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Citation for published version:

Krasniqi, G 2013, 'State Borders, Symbolic Boundaries and Contested Geographical Space: Citizenship Struggles in Kosovo' *Transitions*, vol 52, no. 2, pp. 29-51.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Author final version (often known as postprint)

Published In:

Transitions

Publisher Rights Statement:

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State borders, symbolic boundaries and contested geographical space: citizenship struggles in Kosovo

By Gëzim Krasniqi

Introduction

Space, both in its physical and symbolic definition, has traditionally been a central element of state and nation. Therefore, the concept of national citizenship merges space, nation and state through the dual capacity to include or exclude individuals. While looking at the process of symbolic modification of territory in Kosovo¹ during the last twenty years, the paper argues that the symbolic changes and landscape modifications represent deliberate attempts of both Serb and Albanian elites for symbolic control over their perceived national territory and (re)definition of hierarchical citizenship.² The paper looks at the construction and replacement of identity markers and symbols of territory – flags, sacred national sites, monuments, cultural objects, street names and signs – in Kosovo in the context of symbolic exclusion of individuals or particular groups from a political and geographic space.

Appropriation and modification of territory and space can be part of the strategies of war and peace, mainly through the deliberate destruction and replacement of cultural objects and symbols of the ‘enemy’, as well as part of the struggle to define citizenship and citizenry in a polity. Therefore, the modification of territory becomes an aim of different conflicting parties because territory often holds deep symbolic meaning for people and represents “a vital constituent of the definition and identification of the group living within it” (Herb & Kaplan, 1999, p. 2). Whereas expansion of territory is the goal, wars commonly serve as the means, for apart from killings, deportation, population movements and ethno-demographic changes – to name but a few effects – wars also bring about appropriation and cultural purification of territory. This process of purification, mostly realised through the destruction of cultural objects and symbols of the ‘enemy’, is rarely accidental.

Such was the case of the Yugoslav wars, which brought about large population movements, ethno-demographic engineering, “ethnic unmixing” (Brubaker, 1996, p. 166), and the destruction of a huge number of cultural and religious sites in an attempt to attack and eradicate social institutions and cultural heritage, as well as to reshape space and modify territories in line with the political aims and territorial claims of the colliding

¹ Kosovo is a landlocked territory of 10,887 sq. km and has a population of around 1.8 million. In 1991 Kosovo’s population was estimated to be just under 2 million, with Albanians comprising 82.2 per cent of the population and Serbs 9.9 per cent (See Judah, 2000, p. 313). Although the ethnic composition of Kosovo changed as a result of the war and migration, reliable and accurate data is still missing. In 2011, the Statistical Office of Kosovo organised the first census in two decades, but it was boycotted by Serbs living in the northern part of Kosovo. Nonetheless, the number of Serbs living in Kosovo is estimated to be around 130,000 or around 7 per cent. See <http://esk.rks-gov.net/rekos2011/?cid=2.1>.

² According to Stephen Castles, the varying power (in political, military, economic and cultural terms) of states has led to the emergence of a similar hierarchy of rights and freedoms of their peoples, which he refers to as hierarchical citizenship. “Citizenship as a global norm implies the possession of set of civil, political and social rights, but again this legal principle masks a steep graduation in real rights and freedoms” (Castles 2005, p. 215). In many countries in the world, it is ethnic or religious minorities that experience *de facto* exclusion from political, economic and social participation.

parties. The systematic targeting of the heritage of the ‘other’ in the former Yugoslavia was widespread. The deliberate destruction of different national, cultural and religious symbols had a twofold purpose; first, it erased any identification markers that could act as proof of the longevity and historic presence of the opposing nation or ethnic group in a disputed territory, and second, it paved the way for reconstruction of the physical space to match the historical/cultural objectives of the opposing group.

1. The myth of territory and national identity

Territory is a crucial element in the creation of national identity. Thus, “territorially based identities are just some of the myriad identities possessed by people” (Herb & Kaplan, 1999, p. 1). The notion of ‘homeland’ or ‘motherland’/‘fatherland’ merges both a particular territory and group identity. So, fatherland, or “the holy land in which the people dwell, with its memories, heroic exploits, monuments, and the resting places of ancestors” (Smith, 2003, p. ii) serves as one of the sacred sources and founding myths of modern nations. Since state and national identity are tied to territory and space (the latter are vital to national feeling), nationalists have for a long time used images of place “to link people to the land” (Herb, 1999, p. 17). Territory in itself means nothing more than mere geography; hence, what matters is the myth attached to a particular territory – the idea that a certain land is the place where the nation began and that, consequently, that territory is sacred (Schöpflin, 1997, pp. 28-29) - that strengthens attachment to a piece of land and reinforces group identities. Such myths of territory can help elites to mobilise mass support, strengthen authority and engender legitimacy, and above all, justify territorial claims over certain pieces of land. Once nationalism is at work, landscape is politicised and modified in harmony with the prevailing national narratives. This process is carried out mostly by symbolic appropriation and modification of a territory, usually leading to the “territorialization of memory” (Smith, 2003, p. 134) and the politicisation of space.

In addition to myths of territory, symbols and rituals are crucial in the process of ‘sacralisation of territory’. In the words of Schöpflin, “myth is the narrative, the set of ideas, whereas ritual is the acting out, the articulation of myth; symbols are the building blocks of myths and the acceptance or veneration of symbols is a significant aspect of ritual” (1997, p. 20). Everyday commemorations of national and historical days represent outstanding manifestations of the acting out of myths.

Various national elites have utilised myths and invoked them in order to mobilise their own people, exclude others, screen out certain memories, as well as to establish a sense of solidarity (Schöpflin, 1997, p. 22). By the same token, everything that symbolises and characterises territory – flags, maps, anniversaries, monuments, cultural objects – plays an immense role in reinforcing the myth of territory (Schöpflin 1997, p. 29). The Serb myth of the “Battle of Kosovo” (Duijzings, 2003, pp. 176-202) represents such an example. In other words, an identity that is based on a territorial myth and which is closely associated with it, is, as Kaplan named it, a “spatial identity” (1999, p. 35).

1.1. Space, politics and identity

Spatial identities are only one kind of identity that connect people. “The spatial identity of a national group is composed of land deemed essential to its security and vitality” (Herb & Kaplan, 1999, p. 3). According to Herb and Kaplan, this particular piece of land that is crucial to a national group, may consist of many parts: it may be the actual space, a particular terrain that defines the group, the locational context *vis-à-vis* other powers, the historic legacy of a particular area, or economic and military-strategic importance (ibid). Although landscapes in general have much in common, nevertheless, each nation treasures its own particular geographical features and elements; hence, cultural heritage and geographical traits are integral parts of the national identity (Lowenthal, 1994, p. 17). Häkli, on the other side, used the term “discursive landscape” (1999, p. 124) to emphasise various ways in which geography is involved in the evolution of national identities and to address the specific relation between national identity, culture and space.

In reality, this kind of landscape is produced by a range of actions and activities taken by elites in order to erect and build new symbols and signs of material culture in a given territory through the process of territorialisation of memory and politicisation of space. In return, the process of reifying territory creates conditions for “spatial socialization” (Paasi cited in Herb, 1999, p. 17) as members of a given nation become socialised within a geographically bounded space – their homeland. In this way, the political attitudes and beliefs of people living in a certain territory are shaped by symbols found on it.

As far as state space is concerned, Neil Brenner *et al* (2003, p. 7) identify three dimensions of it. The first is *state space in the narrow sense*. It refers to the state's distinctive form of spatiality, comprising both the changing organisation of state territoriality in the modern inter-state system and the evolving role of borders, boundaries, and frontiers. The second dimension - *state space in the integral sense* – refers to the specific ways and modes, both territorial and non-territorial, in which state institutions are mobilised strategically to regulate and reorganise social and economic relations. Finally, *state space in the representational sense* refers to competing spatial imaginaries that represent state and political spaces in different ways. In addition, these spatial imaginaries also represent an important source for political representation and the mobilisation of territory-, scale-, and place- specific forms of state intervention (ibid.).

1.2. Symbols and other identity markers

Symbols have an enormous potency in political processes and their instrumentalisation is bound up with conflicts and may even lead to wars. According to Schöpflin, “[t]he potency of symbols in the political process derives from the fact that they are vehicles for conceptualization” (1997, p. 28). With regard to the relationship between people and symbols, Cassirer and Langer argue that men live in a symbolic world created by them and that symbolic thinking is the fundamental function of human consciousness and constitutes the basis of any kind of human activity (cited in Mach, 1993, p. 22). Hence, symbols are essential identity markers. Territory, too, is conceptualised through symbols. Likewise, according to Cohen, social relationships develop through and are maintained by symbols; “We ‘see’ groups through their symbols” (cited in Mach, 1993, p. 39). This explains the fact why states aim at monopolisation of symbolic life and symbolic control over particular territories.

As already mentioned, myths and symbols are utilised by elites to build legitimacy and reinforce authority as well as control over people and territory. Mach argues that symbols are utilised precisely because of their role as vehicles that convey values (1993, p. 37). Everything that symbolises territory – flags, maps, anniversaries, houses, streets, squares, and cemeteries, religious sites etc., – is part of the symbolic world of a group of people and/or a nation. Even boundaries which people build to separate themselves from the others are of a symbolic nature (ibid, 20). Since territories are crucial elements in the development of national identity, everything that symbolises a territory serves as an identity marker. Thus, political projects of the national and state elites set up the ‘symbolic fabric’ that, by producing symbols, links “the self-understanding of a people with a particular territory, concrete places, everyday practices and imagination” (Häkli, 1999, p. 130). This way, the emerging symbols in a particular territory serve to document the longevity of a nation’s life and to strengthen identity by linking it to a certain territory. Likewise, they serve as links between people and polities.

Identity, territory and space are closely connected to each other. Mach argues that territory conceptualized as homeland is the main component of ethnic identity (cited in Duijzings, 2003, p. 62). A glorified and much-cherished territory and space is often used by political and national elites to transform and reinforce ethnic and national identities in line with nationalist projects and goals. So, symbolic appropriation and modification of the territory is essential in ‘proving’ one’s longevity in a particular territory and dominance over ‘the other’. Throughout the twentieth century, Serb and Albanian elites have engaged in a struggle for political domination in the hierarchy of citizenship, symbolic appropriation and modification of the territory and space of Kosovo.

1.3. Citizenship, space and boundaries

Space in general, and public space in particular, has historically been an important element for the emergence and development of citizenship. As Isin and Wood argue, “If we consider the spaces within which citizenship rights were developed, it is clear that they were centred in non-domestic and, in this way, public spaces. Or, to look at it from the reverse view, citizenship rights were mapped in congruence with access to public space” (1999, p. 78). Likewise, borders and boundaries are essential in the process of state and citizenship constitution. They are both physical and symbolic. Traditionally it is physical borders that determine the scope and size of a polity. In addition, they determine who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’. Nonetheless, a rigid view of citizenship that derives from its dual capacity to include insiders and exclude outsiders seems to have started being exchanged for a more flexible definition, one where state borders do not coincide with citizenry and symbolic boundaries. As far as the latter are concerned, they cut across both the would-be nation state and trans-border ethno-cultural communities.

Thus, even in those cases where states have put in place one tier and integrated citizenship regimes, symbolic boundaries emerge within the state and its public and urban space(s). According to Yuval-Davis (2003) bounded urban spaces play the role of a daily theatre for the performance of (struggles over) citizenship. This performance of political identity involves the intersection and (re)articulation of ethnic, class, and gender differences, as well as continuing struggles over the socio-institutional boundaries delimiting the exercise of citizenship. Therefore, different groups struggle over the

control of different spaces, thus leading to a process of spatial inclusion/exclusion, which is not necessarily related to the central state level of citizenship inclusion/exclusion. In other words, even in those cases when citizenship regimes are open and inclusive towards all the residents of that territory without discrimination over ethnicity, language or gender, exclusion can result from the continuing struggles over the socio-institutional, symbolic and special boundaries delimiting the rights to citizenship. Therefore, urban space in particular serves as the arena for new modes of political action and for new forms of political identity.

In what follows, the paper looks at the role of geography and space as a daily theatre in the process of continuous struggles over the socio-institutional, symbolic and special boundaries delimiting the rights to citizenship in the case of Kosovo.

2. Wars and continuous modification of territory and space: the case of Kosovo

Albanian and Serb elites have had overlapping historical claims to the territory of Kosovo for a long period of time, thus making Kosovo's territory "[a] landscape whose ownership is disputed" (Brown, 1994, p. 796). As a consequence, in the last one hundred years the territory of Kosovo, a territory with disputed ownership, has been modified many times and has known major symbolical changes. As in other similar cases, Kosovo in certain historical moments, during or after wars, has experienced phases of "the appropriation and 'cultural' purification of the landscape, the destruction of churches and mosques, and the elimination of the cultural heritage of the 'Other(s)'" (Duijzings, 2003, p. 37). During and after the annexation of Kosovo by Serbia in 1913 as a result of Serbia's attempt to change the composition of the territory of Kosovo and establish full control over it, many old and traditional Albanian³ cultural objects and traditional houses called *kulla* (tower) were destroyed; many places were renamed with Slavic names. This kind of modification of territory represents a nationalist cleansing of space with the purpose of legitimising territorial claims.

In the post Ottoman period, many Albanians and Muslims were expelled or killed and most of the visible traces of their culture were erased, so that "[t]he 'reality' of new landscape [becomes] powerful evidence for the rightfulness of territorial claims" (Herb, 1999, p. 23) of Serbia. Nevertheless, the next step of the Serb government was to repopulate the destroyed and emptied areas with Serb and Montenegrin inhabitants. The first attempt was made in 1914 with the adoption of the 'Law-decree on the settlement of the newly liberated areas', followed by the decree on 'preliminary measures for agrarian reform' of February 1919, which aimed at offering many favours, advantages and incentives (including land and exception from taxes for an initial period) for Serbian and Montenegrin families willing to move to Kosovo (Malcolm, 1998, p. 279-280). Those new villages and neighbourhoods that were built were given "suitably uplifting names from Serbian mythology" (Malcolm, p. 281), such as Devet Jugovića (Nine Jugovićs – the nine brothers of the Jugović family that died in the Battle of Kosovo), General Janković (a commander of the Serb army in the First Balkan War), Srbica, etc. Adopting Mach's terminology (1993, p. 196), it can be concluded that the reconstruction of historic

³ By using the adjective 'Albanian' or 'Serb' to describe local populations, cultures or identity markers, I do not wish to suggest that they are monoliths. Rather, it refers to people, symbols and objects perceived as such.

places in the territory of Kosovo after the annexation by Serbia - a symbol of the continuation and rebirth of Serbs - was done at the expense of Albanian and pre-existing Ottoman historic symbols and cultural heritage.

As far as formal citizenship of Albanians in the interwar Yugoslavia is concerned, their status was downgraded to that of a religious minority and apart from being generally treated as second-class citizens, various attempts were made by the state to facilitate their migration to Turkey (Rava, 2010; Krasniqi, 2010). In the new state of the South Slavs, Albanians, together with other non-Slavic minorities occupied the bottom position in the hierarchical citizenship of the state.

However, the situation shifted somehow during World War II (WWII), when the biggest part of Kosovo and parts of Western Macedonia joined Albania, which was annexed by Italy in 1939. New Albanian symbols (symbols of the Kingdom of Albania) became visible in Kosovo. At this time, many Albanians in Kosovo sought “to seize the opportunity offered by the collapse of Yugoslavia to gain more power over their own territory and reverse the colonizing and Slavicising policies of the previous decades” (Malcolm, 1998, p. 296). As a result, many schools were opened, carrying the names of renowned Albanian historical figures, poets and intellectuals.

2.1. ‘Brotherhood and unity’ and the socialist vision of territory

At the end of WWII and after the communist takeover, Yugoslavia was constructed on the principles of federalism and self-determination of free and equal nations. Under the 1946 Yugoslav Constitution Kosovo became an ‘autonomous region’ (*oblast*) - a lower status than that of an ‘autonomous province’ (*pokrajina*) given to Vojvodina - of the People’s Republic of Serbia, and Albanians were not defined as people (*narod*)⁴ but as a national minority (*nacionalna manjina*).⁵ In the early 1970s Kosovo became a ‘socialist autonomous province’ (SAP) and obtained its own constitution, parliament, government, central bank, constitutional court, as well as representation in the federal institutions independent from the Republic of Serbia and thus was a republic in everything but name. This implied that Kosovo’s institutions had the main say on a range of issues, such as political, social, economic and spatial planning. This meant a more balanced relationship between both Kosovo and Yugoslav authorities and Serbs and Albanians on many issues, including control of and access to space and territory in Kosovo.

Regarding territorial and modification politics, a major wave of territorial and spatial modification occurred in Kosovo after the end of WWII. Though the post WWII changes reflected the socialist spirit in general, elements of national identity of the titular nations in Yugoslavia became omnipresent all around the country. These new changes were manifold and were done under the pretense of ‘modern urbanisation’. In the words of Andrew Herscher:

Post WWII ‘urban modernization’ targeted other religious sites, along with other examples of pre-modern architectural heritage for destruction. In Kosova, urban

⁴ The category of the people (*narod*) was initially assigned only to Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians and later in 1971 to Bosnian Muslims, under the term “Muslims”.

⁵ In 1963 Yugoslavia dropped the term ‘national minority’ to substitute it with the politically less sensitive term *narodnost*.

modernization was more damaging to Islamic religious sites than to Orthodox ones, a result of both the Ottoman-era urban morphology of Kosovar cities and Orientalist ideology that posed Ottoman-era heritage as a product of a primitive pre-modern culture. To the slogan of “Destroy the old, build the new!”, brigades of ‘Popular Front’ volunteers in Kosova, as elsewhere in Yugoslavia, destroyed mosques as well as Ottoman-era bazaars and other buildings as part of modernist urban renewal projects in cities such as Prishtina, Peja and Prizren. The significance of targeted religious sites as ethnic symbols was less explicitly salient to the socialist state than their significance as symbols of the pre-modernity the state was striving to overcome (2006, pp. 39-40).

Such drastic changes imposed by the Yugoslav state and the newly emerging architecture “can be regarded as a symbolic structuring of territory, as a manifestation of the [new] cultural organization of the land, and of the process through which people expressed and communicated their [new Yugoslav] identity and transformed the natural land into cultural territory” (Mach, 1993, p. 198). Hence, the aim was to transform what remained from old traditional Albanian and Ottoman style architecture into new Yugoslav socialist cultural territory.

On the other hand, in an attempt to territorialise the memory of the Battle of Kosovo⁶, in 1953 Serbian authorities decided to build a monument to the Kosovo heroes close to Sultan Murat's *turbeh* (*Gazimestan turbeh*). This practice of sacralisation of land was followed up by the practice of rituals of gathering people around the monument on the day of the Battle of Kosovo, June 28, 1389.

⁶ The Battle of Kosovo (1389), fought at the ‘Field of the Blackbirds’ (now *Kosovo Polje/ Fushë Kosovë*) between the Balkan armies and the Ottoman forces, takes a central place in the modern Serbian nationalist discourse and narratives. For more see Duijzings (2003, pp.176-202).



Fig. 1. The Monument of the Battle of Kosovo Heroes in Gazimestan, close to Pristina
(Source: Wikipedia)

Such rituals serve to perpetuate the myth of the Battle of Kosovo, and of Kosovo in general as a sacred land, and thus represent what Durkheim called *the elementary forms of the religious life* (1964), meaning mechanisms by which a society maintains or establishes a sense of collective activity in periods of apparent dispersal, that is achieved by “the sacralization of particular places which derive their sacred quality less by what is in them, than by illuminating the solidarity of those who view them” (Brown, 1994, p. 787).

During the period from 1945 until the abolition of the autonomy of Kosovo in 1989, the cultural landscape of Kosovo, including the architecture, was impregnated with socialist aesthetics and the ideology of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ (*Bratstvo i Jedinstvo*). Narratives and discourse about *partisans*⁷ were omnipresent in this period, as expressed by symbols, signs, monuments, street and school names carrying the names of heroes of the anti-fascist war. The legend of *Boro and Ramiz* (a Montenegrin and an Albanian who died together fighting for the partisans in the WWII) after whom many schools, sports and cultural centres (including the main one in Pristina), and various other institutions

⁷ Members of the antifascist and revolutionary movement in Yugoslavia during World War II.

were named, “was an especially important story to be told in Kosovo, where the story of their fraternal sacrifice would provide the normative framework for a new relationship between local Serbs and Albanians” (Kerenji, 2008, p. 118). Hence, the socialist spirit was to dominate the territory and space in Kosovo for almost half a century, until the late 1980s when the situation deteriorated, first in Kosovo and then in the rest of Yugoslavia.

Thus, during socialism, the legal, political and social empowerment of Albanians in Yugoslavia in the 1970s created conditions for a more equal⁸ access to public space and symbolic representation. This led to a higher level of integration between all the groups in Kosovo in terms of sharing public spaces and other socially owned institutions. The principle of ‘equality of *narodi* and *narodnosti*’, which was central in the definition of citizenship, translated into an increasing level of equality in terms of access to public spaces and symbolic representations of peoples.

2.2. 1990s: the period of total Serbian control and war

Following the abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy in 1989 and the fall of socialist Yugoslavia, discriminatory and repressive practices aimed at ethnic Albanians in Kosovo became common in the new state. From the outset of the creation of the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), the new citizenship regime *de facto* downgraded the position of Albanians (from ‘nationality’ to ‘national minority’) and striped them of their basic political and legal entitlements (Krasniqi, 2010, p. 7; Rava, 2010, pp. 9-10). In reaction to these repressive measures, Albanians in Kosovo, under the leadership of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), boycotted Serbian institutions in Kosovo and set up their own parallel system of education and health. In turn, this created a new harsh reality for the Albanian population and turned Kosovo into a segregated society.

After 1989, when Serbia abolished Kosovo’s autonomous institutions, a new wave of territorial and spatial modification in Kosovo and Pristina was initiated by the Serbian regime. The cultural landscape changed too: a process of ‘Serbisation’ of the region began. All the schools were supposed to serve Serbs exclusively - especially secondary schools and university – while street names and other signs became exclusively Serbian. Many Albanian cultural institutions were closed down or destroyed. This wave of attacks on cultural sphere was an attempt to reduce both ‘socialism’ and ‘Albanianism’. For example, in the mid 1990s, in the city of Gjakova (Serbian *Dakovica*), which had a 97 per cent Albanian population, all the Albanian street-names were changed into Serbian, commemorating heroes and saints; one of the main streets, which was called ‘The League of Prizren’ later was named ‘King Peter the Liberator’ (Malcolm, 1998, p. 352). New monuments of Serbian heroes were erected in squares, in front of public building etc, and churches were built. Serbian authorities started erecting a new Orthodox Cathedral even in the University Campus in Pristina, but due to the eruption of the conflict in 1998 it remained unfinished. Archives from libraries and

⁸ Yet, for many Albanians, the fact that Albanians were a *narodnost* and Kosovo an autonomous province as opposed to the six south-Slavic *narodi* and republics respectively, was an indication of their lesser status in Yugoslavia.

institutions, as well as many materials from museums were taken to Serbia. Even the name of Kosovo was officially changed to ‘Kosovo and Metohija’⁹ or ‘Kosmet’.



Fig.2. *The unfinished Orthodox cathedral “Christ The Saviour” in the University Campus in Pristina*

The axe of division and separation fell on the education system as well. Kostovicova (2005) has analysed in detail the process of spatial separation between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo in the 1990s and the way in which these spatial arrangements affected the symbolic coordinates of both communities. A mental map of separation was thus created through the education system. While focusing on the education system in Kosovo, Kostovicova illustrates the reconfiguration of national identity through the interplay between two different understandings of the space – space as a symbolic and physical resource. She argues that:

In post-autonomy Kosovo, educational space became closely linked to political space. Therefore, nationalism had turned education into a battleground and created new spaces that became a source of new identity. The symbolic redefinition of homeland was a part of that identity (Kostovicova, 2005, p. 3).

⁹ *Metohija* (meaning ‘monastic estates’) is the Serbian name for the south-western part of Kosovo, which in Albanian is called *Rrafshi i Dukagjinit*.

Things deteriorated further during the war, when hundreds of cultural objects, mainly religious ones, were destroyed during the fighting. The eruption of the armed conflict in Kosovo in early 1998 between the Yugoslav military and paramilitary forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) paved the way for the military intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the territory of the FRY. In response to this, the FRY authorities carried out a large-scale action of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo which resulted in more than 850,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees being deported into neighbouring countries; hundreds of thousands of others became internally displaced persons (UNHCR, 1999). Apart from private Albanian houses, according to the Islamic Community of Kosovo, approximately 200 (of the more than 600 mosques in Kosovo) were damaged or destroyed during the 1998-1999 war, along with other Sufi lodges and Islamic schools (*Medrese*), archives and libraries (Herscher, 2006, p. 41). Likewise, the Museum of the League of Prizren, which is located in the Ottoman quarter of the historic town of Prizren, in the 1990s first had its exhibits taken away and was used as a hostel for Serbian refugees from Croatia (Malcolm, 1998, p. 352) and finally was burned and destroyed completely by Serbian forces on March 29, 1999.

Likewise, architecture, as “a symbolic form through which a community creates its identity” (Mach, 1993, p. 194) was targeted. Old symbols of Peja (Serbian *Peč*) and Gjakova – Old Turkish Bazaars (*Çarshia*) were burned too. In short, everything that could manifest the symbolic world of Albanians, their cultural organisation of the land and identity, was seriously endangered during the war. Undoubtedly, deliberate targeting of the Albanian cultural heritage in Kosovo was one of the main goals of the Serbian state in the 1998-1999 war.

2.3. Changing faces: replacing Serbian identity markers and symbols in post-1999 Kosovo

Both Albanian and Serbian cultural objects were targeted in the years of conflict (1998-99). The Serbian army and paramilitary forces destroyed the former during the conflict, whereas the latter were mainly attacked and destroyed by Albanian groups after the withdrawal of the Serbian machinery from Kosovo and establishment of the international presence in the country in June 1999, in a deliberate attempt to eradicate symbols of ‘the other’. According to estimates made by the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, approximately 140 Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries have been damaged or destroyed since June 1999 (Herscher, 2006, p. 42). After 1999, everything that represented Serbian culture – churches, monasteries, houses, cemeteries, monuments – inspired hostility from many Albanians. As a result, many Serbian settlements¹⁰ were burned, churches attacked and destroyed, in what was considered as revenge by the Albanians for the crimes and destructions committed by the Serbian state in the earlier period. In addition to revenge, this campaign served as a means of Albanian nationalists to reconfigure space and territory in the post-war reality in Kosovo.

¹⁰ The UNHCR estimated that the total number of non-Albanian refugees that left Kosovo after the international intervention in June 1999 is 200,000. For more detailed analysis of the number of refugees from Kosovo see UNHCR (2000; 2009) and ESI (2004).

Meanwhile, at this period started what Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers have called, “construction of a Pan-Albanian master narrative in post-war Kosovo” (2006, p. 513). At the centre of this narrative was the myth of the war heroes of the KLA – Kosovo Liberation Army (*UÇK – Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*) and, especially, one of the founding commanders of the KLA, Adem Jashari, who died in early 1998 together with his extended family and some of his cousins under siege at his home while fighting with the Serbian forces. After the war, “social reproduction of the Jashari legend became ubiquitous, and is evident in the many schools, barracks, squares and streets all over Kosovo that are named after him...[and]...there are many representations of Adem Jashari as a brave warrior – in popular songs, postcards, calendars, medals, posters, copper plates, watches, notebooks and other souvenirs” (Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers, 2006, p. 517). His sacrifice became an undisputed symbol of the Albanian struggle for national liberation. The meaning of the KLA war became as strong as to symbolically substitute almost completely the myth of the anti-fascist struggle of the partisans in WWII; many monuments that were built in Kosovo to commemorate dead soldiers are almost identical with monuments of socialism built in socialist Yugoslavia. Many of these representations, and especially those of Adem Jashari, represent “modernist aesthetic rooted in socialist memorial iconography” (Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers, 2006, p. 521). Indeed, a mushrooming of the monuments of the KLA soldiers and Albanian heroes as well as rituals, which “revolve around three fundamental constants: struggle, sacrifice, victory” (Ingmundarson, 2007, p. 104) can be witnessed today all around the country.

However, a particular site symbolising both Albanian sacrifice and struggle for freedom stood out in post-war Kosovo – Prekaz. The place where Jashari was killed was soon turned into a sacred space or territory by Albanian myth-making and “memory entrepreneurs” (Jelin cited in Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers, 2006, p. 514). In that place, in the village of Prekaz, a memorial complex ‘Adem Jashari’ was built and today is a “popular destination for an Albanian political tourism that has acquired the character of a pilgrimage” (Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers, 2006, p. 514). The myth of Jashari family and other Albanian national heroes represent a *par excellence* example of the territorialisation of memory. In this case, myth is the narrative of the sublime sacrifice and glories of war, which is being acted out by the rituals – political tourism and pilgrimage. In addition, the remaining members of the Jashari family are reserved a special moral status in Kosovar society. Their opinions often carry great weight in society and among political elites. All these are attempts to elevate the Jashari family to the level of a moral institution of Albanians.

2.3.1. Between the lines: UNMIK’s agenda in Kosovo

On 10 June 1999 Kosovo was placed under direct international (interim) administration, under the authority of the United Nations and its Resolution 1244. In terms of the legislation, the new UN-drafted legislation was informed by principles of multiculturalism and equality of all the ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in Kosovo - recognised under the category of ‘communities’ – the aim of which was to overcome past grievances and cleavages. This meant that for the first time in the 20th century both Albanians and Serbs would be treated equally in terms of the constitutional category. As

regards citizenship, the UN created a separate civil register (Central Civil Register of Kosovo)¹¹ for the residents of Kosovo, which in a way became a substitute for citizenship regulations, and issued UN Travel Documents to habitual residents in Kosovo. Hence, in certain aspects, the interim international administration in Kosovo, which was mandated to administer Kosovo until the final status settlement, set up the foundations of a new quasi citizenship regime, quite similar to the one that existed in the period between 1974 and 1989 (Krasniqi, 2010, p. 8).

UN administration was also involved in the post-war competition for symbols in Kosovo. Its campaign in post-war Kosovo of restoring the destroyed heritage had become a way of recreating the past that is able to promote a future of peaceful existence (Wolferstan, 2006, p. 105). However, the international community's mantra of 'multi-ethnicity' never translated into a clearly defined vision of managing Kosovo's post-war space. As argued by Blumi, UNMIK took a position of institutional management based on the rigid reconstructing of the political life in Kosovo along the lines of ethnic division between 'Albanian' and 'Serb' communities, which aimed at delegitimising all the pre-existing structures as archaic symbols of a violent past (2003, p. 216). As a result, the pre-existing local social practices and common sites and spaces, including the ones originating from socialism, were abandoned. On the other hand, UNMIK and KFOR (which claimed exclusive responsibility for security in Kosovo, including the control of air space) attempted to establish legitimacy through their centralised control from Pristina, as well as through the use of billboards, media ads, UN ID cards etc.

The exclusive approach of the international mission in Kosovo and its incompatibility with the desires and political ambitions of the majority of the population led to conflict and resistance from the local population. Territorial and symbolic modifications that were performed by Albanian individuals or local institutions were in line with the need to resist any attempts by UNMIK to "institutionalize its own reconstruction agenda [by defining Kosovo's identity in terms of multi-ethnicity] by forgetting the past and by omitting the future status of Kosovo" (Ingmundarson, 2007, p. 114). As observed by Wolferstan, "The existence of commemorative sites including statues [...], monumental graves, a museum exhibition dedicated to KLA soldiers, posters of fleeing refugees marking [the anniversary of] the flight of Kosovo's Albanians, anti-UNMIK material culture and acts of resistance all betrayed the international community's inability to bring the less savoury aspects of memory and its materiality out into the open for public debate" (Wolferstan, 2006, p. 106).

When it comes to the Albanian resistance towards UNMIK's multi-cultural vision, it is important to note that there is an inter-Albanian strife as well that plays an important role in the creation of the modern Kosovar Albanian identity. According to Ingmundarson, the inter-Albanian strife is mainly a political power contest over memories of the struggle against Serbian rule in Kosovo between the non-violent legacy of the late President the dominant political party in the 1990s (the Democratic League of Kosovo - LDK) and the armed resistance of the disbanded Kosovo Liberation Army as represented, in the post-war period by two political parties – the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) (2007, p. 97). These two camps have appropriated figures of Ibrahim Rugova and Adem Jashari respectively and utilise them as symbols in their quest for political power in Kosovo. This struggle

¹¹ UNMIK/REG/2000/13.

often seems to be suspended due to the daily political needs and party interests. Such were the 2004 government coalition between the LDK and AAK and the 2007 coalition between LDK and PDK. Compromises were made also at the time of negotiations on the final status of Kosovo when all parties were united in their positions on Kosovo's future as an independent state.

Therefore, after the war in Kosovo ended in 1999, Albanians had almost a total monopoly of symbolic life in the territory of Kosovo. The territorial and symbolic modifications that were made during this period were in line with the post-war liberation narrative (which was also filled with the myth of the national purity of the rural population) and the myth of the glorious war; they are symbolically represented through local heroic figures, above all Adem Jashari, as "the perfect embodiment of the 'authentic Albanian patriot' in opposition to the 'putative Yugoslav corruption' of the urban population" (Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers, 2006, p. 518). Streets, squares, buildings and even cities were renamed in an attempt to cleanse Kosovo's territory of Serbian cultural elements. Notwithstanding these changes, the Ahtisaari Plan¹² for the final status settlement in Kosovo, which constituted the basis for the declaration of independence of Kosovo, foresaw that all the cities should revert to the names by which they were known before the war. Therefore, it is a common practice in today's Kosovo that streets, villages and cities have two or three different names, depending on who (Albanians, Serbs, or foreigners) uses them and in what context.

Hence, despite the adoption of non-discriminatory legislation that aimed at providing equality between various populations in Kosovo, UNMIK's approach of seeing individuals through a reductionist, essentialist and ethnicising frame, failed to create a functional integrated territory and political space in Kosovo. The most visible dividing symbol is the bridge over river Ibër (Serbian *Ibar*) that divides the city of Mitrovica in a Serbian dominated north and Albanian dominated south. Serbian dominated areas in Kosovo, particularly northern Kosovo (where Russian president Vladimir Putin's image – whose staunch opposition against Kosovo's independence is deemed essential by the Serbs – decorates posters and billboards), represent 'pieces of Serbia in Kosovo' as everything is written in the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet and Serbian flags and inscriptions 'Republic of Serbia' decorate the landscape.

The logic of seeing various populations through their membership in homogenous ethnic groups, combined with the policies of creating new municipalities based on the principle of ethno-majoritarianism (Dahlam & Williams, 2010), facilitated the process of symbolic and special division, which eventually led to the creation of ethnically homogenous municipalities and areas.

2.4. Citizenship struggles in 'newborn' Kosovo

¹² In 2005, the Security Council authorised the beginning of the status process, mediated by the former Finnish President, Martti Ahtisaari, in the capacity of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the future status process for Kosovo. With 15 rounds of negotiations organised, and with no compromise between leaders of Serbia and Kosovo on the horizon, on 26 March 2007, Ahtisaari presented his final version of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (known as the Ahtisaari Plan) to the Security Council and the Secretary General. It served as the legal and political basis for the declaration of independence of Kosovo and, according to the Constitution of Kosovo (art. 143.2), it shall take precedence over all other legal provisions in Kosovo. See *The Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement*, 26 March 2007. <http://www.unosek.org/unosek/en/statusproposal.html>.

Having already endorsed the Ahtisaari Plan in March 2007, Kosovo declared independence on 17 February 2008. Kosovo was declared 'to be a democratic, secular and multi-ethnic republic, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and protection under the law' (Kosovo Declaration of Independence, 17 February 2008). According to Ahtisaari's proposal, Kosovo should be a multi-ethnic society based upon the equality of all citizens and the highest level of internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the promotion and protection of the rights and contributions of all its communities and their members. The newly adopted legislation set up the contours of an all-inclusive citizenship, both at the micro and macro level. As far as citizenship, understood as a link between the individual and the state, is concerned, the boundaries of the new polity were to be established not according to the principle of origin, but according to territory (Krasniqi 2010: 10).

Nonetheless, in a situation where recognition of group rights seems to perpetuate group differences, the state of Kosovo lacks the necessary integrative ideology. Insistence on 'multi-ethnicity' and 'multiculturalism' in a society deeply divided on an ethnic basis and without a common link, risks rendering these concepts meaningless. As far as ordinary people are concerned in Kosovo, they seem to be divided based on ethno-national belonging and pledge loyalty to their ethnic nations or their kin-states. They remain divided both physically (in the northern part of Kosovo), as well by mostly mutually exclusive symbols, which in turn have created various special boundaries between different communities. As a result, urban and public spaces have been used as arenas for new forms of exclusive political identities. In what follows, the paper looks in more detail at the symbolic changes that have taken place in the city of Pristina since 1999 and the struggles for domination and appropriation of the public space.

3. Post-war Pristina: demographic and symbolic changes

For most of the 1990s, Serbian symbols and the Cyrillic script dominated Pristina. Despite the fact that more than 85 per cent – the exact percentage is not known since the last general census in Kosovo was in 1981 - of the population of the capital city was Albanian, the landscape was almost completely Serbian. However, a drastic change happened after 1999. Just as in other parts of the country, new Albanian inscriptions and symbols suddenly replaced the Serbian ones. Similar to the case of eradication of German symbolic culture in Poland after WWII, adopting the terminology used by Mach (1993, p. 197), almost all symbolic aspects of Serbian culture were removed and the Albanian symbolic world was to (re)emerge; thus pre-existing emblems and inscriptions were removed from buildings and streets acquired new names which were supposed to indicate the Albanian character of the land and most of the Serbian monuments and memorials were removed and new Albanian ones were created to 'remember' a mythical past or the recent liberation war.

In this way, what was previously *JNA - Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija* (YPA - Yugoslav People's Army) street, became *UÇK* (KLA). The main street in Pristina



Fig. 3. UÇK (KLA) street



Fig. 4. Skënderbeu monument

that before was called Marshal Tito street was renamed ‘Mother Teresa’ and a statue of her was built there with the intention of both promoting her Albanian origin and the pro-Western orientation of Albanians. In the same street, two other Albanian national symbols have found a place; the first is a monument of the Albanian national hero from the Middle ages, Gjergj Kastrioti – Skënderbeu, which was built in front of the governmental building and opposite the national theatre; the second is a statue of one of the founders of the KLA – Zahir Pajaziti, erected opposite the once-famous five star hotel in Pristina, ‘Grand Hotel’, which in the 1990s was controlled by the notorious Serbian warlord, Željko Ražnatović - Arkan. Actually, the majority of the streets¹³ and monuments in Pristina today commemorate and glorify the liberation war of the KLA, as most of them carry names of warriors or other Albanian political and cultural figures. This Albanian post-war ‘master narrative’ also includes foreign politicians who were involved in the international intervention in Kosovo in 1999; a major street in the entrance of Pristina is named after the former U.S. President Bill Clinton; a statue of him was erected in 2009. The former President Bill Clinton – welcomed by thousands of Albanians who celebrate him as a hero for launching NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999 that stopped the Serb forces' terror against ethnic Albanians - attended the unveiling of a 3.5-meter statue of himself on a key boulevard in Pristina that also bears his name (AP, 1 November 2009). Moreover, in December 2008 the Government of Kosovo decided to name a street in Pristina after the outgoing U.S. President, George W. Bush as a sign of appreciation for his commitment and support of Kosovo.

¹³ Looking at the updated street index of Pristina, it turns out that out of almost 500 streets and squares, less than 10 of them carry the names of Serbian cultural and historical figures. See http://kk.rks-gov.net/prishtina/getattachment/City-guide/Streets-of-the-city/lista_e_emertimeve_te_rugeve_te_prishtines.pdf.aspx



Fig.5. Bill Clinton's statue in Pristina

Further, close to the unfinished Orthodox cathedral, in front of the Philology Faculty in Pristina where before was standing a statue of the famous Serbian philologist & language reformer of the 19th century Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, today stands the statue of the academician Fehmi Agani, a distinguished Albanian sociologist and political activist from the 1990s, who was killed in 1999 by Serbian forces, in an wide-ranging campaign that targeted the Kosovar-Albanian political and cultural elite. Though no official decision has been taken yet with regard to the fate of the Orthodox cathedral in the university campus - there have been voices asking for it to be moved to another location since this area is intended for students, but due to its sensitivity, no decision has been taken yet.

With regard to communism, one of the few monuments that survived until now is the 'The Triangle' that symbolised 'Brotherhood and Unity' in Kosovo, that stands in a square between the parliament building and Pristina's City Hall. In the aftermath of the war there was an unsuccessful attempt (using dynamite) to destroy it. Nevertheless, the Municipality of Pristina recently announced that it plans to bring it down and build a new square dedicated to Adem Jashari. While some people from the civil society in Pristina see this act as an attack on Pristina's urban identity, the municipal officials have justified

the decision claiming that the monument does not represent any cultural, political or historical value for the city and its people (*Koha Ditore*, 16 August 2010). This is a clear tendency of the local authorities in Pristina to distance themselves both from the socialist past of the city and the Yugoslav and Serbian rule in Kosovo.



Fig. 6: Triangle – the symbol of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’

Therefore, both the number of Serb inhabitants (there are only few of them living in the city now) and their symbolic world that dominated Pristina prior to 1999 are drastically reduced. New Albanian symbols have been placed in the meantime all around the city. The architecture is much different today; the old grey communist apartment blocks in the centre of the city are painted and renovated and hundreds (mostly illegal) new modern style buildings have emerged. In the months after June 1999, most elements of the Serbian symbolic culture and in Kosovo were deliberately destroyed and a new Albanian-dominated landscape emerged, representing and commemorating people and events that signify Albanian nationalism and nationhood. Thus, the political activities of the emerging Albanian-dominated institutions in Kosovo brought about the emergence of the new ‘discursive landscape’ and produced the ‘symbolic fabric’ that linked the self-understanding of Albanians with the territory of Pristina and Kosovo in general. So, a

more hybrid and socialist past was suppressed in order to create some kind of ethnic uniformity in post-war Kosovo.

Although post-2008 Kosovo has put in place a civic and all-inclusive citizenship regime, the new country faces serious problems in the process of establishing its internal and external legitimacy and creating a political space accessible by all its citizens. As a result, territory, space, symbols and institutions remain contested, with Kosovar Albanian, Kosovar Serb and Serbian elites being engaged in a struggle for domination and control of the territory of Kosovo, its resources, people and landscape.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown how space and territory have been central to citizenship struggles in Kosovo. As a constitutive object of group struggle (Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 99), space has continuously been contested in Kosovo. As a result, the territory of Kosovo and its public space has experienced many phases of territorial modification and symbolic changes throughout the twentieth century, with changes always reflecting the balance of power. Street names, inscriptions, monuments as well as other markers and architecture to a certain extent, constitute those aspects of the landscape and geography that were permanently subject to modification and rearrangement. A physical (administrative or military) control over the country by one or the other nation also meant symbolic control of the territory and space. Continuing struggles over the socio-cultural and political boundaries delimiting the exercise of citizenship have resulted in segregated and mono-ethnic public spaces. In turn, this proves that inequalities in distribution of space and spatial capital can persist irrespective of the attempts to provide for central legal and political equality for different groups within a polity.

As a result, irrespective of the fact that at a political and legal level Kosovo has put in place an all-inclusive citizenship regime, the ‘newborn’ country remains both politically and symbolically divided. While Kosovo is still an unfinished and unconsolidated state where Serb and Kosovan jurisdictions and sovereignties overlap (Krasniqi, 2012), internal symbolic and spatial divisions persist and even widen. Although all the official inscriptions (streets, schools and other institutions) are written in Albanian, Serbian and English, still most of their names commemorate Albanian national history and people. On the other hand, in Serbian dominated areas, especially in the north, no Albanian or Kosovar symbol can be found.

To conclude, national groups, and above all, nationalist elites seek monopolies and control over the symbolic culture and geography, because “geographical indicators scan the physical space for evidence that supports a nation’s claim to a specific territory... [and because] ... placing markers of national culture along the perimeters of a region make national boundaries appear real” (Herb, 1999, p. 22). And, undoubtedly, regions of overlapping historical claims such as Kosovo are the ideal battlefield of such a ‘war for symbols’ where erection of symbolic boundaries and appropriation of public space by one group or the other threatens the very existence of democratic and all-inclusive citizenship.

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