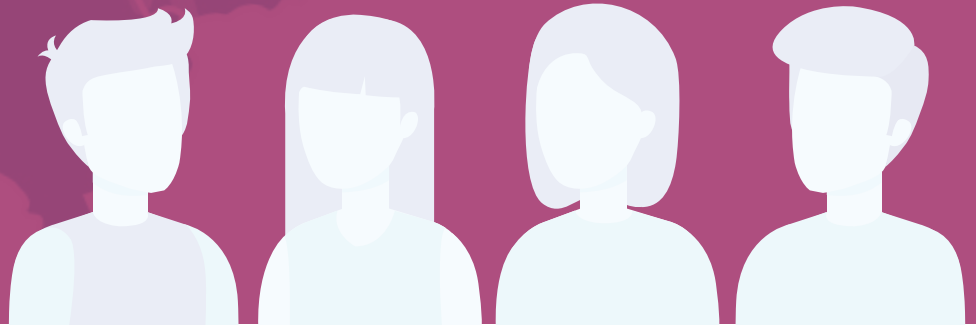


COLLECTION OF PAPERS

Youth involvement in a
constructive dialogue:
*Communist Past in
Contemporary Western Balkan*



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- **2nd Workshop** - Skopje, 18- 20 June 2021
- **3rd Workshop** - Rome, 01-03 October 2021
- **4th Workshop** - Paris, 01-03 April 2022

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Instead of an Introduction: Albania, the inability to break away from its darkest period

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February 20, 1991 is the moment of the fall of Enver Hoxha monument, the Albanian dictator. This event is a fundamental moment in the change of one era to another in Albania. Imagine if we today, as Albanians, did not have such an act. We would not have an event to confirm to ourselves the fact of being free people. We would not have an act, the absence of which would make us ashamed in front of future generations. Without such an act, and without the film footage of that time (as you see), provided as a result of the work of courageous state television journalists, who had to take risks to disobey the orders of their bosses, we would disagree today that change took place in Albania.

Every time you turn to those scenes, you feel a particular enthusiasm because of that atmosphere of significant transformations that took place in that period. After almost half a century under the most brutal communist dictatorship, the process of being released from the Albanian prison undoubtedly carries emotions that retain the same intensity even after three decades.

Student movements, hunger strikes, protests, the overthrow of the Enver Hoxha monument, and the dragging of the monument to the student city were the first acts, and unfortunately, the only ones of the decommunization of Albania. What followed was the transformation of a popular revolution that began with all its momentum into a political agreement with the old caste to gently remove it from the political scene despite the most unprecedented crimes and injustices that that regime had committed against the people. Its people.

I will shortly focus on the issue of decommunization as it is imperative. It is directly related to the most challenging period of modern times in which we live today, that of transition. The longer the presence of communist people, beliefs, actions, and mindsets in our country, the longer the transition continues. The shorter this process was, the faster we would have transitioned to a society with the rule of law and standardization.

Communist individuals and mindsets have accompanied us throughout our transition. They appeared as signs of the critical stages and reforms this state should take. From land law to concepts of justice, private property, the courts, recognizing and acknowledging the guilt of communism and its reparation, and every constructive process of Albanian hybrid democracy, communism as a shadow has remained hidden under the veil of the political elite and culture of Albania. The inability to break away from our darkest period shows the weakness of the self-perception that we have about the fact of being Albanian.

Bringing the experience and history of Albanian communism into the new context in which we find ourselves, in the context of a free society, is extremely dangerous. Not only that, but after three decades, we are not simply facing the inability to punish this period, but today we are witnessing the tendency to return the old communist signs, symbols, graphics, and ideology sweetened and caramelized with the idea that failure of our democracy, can be replaced by the "golden" periods of that time. This act is clothed with the "romance" of that time, totally detached from its savage reality, and overlaps in a society of social networks, personal and property freedoms, the society of image and vanity, appearance, and extravagance, and tries to project itself as the solution to our problems. In short, the tendency to plunge our society into amnesia, a forgetfulness of historical memory



associated with communism. But this is the first process, i.e., amnesia, historical forgetfulness, is deliberately served to erase from the memory the crimes and damages of that period that were done to the human being as the foundation of a society.

The second process which comes after amnesia is neurosis, i.e., deformation. After over three decades, they have succeeded in producing historical amnesia - historical forgetfulness about what has happened to these people for half a century - now the process of deformation of events, of neurosis in terms of purpose and methodology, has begun. The thesis that that system applied the laws of the time, that this was the reality and that it had its benefits is only the beginning of the process of historical neurosis, which tries to distort the history of experiencing communism in the minds and perceptions, especially of the new generation. That thesis does not mention a fundamental principle that any system which, although it may have had some minor benefits, in the context of the lack of fundamental human freedoms, turns into worthless because they have been precisely in the function of destroying these freedoms.

Unlike the former communist countries of Eastern Europe, Albania has failed to decommunize its society. He has probably done this with some purpose. In 1997, 40 thousand files of persons connected with the communist system disappeared from our archives, as well as over a thousand concrete names of high-ranking officials who are still implicated in Albanian politics. Is this the fault of Albanians or Albanian elites? Some say that it is the fault of the Albanians who produced and maintained this leading class. Others say that it is the elites' fault who made these Albanians of transition full of defects and immorality with the mechanisms of power.

I believe that people cannot be blamed for their culture because we would slip into cultural racism, which tends to criminalize certain cultures in favour of others. None of the people was born ready for the process of improvement, much less any of the people were born prepared for democracy. They have managed to improve through processes that have taken time, but above all, they have wanted governments and just political elites. The non-decommunization of our elites has shifted the issue to the non-decommunization of our mindsets which are passed down from generation to generation, producing a low yield in the country's political improvement and standardization processes. For the final decommunization to occur, justice must be done, the guilt must be admitted, the perpetrators must be compensated and punished, and our society must finally go through self-purification. Only then can we hope for visible improvements, a functioning democracy, and a smooth end to our transition.

Collective memory building and political discourse in post-totalitarian Albania: A critical approach

ALTIN GJETA¹

Abstract

In this paper I argue that the failure of Albania to deal with its past has perverted the establishment of a shared memory and understating of its communist regime massive human rights abuses. This has in turn gave rise to the birth of the politics of anti-politics in post-communist Albania which has left citizens' needs unaddressed and brought about a massive dissatisfaction and distrust towards party politics and much proclaimed benefits of democracy in general.

Key words: Communist regime, critical approach, democracy, Albania

Abstrakt

In this paper I argue that the failure of Albania to deal with its past has perverted the establishment of a shared memory and understating of its communist regime massive human rights abuses. This has in turn gave rise to the birth of the politics of anti-politics in post-communist Albania which has left citizens' needs unaddressed and brought about a massive dissatisfaction and distrust towards party politics and much proclaimed benefits of democracy in general.

Fjalët kyçe: Communist regime, critical approach, democracy, Albania

Introduction

Albania experienced one of the harshest communist regimes in the world after communist party came to power at the end of World War II. Its rule lasted half of a century, and it is estimated that 20% of the Albanian population was subject to interrogation, arrest, imprisonment, torture, or exile – while over 6,000 people were executed, many of whom were secretly buried in mass graves and whose bodies were never recovered (Krasniqi, 2012; Amy, 2013). These crimes were perpetrated by an oppressive apparatus in the hands of the communist political leadership who built it to sow fear and obedience among the population. According to Austin and Ellison, Sigurimi, the communist's regime secret service, employed some 10,000 full-time agents and a quarter of the adult population as part time informers (2008). This repressive security mechanism is estimated to have affected the lives of as much as one-quarter of the country's total population (Biberaj, 2000).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and particularly the anti-communist revolution in Romania triggered student's anti-communist movements in Albania at the beginning of the 1990-s which overthrew Enver Hoxha's lasting communist dictatorship. Admittedly this raised Albanians' hopes for socio-political change, addressing the past state's human rights abuses and thus redressing country's communist historical narrative. However, as

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I have argued elsewhere, the regime change fell short of these aspirations as the 'new' elite showed lack of political will and consensus to sincerely deal with the past and prosecute perpetrators of human rights (Gjeta, 2020a). Though initially Albania undertook some ambitious transitional justice measures such as criminal trials, lustration, and reparatory legislation, it soon emerged a big gap between formal provisions and their implementation. This was due to the combination of politics of the past with the politics of the present where communist legacy in politics, judiciary and public administration, politicisation of the process and ill-faming of de-communisation laws played a significant role in hindering Albania to make a bold break with its communist past (Gjeta, 2020b). This rendered transitional justice a futile enterprise which in turn has affected Albania's direction of transition after the 90s.

In this paper I am particularly interested to look at a possible correlation between collective memory building and political discourse in post-totalitarian Albania. In this regard, in the first section I will dwell on how Albania failed to build a shared understanding over its communist's regime human rights abuses and then in the second part I will analyse the implications this brought about to the political discourse of the political elite during the democratic transition.

Failing collective memory building in post-communist Albania

Teitel's understanding of collective memory building contends that it is the process of reconstructing the representation of the past in light of the present through varying legal measures, such as the trials of the ancient regimes, or bureaucratic bodies convened for these purposes (2000). In this respect, it is said that law can take a crucial role during transitions in shaping collective historical account by establishing facts about the past. For instance, facts brought to light by transitional justice practices facilitate the creation of a counter narrative to the totalising one and in turn establish a shared collective truth of past state's wrongs. The inability Albania to deal with its totalitarian past has impeded the uncovering of the past state's human rights abuses. This has undermined the establishment of a shared understanding and memory of its totalitarian past, which is misused by post-communist political elite to construct an anti-political narrative.

Surprisingly, grave human rights abuses of the communist regime are entirely absent in school textbooks today. According to a recent survey more than 60% of teachers were not aware about the number of victims of the communist regime because the country's criminal past is not reflected in school curricula (Godole, 2020). In the same vein the head of the Federal Foundation for the Communist Legacy in Germany, Dr. Anna Kaminsky, contends that the Albania's communist past it continues to be treated in school textbooks as a glorious period where big reforms in education, electrification and woman emancipation took place, while its substance was repression and victims (cited at Panorama, 2019). This has left manipulated totalitarian historical account in place, which as Aguilar maintains, becomes integrated into social institutions that act as collective memory archives (2002).

The negligence of post-communist Albania to deal with communist state's human rights violations has basically left the youth who did not experience first-hand Hoxha's regime without clear references to the past. According to Ignatieff public education in every post-conflict or post-authoritarian rule is important in order "to reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in the public discourse" (1998, p.173). In the absence of an official history regarding the communist regime's abuses, youth has rested upon confusing information coming mainly from family members, media and communist period films produced by Kinostudio e Re which was part and parcel of its propaganda (Godole, 2019). This has created a conflicting assemblage of communist historical account among the youth, which in turn has neither helped the acknowledgment of victims' sufferings, nor the reconstruction of a shared understanding about the communist regime's wrongs.

In this regard, communist's regime crimes have remained disputed, denied and recently its violent and degraded architecture has even been rehabilitated in the public life. For instance, three years ago a heated



public discussion exploded over the Tepelena concentration camp where hundreds of thousands of people including children and elderly were interned from 1949 to 1953 and it is estimated that roughly 1000 people lost their lives due to physical torture and malnutrition (Kola, 2019; Kujto.al, no year). These wrongdoings were downplayed on grounds that conditions at the Tepelena camp were not that bad, thus relativizing past regime criminal legacy.² The public discourse on the Tepelena concentration camp showed that if we rest merely on witnesses' memory and fail to hold accountable the perpetrators, the state's past wrongs will be denied and distorted by elites that served the official history of the old regime (Godole, 2018). Moreover, the successors of the Labour Party, the Socialist Party in power has gone beyond the common sense in attempting to redress the communist's regime criminal memory. On the one hand Prime Ministers' Rama government has downplayed Hoxha's regime victims' sufferings, demolished the National Theatre, left in shadow and forgetfulness the notorious communist era prisons Spac, Qafe Bari and Burrel, and on the other hand it has lavished communist's regime violence symbols such as BunkArt, House of Leaves and most recently the Pyramid, a mausoleum built to incarnate Enver Hoxha's cult in the centre of Tirana (Exit.al, 2020; Koleka, 2020).

Thereby, the failure of Albania to draw a thick line with its communist past has not even hindered but has whitewashed and rehabilitated people's understanding of its communist regime criminal account. Another survey conducted by the OSCE Presence in Tirana, revealed that 62% of the respondents did not see the communist past as a problem. The most controversial figure was that when asked about the role of the former dictator Enver Hoxha in the history of the country, more than half of the respondents had a positive perception (OSCE, 2016). These concerning results show that Albanian's society is not sufficiently informed about the dictatorship and has been unable to reckon with its communist past (Godole, 2019). This has strained truth revelation and a shared understanding of the communist past which in turn has dragged down Albania's transition towards a functioning democracy where people are offered genuine political alternatives not empty signifiers such as the long-lasting dichotomy, communist versus anti-communist. This should have already been settled.

The birth of the politics of anti-politics

It is widely believed that historical accountability sets off transition's dynamics, is transformative and plays a forward-looking role in a country's liberalisation process. No viable democracy can afford to accept amnesia, forgetfulness, and the loss of memory. "An authentic democratic community cannot be built on the denial of past crimes, abuses, and atrocities" (Tismaneanu, 2008, p.172). Therefore, it is assumed that holding individuals accountable for crimes committed under the previous regime lays the foundation for a democracy committed to the rule of law and prevents future abuses under the new system (Huntington, 1991). Thus, transitional justice is envisioned to create a new foundation for state and societal rebuilding by making a break with the past and setting the directionality of transition. The failure of Albania to bring to justice wrongdoers of the communist regime has nurtured old elite continuation. This has constantly plunged the country into political crisis and undermined citizens' political choices. In this vein, Krasniqi points out that "the new system continued to function as an appendix of the old system, and the main bearers of this were political parties and institutions they created" (2019, p.69). This turned Albania into a fertile ground for political polarisation and the emergence of the unpolitical.

The political discourse in post-communist Albania is not framed around politics, by which democratic politics theorist Chantal Mouffe understands "the wide range of practices, discourses and institutions which aim to establish a peaceful co-existence of different conceptions over what constitutes a good or moral life" (2000, p.101). To the contrary, the unsettled historical account of the communist past is misused to construct a divisive political narrative for electoral benefits into two antagonist camps, the anti-communists, and the successor of

² Albanian historian Pellumb Xhufi's statement in a TV show.



the communists (Kajsiu, 2010). This has not served the needs of citizens and democracy building but rather has hardened political polarisation. As Mouffe suggests if a political unit cannot transform antagonism into agonism it risks tearing apart the very social fabric of the society and dismantling democracy in the first place. Moreover, by emphasising the threat of 'Communism' versus 'Berishizëm', the latter referring to the former DP leader and anti-communist movement Sali Berisha, who became the main political player in Albania from 1991 to 2013, the unpolitical discourse deemphasised other internal social divisions and subsumed political alternatives what has in turn perverted democratic representation and political choice (Kajsiu, 2010; Gjeta, 2019).

This April Albania is about to hold its 10th general elections since the fall of the communist regime. However, most electoral campaigns have not addressed peoples' concerns and needs, but instead they have been dominated by anti-politics which merely intend degrading political opponents. Political articulation of different social strata's problems is substituted by an empty narrative which portrays the opponent as the biggest evil who should be ostracised from the country. In 2009 elections the then SP leader Edi Rama declared that he is not a politician at all and denounced his opponent the then Prime Minister Sali Berisha as the symbol of the backwardness. Nevertheless, Rama's party did not deliver any political manifesto where farmers, labourers, teachers or other social groups' needs were addressed rather he declared a total war against the 'old politics' without offering any alternative.³ On the other hand the Democratic Party has played the anticommunism card during the 90s and continues to use and reuse it for electoral benefits without genuinely addressing social groups' needs. This has brought to the surface a deep crisis of representation in Albania, expressed in increasing public's distrust towards political parties and public institutions in general (IDM, 2018).

These failures, coupled with the economic stagnation of Albania during these years and EU integration stalemate have nurtured popular disillusionment towards democratic system's much proclaimed benefits. As post-communist Albania struggled to make progress and deliver tangible results for its population, the letter started feeling nostalgic for the past. This mass dissatisfaction has been politically harnessed by communist era politicians and ancient regime's successors in politics to cling to power and thus protract Albania's path towards a functioning democracy. The 2020 Freedom House report defines Albanian as a partly free country and a hybrid democracy, while in the same vein Transparency International ranks Albania as a highly corrupt country (FH, 2020; TI, 2020). What is more troubling is the fact that Albania is persistently sliding back as far as democratic practices are concerned (Bieber, 2020), which indicate that its already prolonged transition to a full-fledged democracy will continue.

Conclusions

After the fall of the communist regime, Albania had most historical credentials to undertake stringent transitional justice measures and thus bring to light its communist dictatorship gross human rights abuses. Nevertheless, as we have seen in this paper, though Albania initially introduced ambitious transitional justice legislation it failed at implementation stages altogether. As a result, the distorted communist's regime narrative of the past remained untouched and its crimes were never uncovered and punished. To the contrary, paradoxically the communist past continues being portrayed in the public sphere as glorious period in education, women's emancipation, and public works. Its criminal account is relativized, and at some point, denied and rehabilitated. Presumably this has hindered the establishment of a collective memory and understanding of the communist's regime criminal account.

In turn, the inability of Albania to punish communist's regime perpetrators and build a shared truth on its communist past has polarised the society, facilitated communist elite continuation and ultimately gave birth the unpolitical discourse. The post-communist Albania's political leadership kept misusing the uncovered and

³ Edi Rama, speech, 11th Congress of the Socialist Party of Albania



distorted past as an empty signifier for electoral benefits. The political discourse was dominated by an empty rhetoric and accusations with the reference to the past. Consequently, social groups' real needs and concerns were not addressed. This brought about an increasing popular dissatisfaction towards institutions, politics, and democracy in general, and what is more troubling it has led to an increasing of nostalgic feelings towards the communist regime. These assemblages of failures, denials of communist's regime abuses, the emergence of a crisis of representation and disillusionments towards democracy risk tearing apart the very social fabric of the society – and lastly hampering further Albania's transition toward a functioning democracy.

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The absence of political culture explains Albania's lack of democratic consolidation

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Abstract

Albania has a weak political culture that is chiefly legacy of its recent communist past. Albania's communism that lasted for more than five decades was of a pure totalitarian type, making it an exception even among its peers in former Eastern Europe. This combined with weak democratization standards and feeble institutions in the pre-communist era, were one of the main impediments of establishing strong rule of law that is a pre-condition for fast democratic consolidation in the aftermath of the communist era. Therefore, Albania is still suffering from a protracted transition, with little headway toward strengthening its institutions and building a vibrant deliberative democracy. This paper deliberates on how the lack of political culture is one of the chief reasons to explain the existing conundrum. Therefore, I use both a historical vantage point as well as a comparative framework to analyze Albania's situation vis-à-vis the Central and Eastern European countries to understand why lack of a consolidated political culture can influence the present reality not just from institutional point of view but also the rules, norms and perceptions of people today.

Key words: Albania, political culture, communist legacy

Abstrakt

Shqipëria ka një kulturë të dobët politike që është kryesisht trashëgimi e së kaluarës së saj të afërt komuniste. Komunizmi i Shqipërisë që zgjati për më shumë se pesë dekada ishte i një lloji të pastër totalitar, duke e bërë atë një përjashtim edhe midis kolegëve të saj në ish-Evropën Lindore. Kjo e kombinuar me standardet e dobëta të demokratizimit dhe institucionet e dobëta në epokën para-komuniste, ishin një nga pengesat kryesore të vendosjes së një sundimi të fortë të ligjit që është një parakusht për një konsolidim të shpejtë demokratik, si rrjedhojë e epokës komuniste. Prandaj, Shqipëria ende vuan nga një tranzicion i zgjatur, me pak përparim drejt forcimit të institucioneve të saj dhe ndërtimit të një demokracie të gjallë diskutuese. Ky punim shqyrton se si mungesa e kulturës politike është një nga arsyet kryesore për të shpjeguar enigmën ekzistuese. Prandaj, unë përdor si një pikë historike të favorshme ashtu edhe një kornizë krahasuese për të analizuar situatën e Shqipërisë përballë vendeve të Evropës Qendrore dhe Lindore për të kuptuar pse mungesa e një kulture të konsoliduar politike mund të ndikojë në realitetin aktual jo vetëm nga pikëpamja institucionale e pikëpamja por edhe rregullat, normat dhe perceptimet e njerëzve sot.

Fjalët kyçe: Shqipëria, kultura politike, trashëgimia komuniste

Introduction

Albania's communism has been the most extreme, autarchic brand of communism in the entire former Eastern Europe. Albania has arguably been the only pure totalitarian communist system during the entire five decades



after the liberation war against Nazi-Fascism, comparing only to the Soviet Union under Stalin's rule. Even after the break-up from Soviet Union in the 1960s and the Socialist Republic of China in the 1970s, Albania continued to walk into alone into "unexplored paths" while the other regimes in the former Eastern Europe were exploring forms of cultural opposition, like the example of samizdat in the Vishegrad countries or forms of alternative market strategies like the decentralization policies in Yugoslavia (Kalemaj 2020). No doubt this legacy would impact as it actually did the post-communist transformation of the country after 1991. It started with Albania being the last country to finally overthrow the communist regime which paradoxically came through a semi-pact between the ruling elite and the new political opposition to guarantee the multi-party system and the establishment of free press and other previously forbidden freedoms such as that of religion.

Although, the totalitarian communist regime is the chief to blame for Albania's main impediments in its difficult transitory democracy path, starting from meagre economic growth that averaged barely a 2.5 percent during the past three decades (Gjokutaj 2014) to weak rule of law and other serious handicaps that have well prevented the sustainable development, one of the main factors to be taken under consideration has been the lack of a consolidated political culture. Of course, that precedes the communist regime and is also a resultant of the fact that Albania is a very young sovereign state (barely over a century) with much political instability and weak institutions that preceded communism in the country.

Generally, the lack of solid political culture is one of the main impediments in the country's path toward full democratic consolidation and strengthening the rule of law. In the post-communist Albania this has been linked to dysfunctionalities such as "political antagonism, increasing authoritarian tendencies and lack of institutional bedrock" (Kalemaj, 2016), or "divisive and leader dominated political party system" (Mavrikos-Adamou, 2013).

Political culture as a concept

Political culture is a concept that is mainly related to political processes, but also studies the interaction with social, cultural, and economic ones. One of the main issues is political representation, or more precisely how citizens are represented with or without proper political information. While politics is the external and structural form of building a state or nation, culture is the internal essence that gives it spirit and identity. In this line there are different definitions about the concept of political culture but the most widely used is that of Almond and Verba: "as the set of values, norms, knowledge, attitudes and feelings that determine political behaviour towards the political system" (Almond & Verba 1963). In other words, they considered political culture as an element that connects individual behaviours with the political system as a whole.

Culture and politics are the two basic areas of a state, where the exclusion of culture from politics and vice versa, is very dangerous for the health of a nation. For a state to function well, it is necessary to have these two components developed in parallel. In order to better explain the progress of the transformation processes in the countries of Southeast Europe, as well as the patterns of development of electoral, party and governing systems, it is necessary to analyse the level of political culture and the legacy of the past. These two elements have had a major impact on the formation of new political systems, on electoral and political behaviour, and on the ability of post-communist societies to build open models of free and democratic societies. Political culture according to the historian Hanisch (1970) is a "mixture of orientations, attitudes and relations in political processes and structures". It expresses the political views that citizens, large social groups and functional elites have about the world. Scholars such as Sartori (1987) or Offe (1991) evaluate political culture as indicators of the level of democracy and the ability of a society to adapt to the principles and values of the new system. Polish scholar Ana Volk-Poveska in her study on democracy and the market economy in Eastern Europe writes that "the political culture of societies that abandoned communism is full of paradoxes, which relate to the character and essence of the processes of the transitional period. They can be found in the conflict between the political system and the interests of society, in the conflict between goals and means, in the conflict



of integrative credibility” (Weidenfeld 1999: 43). Consequently, the birth of a political culture that contains “old norms and new experiences, can be compared to going through an unknown path, where continuous qualification is required.” Poveska warns of the appearance in this process of mistakes which could neither have been predicted nor could have been avoided before.

There are several theories that make the classification of former communist countries and their difference in the central and south-eastern part. One of them based on the structural factor, referring to the former Soviet countries, connects it with the heritage, history and culture of these countries. Post-communist countries with greater distribution of political power and veto-wielding actors in the political decision-making process have managed to establish a more stable and effective system than countries in which political power is more concentrated. Other scholars link it to the geographical aspect, according to which countries located geographically closer to the developed west will mark faster steps towards democratization. The second theories are not based on country structure, but on political actors. Supporters of this thesis think that invisible systems and structural factors can make the country neither democracy nor dictatorship. People can do it.

Wolfgang Merkel is more concrete when making a classification of the level of political culture in former communist countries” (Gashpar 1998: 13). In his studies, countries are divided into three major groups: countries with a high level of political culture (Slovenia, Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Poland and Lithuania), countries where civic culture is still in the process of consolidation (Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, etc.), as well as the third category with low standards of democracy and political elites. The latter includes two subdivisions (Serbia, Albania, Macedonia), as well as the last subdivision with Russia, Moldova and Bosnia. Even in the classification that Merkel in the same paper makes the level of consolidation of electoral systems and systems of political representation we have the same ranking, first Slovenia and last of the 19 former communist countries, Belarus. In the ranking for the democratic quality of political systems in Eastern Europe, Slovenia leads with 9.55%, in the first group of constitutional democracy, which also includes Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria. The second group of “defective democracy” includes Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia. So, his argument on “political culture” is consistent with his argument on the “progress of democracy” in post-communist countries. Other authors focus on the analysis of the transition period in Eastern European countries, cultural differences are often based on divisions between Catholic countries, Orthodox countries and those with Muslim populations. This is especially emphasized when “political culture” as a cultural and political phenomenon in Southeast Europe is accompanied by study comparisons with Western models.

The differences are found in the historical tradition (a Catholic Christian West and a predominantly Orthodox East), which has had its effects in creating different civic perceptions on life, society, community, human solidarity, moral principles, the relationship of faith and freedom, exchanges and external influences. Huntington says that we are not dealing with two diametrically opposed, but different models, i.e., with differences (Huntington 2011: 197). Byzantine heritage in the east created strong relations of interdependence between political and institutional elites, as well as religious institutions, while in the west the idea of coexistence between religious institutions and the secular state dominated. Western models created the notions of separation of powers much earlier than in Eastern models, in which hierarchical structure dominated over any other model of political and state organization. The state models were very centralized, and in conditions when even the church was completely dependent on the state, there were no landowners independent of the state. Mendelski (2007) in his study on institutional reforms in SEE countries relies heavily on the thesis of differences arising from the Hapsburg heritage versus the Ottoman heritage. According to him, the governance indicators in SEE in these two periods clearly show the deep difference between, for example, Slovenia-Austro-Hungary and Macedonia and Ottoman Albania, and that in these last countries economic development was much lower. He makes responsible the structural model, of both models, which is also evident in the period between the two wars. According to him, Albania and Macedonia had lower indicators than Slovenia, Croatia, etc. (Mendelski 2007).



Communist past influencing political culture in its aftermath

The new political culture of post-communist societies is a product of processes, which are developing, in at least three dimensions: (1) in the universal dimension, where political culture is associated with typical symptoms and phenomena for every turn associated with changing political systems / regimes and not just normal political rotation; (2) in the regional dimension, where its integral element are the structural changes, characteristic for those countries which are on the path from communism to the democratic order and market economy; (3) in the dimension of the "special path", where the history, geopolitical conditions and national structure of post-totalitarian states influence the challenges that these states face to have a differentiated character and a different scope of action.

Democracy cannot develop independently of political culture. Sound democracy in Albania depends very much on the degree of development of the Albanian political culture, which means that every citizen with his behaviours, attitudes, practices and moral norms determines the ability as an individual, as a society and people to self-govern. "Albanian society, coming from a communist totalitarian political system for five decades, even with the advent of democracy in 1990 inherited a dictated and submissive citizen, which in itself encouraged laziness, routine and indifference." Therefore, it is necessary to make a real philosophical "catharsis" in the Albanian society, i.e., "to replace in the basic memory of the Albanian individuals the old content of the communist period with a new content" (Kocani 2003: 2). Quite differently, in today's Albanian reality, the political culture of a new democratic society is formed by the free activity of the individual (individuals) and certain communities (groups) in this society" (Bardhi 2013: 4-18).

Citizens of a free society in a democracy pursue their own interests, exercise their rights and are accountable for their private lives. They decide for themselves about daily life, about the present and the future, about their family and children, where they will live in Albania, Europe, and in the world, what work or profession they will do according to their skills and beliefs, that where they will live in the city or in the countryside, will they deal with politics, art, philosophy, science and so on with an endless range of interests. These constitute the right of personal self-determination given to them by nature and God. Political culture, in the broadest sense of the word, is not about the concept, idea, artistic, literary, or musical vision, but about the behaviours and abilities of a people in a democracy, with the responsibilities to govern or self-govern. Seen from this perspective, we might conclude that Albania is still in its way to consolidate its political culture as a *conditio sine qua non* for the consolidation of both rule of law and democratization.

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Communist Legacy and Memory making in Albania Today

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the communist legacy in Albania and particularly in the memory making in contemporary Albania. In the framework of the EU-path that post-communist Albania must follow, it is expected that Albania should apply the European transnational perspective on the politics of communist memory. However, the process has not been smooth, and challenges remain.

Key words: communist legacy, memory making, post-communism, EU

Abstrakt

Ky punim fokusohet në trashëgiminë komuniste në Shqipëri dhe veçanërisht në krijimin e kujtesës në Shqipërinë bashkëkohore. Në kuadrin e rrugës së BE-së që duhet të ndjekë Shqipëria postkomuniste, pritet që Shqipëria të zbatojë perspektivën transnacionale europiane në politikën e kujtesës komuniste. Megjithatë, procesi nuk ka qenë i qetë dhe sfidat mbeten.

Fjalët kyçe: trashëgimia komuniste, krijimi i kujtesës, post-komunisti, BE

Introduction

30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall the history of communism still presents itself as one of the most polarizing and controversial themes in Eastern Europe's culture of memory. While some governments advocate the legal and historical investigation of communist rule after the fall of the Iron Curtain, others confront their recent past with denial or idealisation. There have been numerous studies on memory especially in the sense of Pierre Nora's lieux de memoire or 'realms of memory' (Nora, 1984), as expressed in monuments, memorials and works of art, as well as in school textbooks. Nevertheless, Nora's approach to memory has proved enormously fruitful and wherever 'national identity' seems to be in question, memory comes to be a key to national recovery through reconfiguring the past. After the collapse of communism, memories were 'unfrozen' on both sides of the former Iron Curtain.

Both personal and collective memories were liberated from constraints imposed by the need for state legitimation and friend-enemy thinking associated with the Cold War (Müller, 2004). In central and eastern Europe, as Ugrešić has put it, 'in this "post-communist" age it seems that "Easterners" are most sensitive to two things: communality and the past' (Müller, 2004: 36). The 'return' of memory has taken place on multiple levels and there has been a process of a nachholende nation-building, for which collective memories have been mobilised (Müller, 2004: 37). Nevertheless, in a new political situation after 1989 the nature of a pluralist society itself presupposes different interpretations of the past, sometimes contradictory (Marin, et.al, 2013: 17).



Memory of the communist past today in Albania

In any culture, collective memory conveyed through rituals, ceremonies, and similar events reinforces a link with the past of a kind that involves no explicit reflection on the distance that separates us from it. We usually regard such reflection as becoming possible only with the emergence of historiography, a literary genre that aims among other things to record and preserve information about events worth remembering (Ginzburg, 2001). But it is a political, social, and pedagogical task at the boarder of historiography, society, and politics that underlines the danger of any politics of history, as historiography always been used by totalitarian rulers. Historiography here in Albania is affected also by the political agenda. Yerushalrni pointedly writes that “memory ... is no longer recollection, which still preserves a sense of distance, but reactualization according to the streams of the political endeavours (Yerushalmi, 1982).

In Albania the research on communism and of the memory of it is in its beginning although almost 28 years have been passed since the fall of communism. The studies on communism⁴ and on memory of communism is very poor reduced in some newspaper article and mostly publication of past memories of former political prisoners.⁵ Communist crimes are not deeply studied and the only serious study on violence and terror in Albania to be mentioned is the publication until today of the volumes of encyclopaedia of Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and Consequences of Communism.⁶ The study communism and its memory from the framework of cultural studies consist only in a recently published study with interviews on collective memory (Kati, 2015), but other crucial studies on communism, communist past or memory of it are still missing.

Today as witnesses to the tragic event of communism are passing away, politicians, historians, and representatives of associations and NGOs are struggling for the reconstruction of a social memory. This finds its expression in commemorative acts, memorials, or private initiatives. Public discourse and important debates demonstrate the changes in social consciousness relating to the Past events and the official policies of history must tackle a difficult task of strengthening national identity for the normative formation of the newly erected democracies and establishing elements of a transitional event and memory like Communism (Wolfrum, 1999).

Due to the structure of public discourse collective memory is therefore a process, much more heterogeneous and contingent than defenders of ‘my country, right or wrong’ are willing to accept, but nevertheless some kind of dominant collective memory does exist. According to Aleide Assmann it is shaped through text, monuments, and rituals of commemoration. In other words, it is a process of constructing the normative ground of society with respect to the past (Assman, 2008).

In 2017 transition is officially over, as Maria Todorova wrote, in her introduction of the edited volume, *Remembering Communism* (Todorova, et.al, 2014), followed up surprisingly by the explosion of the phenomenon of “post-communist nostalgia”. Fewer and fewer people have immediate memories of communism (Todorova, et.al, 2014: 2). Yet how people understand their own lives considering how official public memory is constructed. How lived experience of people are inflected by present-day political and social exigencies regarding the public memory of the Communist Past? How is the Past represented in media, public sphere, in commemorative events or in the museums and memorials in Albania?

⁴ Here I mean the Albanian studies on Communism after 1991, as I do not wish to mention the local studies done during 1945-1991 on what was Communism in Albania, as they have a strong indoctrinated character.

⁵ Uran Butka, *21 vjet burg komunist 1961-1982. Kujtime, mbresa, portrete dhe refleksione*, Tiranë, 2001; Amik Kasarhuo, *Një ankh gjysmëshekullor: Shqipëria e Enver Hoxhës*, Tiranë: 1996; Tomor Aliko, *Genocidi mbi elitën intelektuale të kombit shqiptar nën terrorin komunist*, Tiranë: 2007; Agim Musta, *Libri i zi i komunistit shqiptar*, Tiranë: 2007; Tomor Aliko, *Genocidi gjysëm shekullor në Shqipëri*, Tiranë: 2010.

⁶ *Fjalori Enciklopedik i Viktimave të Terrorit Komunist (Vol. I-8)*, Tiranë, 2020.



Memory making in Albania

In the framework of the “Europeanisation” path that post-communist Albania has to follow, it is expected that Albania should apply the European transnational perspective on the politics of communist memory. EU induces and encourages an ideal situation in which the memory of Communism will be acknowledged equally to that of the Holocaust for example. In this perspective, the political struggle of European actors aiming at criminalizing Communism is theorized as a rightful attempt that “calls for recognition of the value of the distinctly East European experience that has not been universally shared in Europe”. The basis of this “recognition-seeking campaign” is that all victims of past injustice deserve equal respect, irrespective of the causes of their suffering (Zombory: 2017). But as Zombory rightly points out, the EU politic of recognition has two unreflective features. The first is a direct causal link between history and politics: the past determines regional difference, which automatically calls for public recognition. Seeking reconciliation between competing visions of history, the thesis of politics of recognition mistakes the memory claims of the actors for history. The second unreflective feature concerns the Eastern nature of Communism: an experience directly known only in the Soviet member states and satellite countries. In this view, the memory of Communism in its currently canonized form is the outcome of a bottom-up process through which the Eastern experience of Europe has finally been (partially) acknowledged aside the founding experience of the Holocaust (Zombory: 2017: 1029).

Charles Maier has written on “hot and cold memory”, referring to Nazis and Communist memories. According to me, this is exactly a cold memory of communism, where from the point of ‘Western intellectuals, some of whom are Marxist for decades, communism/socialism is considered mild, mellow because it is not enough studied and because to many of former communists evidence lack the concept of shame and of personal regret towards their victims and their acts during communism. Thus, nostalgia of communist past is very present and I am not wondering why such publications are trendy nowadays.

Therefore after 30 years after the collapse of Communism in Albania (1991) the Communist discourse and the ways how Albanians recall their communist past has been very controversial and polarized. One of the main targets of those who reject the notion of a criminal communist regime and the efforts to commemorate the victims of Hoxha’s repressive policies is the ISKK with its research and commemoration activities. The latest casualty of this fight was Agron Tufa, a renowned writer and translator of international literature, who had publicly denounced former Sigurimi officers still active in the state administration and called for stricter lustration measures and de-communisation of Albanian society. He continuously asked the ban of the Communist symbols which were recently reappearing in public events. The last appearance was the set up by the municipality of Tirana during November 2019 of the big [portraits of communist partisan fighters](#) killed during the WWII in the main boulevard of the capital city, marking the 75th anniversary from Nazi’s liberation. This portraying caused many debates on the WWII events in Albania and [Tufa criticized fervently and called the partisans’ photographs as an act of hypocrisy toward the victims of Communism in Albania](#). Although he tried to [seek help](#) from several foreign embassies in Albania, his life threats pretending was ignored by the foreigner representatives, who have shown many times to not understand the local realities and distant themselves from “local troubles”.

It seems that although many years have passed since Communism disintegrated in Albania and many scholars have documented numerous communist atrocities, the communist period remains a hot potato of the public and political discourse. Many in Albania remain unaware of the enormous scale of violation of human rights during that period and in the last years Communism has begun to attract a consideration and voices for a revision of Communist atrocities are on rise, as well the nostalgic feelings.

In 2016 the OSCE Office in Albania presented a [survey](#) about how Albanians see the Communist past of their country, and on what they know about the former regime and how they deal with its legacy. Based on 995



interviews with people of different ages, gender, education, geographic location of residence and political status as a formerly persecuted or imprisoned person, the study revealed rather ambiguous perceptions and a rather uneven scale of historical knowledge about the Communist rule and life during that era (OSCE Report).

Almost half of the people surveyed had a positive perception of the Communist regime in Albania, probably due to a nostalgic view of the past. Most of them also did not see the legacy of Albania's Communist past as a present problem for the country. On the other hand, the survey results showed a lack of knowledge of the former regime among young people and a lack of interest in learning more about it, in general. [This survey, revealed that 42 per cent of Albanians believed Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha had a positive impact on history – not much less than the 45 percent who see his impact as negative.](#)

One can conclude from the survey's findings that the perpetrators are very nostalgic of their past, while the victims are traumatised and still are looking for justice to be implemented in a society in a need for transitional justice. The young generation is faced with amnesia, as many former political prisoners are dying off, their voices are decreasing, their early 1990s optimism on reparation, lustration, and justice is vanishing, and those born in post-Communist Albania have not enough information from school curricula or are just careless of what communism was about in their country. Daily stressful routine, the economic and social troubles have affected the ways how people perceive Communism. Nostalgia and amnesia as well the revision of Communism, are characterising the path from transition to democracy as are the demands of former political oppressed people for a condemnation of Communist atrocities and implementation of the transitional justice.

Because of contested nature of memory, within the debate around coming to terms with the past one could feel the sensitivity of this process. In Albania, the memorial contraposition between victims and perpetrators has remained deadlocked in an internal confrontation and reciprocal accusations of past contiguity with the regime. Because of this overarching situation, for many years, proposing any kind of reflection on the memory of the regime was highly controversial, as it was clear that there was no room for negotiating any conciliatory middle range (Iacono, 2018).

The policies proposed in order to deal with the communist past so far have been rather partial and inconsistent. In 2006 the parliament of Albania adopted a resolution condemning the crimes committed by the communist regime, by declaring that the communist totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha that led Albania after World War Two until 1990, was marked by widespread violence of human rights, murders, individual and collective executions, with and without a court process, deaths in concentration camps, death from starvation, tortures, evictions, slave labor, physical and psychological terror, genocide for political background or heritage ownership, and violation of freedoms of expression, thought, press, religious beliefs and political pluralism ([European Parliament](#)).

The Albanian Parliament condemned dictator Enver Hoxha as the founder, inspirer, leader and executor of the most egregious communist dictatorial system in Eastern Europe, which led to the extreme isolation and impoverishment of Albania and demanded the removal of all the titles and decorations given to him by the communist regime. Further the Parliament called for the revision of the communist system symbol dates, which marked the installation of communist dictatorship in Albania, as well as the removal of these dates from official state protocols. At the end the Albanian Parliament invited independent academics, historians and experts to intensify their research on the objective determination and verification of Albania's history during the communist dictatorship.

In the framework of the EU-path that post-communist Albania has to follow, it is expected that Albania should apply the European transnational perspective on the politics of communist memory. According to the last EP resolution the memory of Communism should be acknowledged equally to that of the Nazism and Fascism. The latest European Parliament resolution was adopted on 19 September 2019 is [the resolution on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe](#) (PDF), which "calls for a common culture of remembrance



that rejects the crimes of fascist, Stalinist, and other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the past as a way of fostering resilience against modern threats to democracy, particularly amongst the younger generation". In this perspective all victims of past totalitarian injustices deserve equal respect, and human rights violations "are remembered and brought before courts of law, and to guarantee that such crimes will never be repeated." The resolution stresses the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive, because there can be no reconciliation without remembrance.

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Unity and separation of powers in light of the constitutional systems in Albania

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Abstract

The constitutional system represents the way a state restricts the exercise of state power by guaranteeing the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms which constitute the foundation of the democratic states and legitimizes them. Constitutional systems have been developed during historical periods in relation to the content and purposes of the constitutions, but also in relation to the evolution of the principle of the separation of powers. Arguably no political principle has been more central than the separation of powers in the evolution of the constitutional governance in Western democracies. The terms “unity” and “separation” of powers indicate the principles of organization and mechanism for the exercise of the state power. Thus, this paper analysis both principles of unity and separation of powers evaluating the situation and prospects of constitutional developments regarding essentially the communist and post-communist systems in Albania. Discussions about socialism and state powers which are more political rather than juridical phenomenon, might seem redundant to include in the nowadays public discussion but as a theoretical and political tradition of critical and often conflictive relationship with state institutions, communism constitutes in post-communist countries an important force that has influenced (still does) and shaped the evolution of the democratic constitutional state.

Key words: separation of powers, socialism, communism, unity of powers, constitutional system.

Abstrakt

Sistemi kushtetues përfaqëson mënyrën se si një shtet kufizon ushtrimin e pushtetit shtetëror duke garantuar mbrojtjen e të drejtave dhe lirive themelore të njeriut që përbëjnë themelin e shteteve demokratike dhe i legjitimon ato. Sistemet kushtetuese janë zhvilluar gjatë periudhave historike në lidhje me përmbajtjen dhe qëllimet e kushtetutave, por edhe në lidhje me evolucionin e parimit të ndarjes së pushteteve. Padyshim që asnjë parim politik nuk ka qenë më qendror sesa ndarja e pushteteve në evolucionin e qeverisjes kushtetuese në demokracitë perëndimore. Termat “unitet” dhe “ndarje” të pushteteve tregojnë parimet e organizimit dhe mekanizmin për ushtrimin e pushtetit shtetëror. Kështu, ky punim analizon të dy parimet e unitetit dhe ndarjen e pushteteve duke vlerësuar situatën dhe perspektivat e zhvillimeve kushtetuese në lidhje me sistemin komunist dhe post-komunist në Shqipëri. Diskutimet në lidhje me socializmin dhe pushtetin shtetëror, që janë më shumë fenomen politik sesa juridik, mund të duken të tepërta për t’u përfshirë në diskutimet e sotme publike, por si një traditë teorike dhe politike e marrëdhënieve kritike dhe shpesh konfliktuale me institucionet shtetërore, komunizmi përbën në vendet post-komuniste një forcë e rëndësishme që ka ndikuar (ende ndikon) dhe ka formësuar evolucionin e shtetit demokratik.

Fjalët kyçe: ndarja e pushteteve, socializëm, komunizëm, uniteti i pushtetit, sistem kushtetues.



*Anyone in power can abuse it.
He can get there if he finds no restrictions.
In order not to be able to abuse power,
you need power that stops power.*

Montesquieu "The Spirit of Laws" (1748).

Introduction

The principal of the separation of powers and constitutional justice are not only of a legal nature, but they are also political issues *par excellence* (Omejec, 2015). Socialism opposed strongly the principle of separation of powers, considering it a fabrication of reality and supporting the full power of the Assemblies as direct representatives of the sovereignty of the people. These theoretical positions and the support of the principle of unity of power were materialized in the Soviet constitutions and later in other socialist countries.

From a historical attitude, after the independence from the Ottoman Empire, Albania tried to create an independent and democratic state like other European countries. The first attempts to realize the separation of powers originate in the Canon of Civil Administration in Albania (*Kanuni i Përtashëm i administratës civile në Shqipëri*) in 1913. The present Kanun of the civil administration in Albania can be considered an act of constitutional importance, but it could not replace a real constitution as it is incomplete in the elements of the form of government and the rights of individuals. However, the law reflected the seriousness of the Government's desire to establish institutions, local, but of a democratic nature, in the country.

Communism

In Albania, the establishment of the conventional system based on the principle of unity of power, in May 1944 was decided by the Congress of Përmet. With the decision of this congress, the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council was formed "as the legislative and executive body", while the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Committee was considered the largest executive and commanding body. This principle was applied after the Liberation of Albania in the constitutions of the socialist system (Omari, 2012).

"Constitution" is almost a recent terminology in the Albanian law. After the Declaration of Independence in 1912, the constitutional discipline was initially indicated with the term of Fundamental Law in 1914 and subsequently with that of Fundamental Statutes. Only starting from 1946 this term will be replaced by that of the Constitution (Cukani, 2016).

So, the first constitution adopted after the establishment of the communist regime in Albania was that of 1946, which was approved by the Constituent Assembly resulting from the elections of December 1945, which were the first democratic elections in Albania, but also the last until changes of the 1990. With the adoption of the Constitution, the monistic social and state organization was sanctioned, which continued for 45 years until its overthrow and the establishment of a pluralistic system. In the academic literature, the Constitution of 1946, is defined as nothing more but a copy of the Yugoslav Constitution, adopted only a few months ago. The most noticeable change from a formal point of view it was probably in the fact that the Yugoslav Constitution provided for the system of the parliament with two chambers, while Albanian Constitution with one chamber.

The Constitutional Assembly of Albania, which emerged from the elections of 1945, announces the new Constitution which defined the form of government of the People's Republic. The Constituent Assembly was the highest body of the state and later became the People's Assembly, Albania became a strongly isolationist National-Communist state, with a Stalinist and anti-revisionist imprint, which cooperated with the Warsaw Pact states.



The principle of the unity of power was sanctioned and was concentrated in the representative bodies, such as the People's Assembly and the people's councils, which exercised legislative and executive powers (More [here](#)). Even this principle turned into a facade behind which the People's Assembly mechanically voted on projects that had received the approval of high party bodies (Omari, 2017).

Authoritarian political regimes, especially totalitarian ones, deny the separation of powers. Communist ideology rejects it even theoretically, affirming the principle of unity of power, according to which the mandate to perform any state function is a derivative of representative power. It is believed that the administrative and judicial actions of the state were performed on behalf of the representative bodies of state power and, as such, not by the power, but only by a function performed on its behalf. The practical application in socialist countries of the principle of unity of power has led to the concentration of the fullness of state power, not even in an officially representative body, but in the hands of the Communist Party apparatus and unprecedented abuse of power. Regarding the judiciary, it was determined that Justice in the People's Republic of Albania was administered by the Supreme Court, the people's courts and the military courts, and that the Courts were independent in the exercise of their functions (Article 80 of the 1946 Albanian Constitution). The Supreme Court was the highest body of justice (Article 81 of the 1946 Albanian Constitution).

The advancement of Communist ideology in accordance with the general doctrine of the Party leads to the need to draft a new constitution in 1976. The need for the new constitution was also given by the fact that the international situation had changed because of the Cold War that started after the Second World War. The 1976 Constitution It was structured based on the post Nazi occupation Constitution of 1946. Albania was defined as a "Socialist People's Republic" (Article 1 of the 1976 Albanian Constitution) a "state of the proletarian dictatorship" (Article 2 of the 1976 Albanian Constitution), and in a similar manner to its predecessor entrenched the rule of the Party of Labour of Albania as the leading force in the Albanian society and "the vanguard of the working class" (Article 3 of the 1976 Albanian Constitution).

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The 1976 Constitution was acclaimed as reflecting Albania's progress along the Marxist materialist dialectic continuum and marked her entrance into a new phase of socialist development (Article 2 of the 1976 Albanian Constitution). The Marxist constitutionalism rejected the separation of powers. Albania was organized and operated under principle that all state power derives from and belongs to the working people (Article 5 of the 1976 Albania Constitution).

The constitutional systems of the socialist states were based on the concept of the uniformity of state authority. The state apparatus was built according to the principle of centralism, in which the formal key role was entrusted to parliament as the supreme organ through which 'the working people' exercised authority, yet the real power was concentrated in the hands of the Communist Party. With this constitution, the people's courts were created, headed by the Supreme Court (Article 101 of the 1976 Albania Constitution). Of course, power was centralized to the extreme, there was a one-party state, and there was no question of constitutional justice during this period, which is based on the separation of powers and fundamental human rights and freedoms. Under the Albania Socialist Constitution, the People's Assembly is the people's highest representative body, the supreme organ of state power, the bearer of the sovereignty of the people and the sole agency having constitutional and legislative powers (Article 66 of the 1976 Constitution).

In both the Albanian socialist constitutions, no external control was envisaged to verify the compliance of the laws adopted by the People's Assembly with the Constitution. The Assembly exercised this competence



and made the authentic interpretation of the laws (Tafari, 2014). Such a principle was applied even in other socialist countries as well and was in line with the principle of unity of power for which control of the legislature by another body was unacceptable (Omari, 2015). Regarding the organization of the state, the Constitution of 1976 does not convey in anything new compared to the previous Constitution, but the dictatorship and control of the Communist Party in the country is strengthened even more.

Democracy transition

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of Cold War and the policy change of the countries under the dominance of communist ideology. As a result of the collapse of state socialism in the countries of the Warsaw Pact and in Yugoslavia, on 11 December 1990, political pluralism was introduced in Albania, as a result of student's protests in Tirana in December 1990. Democratic pluralism and a pluralist parliament triumphed after 67 years in Albania and marked the end of a painful political chapter and, at the same time, the beginning of a long road to the adaptation of full liberal democracy.

The 1976 Constitution was unsuitable for the new social, political and economic situation: it was revoked with Law 7491/1991 "On the main constitutional provisions", which introduced important constitutional provisions. The principle of separation of powers as a fundamental principle for the democracy was at the top of the list of principles of the new constitutional structure in Albania, as a necessary step for the birth and development of democracy after the fall of the communist regime. Article 3 (Article 3 of the Law 7491/1991 "On the main constitutional provisions") of the 1991 constitutional provisions sanctioned that "the basic principle of state organization is the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers", but in the political reality the powers envisaged were too broad and extended beyond the executive, intervening in the legislative and judicial, and thus proving that, the political reality was not in accordance with the principle of separation of powers, sanctioned through constitutional provisions (Malaj, 2018). The constitutional provisions, which for several years fulfilled the gap created by the lack of a Constitution, brought also many contradictions and incoherence but above all reflected the necessity of drafting a new constitution (Omari, 2012).

The new democratic Constitution of the Republic of Albania was adopted on 28 November 1998 after the approval by the parliament and the popular referendum. In the parliamentary republic the separation of state power was set as a precondition for a democratic political regime and the institution of the President of the Republic as a guarantee of this fundamental principle. The separation of state power was sanctioned (Article 7 of the 1998 Albanian Constitution) by the constitution which guaranteed the separation of powers and the control of the executive power by the legislative power, through some mechanisms sanctioned in its articles 77, 80, 104 and 105 (Berberi, 2014).

Conclusions

The constitution is a legal but also a political act, in this context, the constitutional provisions that *de jure* guarantee the principle of separation of powers *de facto* faced, with the issues of political reality in Albania. 23 years from the democratic Albanian constitution is important to understand that constitutional democracy progresses only when the citizens are willing to sacrifice their immediate self-interest for a system that will guarantee long-term rights and freedom. History has time and again shown that unlimited power in the hands of one person or group in most cases means that others are suppressed, or their powers curtailed. The separation of powers in a functional democracy is to prevent abuse of power and to safeguard freedom for all. If the separation of powers is compromised and disregarded, citizens tend to rely on personal relationships, nepotism, and corruption to secure their place in society and in this environment, the centralized systems of communism and fascism flourish. These systems take roots in society precluding the separation of powers that can bring out "individual rights and merits" against "rights of the people and the state".



Today, while in Albania the separation of powers is weakened and seriously threaten from a super powerful executive, ensuring and protecting the constitutional democracy, and the social contract it reflects, requires an active citizenship. Albanian governance throughout its constitutional systems lacked having both mostly political than legal safeguards. Political safeguards include periodic democratic elections, but a uniformly political approach is not enough to prevent powerful interests exerting excessive influence without legal safeguards guaranteeing rights, as well as designating and limiting governmental power ([here](#)). James Madison, once wrote that “The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny” ([here](#)).

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Building multicultural society: Developing and sustaining dialogue among the communities

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Abstract

Multiculturalism is a model used by democratic societies to accommodate differences between ethnic groups living within the borders of the state. It is a way in which modern states respond to the needs of the groups to protect their group-differentiated rights. The national integration of the minority community is multifaceted, encompassing political, social, and economic integration. Each should be accompanied by different measures that provide a socially acceptable way to nurture the group's cultural differences and series of government policies that seek to change people's attitudes and promote loyalty to the state by developing national institutions and finding practices for political socialization. This short paper deals with ideas that help in building a multicultural society, in particular development of the sustainable dialog among different communities using the example of Ohrid Framework Agreement, as an instrument that established Macedonian multicultural society and gives recommendations for its future implementation.

Key words: multiculturalism, integration, Ohrid Framework Agreement; dialogue; ethnic communities

Апстракт

Мултикултурализмот е модел што го користат демократските општества за да се приспособат на разликите меѓу етничките групи што живеат во границите на државата. Тоа е начин на кој модерните држави реагираат на потребите на групите за да ги заштитат нивните групно- диференцирани права. Националната интеграција на малцинската заедница е повеќеслојна, опфаќа политичка, социјална и економска интеграција. Секоја од нив треба да биде придружена со различни мерки што обезбедуваат социјално прифатлив начин за негување на културните разлики во групата и серија владини политики што бараат да се сменат ставовите на луѓето и да се промовира лојалност кон државата, преку развој на националните институции и изнаоѓање практики за политичка социјализација. Овој краток труд се занимава со идеи што помагаат при градењето мултикултурно општество, посебно во развојот на одржливиот дијалог меѓу различните заедници, преку примерот на Охридскиот рамковен договор - инструмент што го воспостави македонското мултикултурно општество, и дава препораки за негово идно спроведување.

Клучни зборови: мултикултурализам, интеграција, Охридски рамковен договор; дијалог; етнички заедници.

Some notions about multiculturalism (an introduction)

Multiculturalism is a model used by democratic societies to accommodate differences between ethnic groups living within the state. It is a way in which modern states respond to the needs of the groups to protect their group-differentiated rights. This is necessary since a state may seem neutral to different national groups, but it



can (and often does) privilege the majority group in different ways, for example - drawing internal (municipal) borders, establishing and use of official language, transfer of power at the local level, etc., which significantly reduces the political power and cultural representation of the minority group at the expense of the majority. It has long been said that the only way to accomplish “citizenship” is to impose a single, unified model for all individuals.

Nevertheless, the ideas and policies of multiculturalism (which have arisen since the 1960s), are based on the assumption that complex history inevitably generates differential ethnocultural group requirements that should not be suppressed but framed with the frame of human rights, civil liberties, and democratic accountability. Hence, multiculturalism develops new models of democratic citizenship that replace undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion and overcome deeply rooted injustices that are existing even with the abolition of formal discrimination (Kymlicka, 2005). Following these ideas, an increasing number of countries are accepting models that protect certain forms of cultural differences through special legal or constitutional measures, beyond the common citizens’ rights and through different systems for minorities’ protections.

Among them, the system that enables the integration of the minority group in the society without forced assimilation proved to be the most acceptable. Within an ideal system of minority protection, formal equality (that is guaranteed to the group) needs to be followed by true equality, meaning different treatment for different people in different conditions (Henrard, 2000). This short paper deals with ideas that help in building a multicultural society, in particular development of the sustainable dialog among different communities using the example of Ohrid Framework Agreement, as an instrument that established Macedonian multicultural society and gives recommendations for its future implementation.

Challenges

Many countries have abandoned the view that the assimilation of minorities is desirable. Hence, modern states promote measures of equality and integration to overcome the socially subordinate position of the minority group, such for example protection of the rights of minority groups with laws prohibiting discrimination in all spheres of society; promoting measures of affirmation or positive discrimination to increase the level of achievement for the group; having a mixed ethnic composition within the political parties; proportional representation in public services and other official decision-making bodies, etc. (Birch, 1989). These measures are important since it is difficult to bring down the cultural identities (lifestyles, attitudes, etc.) to totality or uniformity (Barth, 1997). Additionally, the cultural affiliation provides a sense of identity and belonging, so the people want to identify themselves as members of one ethnic group, but at the same time, they want others to see them as important. Therefore, they seek increased recognition and visibility within the wider society (Kymlicka, 2005).

Multiculturalism can address some of these issues. However, it has some related challenges such as the possibility of the existence of illiberal cultures within the multicultural frame, and the controversy over their equal level of protection as well bad success record of some of the multicultural projects. In that sense, multiculturalism is not always and everywhere successful. Though it is difficult to conclude some factors are contributing towards the failure of the multicultural projects such as the fear of states for their survival in the geopolitical sense (that seems unjustified, especially with the establishment of NATO, EU); and the individual fear of been subjected to minority self-governing institutions, that may be perceived as islands of local tyranny that can emerge within a wider democratic state. In addition, multinational, multilingual democracies have several issues that are difficult to be articulated through the language of democracy. Many of these questions arise from the fact that in those countries there is more than one “self” in terms of self-determination and self-government. While in some countries it is possible to weave a single identity from different identities (mostly from immigrant identities), such as in the United States or Australia, it is just a dream for those countries that have historically based ethnocultural groups (Kymlicka, 2012).



Prospects

Besides the shortcomings, multiculturalism as an idea has potential and should remain an important option among the democratic tools, worthy of serious policymakers' considerations. In essence, to be successful as longlasting project, multiculturalism should encompass:

- ▶ Dialogue, as a democratic way for overcoming the problems;
- ▶ Involvement, integration of the communities in the public life of the country, to overcome the inferior position of the group which is the basic source of dissatisfaction;
- ▶ Acceptance of the others, tolerance among the groups that exist in the political / socially sphere in terms of comprehension and respect of the differences;
- ▶ Expression of diversity - group activities that allow highlighting its diversity in a socially acceptable manner;
- ▶ A Balanced distribution of the social resources, as a condition for overcoming the presumption of inequality;
- ▶ Common identity, building, and promotion of citizens' identity that will extend over the ethnic lines of division.

Additionally, there are a variety of methods that can support the multicultural society such as systems of power-sharing that can be: autonomy; decentralization, but also the financial subsidies for the regions where a minority group lives. Except for the decentralization, the other models may include large government coalitions, consensus decision-making, mutual vetoes, etc. Other options, for example, range from consensual models that encourage collaborative decision-making and accommodate ethnic group leaders to a political center, to models that stimulate integration across dividing lines and encourage group adjustment by promoting common interests.

Of course, those are only the possible options from the wide range of political options available to the state to maintain compromise between groups and these approaches can complement each other in a variety of different ways (Sisk, 1996). Additionally, it is necessary to allocate resources, at the same time take concrete measures to support different groups, and to promote social unity, as well as a significant level of political but also - goodwill for coexistence at all levels of society. The challenge of multiculturalism as a system is to accept and nurture differences in a stable and morally acceptable way. But in addition to special rights and respect for differences, to maintain a multinational state, there must be sources of unity that will bond the groups. These can be common values, such for example - belief in equality and justice, belief in consultation and dialogue, support for diversity, tolerance, compassion, generosity, freedom, peace and nonviolent change, and of course - the idea of a common identity. Consequently, it is not enough just to appreciate the great ethnic diversity in general, but also to find a common political language and codes of conduct (Habermas, 1998).

Multiculturalism reflected in Macedonian society - Ohrid Framework Agreement

The main pillar of the multi-ethnic Macedonia is the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) signed in 2001 that aims to ensure greater rights for the non-majoritarian communities and bigger political representation. OFA is establishing a framework that articulates different political, ethnic, and civil visions for the development of a democratic society, fully integrated into the EU and NATO. The OFA sets the basis of the political relations between the different communities in the country and provides guidelines for an increase of the respect among ethnic groups towards the harmonious development of the society.

The OFA acknowledges peaceful political solutions encouraged by a participatory process in a unitary sovereign



state. The OFA encourages decentralization and an appropriate system of funding as possible tools for the proper distribution of responsibilities, particularly in the areas of local economic development, culture, education, social and health care, and public services. Among other things, the OFA establishes a framework that takes into account equitable representation for minorities, especially in public administration, police services, and in other spheres of public life and public funding (OFA, 2001). In addition to the abovementioned legal documents, laws are regulating the position of the other no – the majority ethnic groups including the Law on local self-government (Law, 5/2009); Law for use of languages that are spoken at least 20% by the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in the local self-government units (Law,101/2008) and other sub-legal acts.

Twenty years after its signing, the Framework Agreement is still an open subject - either its justification is being questioned, or its potential for maintaining a firm multi-ethnic society is being quizzed. But one thing is certain - the Framework Agreement is a step towards a more inclusive society because it is based on a multi-ethnic tradition and, above all, on good interpersonal relations.

Towards a more prosperous society (concluding remarks)

The national integration of the minority community is multifaceted, encompassing political, social, and economic integration. Each should be accompanied by different measures that provide a socially acceptable way to nurture the group's cultural differences and series of government policies that seek to change people's attitudes and promote loyalty to the state by developing national institutions and finding practices for political socialization (Birch, 1989). Considering the above elaborations, we share our thoughts towards a more prosperous Macedonian society. In that sense we consider that:

- ▶ Multiculturalism should be in a high place in the political agenda of all society segments; there should be communication among different communities not only on technical but as well on the essential level;
- ▶ The general determinations about multiculturalism need to be followed by measures - Measures need to be related, thoughtful, coherent, related to the higher goals that are the pursuit of multiculturalism. It is necessary to use their potential to extract from them the essence of cooperation to promote the multicultural character in the country;
- ▶ Points of social unification are needed and the promotion of common identity - there should be points of social unification that need to be promoted and that are crucial for bridging ethnic divisions in a multicultural society; there is a need for commitment for building a common identity across ethnic lines. It is necessary to promote an inclusive civic identity;
- ▶ Measures that encourage integration into society – there is a need for “soft measures” that, in addition to technical, would encourage real integration, as well as more suitable ways of accepting the distinctive features. Greater affirmation and stimulation measures are needed for different groups to be involved in society, and to be able to truly compete for resources. Proportional representation and economic measures are not enough to overcome the assumed inferior positions;
- ▶ Democratic dialogue has to be enhanced as a way for overcoming the usual differences in opinions and presumed disagreements that exist in a society with different cultures. Greater efforts are needed in that direction;

The promotion of the benefits of multiculturalism among all groups of citizens needs to be taken more seriously. Multiculturalism is often associated with the education of young people, which is insufficient, especially because there is a complete lack of social action that would take place in other segments of social life. It is necessary to promote the benefits of multiculturalism among all groups of citizens, as well as to stimulate multicultural action at the local level.



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Minorities' rights: Individual or collective protection

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Abstract

This paper attempt to examine in brief the legal solutions for minority protection both in EU and non-EU MSs, by selecting the following countries as case studies: Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia. These countries represent an interesting combination: some have quite sizeable minorities; others have only recently started to adopt protective legislation; they also differ in terms of membership in the EU and other regional organizations. The study is mainly interested in the minority legislation in the countries under consideration and not on the implementation processes, focusing on the recognized numerically largest minority groups settled in the countries' regions belonging to the Adriatic basin area and the numerically largest minority group in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Key words: minorities; EU; Western Balkan; Italy; Slovenia

Апстракт

Овој труд се обидува накратко да ги испита законските решенија за заштита на малцинствата и во земјите-членки на ЕУ и надвор од ЕУ, со избирање на следните земји како студии на случај: Италија, Словенија, Хрватска, Србија и Република Северна Македонија. Овие земји претставуваат интересна комбинација: некои имаат значителен број малцинства; други од неодамна почнаа да усвојуваат законодавство за заштита; а се разликуваат и во однос на нивното членство во ЕУ и во други регионални организации. Овој краток труд главно се осврнува на законодавството во однос на малцинствата во земјите што се разгледуваат, а не на процесите на имплементација, фокусирајќи се на признаените нумерички најголеми малцински групи што се населени во регионите на земјите кои припаѓаат на областа на Јадранскиот басен, како и на бројно најголемата малцинска група во Република Северна Македонија.

Клучни зборови: малцинства; ЕУ; Западен Балкан; Италија; Словенија

Introduction

The protection of minorities in an academic assessment often comprises an analysis of the existing legal framework and it tends to deal with the respective implementation. As an issue of a forefront in the political agenda of many countries, the protection of minorities has become an important element for consideration in the countries' monitoring and evaluation reports undertaken by the international governmental organisations. The European Union (EU) is undoubtedly a mechanism in terms of actual legislative change in the countries aspiring its membership, however EU is based on a consensus politics; minority issues, within the EU, have had to be tackled in a fractionated way, almost by 'stealth'. Issues relevant to minorities have been addressed by the EU (discrimination and social inclusion, cultural diversity etc.) nevertheless the commitment to initiatives PROF. ASSO



on minorities as such is unsuccessful. The fractionated way of addressing minority protection is seen through the different legal frameworks existing in the EU member states (EU MSs) and those of the pre-accession and candidate countries, mostly developed following the Council of Europe (CoE) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML).

Theoretical state models accommodating minorities' rights

There are at least four fundamental ideological (abstract) models that determine the overall attitude towards arrangements of differences (Palermo & Woelk 2011): 1) nationalistic repressive model; 2) "agnostic" liberal model; 3) 'promotional' model; and 4) multinational model. Clearly legislative and administrative practice and case law show how the reality and the historical experience tend to combine elements of different models, because of different circumstances and different parameters of the adopted decisions. In the nationalistic repressive model, the state emphasizes the repressive ideology of national identity and unity of the population homogeneity, exalting with exclusivity and superiority. The differences in the society are not ignored, on the contrary, they are considered from the perspective of their repression and their annihilation.

Liberal models are characterized by exclusive attention to individual rights and a consequent indifference to the collective demands of diversity. In these systems is assumed by law the coincidence between nationality and citizenship, diverse groups of citizens cannot exist. There is no denial of individual fundamental rights and the liberal designs are based on the general recognition of the principle of equality in the formal sense (nondiscrimination) of all citizens, however, disregarding the instruments designed to guarantee equality in a substantive way. 'Promotional' models are characterized by the presence of a dominant national group (the majority) alongside with one or more minority groups. The recognition, protection and promotion of minorities are essential for the constitutional order and take part of its core values. Thus, while the classical liberal model guarantees the right to be equal, the promotion recognizes the right to be different. The entire constitutional order in the case of a multinational model is designed to complement and reflect the diversity of institutional constituent groups in the organizational structure of the state, either through the appearance of the territorial division of power, or through specific rules concerning the form of government. Legally there are no majorities and minorities: each national community is a constitutive element of the state. What it going to be seen in the analysis are the different countries' models and arrangements in terms of specific minority rights protection.

Case studies

Italy, as a founding EU member and the largest state (in terms of territorial dimensions) in the Adriatic area, represents a particular model for minority rights' protection. The Italian model of arrangements of differences can be categorized as 'promotional' model. Through the years, the Italian legal order has been developed in a rich and complex instrument in regards to the juridical treatment of differences. In Italy, there are many minority groups living together, rather different from each other in the number and level of protection granted to them by the legal system. There are about 2.5 million (around 4.5% of the population), divided into at least 12 different language groups. Despite the significant presence of nonnative groups from the unification, the question of minority was raised only after World War II, following the annexation of South Tyrol by Italy. Only after the fall of the Fascist regime, however, the protection of minorities became one of the main objectives of the new democratic state born of the ashes of World War II.

The Italian Constitution uses exclusively the linguistic criteria as a distinctive feature when defining the term 'minority', ideological choice for the original base membership to the Italian State on the objective criterion of citizenship and thus a conception of civic and not ethnic belonging. Until the approbation of the Law on



the protection of linguistic historical minorities of 1999, the distinction was made between recognized and not-recognized linguistic minorities; after the approval the differentiation, in doctrine, is made according to the level of protection since it recognizes all the historic linguistic minorities in the territory: 1) Extra-protected (superprotette) minorities – the most protected minority groups in the special autonomous regions in the Alpine and north-Adriatic area and within those they are diverse in the intensity and modality of protection; 2) Minorities eventually protected - those listed in the law of 1999, whose different level of protection depends on whether the various instruments provided by law are activated or not; 3) Not recognized minorities (and unprotected), or groups which, while in possession of the subjective requirement of the request for recognition as a distinct group, do not fulfil the objective requirement of recognition, and, therefore, are legally irrelevant to the differential treatment (Sinti and Roma people, but the same goes for immigrant minorities).

As the Italian, the Slovenian model is also seen as 'promotional'. Already in the Constitution of the Socialist Republic (SR) of Slovenia of 1963 (Art. 77) as well as that of 1974 (articles 250, 251) Slovenia granted to the Italian and Slovenian minorities (at that time defined as 'nationalities') several special rights (language rights, education, media and cultural education). The Slovenian Constitution from 1991 (in art. 64) affirms special rights for the autochthonous national communities living in Slovenia. It specifically asserts the following rights: use of national symbols; establishment of organisations and development of economic, cultural, scientific and research activities as well as activities in the field of public media and publishing; education and schooling in their mother language and right to establish and develop such education and schooling; representation in local self-government and National Assembly (Art. 80); fostering relations with their nations of origin and their respective countries. In reference to the territorial application of these rights, it is stated that the exercise of these rights outside the areas where these minorities reside is to be regulated by a specific law. It is also established that laws, regulations and other acts regarding the rights and position of these minorities exclusively "may not be adopted without the consent of representatives of these national communities"; a type of 'absolute' veto in the hands of representatives of the national minorities (both deputies in the Slovene parliament and municipal council members) (Klemenčič, 2006).

As in most of the countries' legal frameworks on protection of minority groups, in Croatia the minorities' protection is guaranteed through a supra-national protection directly applicable in the national legislation following a ratification of international conventions and charters; bilateral agreements, such as the one between Italy and Croatia from 1996; the Constitution and the Constitutional law on the rights of national minorities in Croatia and other relevant laws concerning the rights of the minority groups living in the country. It is possible to distinguish two main 'normative seasons' in Croatia in terms of minorities' rights. The first one is from the beginning of 1991, following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the independence of Croatia. In this period, the prediction of legal measures for minorities' protection, both in the Constitution and in constitutional law, has represented an aspect of the broader objective of ensuring full protection of human rights. On the sidelines of this regulatory process stands the agreement between Italy and Croatia, for the protection of minorities, which was the result of a long historical development. The second 'season' has started in 2000, when, based on the CoE recommendations, the Constitutional law has been amended. This reform took place also in the context of the negotiation process for adhesion with the EU which started the same year when the law has been amended. As in the previous two countries, Croatia has a 'promotional' model of arrangements of differences.

Serbia introduced ethnic non-territorial autonomy through elected national minority councils into its legal system in 2002 (Korhecz, 2019). For a variety of reasons, the model of non-territorial autonomy is clearly overrepresented in the region of the former "Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", mostly in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. Its effectiveness, however, in minority protection in the area is under question. In some cases, the right to self-proclamation in order to be registered in minority electoral catalogues is partly violated (Serbia e. g.), in others the minority councils merely have a decorative 'advisory' role (Croatia, e. g.) and enjoy but an insufficient legitimacy due to their partial indirect election (Serbia e. g.), while in all cases they have no legislative or taxing powers and enjoy inadequate state funding (Yupsanis, 2019). The Serbia's 2009 Law on



National Minority Councils was welcomed by the international community, however both national minority councils and public agencies have from the very beginning of its operation expressed serious concerns relating inter alia to the unspecified legal status of the councils (Beretka, 2019).

The Republic of North Macedonia is a case of a multicultural society with a history of minorities' accommodation followed by inter-ethnic tensions. In terms of a model determining the attitude towards arrangements of differences this country created a 'promotional' model. The Republic of North Macedonia has developed mechanisms and instruments for inclusion and co-habitation with different ethnic groups until recently (however the basis was established long ago). There is an interethnic structure composed of one dominant group and that is the Macedonian ethnic community (the Macedonian people or the Macedonian ethnic nation) and one large minority group and that is the Albanian national minority. The Macedonian Constitution includes an explicit acknowledgement of the country's Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Serbian, Roma, and Bosnian minorities in the Preamble. It provides

for minority language rights, and provisions for the use of minority languages at the local level: "The Macedonian language, written using its Cyrillic alphabet, is the official language throughout the Republic of Macedonia. Any other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language, written using its alphabet..." (Amendment to the Art.7).

Conclusions

Case study analysis gives as a good overview of the current practices applied for minorities' protection and promotion. They also tell us that countries and models of protection differ. Specifically for the case of Republic of North Macedonia during the workshop held in Skopje, an attempt to analyse the model through SWOT has been made and several key aspects have been identified. In the extract of the analysis made through the interactive online tool Padlet we can see how participants perceive the minorities' protection model of North Macedonia.

Table 1 – SWOT on the Macedonian model

Strengths	Weaknesses
Resolved ethnic conflict Shared values between different ethnic groups Acceptance of minority groups Promotion of political participation	Possibility for misuse by the politicians in order to gain political points Prejudices and stereotypes
Opportunities	Threats
Entering into EU could increase protection of minority groups (especially those small-in-size) EU integration could repress secession attempts based on ethnic lines Involving the minority groups in the process of governance is the first step for building strong democratic values Building strong civil relationships Ethnic division of territory	Nationalism Ethnic division of territory



A further study and SWOT analyses of the other countries mentioned here could be made, in order to identify the key areas where perhaps and improvement needs to be made in order to accommodate both states' and minorities' interests.

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Independence Through Peaceful Self-determination - The Case of Macedonia

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Abstract

The case of Macedonia and its policy of peaceful self-determination demonstrates that important changes had happened in the international system of states with the fall of the Berlin wall. In the former Yugoslavia some chose force as a way of resolving the problems of a multinational society, while Macedonia chose peace and law and, in the shadow of the ethnic wars in the federation, very much unnoticed by the world, achieved independence through a policy of peaceful self-determination. In the process politicians learned that law does not exist in vacuum but is part of the wider political context of the system of sovereign states driven primarily by their interests. When the Arbitration Commission of the EC decided that only Slovenia and Macedonia are the two republics that fulfil the criteria for independence, it was a triumph of law. When Germany decided to recognize Slovenia and Croatia and Greece blocked Macedonia's recognition, it was politics all over again. Yet with law on our side we demanded recognition and we achieved it through a policy of peaceful self-determination. This paper is a personal experience of the first minister of foreign affairs of independent Republic of Macedonia.

Key words: Macedonia; Berlin Wall; Peaceful self-determination; EC Arbitration Commission; Law and Politics

Апстракт

Случајот со Македонија и нејзината политика на мирно самоопределување покажува дека со падот на Берлинскиот ѕид се случиле важни промени во меѓународниот систем на држави. Во поранешна Југославија некои избраа сила како начин за решавање на проблемите на мултинационалното општество, додека Македонија избра мир и право, и во сенка на етничките војни во федерацијата, многу незабележана од светот, постигна независност преку политика на мирно самоопределување. Во тој процес, политичарите дознаа дека правото не постои во вакуум, туку е дел од поширокиот политички контекст на системот на суверени држави воден првенствено од нивните интереси. Кога Арбитражната комисија на ЕК одлучи дека само Словенија и Македонија се двете републики кои ги исполнуваат критериумите за независност, тоа беше триумф на правото. Кога Германија одлучи да ја признае Словенија, а Хрватска и Грција го блокираа признавањето на Македонија, беше повторно политика. Сепак, со законот на наша страна, баравме признавање и го постигнавме преку политиката на мирно самоопределување. Овој труд е лично искуство на првиот министер за надворешни работи на независна Република Македонија.

Клучни зборови: Македонија; Берлинскиот ѕид; мирно самоопределување; Арбитражна комисија на ЕК; право и политика



I remember that on the 9th of November 1989 my phone rang and the editor of our major newspaper “Nova Makedonija” offered me a full page to write an article on the event of the century: the political earthquake that brought down the Berlin wall that same day. As far as I could remember, a full page, one of those big pages, was usually granted to leaders of the Communist party delivering speeches at a party congress. But now on the agenda were serious questions that could not be answered by leaders of the ruling party. “The Epicenter is in Moscow” was the title of the article in which I argued that the fall of the Berlin Wall is only the beginning of a dramatic demise of one of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union. George Kennan in his 1947 issue of “Foreign Affairs” presented his containment policy hoping that this was the best way of dealing with the expansion of communism, but no one could predict the date of its demise from world politics. So, the implosion of the one party system across Eastern Europe came suddenly and to the great amazement of the masses and scholars I might add. Unexpectedly and swiftly the bipolar world order came to an end. The system imploded contrary to everyone’s belief that it will be a difficult, while building democracy would be easy. The opposite turned to be true.

With the breakdown of the world order Yugoslavia, a leader of the Non-aligned movement and periodically an important postman between the two superpowers, also lost its position in world politics. Contrary to the beliefs of many people then and now, the disintegration of the federation was not a deliberate action of the Western powers, but the lack of interest for the future of Yugoslavia. Interest had shifted towards the Soviet Union with its enormous nuclear arsenal in an attempt to avoid the dangers of a disorderly transition towards democracy.

This was a time of great expectations. The End of History was proclaimed by the American scholar Francis Fukuyama in his famous book “The End of History and the Last Man”. He wrote that humanity has reached “not just...the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such. That is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”. Liberal democracy won over autocracy and dictatorship. A “New world order” was proclaimed in which the rule of law governs the conduct of nations. Violence has no place in today’s Europe we were told at the Conference on Yugoslavia by European lawyers, diplomats and politicians, and law means not only peaceful solutions but also just solutions. New on the European continent, the argument went, is that imperialist forces do not impose solutions, because for the first time in our history we live in a Europe where all countries support the principles of democracy, the rights of man and freedom...

Of course, we all know, especially us from former Yugoslavia, things did not turn out exactly that way: the bloody ethnic wars first in Yugoslavia and later elsewhere, seem to prove the realist’s argument that it is still violence not law that sets the international agenda. But many of those who are right to be critical of this global outbreak of euphoric optimism in the Nineties are wrong to dismiss the whole idea of a new Europe. The Macedonian case demonstrates that important changes had occurred in the international system of states generally and in our part of the world – the Balkans. One should not easily dismiss the fact that in 1991 there was a choice to be made by politicians in each of the six units of the federation. Some chose force. We in Macedonia chose peace and law, and in the shadow of the ethnic wars in Yugoslavia, very much unnoticed by the world, we achieved independence through a policy of peaceful self-determination. In the process we had to learn the hard way, that law does not exist in a vacuum but is part of the wider political context of sovereign states driven primarily by their interests.

When the Arbitration Commission of the EC decided that Macedonia and Slovenia are the only two republics that fulfil the criteria for independence, it was a triumph of law. But when Germany decided to recognize Slovenia and Croatia and Greece blocked Macedonia’s recognition, it was politics all over again. Yet with law on our side, we demanded recognition of the new Macedonian state. To the embarrassment of our western counterparts who personally had sympathies and supported our policy of peaceful self-determination, their states would not extend recognition of Macedonia’s independence because of Greek opposition. The reasons we were given had nothing to do with law, but everything with politics: elections, state interest, lack of state interest, priorities



on the domestic political agenda, alliance solidarity etc. etc. Yet before we praise the law and put all the blame on politics, I must admit that politics helped us achieve independence. Namely, the constructive behavior of Macedonia was rewarded by politicians in the US and Europe who were critical of the destructive behavior of their ally Greece. They could not break the alliance and they could not disregard the interests of their respective states vis-à-vis their partner, but they all found ways to help us, usually from a safe distance and behind the curtain of international politics.

Sympathizing with my agony over lack of international support for Macedonia, an American envoy spoke the truth: "Macedonia, he whispered is the tar-baby of the Balkans". Tar-baby? I had to look this up in the dictionary. He meant several things: first, that no state will involve itself fearing that it will get stuck in our problem; second, that other states will regret if they intervene and will regret if they do not. The message, as I understood it, was not to expect too much from international law, to adapt to new situations, to look for compromises and to try to survive. And yes, not to rely on the false belief that, regardless of what we do, the American cavalry will inevitably come to our rescue at the end of the film. So much of the new world order.

So, we stopped idealizing international law, we adapted to the new situation, we made all the difficult compromises and we survived. The world had not changed that much, after all. But help also came in the form of a very small contingent of American soldiers under the flag of the UN, stationed, perhaps by chance at the airport. It was a clear sign that America supported our independence, and its symbolic presence was primarily directed towards Greece and its regional ally Serbia. Help in the form of financial and other support also came from various European states. The United Nations supported our idea to send the first preventive monitoring mission on our undefended borders. Nobody was immune to the fact that a fledgling state was bullied by the stronger neighbors.

In the meantime, recognition of Macedonia began, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Turkey, Russia to mention a few, but we knew that recognition of the western powers was of that utmost importance since we already had defined our strategic foreign policy aims – membership in NATO and the EC. So, regardless of how many times they refused, we kept coming back asking for new meetings and arguing our case. Our case respected the declared European principles, and our behavior was sincere and honest: we were the most constructive participant on the Conference of Yugoslavia, whose final document was drafted according to our proposals. We achieved independence through law, in 1993 not much later than Slovenia and Croatia (some 11 months) we became members of the United Nations in a peaceful way.

One would say a great achievement, especially since nationalistic politicians in the Balkans kept repeating that independence was not possible through law but only through force, and that one had to spill blood for the independence of his country, were proven wrong. Alas we did not get everything to which our state was entitled according to the law. Due to Greek opposition and the interests of the big powers vis-à-vis their awkward partner, we were admitted to the UN not with our constitutional name but under a reference: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Finally Macedonian nationalism, distributed throughout the specter of party politics had a case: that of yet another historic humiliation of the Macedonian people. At a moment of the country's greatest victory, the name issue became the new symbol of our nation's defeat. On top of that, the feeling that this was the result of appeasement, gained in proportion as the fears of war were removed and the country continued to live in peace. On the doorsteps of the UN, I, on my part, resigned as the first foreign minister of independent Macedonia.

The story behind the story is that the moment Macedonia was established as a sovereign state in international relations, politicians learned very quickly that if you appeal to people's emotions, politics is easy, while if you appeal to their reason, it becomes very difficult. So, the very emotional issue of the name became a source of political power and meant and still means electoral victories for parties and personal political promotion for leaders and party members.



So what kind of a world did the Republic of Macedonia, now the Republic of North Macedonia join: the world of Hobbs or the world of Kant? Hobbs (1588-1679) saw the world as a jungle in which “agreements without a sword are only empty words”, in which states in a state of war, like gladiators facing each other with guns and garrisons on their borders. Kant, on the other hand, saw the world as a union of free states, a union of democracies that create a “state of peace”. The answer is: both. Luckily our small state is on the European continent which, after the catastrophic World War Two and the Holocaust, embraced the ideas of Kant in Hobbs’s world.

Revolutions of 1989: History and Legacy

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Abstract

The collective memory or historical narratives, influence attitudes, decisions and approaches to our contemporary problems and are not given once and for all. They are constructions, constantly re-examined, re-built, re-loaded, re-told in the light of new knowledge and insights. That is why debates as this one, are valuable.

Key words: legacy, history, communism

Апстракт

Колективната меморија или историските наративи, влијаат на ставовите, одлуките и пристапите кон нашите современи проблеми и не се дадени еднаш засекогаш. Тие се конструкции, постојано преиспитувани, повторно изградени, преоптоварени, прераскажани во светлината на новите сознанија и сознанија. Затоа дебатите како оваа се вредни.

Клучни зборови: наследство, историја, комунизам

Introduction

1989 was a year of global and personal dramas. Of euphoric enthusiasm and a lot of pain and tears. A year of revolutions that fundamentally transformed Europe. A year of hope and great challenges. A year of velvet as well as bloody revolutions. My generation was not only a witness but also a participant in a series of unique moments of the rise of democracy. The reasons for profound and relatively rapid changes in political power and the political system behind the Iron Curtain in 1989, are to be found in the long-standing political, social, and economic repression, the political incompetence of the ruling elites and the exhausting struggle for domination between Western and Eastern blocs, that has caused material and spiritual impoverishment in the societies of Central and Eastern Europe. Gorbachev, the leader of Soviet Union, understood well the situation and introduced some reforms. That was the beginning of a political "Big-Bang". The situation ends up with mass revolt of citizens against the governments and its holders.

That year I worked at a scientific institute in Skopje, and I remember the atmosphere, which could be described as incredible optimism of that time and hunger for change! Where does this urge come from? Because we in Yugoslavia, for example, did not live badly, nor was the system as repressive as in other Eastern Bloc countries. We had constitutionally guaranteed social rights self-government and so on. The Yugoslav model of socialism was so flexible that we could buy and read Western literature, travel, or work abroad. And yet, we sought and expected the expansion of social rights with political rights and freedoms, such as freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of association in political parties, the right to free and democratic elections, and so on.



The debate in university circles in 1989 held between proponents of two opposing views, was around the question: is a stable multi-party democracy possible in Eastern Europe, after the fall of the one-party communist system? Those who believed that Eastern Europe had no preconditions of stable democracy (for example professor Ken Jowitt in his article "The new world disorder" published in the "Journal of Democracy") elaborated on the following arguments: that these countries do not have strong middle class, that the transition from a state to a market economy will be a long and difficult process, that in these societies the middle class is weak, and democratic tradition doesn't exist. They also pointed out that democracy, as a rule of norms for mediating plural and conflicting interests, if introduced overnight, violently, against the will of some of the actors, would encounter resistance and obstruction from those actors, so that consolidation is questionable. The opposite opinion came, for ex. from the professor Giuseppe di Palma in his text: "Why can democracy succeed in Eastern Europe?" He belonged to a scientific circle that believed that the history of Western democracies could not be strictly copied and transmitted to the former communist countries. Democratic 'rules of the game', he writes, can be a matter of agreement while new behaviour and political beliefs can develop after political actors have boarded, by their own choice or coercion, into the boat of democracy, meaning free elections and other democratic institution.

Today

After thirty years, it is clear that many of these fears and reservations of political scientists and others have proved justified and that the new democracies had and some of them still have even today, difficult time facing nationalism and populism, but in 1989 there was no room for choice: what started as an attempt by the old communist regimes behind the Iron Curtain to make smaller reforms just to prolong their lives, took an unwanted and quite different direction from the first initiatives. In Macedonia we have some democratic legacy at least of protests, dissidence, or subversive artistic expression. For ex. my generation took part in the massive protests of students, workers, intelligentsia etc. against the increasingly violent state repression in Europe and all around the world in 1968. In Czechoslovakia for ex. the communist party leader Dubcek, promoted some democratic reforms known as "Prague Spring" that inspired us all in Eastern Europe.

In Yugoslavia, on 2–3 June 1968 student demonstrations in Belgrade, were the first mass protest in the country after the Second World War and they spread throughout the country. I was protesting in Skopje with other students. Did we know what we wanted? Not clearly, we criticized everything, but our demands were mainly for better quality of life, better education, political freedoms, freedom of speech etc. I noticed that the highest officials from the Macedonian communist party present at our meetings, looked at the students' criticism approvingly. Later, I understood why. They belonged to the so-called liberals in the party, and they need support against the dogmatic party wing. As a result, some democratic reforms were introduced and the following year we were leaving our "Yugoslav spring": freedom of expression in all artistic forms was respected and encouraged. American professor Piter Liotta was so impressed, for example, by Yugoslav rock music that he devoted two articles published in the journal I edit, "New Balkan Politics" to this topic.⁷ "In the role of "art", he says, the rock 'n' roll expressed the idea of freedom through a loud, pulsating, expressive sound. It was, in fact, a form of liberation" (Liotta, 2002).

In this of variety and complexity of life in former communist countries, I would like to mention, an example, the so called subversive art: for example, books like "The Captive Mind" of the writer, poet, [academic](#) and [Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz](#), described by historian [Norman Davies](#) as a "devastating study" which "totally discredited the cultural and psychological machinery of Communism". Or 'subversive' Polish films and film directors like *Andrzej Wajda*, *Krzysztof Kieślowski*, *Krzysztof Zanussi*, *Roman Polanski*, described in the article

⁷ In 1987 the rock group Bijelo Dugme recorded a song where, intentionally, or unintentionally, the end of Yugoslavia was predicted. The song was entitled "Spit and Sing Yugoslavia, My Yugoslavia" and the song became extremely popular. The front man of the group, Goran Bregovic "warn politicians" "Spit and sing, Yugoslavia ...Yugoslavia, get up and sing, let them hear you. He who does not listen to the song, will hear storms!" It is very sad that at the moment of great victory of democracy, at the beginning of the eighties, it was forbidden for Bijelo Dugme to play in Slovenia, because of its "Yugoslav nationalistic feelings."



of the film critic Martin Smith in *Socialist Review*, with the following words: “Polish directors, actors and film crews worked under difficult conditions but amazingly, they were still able to make some of the greatest films of the 20th century” (Smith, 2009).

Was the optimism, expectations and hopes from 1989 fulfilled? Obviously, they were put too high. The biggest disappointment was aggressive nationalism and as a result, bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia. International mediation wasn't efficient or successful and the federation has begun to disintegrate through a chaotic process in which federal government in Belgrade lost its role as an impartial centre of reconciliation of interests and each national group took security and arms into its own hands. One of the bloodiest territorial and ethnic war in Europe, since World War II, broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. American journalist David Rohde, in his Pulitzer Prize book *End Game*, first attracted world's attention on the massacre in Srebrenica where nearly 8000 Muslim man and boys were killed. That was a terrifying example of ethnic cleansing, led by colonel-general of the Army of Republika Srpska, Ratko Mladic, who recently was sentenced to life imprisonment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Between seventies and eighties, Praga Spring was crashed by the Soviet tanks. Yugoslav spring was cut, by political means. Tito understood that too much liberalization will endanger his power and he took an offensive battle against liberal fraction in the Yugoslav communist party and won this battle. The leaders of the liberal wing were expelled from their positions and opportunists and party bureaucrats came to power, once again. Ironically, some years later, in 1989, these same people were put in a situation against their will to write and promote the rules under which the communist party lost its power on the first democratic election in Macedonia in 1990. The new chapter not necessarily easier, has start.

Legacy

Speaking about legacy of 1989, I hope, it will be remembered how incredible, unpredictable, exciting, dynamic, widely connected, sometime joyful, much often, painful was the historical and political storm of progress in Europe, after the World War II. During the 1989 revolutions, democracy spread throughout Central and Eastern Europe and Europe united. Some of these changes, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, promised a bright future; some, such as the execution of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania or the break-up of Yugoslavia, the civil war and aggression against Bosnia, savage ethnic cleansing, etc., serve as a reminder that the path to democratic change would not be easy, facing mainly nationalism and populism.

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Italian political culture from 1989 onwards: Idea, memory and practice of democracy

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Abstract

This paper concerns the analysis of ‘Italian political culture from 1989 onwards’ prepared by Peripli association in the framework of the project ‘Youth involvement in a constructive dialogue: Communist Past in Contemporary Western Balkan’ (YOU-WB), funded by the Europe for Citizen Program of the European Union’. The focus of the research is to examine the main stages of the construction of Italian democracy (from II World War to 1989) and its difficulties from 1989 to the first twenty years of the 21st century, when the political and institutional changes disrupt the Italian political class up to the transformation of party system and political communication of today. The main objective of the project is to consider the democracy both as a common memory to share with youth and an idea/practice that need to be implemented and nurtured continuously for assuring its integrity and its evolution.

Key words: democracy, populism, collective memory, parties, social and economic transformation

Astratto

Il presente contributo riguarda l’analisi della ‘Cultura politica italiana dal 1989 in poi’ preparata dall’associazione Peripli nell’ambito del progetto ‘Costruzione giovanile in un dialogo costruttivo: il passato comunista nei Balcani occidentali contemporanei’ (YOU-WB), finanziato dall’Europa per Programma Cittadino dell’Unione Europea’. Il focus della ricerca è quello di esaminare le principali tappe della costruzione della democrazia italiana (dalla seconda guerra mondiale al 1989) e le sue difficoltà dal 1989 al primo ventennio del XXI secolo, quando i cambiamenti politici e istituzionali sconvolgono la politica italiana confrontarsi con la trasformazione del sistema dei partiti e della comunicazione politica di oggi. L’obiettivo principale del progetto è considerare la democrazia sia come una memoria comune da condividere con i giovani sia come un’idea/pratica che deve essere attuata e coltivata continuamente per assicurarne l’integrità e la sua evoluzione.

Parole chiave: democrazia, populismo, memoria collettiva, partiti, trasformazione sociale ed economica

Introduction. Italy’s path toward democracy

The conquest of democracy in Italy took place after World War II and affirmed itself over the twenty years of fascist dictatorship through the partisan struggle in which all the political and civil forces in opposition to that dictatorship participated, organizing the Resistance to fascism clandestinely.

The Italian communists of that time, who founded in the 1921 the most important Communist Party in the Western world, were banned and persecuted during the twenty years of fascism, but they made a decisive contribution to the success of that struggle, together with the groups of Catholics of the Popular Party, the liberal secularists, the socialists and the Action Party, all political forces reduced to hiding and persecuted during the fascism.



It was a very significant moment in Italian contemporary history, which highlighted the importance of the cultural roots of the groups in action, but also of the civilians, of the people, of all those who miraculously emerged from twenty years of denial of individual and collective freedoms, from a culture of hatred and death, from the nightmare of the racial laws wanted by the regime with the consequent extermination of the Jews and not only, from the barbarism of a devastating war, which had destroyed Italy and weakened the soul of the Italians.

All the political forces of the victorious Resistance, following the institutional referendum of 1946 in favour of the Republic, then merged into the Constituent Assembly which produced the constitutional charter which went into effect on January 1, 1948, and which is still in force today. The Italian Constitution affirms the fundamental values of democracy and dictates the rules of civil coexistence inspired by a strong intertwining between the concepts and rights of freedom and equality. The enactment of the constitutional law sanctioned the birth of the Italian Republic and its form of a representative democracy, articulated in institutions such as mass parties, and characterized by universal suffrage extended to all the citizens of the Republic.

The Big Clash: 1989

Without those cultural roots, would it have been possible to free oneself from the fascist yoke and give life to a democratic path based on the republican constitution and to face the challenges of the post-1989 world? These basic questions have guided our research and the training of our youth in the contemporary phase of Italian democracy by now adult, but perhaps still not very mature and full of contradictions, of residues of the fascist mentality visible in various forms of populism, of infiltration organized crime in the meshes of the democratic state, of internal terrorism, political corruption, of attempts to manipulate public opinion, etc., in short, of continuous very dangerous attacks on the maintenance of democracy and which marked the years following its affirmation.

1989 represents a turning point for Italian political culture and democracy. From 1989 onwards, with the real and symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall, many of those contradictions were highlighted and Italy has lived and is experiencing now a different cultural phase. It was a profound change in history. From this moment on, Italian political culture is characterized by profound changes that mark the various stages of a path, often troubled, that leads to the evolution of the great mass parties, the attempt to participate actively in the construction of political Europe.

The reflection on what has happened in Italy in the last 30 years is essential for the defence of a democratic process that must continue in the transformations and cultural changes, inside and outside Italy: as, for instance, the affirmation of the European Union, of which Italy was co-founder with Altiero Spinelli's Ventotene Manifesto, the globalization and the important economic developments, the era of digital communication, the insertion of Italy in a context that must take into account above all the evolution of the European Union, of what is happening in the Balkan region and more generally in the Mediterranean region.

Memory and action: Peripli approach

In the middle of the abrupt changes of today, the historical memory of the difficult construction of our democracy and the care it requires, must not be forgotten. We must keep in mind the cultural changes in which we must act, the defence of human rights and individual and collective freedoms, the promotion of equality of citizens not only before the law, but in the equity determined by the better distribution of wealth, solidarity towards peoples devastated by wars, conflicts, climate change, thoughtless exploitation of nature and its resources, epidemics, etc., for which we are all responsible. All this must be kept in mind, not in the abstraction of good intentions, but in the concreteness of politics and cultural actions aimed at spreading ideas, reflections, and the production of tools necessary to support the democracy of our time.



Our project considers the involvement of youth people crucial in terms of historical memory and cultural diffusion. Our Association has taken this opportunity to intensify a training course on the proposed themes intended for high school and university students, some of whom participate with their ideas and reflections in our meeting as protagonists, as well as an attentive and participatory public.

The 3-day workshop organized by Peripli also received the expertise of well-known Italian specialists in the political science sector, such as prof. Paolo Mancini, in that of the history of political ideas, like Dr. Rosa Fioravante, and in that of digital challenges for Italian political parties, like prof. Antonio Tursi; the testimony of the journalist Marina Lalovic, an immigrant from Belgrade, was also used.

The collaboration of some members of Peripli was essential. They contributed to the training of young people during the project itself, as well as participating in the workshop with interventions in accordance with their skills. It was also used the output obtained from the training of the young people involved in the project, which produced a series of in-depth information papers, on the transformation of mass parties, after 1989, of the Italian Communist Party and of the Christian Democrats; on the essential and historical stages of the path of our democracy; on the involvement of civil society in the defence of democratic processes, etc.

The comparison with the other realities of the countries involved in the project, through the meetings already organized by Albania, North Macedonia, and France, has fascinated our young people and it was an opportunity for comparative reflection between the history of Italy and that of these countries. The workshop ended with a final interactive debate on the subject: "What action can we take to initiate a process of change?" The most shared theme among the participants is to create a new political class that can be formed in function of sustainable, fair, and inclusive development. Young people have focused their interventions on the importance of caring for the environment.

Finally, it emerged that the goal of future generations must be to reduce inequalities. The need for a framework that can function without any kind of discrimination was stressed. A world where every person, regardless of race, gender, sexual or political orientation, can have an opportunity.

Conclusions. Democracy vs Closed society

Democracy is a process that is carried out continuously, involving societies, but it is also a value to be pursued based on the history of each country, it is not a format that can be fully exported, but a constant civil work supported by memory, culture, confrontation, dialogue, which must be translated into ethics and political commitment. Recourse to the electoral call is a fundamental element, but not sufficient to guarantee the complexity of the democratic form. The path toward democracy has not finished with the end of II World War or in 1989. It is a never-ending collective struggle that it involves nowadays the framework of the European Union, where the contribution of each country is strategic for building an effective intercultural democratic society in Europe and for shaping a renewed authentic relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Region.

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- ◆ Dr Rosa Fioravante's speech on the theme "Democracy as ideology: from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the fall of liberalism"
- ◆ Prof. Antonio Tursi's speech on the theme "Parties in the digital challenge: between participation and participationism"
- ◆ Testimony of the journalist Dr. Martina Lalovic on the issue of identity and large emigration from the Balkan region

Metamorphoses of the Communist Legacy under the Gaze and Perception of the Generation Z in Romania

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Abstract

In the post-socialist Romania, an overall strong perception of the lost built environment is mainly associated with the tabula rasa of the historic centres' demolitions that occurred during the communist regime within the massive urban modernization and systematization interventions. The longing for the lost architectural space dating from pre-socialist periods and the resentment manifested towards communism's legacies established certain bias interpretation of the built environment in its overall manifestation, use, and function. Moreover, the built environment post-socialist transformations triggered "generational" debates concerning the intangible legacies of the recent past in a matter of symbols, principles, and values. The article tackles the intangible aspects of the communist legacy through the perspective of Generation Z in Romania, starting from some specific tangible aspects of the burdensome legacy of the communist period in Romania, such as e., the "House of the People" in Bucharest, the nationalisation/restitution of private properties and its impact on the historic urban centres, mass-housing legacy, small mono-industrial towns, and their post-industrial shrinking destiny. Based on an online questionnaire that received twenty-nine answers, the article represents just a first exploration of the knowledge transfer and information access through social media to Generation Z in reference to the communist period in Romania.

Key words: built legacy, communism, post-socialist transition, Generation Z, Romania

Résumé

Dans la Roumanie postsocialiste, la plus forte perception de l'oblitération spatiale et mémorielle, de la « table rase » du passé, correspond aux démolitions des centres historiques décidées par le régime communiste. Pour ce dernier, le processus de modernisation urbaine s'accompagnait systématiquement d'effacements massifs. La nostalgie de l'espace architectural présocialiste, effacé sous le régime communiste, et le ressentiment manifesté envers ce dernier représentent, en effet, des jalons dans la lecture de l'espace public et de ses usages. De même, les transformations postsocialistes de l'environnement bâti déclenchent des débats « générationnels » concernant les héritages immatériels du passé récent, traduits par des symboles, des principes et des valeurs. Par le biais d'héritages communistes tangibles et pesants - comme par exemple la "Maison du Peuple" à Bucarest ; la nationalisation/restitution des propriétés privées et son impact sur les centres urbains historiques ; l'héritage de l'habitat de masse ; les petites villes mono-industrielles et leur destin post-industriel de rétrécissement - l'article aborde les aspects intangibles de l'héritage communiste, tels que perçus par la génération Z en Roumanie. S'appuyant sur un questionnaire en ligne et une trentaine de réponses, l'article ne représente qu'une première exploration de l'accès à l'information de la génération Z via les réseaux sociaux et du transfert de connaissances d'une génération à l'autre, concernant la période communiste en Roumanie.



Mots clés: heritage bâti, communisme, transition postsocialiste, Génération Z, Roumanie

Introduction

Like its counterparts from Eastern Europe, Romania represents a territory of antagonistic interests, and the recent past reflects it very well. The end of WWI concluded for Romania with the unification of all Romanian regions and the foundation in 1918 of the sovereign Romanian State. Followed WWII that concluded with the abolition of the Hohenzollern monarchy by the communist regime installed here in 1945 with the support of the Soviet Union, triggering a historical period known popular as the “communist” one. During this period spanning 1945 to 1989, Romania always played internal and external political affairs in disagreement with Moscow’s directives under the lead of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1947 - 1964) and Nicolae Ceausescu (1965 - 1989) (Tismăneanu, 2006).

In 1989, at the fall of the Berlin Wall, Romania also experienced a political shift due to a people’s revolution based on a coup-d’état that concluded with the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena. The transition into western-type market economies and democracies was doubled by liberalising all aspects of social and cultural life. The European political elite argues that this transition is still ongoing (Roberts, 2016).

The tangible legacy of the “45 years of enforced communist dictatorship of landscape” is evident and easy to identify as being connected with the built environment in a matter of architecture and urban planning (Czeczynski, 2008: 173). Moreover, it overlaps the three decades of transition, stressing the cultural, economic, and political impact in continuity/discontinuity of the environment’s transformations in the communist and post-communist periods. In 2019 interview on “*Why many millennials have a good opinion on Communism?*”, Alexandru Groza, a Romanian historian who specialised in the 1980s Romanian – American political affairs, argued⁸: « (...) most respondents do not understand the totalitarian dimension of communism, confusing Marxism’s utopian ideological hypothesis with its direct genocidal state reality in its implementation. (...) The lack of balance leads to the idealisation of a utopian egalitarian system, such as Marxism, without being aware of the systematic consequences of the system such as e.g., abuse of power, terror, violence. (...) The ideas like “life was better than” or “school was a real school in my time” or “no one starved to death” and other forms of subjective truth are arguments used in consolidating a sweetened image of Romania’s communism. » (Generation Z and Millennials) « have confusing or unclear information on this national history period. The lack of access to the internet (information), doubled by the lack of involved teachers, has generated significant gaps in many cases. The strangest combination is that between ignorance and conformity, assuming the sources [on communism] without previous analysis or comments. » ([here](#)).

This quotation is broadly in line with the results of our online questionnaire that addressed the way the Romanian Generation Z relates to communism’s tangible and intangible aspects. The questionnaire was developed in March 2022 and received twenty-nine answers from young, educated persons ages 19 to 33. Therefore, the article will tackle the intangible aspects of this legacy through the perspective of Generation Z, starting from some specific tangible aspects of the burdensome legacy of the communist period in Romania, such as e., the “House of the People” in Bucharest, the nationalisation/restitution of private properties and its impact on the historic urban centres, mass-housing legacy, small mono-industrial towns, and their post-industrial shrinking destiny.

⁸ Alexandru Groza is a young historian born after the 1989 political shift in Romania, a Fulbright Fellow specialized in the 1980s Romanian – American external affairs and a guided tour to “Ferestroika” the first post-1989 private museum dedicated to the daily life reality in communist Romania. See <https://ferestroika.com/>



The House of the People (communism) / The Parliament Palace (post-communism)

The Romanian Parliament Palace's construction started in 1984 under the close guidance of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. It is known worldwide for its dimension - the second-largest administrative building globally. For Bucharest and Romania, it represents an open wound of the communist systematization through demolition and destruction of the existing historic environment (i.e., a fifth of Bucharest's historic centre) (Giurescu, 1989). From an architectural perspective, the "House of the People" is monumental due to its scale and composite style, embedding the neo-Socialist Realism promoted in the 1980s by Ceausescu. From an urban perspective, the building is an endpoint of a significant urban axe, the former Socialist Victory Boulevard, which promoted a new administrative and political order of socialist Bucharest itself. The urban and architectural project was unfinished at the 1989 political shift, triggering debates on its destiny (Iosa, 2011). However, despite its strong communist association, the building was first used by the Chamber of Deputies in 1996, followed in 2004 by the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Senate in 2005, and the Folk Costume Museum. It also entered the touristic and commercial network (Light, 2000: p. 146-160).

Most of the young people consulted know little details about the Parliament Palace, especially that its construction site is still ongoing. The building inspires "insecurity", "megalomania", "chaos and lies", "a feeling of amazement and curiosity", "a feeling of fear, obedience, removal of the passer-by" but also "pompous luxury, cunning, the ideal that Ceausescu had for Romania". Three of the respondents answered that they are inspired by "a sense of pride", two others testify to a "sense of respect", and three others to a sense of "grandeur".

Communist nationalisation and property restitution after 1989

Between 1945 and 1955, the Romanian socialist State nationalized the private properties of the political, socially, and culturally targeted members of the society within the process known as "social purge and terror control" of the population, typically associated with the Stalinization process of those years (Tismăneanu, 2009). This process was part of the nationalisation of all economic activities, industries, natural resources, infrastructures, and the abolishment of private economic entities (The nationalization law n. 119/11.06.1948). The fact that the socialist State became the sole owner of properties and land drastically transformed the built environment and national territory within the overall centralised and politically controlled urban and architectural practice (Zahariade, 2016). After the fall of communism and under the direct pressure of the European Union, the issue of private property restitution became a factor of political cleavage. During 1996 – 2005, the Romanian legislative system issued a series of laws to regulate the restitution process; however largely miss-applied (Iosa, 2008). Therefore, the Romanian State was convicted several times at the European Court of Human Rights for legislative inconsistencies and poor management of the restitution process of the nationalised properties and forced to pay damages. This uncertain state of ownership of many buildings in Bucharest and other major Romanian cities triggered real estate speculation and construction abuses.

Among the Generation Z respondents, fifteen out of twenty-five did not know any detail concerning the property restitution process triggered in the years following the fall of communism in Romania. However, some are aware of the effects and partial failure of the entire legal mechanism with direct reference to the corruption and abuse that defined the process. One respondent argues that the entire process was "a way to increase financial and social gaps between people exponentially".

The housing issue in historical monuments within the urban setting

The complex restitution process and the uncertainty around the property status of some buildings stated as historical monuments represent the main impediments to the State's safeguarding and management of the architectural and urban heritage. This aspect is strengthened by a lack of urban and architectural



legislative coherence in the built environment regulation, which in the post-1989 setting had to transition from a nationalised and centralised to an autonomous professional system. Romania still lacks a detailed architectural and urban preservation legal framework that could consider the safeguard and preservation of a variety of tangible manifestations of the cultural heritage. For example, there is a lack of definition of “historical ensembles”; or “historical urban landscapes” safeguarded as a whole organism, in line with well-known concepts of urban preservation, favouring the monumental architectural safeguarding of a sole/unique building (Historic Monuments Law n. 422/18.07.2001). Moreover, there is a lack of specialised professionals within the State organisms that could control, signal, and interfere with the historical monuments’ management, transformation, and restoration. The above-mentioned issues, together with the market liberalisation in the base of capitalistic principles, created a “window of opportunity” for real estate developers that found “unorthodox” methods of interventions within the built historic environment, such as, e.g., controlled fires, overnight demolitions, intentional abandonment, the dilapidation of built elements like rooftop, windows, and door joints to sustain the buildings weathering, and thus, material decay. Consequently, the post-1989 demolitions of the historic built environment of Bucharest surpassed the communist ones.

Four out of twenty-nine respondents confessed that they knew nothing about this topic. All others indicate lousy management, abuse, misuse of European Funds within the urban practice, lack of clear urban policies, inappropriate interventions in a matter of construction materials and techniques (mainly incompatible with the historic fabric), and an apparent disinterest on the part of the state institutions such as the Heritage National Institute, Ministry of Culture, and local administrations.

Mass-housing neighbourhoods and their post-1989 transformations

A familiar image of the Romanian urban landscape is the social housing neighbourhoods. They were largely diffused and built all over Romanian territory, a symbol of the urbanisation and industrialisation process and a uniform image based on standardisation and prefabrication principles, using both Soviet and Western European models (Zarecor, 2011). After the fall of the communist regime, the Romanian State decided to sell these properties rather quickly as they proved expensive to maintain in the long run. For example, the central heating was slowly eliminated, leaving each owner the “liberty” in providing for themselves in a manner of energy efficiency, triggering individual interventions with drastic effects on the buildings’ facades. Moreover, to compensate for the lack of commercial and social functions within the (socialist) neighbourhoods, the ground level apartments were privatised and transformed into offices, private medical practices, commercial spaces, shops, and day-cares, pushing towards a vernacular aspect and aesthetics.

On this topic, our respondents are aware that this housing typology provided young couples and precarious people access to a dwelling during communism. This aspect became increasingly tricky in contemporary Romania. They also stress the idea that these buildings were built as part of a more expansive urban ensemble, something that today is not accomplished anymore when developers aim for maximum profitability. Finally, they regret the chaotic interventions triggered by the uneven thermal rehabilitations done individually by the apartments’ owners.

The mono-industrial towns and their post-1989 shrinking phenomena

The leitmotifs of the socialist economic and socio-cultural development was the intensive industrialisation and urbanisation process that found its ideological background in the 1920s – 30s Soviet industrialisation based on heavy industries (Strange, 2019). Coal mining, ferrous and non-ferrous mining, steelworks, machinery, and car productions were industrial branches seen by the socialist propaganda as the base of the new planned economy and the base for the new social and cultural order designed to sustain the new working class. During the 1960s, this theory appeared that the base of the Romanian territorial transformation



should be the mono-industrial town of small scale (10'000 – 20'000 inhabitants), considered an actual cell of the new urban network and thus, uniformly distributed at the national scale (Cucu, 1987). It probably became more visible after the regime's fall in 1989, as they represented some of the first derelict places in the new post-socialist reality: industries were rapidly privatised or closed, followed by demolition and scrap recycling during the territorial reclaim process. The industrial shutdown pushed toward mass unemployment and social, cultural, and territorial isolation. Through its abandonment and material decay, the built environment illustrates the effects of economic, social, and cultural shrinkage (Paun-Constantinescu, 2019). However, these territorial realities are also those that, in lack of governmental guidance, generated bottom-up movements directed towards a specific post-industrial scenario revitalisation through the patrimonial acknowledgement and enhancement of their industrial legacy (Paun-Constantinescu, 2019).

Except for three respondents who argued that the topic is unknown to them, the others called the mono-industrial communist town the "ghost town". They also gave specific examples such as the former coal mining towns of Anina, Petrila, Petrosani, Lupeni, Vulcan, and Motru; former steel industrial towns such as Hunedoara, Zlatna, Calan; former non-ferrous mining towns as Baia Sprie, or former textile mono-industrial towns as Baia de Aries. Lack of social services, unemployment, and disrespect for the industrial heritage are the main critiques stressed by the respondents. Furthermore, they strongly criticised the State's incapacity in sustaining these towns' transformation, pushing toward the industrial activity closing and, therefore, high rates of unemployment and, later, emigration. There is a familiar feeling of desolation while facing the destiny of these former industrial towns.

Four respondents also indicate the case of Rosia Montana, which is not a town. Still, a former gold mining rural settlement, Rosia Montana, is extremely well publicised at the national level due to the conflict raised between the local community and a Canadian company that intended to continue the gold extraction through cyanide chemic elaboration while drastically affecting and damaging the local cultural heritage.⁹ The local civic society, sustained by national and international scholars in cultural heritage, pushed toward Rosia Montana's listing as a UNESCO site, raising awareness on environmental and heritage issues nationwide. This case represents the re-birth of the civic consciousness of post-1989 Romania (Iosa, 2017).

Interestingly, the recent history in Romania appears approached by Generation Z, especially when dealing with the everyday reality in a matter of tangible legacies (i.e., built environment and its daily transformations) and intangible when confronted the mentality of the "older" generations that survived the socialist years. Despite the lack of a structured educational program that details and illustrates the communist regime in Romania, Generation Z appears to understand the fundamental rights of democracy based on freedom of expression, considered essential and a privilege. It also comes in reference to understanding and differentiating the socialist propaganda as indicated in the following testimony "(the communism) It was a period in which the freedom of expression was limited, the propaganda and cult of personality were everywhere, poverty was normalised, corruption and bribery were common practice, while the punishments were brutal." From a first glance, the access to information offered Generation Z a complex level of understanding of the Romanian communist regime's peculiarities, even though the questionnaire was applied to an urban and educated sample that does not define the entire Romanian complex reality. It is needed to broaden the study, focusing on the knowledge transfer and circulation through social networks, a goal to achieve in the years to come.

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The musealisation of communist heritage in Central and Eastern Europe – A comparative perspective

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Abstract

After the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, former Soviet ally countries had to re-define their national identities whilst considering European integration. In this context, the communist past was often considered problematic in shaping national narratives. Nonetheless, the musealisation of communist heritage started soon before the accession of the former Soviet satellite States to the European Union. Because museums are an essential medium in the diffusion of knowledge, the way the legacy of communism is displayed and interpreted in communist museums is meaningful. This comparative study analyses three examples of communist museums in Central and Eastern Europe. It shows how former communist countries present their communist past through museum display, and how this dissonant heritage is used to promote both their internal narratives i.e. national identity, and their external image i.e. in their 'nation branding'.

Key words: communist heritage, musealisation, dissonant heritage, national identities, nation branding

Résumé

Après la chute des régimes communistes de l'Europe de l'Est et Central entre 1989 et 1991, les anciens pays alliés au bloc soviétique ont eu à redéfinir leurs identités nationales tout en se tournant vers l'intégration européenne. Dans ce contexte, le passé communiste a souvent été considéré comme problématique dans l'élaboration des récits nationaux. Néanmoins, la muséalisation du patrimoine communiste a commencé peu de temps après l'accession à l'Union Européenne des anciens pays satellites de l'Union Soviétique. Puisque les musées sont un moyen essentiel à la diffusion des connaissances, la manière dont le patrimoine communiste est exposé et interprété dans les musées du communisme est parlante. Cette étude comparative analyse trois exemples de musées du communisme en Europe Centrale et de l'Est. Elle montre comment les anciens pays communistes présentent leur passé communiste à travers les expositions de leurs musées, et comment ce patrimoine dissonant est utilisé afin de promouvoir à la fois un récit interne i.e. leur identité nationale, et une image externe i.e. « l'image de marque » de la nation.

Mots clés: patrimoine communiste, muséalisation, patrimoine dissonant, identités nationales, "image de marque" des nations

Re-defining national identities through cultural heritage

Globalisation has changed our perception of cultural heritage. From a local matter, it has become an international concern, embodied in a set of material practices circulating throughout the world (Meskell 2015: 2). In this context, 'global phenomena' have emerged to respond to broader political agendas. The musealisation of communist heritage in Central and Eastern Europe is one of these phenomena.



Shortly after the Second World War, Europe was divided between two victorious powers, usually referred as the West and the East. Whilst the United States spread their influence on Western Europe, the Soviet Union rallied several satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe. On the same European territory, the Cold War opposed the capitalist model to communist ideals, leading to the establishment of an “iron curtain” throughout Europe.

Against that backdrop, the satellite states of the Eastern bloc were effectively under Soviet influence – although officially independent from the Soviet Union. For almost 45 years, their heritage was as “imported from abroad” (Ivanova 2017: 38). The banner of ‘internationalism’ restricted the emergence of nationalist sentiments (Kulcsár, Yum 2012: 196), and a certain ‘communist model’ —or a socialist indoctrination (Ivanova 2017: 32)— replicated itself throughout the region. The communist rhetoric was to create revolutionary and heroic ‘Soviet symbols’, whilst ignoring national singularities and local traditions.

In the early 1990s, the fall of communist regimes provoked a radical change in European societies. In Central and Eastern Europe, a small group of countries left the socialist Eastern bloc to join the neoliberal Western bloc and the broader international community. In this context, the communist past of these countries was often seen as a shameful part of national histories, and socialist identities were rejected outright, in a “wave of iconoclasm” (Light 2000b: 158; Wiśniewski 2012: 80).

Paradoxically, a growing interest in communism started to emerge within the Western world. In November 1989, a significant number of people flocked to Berlin to witness the fall of the Berlin Wall, and in the immediate post-communist period, the number of western tourists visiting Eastern capital cities such as Bucharest almost doubled (Light 2000a: 146). Westerners were intrigued by the way of life behind the iron curtain, and a new kind of ‘communist tourism’ emerged: from ‘communist tours’, to visits to great communist architecture and remembrance sites.

From the 2000s onwards, dedicated ‘communist museums’ started to appear in most former ally states. One of the first was the Museum of communism in Warsaw, established in 1999, which focuses on life under communism in Poland. Two years later, a similar institution was created in Prague, showing the Czech society under the totalitarian regime. In 2002, the House of Terror in Budapest was opened to emphasise the horrific aspects of fascist and communist regimes in Hungary. Later, a ‘Retro Museum’ opened in Varna, displaying items dating from the communist times in Bulgaria.

Because museum display greatly contributes to the diffusion of knowledge, it has always been an essential tool in the rewriting of national narratives. This comparative study analyses how former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe are promoting their communist past through museums, and how they use this heritage in the redefinition of their external image i.e. in their ‘nation branding’ (Kaneva 2011; Kulcsár, Yum 2012).

Communist heritage in a context of transition: a dissonant heritage

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, ally countries initially tried to return to their folk traditions from precommunist-era. But they also looked towards a European Union accession – and to define themselves as European democracies, they had to adopt a European cultural model. They were torn between globalisation, Westernisation and Europeanisation. Hence, most transitional governments initially intended to erase the communist past from collective memory: statues were torn down, names of the streets were changed, and communist sections disappeared from museum exhibitions (Petkova-Campbell 2010: 282). In cities, one could observe a clear attempt to connect with the West, by reclaiming a cosmopolite European heritage not related to any socialist past (Pusca 2014 : 427).

On one hand, people wanted to overcome the former Soviet influence by redefining their national identities after years of domination. On the other hand, they had to become appealing to international tourism.

Therefore, the notion of 'national identities' has come parallel with the concept of 'nation branding' i.e., the external image of a country on the global stage (Kaneva 2011: 191). Nation branding takes various forms: from commercials to national slogans, including the creation of appealing logos and visual identities. As such, nation branding is the promotion of a country "along a few well-defined core messages and concepts that are intended to capture a nation's desirable characteristics and images" (Kulcsár, Yum 2012: 194). However, for post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, nation branding is more than a way of attracting international investors and tourists: it is also a way to find the meaning of nationhood after communism, to the point where it becomes public diplomacy (Kaneva 2011: 195; Kulcsár, Yum 2012: 198).

In 2004, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia integrated the European Union; and three years later, Romania and Bulgaria. Progressively, the relations that these rather young European countries were maintaining with their communist heritage started to change. Thus, in the 2000s, a shift occurred: many communist museums were established in the region. By adopting a European state model, they became cheaper European touristic destinations, more accessible in term of travel requirements and tourist infrastructures. But more tourism means adapting to the European demand in terms of touristic activities, such as museums.

Nonetheless, remembering communism can be painful, and oftentimes, memories must be reshaped into political convenient discourses (Pusca 2014: 425). In that respect, museums are an essential medium in the diffusion of knowledge (Moser 2010: 22). But the way in which communism is interpreted in museums is often problematic (Light 2000a: 146). This interpretation work is delicate, and museums must deliver both a message for local residents and the international community – because the interpretation of the national heritage in museums is also a way for a country to present itself to the rest of the world (Light 2000b: 158).

That said, the reception of communist heritage greatly varies from one museum to another. To quote Todorova (2010: 8), "the communist experience was diverse enough to produce different post-communist responses despite the systemic similarities". This comparative study of museum exhibition layouts thus aims at informing on the variety of political responses.

Using the museum as a support for propaganda anti-communist

In this context of Europeanisation, the interpretation of communist heritage has become necessarily connected to nation branding. Oftentimes, one way of emphasising and legitimating the democratic aspect of post-soviet governments is to present a clear negation of their past atrocities. The House of terror museum in Budapest is a meaningful example of this phenomenon. Even before visiting the museum, visitors can understand that communism is a horrific part of Hungarian history, in the same way as fascism is – since the logo makes a parallel between the two regimes. The choice red and black colours directly associate the site to the phenomenon of Dark tourism, described by Lennon and Foley (2000: 3) as the use of death and disaster for tourism consumption. The permanent exhibition is spread over four floors, respectively related to imprisonment, dictatorship, deportation, propaganda, torture, and totalitarianism.



Fig. 1. House of terror logo

The exhibition layout greatly plays with the lighting and is made of a succession of rooms of different sizes and purposes. According to Moser (2010: 25) the size of galleries is of major importance in the visitor experience,



as small rooms can provoke a feeling of intimacy and story telling, while bigger rooms can give another vision of official narratives. The same holds true for the lighting creating atmospheres that greatly influence on the audience perception. Visitors entering a small and dark room may, for instance, directly experience the feeling of pain or imprisonment.



Fig. 2. Example of reconstituted rooms, located in the basement © House of terror



Fig. 3. & 4 Torture rooms, picture from visitors' point of view © TripAdvisor

On TripAdvisor, visitors' comments are using a wide range of terms to describe the museum. Among others, the words 'dark', 'sinister', 'emotional', 'provoking' and 'touching' have been used several times, which emphasizes the dark communist experience aspect of the exhibition. Overall, the entire exhibition layout has been designed in a way one cannot feel any "sense of nostalgia" about the period. For instance, even the "everyday life" room, on the website, presents the communist fashion "just as mendacious and miserable as the ideology behind it". This certainly echoes what Pusca has called the prevention of an 'inappropriate nostalgia', or an 'unwanted nostalgia' (2014: 434).

A more nuanced example of such a phenomenon can be found in the Museum of Communism in Prague. As underlined by the museum's slogan "Communism- The Dream, the reality, the nightmare", this institution



intends to provide visitors with a diverse and an “authentic feel of the era”. While some rooms are similarly dedicated to the themes of torture, censorship, labour camps etc., many other spaces display softer themes related to the communist era, such as the socialist culture, leisure, and housing. In contrast to Budapest’s Museum, which is essentially based on strong visual impacts, here, many parts of the exhibition space are used for texts. In Moser’s view (2010: 27), the employment of texts in exhibition layout is used as a mean to communicate ideas. In this case, on TripAdvisor, some words used by visitors to comment on the museum are ‘enlightening’, ‘educational’, ‘entertaining’, ‘impactful’, ‘interesting’ and ‘thought provoking’. In comparison to the House of Terror, the Prague’s Museum is more informative than emotional.

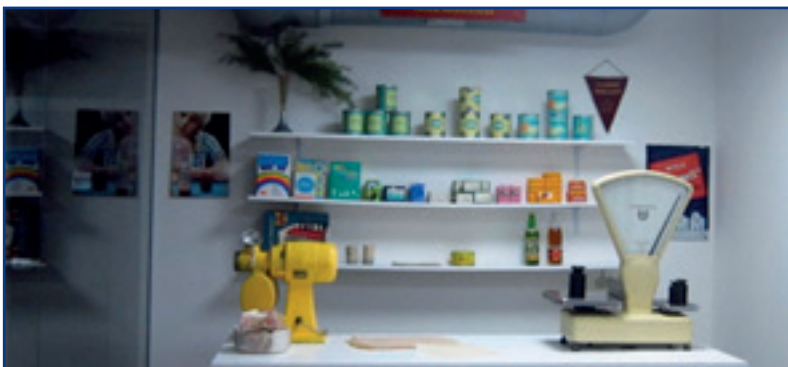


Fig. 4., 5., 6. & 7. Examples of the wide range of rooms presented in the museum, from visitors’ point of view
© TripAdvisor

Overall, as communist museums have to correspond to contemporary Western standards, these two examples demonstrate that they can be both used as an official negation of a ‘guilty past’, as well as *dark experiences* for western tourism consumption, often included in broader ‘communist tours’ (Pusca 2014: 434; Caraba 2011: 33).



Showcasing everyday life behind the iron curtain

On the other hand, there is a reasonable basis for nostalgia towards some aspects of communism. After the fall of communism, from a society that provided full employment, universal education and healthcare, people went through a difficult and disorientating period (Creed 2010: 34). From a strong state of paternalism in charge of every aspect of citizens' lives, people were suddenly left to fend for themselves, in a difficult transitional period (Creed 2010: 30). In this sense, when people evoke 'good' aspects of the communist past, they do not necessarily deny the corruption, the torture, the censorship or the shortage (Todorova 2010: 5).

In this regard, communist exhibitions in Bulgaria are good examples of a more sanitised version of representing the recent history. Until recently, Bulgaria did not display the communist period in its institutions whatsoever. The first —and only— communist-related exhibition financed by the State, was launched in 2009 in the National Aft Gallery in Sofia. According to Petkova-Campbell (2010: 279), the exhibition did not have explanation plates, or any kind of interpretation material. As such, visitors were left alone among a number of socialist-style items and artworks, as if they were only there for contemplation. The reason behind this would be that the curators wanted to avoid both "nostalgia and uncritical irony". Such a choice of non-interpretation underlines how it has been difficult for Bulgaria to deal with the feeling of post-communist nostalgia since the collapse of communism.

It took until 2015 before the first communist-related institution opened in the country —yet outside the capital, in the seaside resort of Varna. This museum is called the "Retro Museum" and is privately founded by a Bulgarian businessman. Although the State is not directly implicated in the process, the museum is promoted on the municipality website, describe as displaying "the whole life from the time of socialism". The museum is located in a gigantic 4000 square meters exhibition space and displays artefacts stemming from the period 1944-1989. It includes vintage cars, Bulgarian cigarettes, Russian computers, Polish posters, and any possible items produced in the former communist countries. Along with antiques, the museum created a plurality of wax figures representing great figures of the era (e.g., Leonid Brezhnev, Vladimir Lenin, Erich Honecker, or even the Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro), often staged with their favourite socialist cars. As stressed by Moser (2010: 25), in exhibition layouts, large rooms give a sense of the "big picture". In this sense, the museum looks more like an exhibition hall than a museum per se and gives to visitors that used to belong to the socialist era a significant sentimental value; and a strong sense of nostalgia (Ivanova 2017: 42). As such, without any embarrassment, the museum focuses on the entire communist aesthetic of the era, from all over the world. Items are displayed as object of *curiosities*.





Fig. 8., 9. & 10. Pictures of the museum's hall, from visitors' point of view © TripAdvisor

To a certain extent, it can be said that the Varna museum shows an *unashamed* vision of the communist past. Plainly, the fact that the museum is not a public institution is meaningful here. Unlike the House of Terror or Prague's communist museum, The Retro Museum is not included in a larger political agenda or national narrative. Although foreigners largely visit Varna, the museum would not have the same impact if it were located in Sofia.



Concluding remarks

The comparison of communist museums can give a good overview of what post-communism mourns, and what it celebrates (Pusca 2014: 435). While some countries use the museum as a support for *mea culpa*, others took the opposite stand by emphasizing other aspects of the life under communism. On the whole, these stances often correspond to national specificities. In Hungary for instance, the communist regime was known as being the most 'moderate' state of the region, and was trading with the West far before the collapse of the USSR (Kulcsár, Yum 2012: 194). The way in which the Museum of Terror in Budapest is conceived greatly corresponds to Western standards of musealisation. By contrast, in Bulgaria, the erasure of the communist past was most likely seen as the proper way towards democratisation. Also, since the Bulgarian communist regime did not have strong political dissidents unlike in other countries (Petkova-Campbell 2010: 282), the 'mourning' – or memorial – aspect of museums was probably seen as less important, which, at present, opens the door for an asserted nostalgia.

Overall, this global phenomenon of musealisation responds to contradictory demands: an international demand for commodification of communism for tourist consumption – and an European demand for democratisation and breaking with the communist past –, and an internal demand for redefinition of national identities. In addition, due to the pressure of global tourism, countries have been placed in the role of competitors vis-a-vis each other. Thus, competitive narratives in communist museums can now be used as different 'branding' of communism, within the international 'heritage competition' scene.

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European Union: The challenges of dissonant resonance

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Abstract

Cultural heritage has always been the subject of debate in Europe because some try to approach it on the basis of references common to all the Member States whereas others consider that there exist many types of heritage, benefiting from mutual dialogue. Dissonance comes from the fact that an official recognition always leads to arbitrating between different types of heritages and establishing hierarchies. But no one today benefits from imposing such hierarchies, and it seems better to build a dialogue allowing exchanges and understandings.

Key words: memory, dissonant heritage, cultural differences, European identity, sense of belonging

Résumé

Le patrimoine culturel a toujours fait l'objet de débats en Europe car certains tentent de l'aborder à partir de références communes à tous les États-membres là ou d'autres considèrent qu'il existe de nombreux types de patrimoines qui gagnent à dialoguer les uns avec les autres. La dissonance vient de ce que la reconnaissance officielle conduit toujours à arbitrer entre différents types d'héritages et à établir des hiérarchies. Or personne ne gagne aujourd'hui à imposer de telles hiérarchies et mieux vaut construire un dialogue permettant les échanges et les compréhensions.

Mots clés: mémoire, patrimoine dissonant, différences culturelles, identité européenne, sentiment d'appartenance.

Introduction

Raising the issue of heritage memories in Europe today leads us both to go back to the very sources of the European Union and to see how to deal with our memories, heritage, and dissonant heritage nowadays. If this distance may appear, it is at the heart of the challenge, which is to highlight the place and possible role of young people facing heritage. Two preliminaries' observations are necessary: the first deals with the concepts of memory and heritage, the second with the idea of a dissonant heritage.

Memory and heritage are two entries, but intimately linked to each other. When we evoke a heritage, we evoke those objects or ideas to which we attach interest because they remind us of values and experiences that help us to better understand our place in the world, whether they are part of a building, an object, a landscape, a music, or a text. To speak of dissonant heritage is to speak of heritage that appears or disappears in an environment that does not officially recognize this dimension or tends to reduce it.



Two opposing situations can lead to this:

- ◆ The first one is that of communities or groups that intend to assert their heritage within a larger set where their heritage has not been recognized like others, or as a listed heritage. Young people are here in the front row because they will have to carry the contradiction that may exist between the heritage of their own native community and that of the host country.
- ◆ The second one is that of heritage which for political reasons is no more fully recognized or even appear as anachronistic or dangerous. Young people are concerned by the way they can look at these tensions: Is there something for them to remember or not?

Main Issues and the Traditional Perspective

When the first discourses on European integration appeared in the aftermath of the Second World War, the importance of giving Europeans the feeling of belonging to the same Region was stressed, and this was already designated as *politics of belonging*. Heritage and culture were not the only arguments then mentioned, but it was understood that without cultural references and common values, it would be very difficult to create an actual union, whatever laws, common markets and common policies. It is also striking to note that in the first real European Treaty of 1950 on Coal and Steel community (CECA), the first common market, the preamble of the Treaty underlined this need for a sense of belonging.

Yet, even if we look at the current situation, culture is far from benefiting from this attention even if it is regularly mentioned. Several reasons can be mentioned here:

- ◆ The short-term urgency was economic, while cultural programs and investments require considerable time.
- ◆ Culture matters for citizenship, and States had no intention of divesting themselves of this dimension, even if we are witnessing a convergence of values adopted in favor of political liberalism and human rights. Here the principle of subsidiarity had to be strictly respected even if the cultural policies of each State were often very weak.
- ◆ Evoking a European culture and heritage inevitably posed trade-offs between National and Community level, i.e. a distillation of national heritages. In addition, cultural dimensions refer to both peoples and States, which greatly complicates the problem. One could say that no any could have country accepted to see its own heritage becoming a dissonant heritage. The examples of the European anthem, which has no official recognition, the European flag, which has a limited recognition, and the choice of images on euro banknotes largely testify to these difficulties.

Between marginalization and subsidiarity

This explains the marginal role of the European cultural programs. At the beginning of the Treaty of Rome of 1956, culture was subsidiary and therefore a national competence. It was quite striking to see that the only remarkable cultural expenditures were depending on the agricultural policy. This latter policy being focused on local development, it largely funded the conservation of heritage but mainly in rural areas. The EC started its culture-focused activities in the 1970s and has used cultural aspects as central elements in promoting integration since the mid-1980s. With the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, culture was made an official policy field of the EU, if not a competence. Initiatives were taken and incentives organized but more as a support activity for example to back the conservation efforts of heritage conservation by member states. Moreover, the EU discourse was increasingly based on a transnational 'European' interpretation of culture and heritage across national differences.



This was the consequence of the subsidiarity principle, but it was too a very difficult equilibrium to maintain. The EU tried to narrate to a wide public and a young audience who Europeans are, and the elements which make up their 'Europeanness'. But it was necessary not so much for cultural reasons but for arguing on the deepening and widening of the EU. Many challenges ranged from debates about Eurozone and European financial markets; political crises stemming from the EU's legitimation and democratic deficits; and so on and so forth.

Let us consider one very visible initiative to illustrate the type of cultural policy managed by the EU: The European Capital of Culture. This initiative goes back to 1983, when the Greek minister Melina Mercouri wanted, with the support of the European Commission, to set up concrete measures to promote the cohesion of European citizenship, according to the article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which gives the Union the mandate to « *contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore* ». *The Union shall also encourage « cooperation between Member States » in the field of culture and « if necessary, support and supplement their action*». A European Capital of Culture must enrich the European cultural diversity, to celebrate the relations which unify the Europeans, to create a meeting-place for the Europeans coming from different backgrounds, and finally, to enforce the feeling of a European citizenship. Thirty years after its inception, the event, which began as an event to showcase cultural prowess and common bonds amongst European countries, has evolved. Today, hosting the European Capital of Culture is seen as an opportunity for urban regeneration and a catalyst for social, cultural, and economic development. The main interest of being a European capital of culture is for making a city better known, and the legitimation is more and more enlightened by the positive economic impact. A recent study has compared the regions of cities that hosted the event with the regions of cities that tried to host it but did not succeed. GDP per capita in hosting regions is 4.5 percent higher compared to non-hosting regions during the event and the effect persists more than 5 years after it. This result suggests that the economic dimension of the event is important and supports claims that the event serves as catalyst for urban regeneration and development (Gomes, 2016). But at the same time it is recognized that European capital is no more the platform dreamed by Melina Mercouri to organize conversations between the various cultures disseminated all over Europe but mainly a showcase for a very city.

European Commission's European Heritage Label (EHL) initiative is another example of European politics of belonging: an aim to construct belonging to particular communities in particular ways. Namely, the EHL aims at legitimizing European narrative of belonging via Europeanizing cultural heritage. This narrative promotes the European dimension of the designated 29 sites all over the EU. Therefore, while EHL is 'officially' part of cultural Europeanization - politics of belonging to European cultural area - the sites might also use heritage to 'imagine' other communities. Apart from that, mobility is crucial in this process: EHL 'Europeanizes' heritage whereas the 'Europeanness' of heritage is also domesticated in the daily practice of the sites by turning it into part of the national practice. This EHL is envisioned to cover 100 heritage sites within and outside EU member states by 2030 (EC 2017a). By doing this, the original aim of the Label as a cultural action of the EU is extended to help construct a notion of a shared, trans national 'European cultural space' across the bounded space of the EU.

Is Dissonant Heritage a Danger? A More Comprehensive Perspective

The issue here is that these initiatives are defended more and more today on the basis of their economic results and less and less on their cultural effects. But we can say too that there is another effect of these EU cultural program, the mobility of persons and mental representations and that may be the long-term cultural impact will be implemented through this very mobility.

This has to be connected to the fact that the most important side of the dissonant heritage is may be more to manage better the mobility of populations towards or within the Union than to seek what can be commonly agreed on in the past of the European States. So, we have to formulate again the question of dissonant heritage



in a different way: Is the emergence of European identity opposed to the emergence of diversity or not?

- ◆ In a first narrative, Europe is understood in terms of different nation states and cultures, and the cultural differences between Europeans may be considered as a decisive factor that prevents the development of a 'true' community of Europeans despite political and legal harmonization across EU member states. This narrative emphasizes that we have to discover from the top what can define a European Culture.
- ◆ In another narrative, the notion of a culturally diverse Europe supports the acceptance of communality among Europeans across national borders despite persisting cultural differences. Cultural differences are not considered as creating decisive antagonism between Europeans, but they are regarded, under some conditions, as building up Europe in a positive way. This second narrative emphasizes that we have to find out a living culture by uniting various groups, including non-EU citizens who have moved for various reasons.

Why should we make this difference? Between the two narratives the main issue is to know from the below or the grass root level who is included or not into this cultural space. When we consider this second narrative the main criterion is not the distillation of the top values or the Europeaness but the increasing speed of exchanges and mobility at the grass root levels in terms of discovery, knowledge and conversation about our various heritages. This is a principle of belonging by exchange and mobility.

This narrative is common among young people who seem more likely to have early experiences of and with mobility (such as exchanges), among people with transnational family links, and among some older participants (particularly in Western European countries) who often described themselves as the generation that supported the visionary beginnings of the EU after the experiences of World War II. Mobility experiences provide a different access to Europe and the EU and promote a more concrete and affective way of constructing belonging than narratives of common values or legal and political harmonization, which may remain remote and abstract. Particularly for the younger generation, narratives that stress personal experiences of intercultural dialogue, peaceful exchanges, and experiences of mobility across national borders seem to have become new powerful, empowering, and more concrete narratives.

Age group	18–35	36–65	66+
<i>Strongly feels European</i>	60%	64%	74%
<i>Does not feel European</i>	12%	12%	10%
Positive associations with European identity	24%	20%	8%
Neutral associations	60%	57%	56%
<i>Is able to describe what European identity is</i>	61%	62%	44%

Source: Europe from Below. Notions of Europe and the European among Participants in EU Cultura Initiatives. 2021. Brill, p. 160.

Connecting Dissonant and Listed heritages for a Cultural Europe

How can we make the meeting of our memories and heritages the promise of a better cultural understanding? This movement is not at all automatic and it would be wrong to ignore that such movements can also lead to violent opposition. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we would like to highlight three ways in which we can contribute to this.



Conversation

A “Shared Heritage Experience” (*Patrimoine en Partage*) illustrates this need for conversation. In specific schools of non-speaking French immigrants in the working-class suburbs of Paris, each child is invited to enter in a conversation about its own heritage by reacting to a shared theme common to all heritages: a party, a meal, an event, a reading, etc. More precisely, he can choose images, photos, videos, narratives, sounds, objects in relationship with the given theme. They can then present them and explain their choice, i.e. why this thing deserves attention from him, to the other children, and react to the reciprocal presentation of the other children. Then, it is the turn of another child to testify of its own choice and answer the questions, and so on. The guiding principle of the approach is to make everyone feel what their heritage is and then, through their cross-exchanges, what is the heritage of others. You can then slide to other form of heritage spaces such as the street, a public garden, a gym, a neighborhood. It is then supposed that after enriching others with one’s own heritage, one can be more attentive together to a common heritage.

Re-use and circular economy

For benefiting from an exchange on a given cultural heritage, this latter must be a development driver and not a permanent liability. This obviously involves the allocation of new use values, not contradictory with its nature. These values must combine the respect of a past memory but also the expectancy of new values for the future as it has been expressed under the expression of the modern cult of monuments given by Riegl a century ago. The atrium network has given many examples of such combinations in Balkan countries. Additionally, the circular economy of a rehabilitation creates a solidarity between this heritage and its territory, which can be both profitable and sustainable. Finally, circular conservation and management of a built heritage disseminates a growing diversity of local actors to take an interest in it, and therefore to develop an attention that will be useful the day when it will be necessary to mobilize new resources. This reuse also makes it possible to reason in terms of preventive conservation. This means that maintenance costs will be lower, but it will probably be resources already present in the territory or more readily available that will be needed.

Deep Interpretation

Regarding dissonant Heritages, a difficulty comes from the fact that they manifest themselves in a situation of tension, which leads to radicalize the positions of many actors looking at them. Then the deep meaning and value of a heritage can disappear, political conflicts overcoming any positive meaning. To take a much more relevant reference today, we can thus ask ourselves whether in the face of the buildings inherited from the communist period, it would not be relevant to distinguish behind the political system the very rich artistic movements that may have inspired it, and I am thinking here of constructivism inspired by Malevich and Mayakovsky. The meaning of such a building then takes on a whole new meaning and makes it possible to put young people from the countries concerned in conversation with those who, in other countries, have encountered comparable inspirations.





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PATRIMOINE
La survie des hommes,
SANS
c'est aussi leur culture,
FRONTIÈRES
leur mémoire et leur patrimoine

