Revolution and counter-revolution; or why it is difficult to have a heritage of communism and what can we do about it

Francesco Iacono

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Francesco Iacono

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

ABSTRACT

Revolutions have powerful effects on the way the past is presented and perceived. In former communist states of Eastern Europe, following the revolutions establishing the regimes, a further sudden inversion has been regularly experienced in the aftermath of the fall of the Eastern Bloc. In this paper, I will comparatively discuss these changes through the lens of Albania. The discussion will highlight how the first communist revolution of the 1940s changed the way the Albanian state looked at its heritage and how this perspective was again completely transformed in the aftermath of the 1991. In both cases the perception of the periods immediately preceding the revolutionary events were those mostly affected. In particular, as regards the second revolution, in Albania, as in many other cases, after a long silence, the perspective adopted by the main stakeholders in the new democratic order was to characterise the heritage of communism in terms of trauma and terror. While these aspects undoubtedly encapsulate key features, there is more to processes of memory and heritage making related to this period. Private memories can sometimes produce rather different narratives of the same recent past, creating a clash with the representation put forward by the state.

A contradiction in terms

In the opening scene of his 1971 film *Bananas*, Woody Allen farcically represents the final moments of a revolution in a fictitious Southern American state as a frenetic sport commentary. Even if paradoxical, such a representation resonates with the commonly accepted meaning of the word 'revolution', as something happening at a quick (often uncontrollable) pace. Heritage and revolution are indeed terms in apparent contradiction, as one evokes immediately impromptu rapid (sometimes violent) change, while the other summons slow-paced images of cumulative transmission of values and materials from one generation to the other. Yet, despite this apparent dichotomy, given their ability to disrupt and invert the order of things in the political realm and beyond, there is little doubt that revolutions have critical effects on societies' ways of looking at their past and producing heritage.

Within abrupt revolutionary changes, laying foundations for the new systems of values to be created played no trivial role. The past and related heritage conceptions were pivotal in framing the *terra incognita* of entirely new social relationships within a known light that was more acceptable. As with the social relations from which it originated, heritage at these critical junctions involved two mostly

distinct, but occasionally overlapping, processes: one of construction of new heritages and another one of destruction of what was deemed not to be translatable into the new authorised discourse of the time (Smith 2006; Sørensen and Viejo-Rose 2015).

In this paper I will try to compare the unfolding of these two processes in two subsequent revolutions that occurred in the twentieth century in Central and Eastern Europe, critically influencing the history of these places. The first occurred in the 1940s and entailed the establishment of a number of socialist states. Despite the remarkable foreign intervention in many of these countries, regime change involved a considerable and rapid political change and can be considered revolutionary (and this is particularly the case for my case study Albania; see Gibianskii and Naimark 2004, 9–10; see also Applebaum 2012; Staar 1967).

Likewise, despite operating via very different social processes that entailed a much looser control on their final outcome, the revolutions of 1989–1991 produced an equally dramatic change of political and social relationships. Given this, they can be (and have been, by historians and political scientists alike) rightly considered to be revolutions, even though in some cases they lacked the element of violent upheaval or complete replacement of governing classes (Antohi and Tismaneanu 2000; Garton Ash 1993, 2002; McDermott and Stibbe 2006).

I will focus in particular on Albania, a small country in the south-eastern Balkans which I believe is particularly interesting for a main overarching reason: Albania was the locus of a Stalinist regime in the period between 1945 and 1991, thus going through the full-fledged revolution experience of the 1940s and the counter-revolution of the 1990s. Here, the first revolution of the 1940s de-facto replaced a foreign occupation with a national government, while in the subsequent transformation after the fall of communism some degree of continuity can be recognised. Besides these specificities, however, unlike many other Central and Eastern European countries during the communist period, Albania remained almost completely isolated, after closing down with Russia in the 1960s and China in the 1970s. While undoubtedly representing a limitation, as a matter of fact, such isolation eliminated the colonial aspect that heavily influenced the revolution in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc (Applebaum 2012; Blacker, Ètkind, and Fedor 2013; Carey and Raciborski 2004; Gibianskii and Naimark 2004, 9–10; Goldman 1997, 13). This has important implications, above all for the way the post-1991 revolution has unfolded.

The questions that I will try to answer through such a comparison are two. The first one is in what ways revolutions mattered to Albanian heritage. Secondly – but the linkage with this first point will become clearer later on – I will explore in more detail why the latter of the revolutions discussed is having enduring effects on the way Albanians see their past and, as a result, why it is difficult to build a heritage of communism which goes beyond the difficult/dark heritage paradigm, despite the obvious relevance of this recent past to current societies in almost every aspect of everyday life (Iacono and Këlliçi 2015).

The answers to these two questions are inextricably linked to the changes that occurred to the state in the aftermath of these two revolutionary moments, as indeed the role of ideological mediation performed by heritage values was critical for that institution.

The post-revolution of 1945

In 1945, the conclusion of the Liberation War, as in many other contexts in Eastern Europe, represents the main revolutionary event of Albania. It is relatively difficult to draw a dividing line between the outcome of the Liberation War and the overthrowing of the previous regime, as effectively the country had been occupied by Axis powers after being a protectorate of Italy since 1914 (Gjeçovi 2009, 23–102; Vickers 1999, 117–140). In any case, due to favourable conditions, the establishment of single-party communism in the country was not only sudden but also produced a complete replacement of ruling elites. Because of this, it is safe to equate this to a 'genuine' revolution (Gibianskii and Naimark 2004, 19).

Although culture did not represent an immediate priority in the aftermath of World War Two, establishing an ideological hegemony quickly became very important for the regime (Lubonja 2002). Its development through cultural policies, however, was not a chronologically coherent phenomenon concentrated in the immediate aftermath of the liberation/revolution; rather, it occurred throughout the history of communist Albania. Although it can be contended that these aspects belong to the *longue durée* rather than to the immediacy of the post-revolutionary moment, they are nevertheless grounded in the revolutionary moment and without taking this into account it will not be possible to make sense of the subsequent shift occurring after 1991, at the end of communism.

New order, new heritage

As far as the creation of 'new' heritage and the process of heritagisation of recent historical events is concerned, the narrative related to the liberation struggle was immediately (and effectively) mobilised by the communist party. It is certainly possible to recognise the urgency of making the liberation struggle the foundational narrative of the emerging communist state in the proliferation of exhibitions, museums and house-museums connected to this period and related episodes and key figures.[1] The celebration of the communist party was often coupled with celebration of the resistance, with many house museums dedicated to 'minor' heroes being actually named after the party instead of the respective individual personalities.

Besides the transformation of the *Lufta Çlirimtare* (Liberation War) in cultural heritage (a trend that incidentally is not limited to either Albania or the Eastern Bloc), the activity of the regime was aimed at modulating the perception of the different phases of the Albanian past. As nationhood and nationalist sentiments were critical for the regime, the periods which were traditionally considered formative for Albanian national identity remained within the attention of the regime, which tried to appropriate them (Lubonja 2002, 97–99). So the period of Skanderbeg (Albania's national hero) and likewise the Albanian Renaissance (or *Rilindja*), which led to independence in 1912, were incorporated into the heritage discourse of the regime, as for instance exemplified by the construction of the museum of Skanderbeg in the city of Krujë, the erection of the famous equestrian statue at the centre of Tirana and the independence monument of Vlorë epically depicting the saga of Albanian independence (see Adhami 2001, 5; Isto 2016) .

In the discipline of archaeology, a new emphasis on autochthony and ethno-genesis of the Illyrians (deemed to be the ancestors of modern day Albanians; see Gori 2012; Veseli 2006; Wilkes 1992) was accompanied by rejection of the Mediterranean linkages with Rome that had been stressed by the Italian archaeologists working in the region during the fascist occupation (Gilkes and Miraj 2013; Pessina 2014). For a limited number of years, before the total withdrawal of any relationship with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, a Russian influence can be recognised in the considerable attention given to early historic and prehistoric archaeology and ethnography, paralleling similar developments in the Soviet world (Klejn 2012, 65–72, 90–91). It is interesting to note that the popularity that archaeology enjoyed within the regime was related to the fact that the discipline was seen as (1) scientific, (2) an integral part of the modernization of the country and (3) ideologically faithful to the regime. So, some of the main archaeological investigations in the country, particularly in prehistory, adopted the new scientific techniques coming from Soviet archaeology and went hand in hand with major public works critical for the development of the country, like land-reclamation (on this see Rugg 1994), e.g. in the Korça plain around Maliq, that was conducted with a substantial use of prisoners' forced labour.

Heritage destruction

So much for new heritage emerging from the ashes of the revolutionary moment, but what about the destruction and selection of what could not continue to be heritage? Monuments/places of cult were the obvious immediate target. Overall, 2169 religious buildings (primarily mosques and Orthodox churches) were closed through the years of the regime (Qazimi 2012). This did not happen immediately

after the establishment of the regime but was the culmination of a campaign of de-legitimisation that started in the immediate post-World War Two aftermath and was undoubtedly a direct consequence of revolution (Vickers 1999, 177–180). A party directive issued in 1967, thus many years after the revolution, interestingly illustrates the approach taken by the regime in carrying out its religious cleansing (Peçi 2014). After asserting that cult buildings were simply 'too numerous', i.e. transforming the very existence of religious monuments into a 'problem' to be solved, the document suggested a linear cut of 70% of all structures. Interestingly, survival would be guaranteed only to those monuments bearing 'extraordinary artistic value', a criterion that somewhat creepily mimics the 'outstanding universal value' of UNESCO (Albania had been a member of that organisation since 1958).

The campaign of 'eradication' of religion was not only conceived in 'destructive' terms but had also a 'creative' aspect to it, which can be seen in the establishment of an atheist museum (arguably moulded on the Russian models of the 1930s; Adhami 2001, 134; Paine 2009) in the northern city of Shkodër, which, incidentally, was one of the places of greatest penetration by the Catholic church in the country and which, through the years, produced possibly the largest proportion of dissenters.

Together with churches and mosques, less formalised types of heritage were also affected by the modernising impetus of the regime. This was never as visible in the country as in the centre of the capital city, which had already been moulded by Italians with many monumental constructions (Bleta 2010). And yet, despite their iconicity, the Italian buildings were easily associated with modernity and left standing. So the 'Casa del Fascio' (the headquarters of the fascist party in Tirana) was transformed into the main university building in 1957 (Bleta 2010, 83). Like elsewhere in the Balkans (e.g. Mattioli 2014), by and large the Ottoman past was instead interpreted as 'backward' (Puto 2003) and its legacy (with some extraordinary exceptions, like the city-museums of Gjirokaster and Berat, see Papleka 1987; Riza 1978) was deemed not worth preserving. Thus, for instance, the old bazaar of Tirana and its dendritic layout was swiftly removed to make room for the newly built Palace of Culture, constructed with the financial support of Moscow before the closing down of international relations (see Bleta 2010, 84).

The post-revolution of 1991

Creating heritage between the public and private sphere

The end of communism in Albania unfolded as rapidly as its beginning had and, despite attempts at a number of progressive reforms, within a handful of months between 1990 and 1991 the regime was overthrown under the weight of student protest and mass fleeing from the country. Even if they did not culminate in large-scale bloodshed, the end result of such events was no less revolutionary than those of the 1940s, with the former leader of the communist party, Ramiz Alia, being imprisoned for a while (Abrahams 2015, 41–64; Vickers 1999, 210–234). As in other post-socialist countries, a certain degree of continuity can be recognised in terms of the people holding power, but it must be considered that the overall social and political framework in which some of these same people were acting was radically different (Abrahams 2015, 65–83).

The two processes of heritage creation and destruction previously highlighted can also be recognised at work in the transition to the new democratic regime. As far as broader interpretations and emphasis on different kinds of heritages are concerned, the discourse related to ethno-genesis and national origin continued to feature highly in the tumultuous background of the Balkan wars and US intervention in Kosovo of the 1990s (Abrahams 2015, 247–266; Lubonja 2002). The relevance of such a narrative to Albanians, particularly those belonging to younger generations, has gradually disappeared (Higgins 2016).

Private property claims could now be laid on land, goods and built environment, and this was of enormous importance, as what was once exclusive property of the state could be subtracted from the public sphere and reclaimed for private use (Damşa 2016, 63–80; Verdery and Humphrey 2004). Within this generalised climate of the shrinking presence of the state, giving up property rights to it – an unavoidable step in heritage legislation (Carman 2005) – became extremely difficult, and it is

not coincidental that the first organic law on cultural heritage protection (after a first, 'emergency' one issued in 1992) was issued in the country many years after the regime change, in 2003.[2] This is not to say that 'new' heritage was not created during this period, it is just that the state was not at the centre of this, instead limiting its activity to the management (with limited resources) of what was already there.

Personal and family heritage of individual families of dissenters persecuted by the regime started to become important and celebrated in ways similar to those of heroes of liberation in the 1940s and 1950s, even if undoubtedly on a smaller scale, through the activities of foundations dedicated to famous dissenters (e.g. the Ivanaj brothers, who were ministers before the revolution).[3]

The resurgence of religion and related communities fostered a renewed attention to cult monuments, and their preservation became one of the main priorities, in which external actors played a considerable role. These involved both Orthodox and Catholic churches, as well as various Muslim communities and interest groups. This is the case, for instance, for the projects involving collaboration between various Albanian institutions, NGOs and various representatives of local religious communities (e.g. at the Orthodox centre of Voskopoje; see Figure 1 and Durand 2005; for a comparative perspective see Klaic 2011).

The opening up of collaborations with foreign institutions was something in which state institutions were active. Particularly within archaeology, this marked a major difference from the pre-revolutionary moment that represented the apex of Albanian isolationism. Foreign archaeological missions and collaborations started to operate in the country, and often their establishment followed the usual paths of international cultural diplomacy, strengthening pre-existing relationships (e.g. with France and Italy; Cabanes, Baçe, and Ceka 2008; De Maria 2012; Lera and Touchais 2002) and creating new ones (with the U.K. and U.S.A.; Bejko and Hodges 2006; Papadopoulos et al. 2014). And yet, because of different attitudes towards research, these relationships were often problematic and ended up affecting research priorities and heritage only to a limited extent. The honest and disarming first-hand portrayal of collaboration with archaeological institutions in early democratic Albania (i.e. in the 1990s) contained in Richard Hodges's recent *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Placemaking* (2016) provides an accurate portrayal of the difficulties of cohering, not only different scientific traditions (neo-liberal vs. state archaeology), but also the expectations of the Albanian archaeologists of the time,

Figure 1. Vandalised frescoes from Voskopoje (Wikimedia Image).

who sometimes treated scientific collaboration as a way to extract personal gains from state-owned archaeological heritage.[4]

Archaeology and related heritage were essentially perceived as a private enterprise. At the same time, however, archaeologists' forms of resistance to the imposition of a neo-liberal agenda ('their business was science, […] not management,' according to Hodges 2016: 84) indicate the conflicted relationship they had with the new order of things.

Deleting the past

The neo-liberal ideology of the 'liberated east' often portrayed the state negatively, as something that had to be dismantled (for some, through a 'shock therapy' of liberalisations) so that the invisible hand of the market would bring its copious fruits to everybody (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 5). But, as the state was identified by citizens as the main owner/guardian of Albanian heritage, this heritage also lost its aura of protection.

Looting was, for much of the 1990s, a widespread phenomenon in Albania (Adhami 2001, 290–300). This can be interpreted as an extreme form of appropriation or self-determined transfer of property rights from the state to the private (Carman 2005, 73–77). To this day, despite the giant leaps made by Albanian archaeology (also thanks to the positive effect of international collaboration, e.g. Bejko and Hodges 2006), traffic of illicit antiquities is still a seriously underestimated issue within Albania.

Somewhat predictably, and similarly to what had happened during the 1940s with the Ottoman legacy, the period before the new revolution was struck by a *damnatio memoriae*, inclusive of most aspects of life. Various strategies were adopted to cleanse the country of communism and its insignia. The quickest way to achieve this was to de-communistize, i.e. remove insignia from buildings still standing that could then be converted to a new accepted function; this was a frequent solution (Iacono and Këlliçi 2016; but see Young and Kaczmarek 2008 for similar processes in other former Eastern Bloc countries).

Targeted and pre-determined destruction of symbolic buildings constructed during the regime occurred more rarely, but instead it was the very urban fabric of the socialist cities that was targeted. The re-distribution of land property (De Waal 2005, 21–24), combined with an extremely 'easy' concession of building permits and scarce control of illegal construction, produced hectic new development activity in many urban centres. It was the urgency of the new, rather than the will to obliterate the old, that was the driving force behind the dismantling of Albania's socialist cities (Pojani 2009, 2010, 2015).

Terror and beyond

In terms of general discourse adopted in post-socialist Albania, the regime experience was regularly framed in terms of trauma and terror, abiding to a general trend occurring over much of the former Eastern Bloc (Light 2000a, 2000b; Yurchak 2006, 20–26). This represented the authorised heritage discourse (*sensu* Smith 2006; henceforth AHD) of socialism and was essentially based on the representation of Albanian communism as a totalitarian regime in Hannah Arendt's (1973) sense of the world.[5] The virtual Museum of Memory,[6] a website realised in partnership between NGOs and some Albanian institutions (including the Ministry of Culture, Figure 2), presents a number of cumulative statistics on the regime and is a good illustration of how such discourse is articulated. It involves the representation of all aspects of surveillance (secret police, pervasive control) and repression (imprisonment, execution, limitation of liberty), with a specific focus on notable victims (either clergy or artists/intellectuals). Everyday life is normally left aside, except for cases that can emphasise the difficult situation through which Albanians had to live (e.g. the lack of food and other essential goods) and hence, indirectly, the failings of the system that had produced these. Showing such failings is implicitly aimed at reassuring citizens, via a negative comparison with the past, of the better prospects of Albanians under the new democratic order.

Figure 2. Homepage of the website 'Muzeu i Memories' (after muzeuimemories.info).

The emphasis on terror is of course entirely understandable, particularly for the years immediately after the regime change (Uzzell 1989; Uzzell and Ballantyne 2010). The repression experience was so overwhelming that, as a matter of fact, it could not be otherwise. The historical record informs us of the scale of what the regime did, with over 6000 people killed (over a population that went from 1 to 3 million) and the extensive use of torture and incarceration in prohibitive conditions.[7] Besides, there are a myriad of smaller episodes of displacement connected to the repression (i.e. relocation of a family from one area to the opposite corner of the country, denial of the right to participate in public life for those who were accused of being opponents, and many more) that are difficult to account for in numbers but allow us to gauge even more accurately the scars left on people's lives (for accounts of such practices see Woodcock 2016).

As highlighted by Assmann (2013), in many Central and Eastern European examples, the trauma of communist terror was recursively identified with an external element, i.e. Soviet colonial intervention. This, in turn, allowed people from Poland and the Czech Republic, for instance, to project themselves in the domain of victimhood, while Russians and their supporters remained the perpetrators (e.g. Applebaum 2012). This was not an option for Albania, which was isolated for much of its communist history (Milo 2013). In Albania, the memorial contraposition between victims and perpetrators has remained deadlocked in an internal confrontation which to this day continues to poison political debate with 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 (if such a thing can actually exist; see Lehrer 2010; Viejo-Rose 2011; see Giblin 2014; Walters, Laven, and Davis 2017). As a result of this situation, the response of the state in terms of creation of new heritage of the communist past, even if portraying the AHD previously described, has been timid at best. As a matter of fact, the post-revolutionary moment translated into an almost complete self-censorship on this topic, which became a kind of taboo heritage (Carr and Colls 2016).

Heritagising communism in Albania

Then, in the early 2010s, things started to change. The creation of the second floor exhibition in the National Historical Museum of Tirana in 2012 (tellingly entitled 'Terrori Komunist në Shqiperia' or 'Communist terror in Albania', see Maltezi 2012) and the realisation of the so-called Postbllok memorial

in 2013 in Tirana marked a renewed phase of heritage-making aimed at bringing the communist period to the attention of the public. The latter monument (see Figure 3, after Isto 2016) featured a mixture of *in-situ* and decontextualized elements, including an unavoidable fragment of the Berlin wall (with the iconic graffiti) and the armed concrete skeleton of a gallery from the infamous prison camp of Spaç, in the north of the country, as well as a bunker, the quintessential (and ubiquitous) symbol of Albanian communism. Bunkers were defensive structures that had been constructed in the hundreds of thousands in every corner of the country (over 750, 000 according to estimations, see Stefa and Mydyti 2009).[8]

The new wave of heritagisation of communism in Albania has been characterised by a much more market-conscious attitude of the economic potential that heritage attractions related with this topic can have (Caraba 2011; Ivanov 2009). This is illustrated by the fact that bunkers, specifically, which are immediately recognised by foreigners as equivalent to Albanian communism, have been selected as the primary marketing symbol for the heritage focusing more or less narrowly on this theme. The Bunk'Art[9] museum opened at the end of 2014 and was located in a gigantic (over a hundred rooms, including a miniature parliament hall) military bunker inside a hill located at the outskirts of Tirana. The use of such an impressive structure represents the only real linkage with the communist past. The exhibition here, inaugurated on the 70th anniversary of the Liberation War in 2014, is actually dedicated to this historical phase, and hence reiterates the old connection between communism and the Revolution/Liberation. The fact that the government in power – and thus responsible for the realisation of Bunk'Art – was a socialist one, as the Albanian socialist party has emerged from the ashes of the communist party in the 1990, has been criticised as, among other things, an attempt to appropriate the symbolism of the old regime.[10]

The second example of memorialisation of the communist past, named Bunk'Art 2,[11] was inaugurated in late 2016 and is located in another decommissioned bunker, this time in the centre of Tirana. Differently from Bunk'Art, Bunk'Art 2 was instead, at least in the intentions of those who designed it, explicitly dedicated to the memory of communism. The opening of the museum has been extremely controversial. In informal conversations, many criticised its non-public nature.[12] Additionally, the ticket price was set very high in proportion to the cost of living, creating a non-secondary issue of access for the local population and thus limiting the potential role of the museum in stimulating debate among

Figure 3. Postbllok monument in the centre of Tirana (after Isto 2016, Photo by Raino Isto).

Albanians. A fictitious concrete bunker, imitating those ubiquitous in the Albanian landscape, has been created and placed at the entrance of the museum. Such an attempt was not received positively by protesters, who tried to set fire to it during an organised demonstration, with very little success, given the nature of the structure. The episode could potentially be quickly dismissed as an internal political quarrel between the socialist government and demonstrators from the opposition party, but this would mean underestimating the fact that the fake bunker stirred considerable disapproval among Albanians, regardless of political affiliation. Discussion with denizens of the capital revealed a diffused unease at what they read as an attempt at disneyfication/commodification (Prideaux 2003; Waitt 2000) of their communist life experience,[13] which had been pre-digested for the tourist gaze through the adoption of the recognisable shape of the concrete bunker. Apart from these issues, the exhibition inside Bunk'Art 2 was relatively traditional and respected the AHD of terror and trauma previously described, occasionally through the powerful use of oral testimony from prisoners and other persecuted subjects.

The limits of the AHD

It has been argued recently that, in the Albanian context, a heritage discourse on communism based solely on trauma and terror, though these aspects are crucial, is not sufficient, as this fails to account for the complexity of memory processes related to that period (Iacono and Këlliçi 2015). There are some precise social and historical reasons for this. As suggested by Burawoy and Verdery (1999) and others (e.g. Hirt 2012; Peshkopia 2008), the fall of socialism materialised *ex nihilo* a private sphere in many of the former communist states. In turn, together with increasing the previously suggested importance of individual and family heritage, this situation created the conditions for cultivating forms of memory different in content from that of the official state discourse. These bypassed the constraints of the AHD and allowed the 'creeping in' of different narratives of the past, centred on personal memories and sometimes on forms of nostalgia (Borneman 1992; Boym 2001; Macdonald 2013, 99–108; Todorova 2010b; Todorova and Gille 2010).

Although these alternative memories rarely manage to construct coherent discourses, they are nevertheless present. Moreover, over time their effect will likely increase, rather than decrease, with the gradual generational turnover that is slowly transforming a population that had spent most of its life under the regime into a new country with little direct exposure to that regime.

A few years ago, an opinion survey on the public perception of heritage from the dictatorship in Albania reported a considerable interest in structures and monuments of the communist period, which, in the opinion of the interviewees, were to be protected with the active investment of resources on the part of the state (Iacono and Këlliçi 2015). Within the broader sample, younger generations showed an interest in the heritage of this period, but this interest was related to the memory of the past regime for only a limited number of respondents.

More recent interviews conducted with young 'culture vultures' (Merriman 1991; in this case students of archaeology and cultural heritage) confirm that those who will become the future stewards of Albanian cultural heritage, while considering the heritage of communism to be 'theirs', had a lot of curiosity and unanswered questions in relation to the period, particularly the every-day dimension of it, which was regularly omitted by the state narrative. For this aspect of the communist past the only source of information existing were families. This curiosity regarding everyday life during communism is so present that even marketing has recently decided to tap into it. The advertisement campaign for *Glina,* a water brand from the period of the regime, features material culture and visual appeals eliciting the very materiality of life under the regime, with its restrictions presented as an inherent part of its nostalgic allure. Similar forms of nostalgia, focusing on 'the previous era's everyday life', have been recently defined by Nadkarni and Shevchenko (2014, 74) as *Proustian* in other Central and Eastern European contexts.

While the state is unable to utter the memory of the mundane, the family, due to processes of self-censorship, is sometimes unable to effectively articulate narratives of repression. Conducting

ethnography at the prison camp of Spaç during the most important commemoration for former political inmates, I realised that participants who had spent considerable amount of time as prisoners complained about how difficult it was for them to communicate their experiences in the repression machine of the regime to grandsons, and more generally people of a younger age, belonging to their families. Difficulties in similar processes of mnemonic recollection/reconciliation are by no means unique to Albania (see Young and Light 2016 on post-1989 Romania) or indeed to the post-socialist world, as attested by the work of Drozdzewski (2012) and De Nardi (2016), dealing primarily with analogous clashes related to post-World War Two memory in Poland and Italy (see also papers in Drozdzewski, De Nardi, and Waterton 2016). What emerges, in general terms, is a desire for knowledge which does not translate uniquely to the need for heritage to be educational and/or informative (Smith and Campbell 2016). The ultimate goal underlying this request is the production of more well-rounded accounts of life under the regime, able to emotionally reconcile, in some way, the AHD of the state with familiar and individual memories that can sometimes spell things differently.

This desire for knowledge and clash of perspectives has been epitomised by a recent survey conducted on a statistically significant sample of Albanians country-wide by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The survey has shown a lack of knowledge beyond the most basic level about the regime (OSCE Presence in Albania 2016, 53); this lack includes aspects like persecution that are in theory included in current representations of communism (57). The clash between public and private views on communism is exemplified by the fact that the majority of interviewee in most regions of the country (inclusive of the dissident north but with the telling exclusion of central Albania, currently the most economically prosperous area) actually thought that communism was 'a good idea poorly implemented' (58), thus explicitly contradicting the current AHD. More worryingly, the majority of respondents showed a positive opinion on the figure of the dictator Enver Hoxha, who was responsible for much of the repressive activity occurring during the regime (67). Again, this is understandable if we take into account the personal cult of which Hoxha was the object while alive, which translates through time into a positive 'irrational' judgement (Uzzell 1989) when transmitted via the 'alternative' familiar memory channel to the new generations without further elaboration.

Conclusions

In this paper I have proposed some considerations on the ways in which revolutions, in particular those of the twentieth century, affected heritage. This influence translated into processes of heritage destruction and creation (Sørensen and Viejo-Rose 2015) that appear remarkably similar despite their different historical contexts.

The yardstick by which I have tried to explore these themes has been the analysis of the development and transformation of heritage conceptions in Albania over the last 70 years or so. The two main revolutions that concerned this country occurred in 1945, leading to the creation of the communist state, and in 1991, culminating in the establishment of a parliamentary democracy. Comparing the changes at these two critical moments, it has been possible to highlight parallel strategies for transforming main heritage discourses, adopted by very different political orders. Commonalities can be identified in: (1) the rejection of the heritage of the pre-revolutionary period, (2) the grounding of the new order in the appropriation of the sacrifices of some of the categories that had suffered either during the transition or in the previous historical phase (heroes of liberation for communism and prisoners and political opponents for democracy) and, finally, (3) the preservation of the nation (defined in various ways and through the mobilisation of its ancestral formation narratives) as a main unifying concept, able to effectively legitimise the revolutionary change.

A main element of difference emerging in the 1990s in comparison to the previous revolution resides in the different relationship between public and private spheres. For instance, the re-establishment of private property in a climate of extreme untrustworthiness toward the state resulted in increased difficulty for Albanians to accept the role of the state in heritage and to cede property rights to it, or respect those already existing. Furthermore, the ascendance of the private sphere of memory has

created a contradiction with the AHD on communism adopted by the Albanian state; this contradiction has emerged in recent opinion surveys and heritage analyses.

The co-existence of different narratives on communism has created a tension because, as eloquently highlighted by Yurchak:

> For the analysis of this seemingly paradoxical mix of the negative and positive values, of alienations and attachments, we need a language that does not reduce the description of socialist reality to dichotomies of the official and the unofficial, the state and the people, and to moral judgments shaped within cold war ideologies. (Yurchak 2006, 27)

Democratic states like Albania are, naturally enough, intrinsically more open to the incorporation of nuanced views of their past than were the preceding dictatorships, and this represents an undoubted advantage for the future ability of heritage to bridge the previously-highlighted contradiction between authorised discourses and private recollections. And yet, the only way in which it will be possible to do so will be through greater consultation with the various components that comprise post-socialist civil societies.

Although many of the issues discussed in this paper are specific to Albania, it is beyond doubt that they resonate with similar situations of twentieth century post-revolutionary change around Europe (e.g. the former Eastern Bloc), and beyond (Africa, Southeast Asia). Because of this, I believe that there is much to learn from an attentive critical comparison of individual case studies, such as the one presented here.

Notes

1. To quote but a few: the Exhibition on the Anti-Fascist War of National Liberation, 1946; the House Museum of the Party, 1949; the House Museums in Shkodër and Labinot/Elbasan, 1952, and in Përmet, 1954; for a complete list see Adhami 2001, 320–325.
2. http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/albania/al_forcultheritage2003_engtof.pdf
3. http://www.ivanaj-foundations.org/web/projects/historical-exhibition/
4. According to Hodges, archaeologists '…believed that they were entitled to handsome stipends for permitting the Butrint Foundation to operate in this, Albania's most privileged, domain. Their negotiating rate started with three apartments in Paris and five Benzs' (Hodges 2016, 84).
5. It is not the place here to discuss the validity of this equation, on which much has been written already (see Todorova 2010a for a brief review of the different arguments).
6. http://muzeuimemories.info
7. It has been argued that Albanians overall were condemned to about 914.000 years of imprisonment, according to data from http://muzeuimemories.info
8. It is not possible to discuss this in any detail for space reasons, but it is worth considering that the importance of bunkers in socialist Albania is obviously not limited to their military function as it resonates with broader notions of control and alertness pervasive during the regime (Galaty, Stocker, and Watkinson 2000; Glass 2008).
9. http://bunkart.al/1/home
10. Such critique originated from commenters both to the left and right, politically: http://www.mapo.al/2016/03/pushteti-i-simbolikes-si-dhe-pse-e-majta-e-perdor-enver-hoxhen/1/comment-page-1; http://www.postbllok.com/bunkerrama/; http://peizazhe.com/2014/11/23/bunker-per-bunker/
11. http://bunkart.al/2/home
12. http://balkanweb.com/site/qeveria-shperblen-carlo-bollinon-i-jep-biznesin-e-bunkart/ http://www.citynews.al/2016/04/afera-bunkart-dhe-carlo-bollino/1
13. On this see also a recent online article by the anthropologist Olsi Lelaj: http://www.rivistadiscienzesociali.it/lets-talk-about-communism-notes-on-politics-knowledge-production-and-ethics-in-contemporary-albanian-i/

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Francesco Iacono is an archaeologist and heritage specialist and has been involved in research projects in Albania, Greece and Italy. His research interests are quite broad and range in scope from cultural heritage of communism to Mediterranean archaeology, social theory (in particular Marxism), and history of archaeological thought. His current Marie Slodowska Curie project is entitled Cultural Heritage of Dictatorship in Albania (CHODIA) and focuses on the recent (from the communist dictatorship period) cultural heritage of this country and its perception in contemporary society.

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