qazimi, also known as Komandant Lleshi, above which the Albanian flag flies.

A small number of Serbian citizens are aware of the monument erected to 12 policemen killed in the village of Lucane, near Bujanovac. Gendarmerie watched over the monument daily, but this was not enough for the visiting family members. In July 2015, the monument was removed during a visit by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić to the Preševo Valley. Finally, the monument was relocated to Bujanovačka Banja, by the church.

These examples show how the Serbian state is using the removal of monuments as a nationalistic tool, whereby the leadership arbitrarily applies its power. The adoption of the "Law on War Memories" frames a coherent narrative wherein monuments must be respected, masquerading a tradition of "liberation", platitudes of general state interest, national and religious emotions, as well as those which do not present real nor historical facts.

Two other examples show that another ideology is hiding

behind "liberation". One is the monument to Chetnik movement leader, Dragoljub Mihailović, on Ravna Gora, which gained further recognition in May 2018 - after Serbian Military officers and soldiers visited. The Ministry of Defense denies this visit. The other is a monument to Jaša Tomić, erected in 2006, in the center of Novi Sad, by then mayor Maja Gojković - at the time also a Serbian Radical Party official. Jaša Tomić is a historical figure, known, amongst other things, for participating in the alliance of Vojvodina to Serbia, namely the Kingdom of SCS. He was a prominent anti-Semite.

In the struggle between the "liberators" and the "defeated", a product of the "Law on War Memorials", the memory of civil war victims disappears. Therefore, a memorial to civilians abducted and killed in Prijepolje and Sjeverin, created to commemorate their suffering and serve as a warning to the citizens of Serbia who committed this crime, is on the list to be destroyed. Also, marking crime scenes (Hrtkovci, Kukujevci), detention camps (Stajićevo, Begejci), mass graves (Rudnica, Petrovo Selo, Perućac, Batajnica), and places of torture (Šljivovica, Mitrovo polje) and murder within the territory of Serbia, has become illegal under the new Law, as it would threaten the "sovereignty, territorial integrity, totality and the independence and freedom of the Republic of Serbia".

With such a Law in place, who would dare request or start to build a monument to the more than 700 bodies of Kosovo Albanians in Batajnica, hidden for two years by the state? If there is no monument, there is no crime, to paraphrase Obrad Stevanović, the Police General involved in the secret operation from Kosovo.

Nine months since the Law passed, there is no information on the destruction of the aforementioned monuments nor the ban on current initiatives for new ones. There are still no public records available, even though the competent Ministry should have completed this by the end of 2018, using data collected by local governments - on the number and status of war memorials; nor is there any progress on the ambitious plan to gather data on victims of the "liberation wars" (1912-1999). The Law is effectively inactive, but, like all legal mechanisms in this frozen country, they can be activated by the order and use of the powerful.

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Skopje 2014:

Ethnocentric Memorialization and Kleptocracy

NATALIJA POPOVSKA AND ANA CHUPESKA

The so-called project *Skopje 2014 (SK2014)* is a product of the coalition partners, the VMRO-DPMNE and DUI political parties, and was mostly implemented during their ruling period. It is the most expensive pseudo-cultural project in the history of independent North Macedonia. In order to understand this project, it is necessary to analyze it through a broader interdisciplinary approach, namely, through a historical, cultural, sociological, psychological and financial lens. So far, both the experts and the general public have contributed to such an analysis through the aforementioned aspects, and here we want to emphasize that, as soon as it was promoted, namely at its initial stage, the project generated a great interest among the public because it produced counter variants with itself. Over time, we have provided an “ocean” of written, documented, video, scientific, and other materials that analyzed and confronted *SK2014* with its own controversy. However, there are still many unanswered questions about it, regarding the authors, the design platforms, the financial transactions, the decision-making mechanisms and its implementation. In an attempt to address some of the above aspects, as much as this article permits, about the project *SK2014*, we can say that it was a populist political maneuver for building a new Macedonian post-socialist political subjectivity. The process was developing in different political, social, aesthetic, urban

levels and value systems, and it was followed by financial controversies. With the project, one of the intentions was to radically eradicate the Macedonian socialist past and to embody a new non-socialist popular political subjectivity, which aspires to confront its other more important subjects. The purpose was also to make transgressions and to contest the post-socialist symbolic and normative order, by specific political posturing, and especially by using historical fabrications. This was embodied in the rapid and mass construction of new churches, large scale sculptures, museums; and facade reconstructions of entire quarters. The central figure is Alexander the Great, whose identity is concealed by the official name “Warrior on a Horse”. In other words, the project is a reification of the concept of the so-called “antiquization” process. According to this concept, the intention was to commemorate myths by applying pseudo-historical and adulterated cultural references, while pursuing an oxymoronic relocation of the Macedonian national identity **from its core [linguistically: as Slavic and statehood as praxis: socialist]** to the distant times of antiquity... At that moment, the disputes and transgression occurred at the symbolic level, meaning that the space realm for apprising the new Macedonian post-socialist political subjectivity was mobilized through the VMRO DPMNE. All of this led to emotional confusion and cognitive dissonance for the

Kristina Lozanovska, “Skanderbeg”, revered by Albanians and Macedonians. The “Albanian mosaic” behind it tells the history of the birth of the Albanian nation with Skanderbeg as the key figure.



people, because it was a matter of induced identity engineering. Certainly, this obsession with mass-scale building and changing the appearance of existing structures is fueled by irrational motives that could be explained through methods of psychoanalysis, however the project is not only controversial in terms of its cost, but also stands as a financial scandal of great dimension.

Among other things, *SK2014* made a kind of pressure on Macedonians to choose between identifying as Slavs or as descendants of ancient Macedonians, by introducing a division in the population between those who support the diachronic paradigm and those who do not support it. Similarly, the Skanderbeg Square, also a part of the project *SK2014*, and built on the other side of the river Vardar, abounds with ethnic features of the Albanian nation. The iconography of the mural is ethno-nationalistic, and it is assumed that as such is meant as a “response” to the ethno-nationalist project from the “other” side, i.e. the Macedonia Square. The mural mosaics tell the story of the Albanian idea of independence and nation-building process. Showing Mother Teresa, Albanian partisans, the struggle for the liberation of Kosovo, the Albanian fighters and the League of Lezhë. The central figure of this square is Skanderbeg. His monument was moved to a much larger pedestal than the previous one. In short, the Macedonian and Albanian ethnocentrism compete with each other within *SK2014*, and on account of that, other ethnic communities living within the Republic of North Macedonia are marginalized. This is reflected in the decision-making process, as well as in the implementation and, of course, representation of others - within the framework of the project. The problematic nature of this project





fosters a symbolic level interethnic and intra-ethnic conflict. It will do so for a long period of time, considering the pedestals and monuments that will remain for decades. The so-called project “Skopje 2014” has its own megalomaniac and kleptocratic background. From the initially announced 80 million Euros, it has reached a figure up to 640 million Euros, that does not account for the propaganda spread (documentaries, commercials, theater subsidies and so on). Today, as a result of the acute financial mismanagement, Macedonian citizens owe 280 million Euros. Since the project was funded with public money, today it is under investigation from the Special Prosecutor’s Office. Expensive monuments for SK2014 will not only serve as an example of populist abuse of the monument form in the creation of cultural memory, and also as a “money laundering” machine. Moreover, at the level of values - the overall process of antiquization implemented by SK2014 had the goal of erasing the socialist cultural memory by creating a false cultural memory relating to Antiquity. It is clear to all of us: the monuments, documents, advertisements and propaganda paid for with public money made a false story and have been provoking hostile emotions among Macedonian citizens.

Consequently, SK2014 represents an ethnocentric glorification of the two ethnicities, with an absence of cultural and political communication, and, from an aesthetic point of view, a manifestation of kitsch, an obsession with myths, a promotion of ethnic tribal conservative patterns, an absence of awareness and communication with the socio-political context of the 21st century and, of course, all of this as a cover for financial mismanagement. As such it fails to be a stimulus of collective memory, but rather to the contrary, it generates ethnocentric memorialization, conservatism and kleptocracy.

Kristina Lozanovska, “Warrior on Horseback” - the tallest monument of SK2014 is directly connected to the legacy of Alexander the Great - polarized the community due to its ethnocentric narrative.

WOMEN IN BRONZE

EURISA RUKOVCI

In most Eastern European countries, the architecture of the socialism era was characterized by a rise of monuments as an admixture of nationalism and socialism. Almost every country in the socialist camp had its own “Mother”¹, proudly eternalized in bronze: from Ukraine to Georgia, to Armenia, to Russia and to Albania. These monuments depict anonymous women², an incarnation of the feminine/motherly features of the Motherland. “Mother Albania”, the “Motherland Monument” in Ukraine, the “Motherland Calls” in Russia, “Mother Armenia”, and the “Mother of Georgia” – all place the woman’s figure on a pedestal. While the “mother” of a nation was often an abstract piece of bronze, the nation’s “father” was always a real person. He had truly lived. He was the “inventor”, the “hero” – leading a medieval uprising or the recent socialist revolution.

Of course, this in itself contains a portrayal of the “typical woman” and what her place in the socialist society was, determined by the dominant ideology of the regime. The woman was the mother. She was the mother of the nation. She was its physical and spiritual regenerator. She was the one who gave birth to the “brave men” and then raised them with the “spirit of patriotism”. She was in the passive role of the provider, the nurse, and the educator of younger generations. Consequently, the nation’s most extolled figure should be a woman. Monuments of the socialist “mothers” of the nation were the secular “Virgin Marys” adapted to the political and ideological circumstances of that era. Kosovo was an exception. Kosovo did not have a “mother” made of bronze. Perhaps due to the fact that it was neither an independent state like Albania or those in the USSR, nor a republic such as Armenia, Georgia or Russia.

In fact, Kosovo not only does *not* have a monument of the

“nation’s Mother”, but in general there is a minimal presence of monuments, memorials and busts of historical female figures. While every corner is filled with monuments of male contribution – mainly to political and military activity, but also to culture, arts, academia, etc., – the number of monuments built in honor of women is low. Extremely low.

Needless to say, without wanting to fall victim to victimization, it must be acknowledged that the number of men who have contributed to various sectors of Kosovo’s society is larger than the number of women. Nevertheless, this has its own explanation. As a society where patriarchy has been very powerful, especially in the past, the number of women with opportunities to succeed in public life, equal to men, has been much smaller.

It was difficult for a woman to engage in political or military activity. During the Kosovo war, the number of women fighting, compared to men, was proportionally less. Of the few females involved in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), many played a supportive role, they worked as medics, were trusted messengers in the field and managed war logistics, mainly in cities. In a patriarchal society, war and combat are seen as exclusively belonging to men, and war itself is seen as a masculine feature. Given the small number of women in the KLA, compared to men, the proportion of memorials dedicated to females is much smaller.

The Monument of Mother Teresa

In fact, the first Albanian woman to whom a monument was erected in Kosovo, was neither born in nor had grown up here. She was a religious missionary. She was Mother Teresa. Born in Skopje, a city very close to Kosovo and one that parallels many

1 <https://www.mywanderlust.pl/mothers-of-post-soviet-countries/>

2 <https://balkanist.net/national-mothers-of-socialism/>

elements of Kosovo society. At the age of 18, she went to Ireland, and a year later, in 1929, she left for India to serve the poor on behalf of a Catholic mission. Mother Teresa never forgot her Albanian roots. In December 1990, she visited Tirana, then still under the communist regime. Mother Teresa met Ramiz Alia, the President of Albania and successor of Enver Hoxha, and asked him to grant her permission to open her charitable mission in Albania. She also did not forget Kosovo. In fact, during her life, Mother Teresa visited Kosovo and Skopje five times³: in 1970, 1978, 1980, 1982 and 1986.

With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, political pluralism was also emerging. The first non-communist political party created in Kosovo was the Democratic League of Kosovo led by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova. Rugova based his public discourse on the historical references of the past and Mother Teresa was one of the most important figures of Rugova's political narrative. Rugova also used these figures in symbolic terms. After the war, he proposed to build a Catholic cathedral in the center of Prishtina to honor the Albanian missionary. In 2002 the location was decided: the Cathedral would be built where a secondary school was, in the centre of Prishtina. In 2007, the Government approved the building of the Cathedral "Saint Mother Teresa"; and in 2010 it was inaugurated on the 100th anniversary of her birth.

Earlier than this, however, in July 2002, a monument honoring Mother Teresa was built on the boulevard in the city center, making her the first woman to whom a memorial was raised after the war.

The "Heroines" Memorial

During the last war in Kosovo, in 1998 and 1999, thousands of Albanian women were raped⁴ by the Serb military and police forces, as well as by the Serbian paramilitary groups linked to the Serbian government. According to some estimates⁵, the number of raped women is 20,000. Individual statements by survivors are horrifying; they include accounts of rape in homes, in front of family members, in detention centers, in refugee lines and accompanied by beatings and humiliation...

To this day, little has been done for this "category" of survivors of the war. Despite the adoption of a law that foresees that these survivors will have at least material reparation and moral



"Heroines" Memorial, Eurisa Rukovci

support, bureaucratic complications have so far neglected its full implementation. In fact, the process of listing the women who were abused during the war has stagnated to this day.

Though overdue, remembrance for these women has not been absent. In June 2015, on the 16th anniversary of the liberation of Kosovo, a monument was built in the center of Prishtina honoring the women raped in the war. It is a feminine face built from 20,000 pins, each representing a survivor of rape in Kosovo. It is not a statue or bust for only one woman, rather it represents the pain of thousands of women.

The Statue of Hyrë Emini

Hyrë Emini was born in Ferizaj in 1973. Since her student years at the University of Prishtina she was engaged in the Council for the Protection of Human Rights and in illegal organizations. At 21, she was arrested by the State Security in her hometown. After being released she went to study in Tirana, but in 1998 returned

3. <https://www.kultplus.com/tag/nene-tereza-viziton-kosoven/>

4. <https://www.politico.eu/interactive/a-dark-legacy-the-scars-of-sexual-violence-from-the-kosovo-war/>

5. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/aug/03/after-two-decades-the-hidden-victims-of-the-kosovo-war-are-finally-recognised>



Monument of Mother Theresa, Eurisa Rukovci

home to become a Kosovo Liberation Army fighter. Hyrë fought in difficult battles, along her fellow men warriors. Her *nom de guerre* was “Mira”.

After the war, Hyrë was engaged in the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). Meanwhile, when armed conflict broke out in North Macedonia in 2001, Hyrë resigned from the KPC and became a member of the National Liberation Army (NLA) in North Macedonia. On 29 July 2001, together with four of her fellow fighters – one from Kosovo, one from Albania and two from North Macedonia, Hyrë was killed fighting at Kuk-Zabel, Gostivar. In March 2017, the statue of Hyrë Emini-Mira was unveiled in the center of Ferizaj, her birthplace. Many citizens came out to honor the memory of Mira. Mira thus became the first KLA soldier in honor of whom a statue was built in Kosovo.

The Statue of Xhevë Krasniqi-Lladrovci and Fehmi Lladrovci

Xhevë Krasniqi-Lladrovci was born in 1955, in a village in Drenica. She was the daughter of an activist of clandestine organizations who, in the 1980s, worked illegally to nourish the uprising against the Socialist Yugoslavia. From a young age, just like her father, she was engaged in the resistance movement. During her political activism, she was introduced to one of the leading activists of underground operations, Fehmi Lladrovci.

Fehmi would later be arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison, but before that, Xhevë and Fehmi decided to marry. Despite Fehmi being in prison, Xhevë lived at his home, as tradition called for, and became a bride without a groom. After Fehmi’s release from prison, both of them, due to political persecution, decided to leave Kosovo and seek political asylum in Switzerland, where they continued their political activism until the spring of 1997.

In May of that year, Xheva and Fehmi left for Kosovo, traversing the Albanian mountains for several days, and attempting to arm up to launch KLA cells in Kosovo. Their entry in Kosovo failed, due to being discovered by Serbs, and they would only make it back in March 1998.

Xhevë participated in all of Drenica’s toughest battles. On 22 September 1998, Fehmi was killed leading the fight. In order not to waver the soldiers’ confidence, Xhevë took the fighting command and continued until she was killed a few hours later. Xhevë and Fehmi were not only a married couple, but also comrades in activism and war.

After the war, Xhevë and Fehmi were declared “Heroes of Kosovo”. Xhevë was also proclaimed as “the post-mortem Major General” of the KLA. The statue of Xhevë and Fehmi Lladrovci was inaugurated in September 2018, in the center of Drenas. As they had lived their lives, so were they memorialized – together, side by side as friends in life, activism and war. Across Kosovo you will also encounter statues and busts of other women – such as Ganimente Tërbeshi, an anti-fascist activist who the German Nazis hanged in 1944 in the center of Gjakova. She was only 17 years old. These busts are mostly erected in the schools named after these women.

What Kosovo lacks are memorials dedicated to the female contribution to society, say, in the fields of science, academia, culture, art, or literature. It seems that, for the moment, this is not a priority for our government. A country drowning in “big topics” – from the negotiations with Serbia to the topic of the party militants’ employment – hardly can find time to discuss the topic of violence against women, let alone talk about the topic of honoring and commemorating women who contributed to our society.

We hope the future will bring a more serious commitment to women’s rights, where we pay tribute to women who deserve our respect, first to those who are alive, and then to those who have died - at least in the form of a statue.



Credits: Center for Women's Rights, Zenica (BiH)

The Institutionalization of a memory: A BRIEF HISTORY (an attempt)

AMILA ŽDRALOVIĆ

Author Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović recently published the book “Women in the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a challenge to gender roles, established (and new) narratives and performative practices with a focus on religion”. Pages of this publication are composed of the results of voluminous empirical research. I will particularly highlight one of those findings. According to the author, during in-depth interviews, some of the interviewees stated that “it is necessary to build monuments for all victims without an ethnical prefix” and that “there is no political will to construct a monument to a ‘people’ with a minority status numbers-wise in specific locations”. On a similar note, in his essay “Expressing the Inexpressible” Nerzuk Ćurak sees the construction of monuments of “own guilt”, which he sees possible “if we free our everyday life from the terror of history”, as the hope for the future. Even if deep ethno-nationalism divides us and the continuing pattern is to memorialize suffering exclusively within the confines of each community, far from taking any steps towards the ethics of responsibility, the informal marking of Day of Remembrance of Women Victims in the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), gives a glimmer of hope that the impossible is still possible. In other words, the unfinished story regarding the institutionalisation of this day is, at the same time encouraging the recognition of the efforts of activists, whilst discouraging support for the resistance to their efforts. Certainly, it would

be worth discussing this resistance, and it could be argued that compromise was reached in the discussions held from September 2014 to January 2018. Therefore, the primary intent of the following text, based on the analysis of the minutes from sessions of the Commission for Gender Equality of House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly and the material deliberated during those sessions, accessible on the web page of the Parliament Assembly of BiH¹ is to present a historical background of the initiatives of female and male activists so far, in order to establish a Day of Remembrance of Women Victims in the War in BiH.

Now, activists from different cities in BiH mark the 8th of December as the informal Day of Remembrance of Women Victims in the War in BiH, as part of the global campaign: 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. This builds a completely different narrative of memory which is not one-sided. However, it should be taken into the account that, in regards to the sphere of civil society and informal political action, formal political actions builds masculine narratives of memory, not only ignoring specific war experiences of women, but often by skilfully manipulating the ethno-national rhetoric, which not only paralyses the peace-building process, but also often deepens the conflict.

In the autumn of 2014, 12 women’s organizations collaborated on the project “Peace with a Woman’s face - Women’s initiative

¹ <https://www.parlament.ba/committee/read/21?mandatId=8>

for dealing with the past”. They obtained signatures of approximately 1,200 citizens, forwarded in a written initiative for the establishment of the Day of Remembrance of Women Victims in the War in BiH (hereinafter: the Initiative) to the Commission for the Realisation of Gender Equality in the House of representatives of the BiH Parliament Assembly (hereinafter: the Commission). This joint peace initiative is of importance at many levels. It gathers female and male activists from across all of BiH, who, as per the Initiative, state the fact that women are excluded from the process of memorialization and that “the total and individual suffering of women is not ‘marked’ in any way”. Such an initiative is a necessary precondition to justice, because it adds memorialization to the discourse on BiH citizens’ suffering during the civil war from 1992 until 1995 and includes a plurality of experiences.

The Commission has, on several occasions, reviewed the Initiative. The deliberation commenced in February 2015 (at the 3rd Commission session), and continued in April of the same year at the 5th session when the Commission “accepted the initiative on principle” and agreed that “upon reviewing the reasoning behind the proposed date given by the applicant of the Initiative” the Commission shall determine “a proposal of an act which would be forwarded to the House of Representatives for approval, and which would represent the realization of the Initiative”.

By September 2015, an Amendment of the Initiative was submitted, proposing that the Day of Remembrance of Women Victims in the War in BiH should be on a “neutral date” - the 8th of December - which would not have the characteristics of national holiday but would be marked as part of the global campaign of 16 days of activism against gender based violence. Within the amendment, a detailed explanation is provided with a comprehensive history of this global campaign and its importance, clearly showing that the applicants endeavour to treat the memorialization of citizens with sensitivity. By choosing a neutral date, the applicants, as stated in the Amendment, wanted to elevate “the suffering of people (women and men) in the war” from the “generally politicized atmosphere” of the period between 1992-1995, to an evaluation of the “value of human rights and lives”. I believe that the importance

of such an approach is that it is open to the inclusion of all different, personal, and painful experiences, and especially the marginalized experiences of women.

By the end of 2015, despite seemingly only needing to propose a concrete date for the Initiative, we understood, from the minutes of 7th Commission session, that the Amendment of the Initiative of women organizations in BiH was reviewed, and after two votes “for”, two “against” and one “restrained”, the Initiative was not accepted. Since the applicants were not given an explanation, only a notice that the Initiative was not accepted, symbolically – on the 8th of December 2016, they renewed their request and proposed the Commission hold a “thematic debate / session on the issue of gender aspect in war memorialization” in BiH, along with a fourteen page reasoning which was then subject to a discussion at the 12th session of the Commission. The proposal to hold a thematic debate was approved.

In July 2017, the round table “Gender aspects of war memorialization in BiH” was held in order to come up with an acceptable solution. Activist and feminist, Vildana Džekman, summarising the conclusions from the round table, stated that, among other things, it was agreed that the Commission “put the Initiative on the agenda of one of its upcoming sessions” with the aim that “the thematic session of the Commission should be scheduled no later than the 8th of December 2017”.

In January 2018, at the 15th Commission session, the conclusions deriving from this round table were discussed, the Initiative was accepted and the Commission agreed it will “participate in the marking of the 8th of December as Commemoration Day for the Suffering of Women during the war in BiH.” Furthermore, it was suggested that the “Commission propose to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to take the decision to officially commemorate this day on the 8th of December”. The commission withdrew from voting on this proposal, and on the 8th of December the activists informally held the Commemoration Day for the Suffering of Women during the war in BiH. Now I will remind you of the beginning of the text: if there is no way to institutionalize and formally mark a day of remembrance for the suffering of female citizens, it is naïve to expect a monument representing “own guilt” to be erected.

Amila Ždralović graduated from the Department of Philosophy and Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo and finished her Masters and PHD through the Department for Sociology at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo. She is the co-author of two books and the author of over 30 scientific works. The primary focus of her interest is feminist discussions about justice and fairness.

NEWS & UPDATES



29TH MAY – 1ST JUNE: MIRËDITA, DOBAR DAN FESTIVAL, BELGRADE, SERBIA

At the start of this month, forumZFD launched the Serbian version of “Living with memories of the missing”, a memory book about missing persons from the last war in Kosovo and the people who are searching for them at “Mirëdita, dobar dan” festival in Belgrade. This unique event, occurring annually, presents Kosovo’s cultural and arts scene to the Belgrade public, providing a space for artists from both Kosovo and Serbia to share ideas and collaborate, to critically examine sociopolitical issues via film, books, artworks and public debates. At a time when relations between Belgrade and Prishtina are particularly divisive, the festival builds relations of normalized exchange between the two countries, to send the message: barriers must be torn down, not built up. Festival organisers: Integra (Kosovo), Youth Initiative for Human Rights (Serbia), Civic Initiative (Serbia), with the support of the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS), Foundation for Open Society in Serbia, Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport of the Republic of Kosovo.

27TH – 30TH JUNE: INSITU ART FAIR, SKOPJE, NORTH MACEDONIA

Skopje’s annual InSitu Art Fair will run its 6th edition at the end of June, with the theme “Intersections”. An intersection is a point at which two things meet. They’ll be exploring the ‘intersections’ between the private and the public, the national and international, the possible and the impossible... Find out more in the upcoming program! <https://www.facebook.com/insituart-fairskopje/>

13TH JULY (CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS UNTIL 15TH JUNE): INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE: WAR TRAUMA, COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA, KOSOVO

On Saturday, July 13th, the Nottingham Trent University and University of Prishtina will host the Interdisciplinary Conference:

War Trauma, collective memory and transitional justice, in Prishtina. The conference strives to assist in identifying future research needs and collaboration opportunities for research on transitional justice and war trauma in Kosovo. The deadline for submitting abstracts (up to 250 words) by practitioners, scholars and students is on June 15th; these can be from different disciplines, preferable related to: collective memory, collective reflection, gender-based violence, gendered experiences of war, evaluation of existing transitional justice processes, commemoration, and coping with trauma. Submissions can be in Albanian or English. For more information, contact: Dr. Blerina Kellezi (blerina.kellezi@ntu.ac.uk), Dr. Linda Gusia (linda.gusia@uni-pr.edu), Ardiana Shala (ardiana.shala2018@my.ntu.ac.uk) and Dr. Nita Luci (nita.luci@uni-pr.edu).



Photo credits: Training for teachers organized by Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HCHR) in BiH for the Project Civic Education for Peace, Mirjana Čuskić (HCHR).

ONGOING (2019): PEACE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BIH)

Since the begin of 2019, forumZFD in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with their regional partners, are supporting a joint regional project in order to contribute to and to develop innovative pedagogical tools and materials for Peace Education. The educational material to assist the constructive teaching of dealing with the past, human rights and non-violent conflict transformation is being introduced to teachers, decision makers and students. Through trainings and regional exchanges on good practice, the project aims to increase understanding and capacities for practicing and promoting inclusive, peaceful attitudes and developing educational approaches. With this, it offers alternatives for facing conflict sensitive issues such as segregation, discrimination or hate speech and advocates towards multi culturalism, critical thinking, multi perspectivity, tolerance and respect. For more information on the Project “Peace Education in/schools”, please contact forumZFD: Valentina Pancaldi: pancaldi@forumzfd.de (Kosovo), or Michele Parente: parente@forumzfd.de (BiH)

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In the Western Balkans, the focus is on projects in the field of Dealing with the Past and on fostering dialogue between opposing parties. This can include supporting civil society or enhancing media capacities for more public debates on Dealing with the Past in a constructive matter.

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DISCLAIMER

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