



**UNIVERSIDADE DE ÉVORA**

**Mestrado em Gestão e Valorização do Património Histórico e Cultural -**

**Master Erasmus Mundus TPTI**

(Techniques, Patrimoine, Territoires de l'Industrie : Histoire, Valorisation, Didactique)

*Holy Path of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge: Transmitting One Landscape's Spirit of Place*

**Nevena Tatovic**

Sous la direction de : **Filipe Themudo Barata**

Évora, agosto de 2016 | Évora, août 2016



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## **O Caminho Sagrado do desfiladeiro Ovcar - Kablar: transmitindo espírito do lugar de uma paisagem**

Situada na encruzilhada de estudos do património e da paisagem, esta tese investiga o conceito do espírito do lugar no desfiladeiro de Ovcar – Kablar, uma área de património religioso e natural no sudoeste da Sérvia. Popularmente conhecido como Montanha Sagrada, o desfiladeiro está classificado e protegido como uma paisagem de beleza e características notáveis, com elementos significativos do património geológico e de biodiversidade. É também um local histórico e cultural único, com dez mosteiros ortodoxos medievais e duas igrejas construídas dentro de cavernas que preservam cerca de cinco séculos de vida e prática religiosas.

A pesquisa visa analisar os elementos que contribuem para o espírito desta paisagem sagrada, bem como os meios para a sua transmissão e os seus instrumentos de representação. Aplicando o conceito de um itinerário que liga os lugares sagrados da região, o estudo investiga a interrelação existente entre as pessoas e a paisagem.

Fundamentada na abordagem fenomenológica, a metodologia utilizada aliou a análise histórica com a pesquisa narrativa, usando o diálogo estabelecido com residentes da comunidade local, para documentar uma narrativa de paisagem viva que é ao mesmo tempo um lugar da adoração e um indicador de poder. Ecoando a compreensão da "experiência vivida" entre "interioridade" e "exterioridade", a pesquisa tem a sua base na prática, introduzindo o desenho como forma de examinar como o espírito do lugar surge a partir do encontro íntimo de si próprio com a paisagem.

Seguindo a orientação da narrativa e do sentido de lugar, a pesquisa teceu uma história da paisagem do desfiladeiro de Ovcar - Kablar como um local cujo espírito se revela como uma emoção insondável sentida por todo o ambiente que o rodeia, uma metamorfose entre o passado e o presente e entre o material e o imaterial.

**Palavras-chave:** espírito do lugar, paisagem sagrada, património religioso, conservação da natureza, património imaterial, contemplativa, silêncio, a investigação narrativa, desenho



*To my parents.*

*In the memory of Boban.*

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**Special note:** Some sources used in the thesis, as well as the interviews, were in Serbian, or in French. Their translations are made by the author, unless otherwise cited.

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## RÉSUMÉ

Situé au carrefour des études du patrimoine et du paysage, ce mémoire étudie le concept de l'esprit du lieu dans la gorge Ovcar - Kablar, territoire où se mêlent patrimoine religieux et naturel, dans le sud-ouest de la Serbie. Surnommée "Montagne Sacrée", la gorge est protégée parce qu'elle est un paysage à la beauté et aux caractéristiques remarquables, avec des éléments significatifs du patrimoine géologique et de la biodiversité. Elle est également un site culturel et historique unique avec dix monastères médiévaux orthodoxes et deux églises troglodytes qui témoignent d'environ cinq siècles de vie quotidienne religieuse.

La recherche vise à examiner les éléments qui contribuent à l'esprit de ce paysage sacré, ainsi que les moyens de sa transmission et les instruments de représentation. En proposant un itinéraire reliant les lieux sacrés de la région, l'étude se penche sur la relation entrelacée qui existe entre l'homme et le paysage.

Ancrée dans l'approche phénoménologique, la méthodologie a épousé une analyse historique par la recherche narrative. Un dialogue avec les résidents de la communauté locale a documenté un récit du paysage vivant qui est en même temps un lieu de culte et un témoin des pouvoirs. Compte tenu de la compréhension de «l'expérience vécue» entre «intérieurité» et «extérieurité», la recherche basée sur la pratique a pour but d'examiner comment l'esprit du lieu se construit dans la rencontre intime de soi avec le paysage.

Conformément aux orientations du récit et au sens du lieu, la recherche a tissé une histoire du paysage de la gorge Ovcar-Kablar. Son esprit s'y révèle être une émotion insaisissable ressentie dans tous les environs, entre passé et présent, matériel et immatériel.

**Mots clés:** esprit du lieu, paysage sacré, patrimoine religieux, conservation de la nature, le patrimoine immatériel, contemplation, le silence, la recherche narrative, dessin, enquête visuelle



## ABSTRACT

Set at the crossroads of heritage and landscape studies, this thesis investigates the concept of the spirit of place in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge, an area of religious and natural heritage in southwestern Serbia. Popularly known as “Holy Mountain”, the gorge is protected as a landscape of outstanding beauty and features, with significant elements of geological heritage and biodiversity. It is also a unique cultural and historic site with ten medieval Orthodox monasteries and two church caves that preserve around five centuries of living religious practice.

The research seeks to examine the elements that contribute to the spirit of this sacred landscape, as well as the means of its transmission and the instruments of representation. Applying a concept of an itinerary that connects the sacred places in the area, the study delves into the intertwined relationship that exists between people and the landscape.

Grounded in phenomenological approach, the methodology married historical analysis with narrative research, using a dialogue with residents of the local community, to document a narrative of living landscape that is at the same time a place of worship and a telltale of power. Echoing understanding of the “lived experience” between “insideness” and “outsideness”, practice based research introduced drawing to examine how a spirit of place arises in the intimate encounter of self and the landscape.

Following the guidance of the narrative and sense of place, the research wove a story of the landscape of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge as the one in which its spirit reveals itself as an unfathomable emotion felt throughout the environs, shapeshifting between the past and the present, and between tangible and intangible.

**Keywords:** spirit of place, sacred landscape, religious heritage, nature conservation, intangible heritage, contemplation, silence, narrative research, drawing, visual inquiry



"He would wake to see the towers and minarets printed on the exhausted, dust-powdered sky, and see as if *en montage* on them the giant footprints of the historical memory which lies behind the recollections of individual personality, its mentor and guide: indeed its inventor, since man is only an extension of the spirit of place."

(Durrel 1968, 143, original emphasis)



## I. INTRODUCTION

Le chapitre d'introduction présente le sujet et la pertinence du thème de recherche abordé. En décrivant les motivations personnelles de l'auteur et les limites de la recherche, ce chapitre donne à voir les principaux objectifs et la méthodologie développés dans le cadre des questions de recherche définies. Le contexte théorique de l'étude porte sur le concept de l'esprit du lieu à travers la perspective des disciplines concernées, avec une attention particulière au concept développé dans le cadre de la conservation du patrimoine. En outre, le chapitre examine l'historiographie de la notion de paysage sacré afin de donner un aperçu de la relation entrelacée du paysage et de la nature avec le spirituel.

### 1. RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

There are places of forgotten lands, dreamlike, voiceless and solitary, yet strangely alive, that exude the enigmatic beauty and silent melancholia of times long past. If listening carefully, on moments one can hear there centuries of history whispering the stories of the ancestral past. Seemingly fallen asleep in the shadows of remembering, these are landscapes of wilderness and vastness where primeval laws of nature still reign, while man awaits his future as a silent witness of the colliding present and past. These are places and spaces of unique powers that reach beyond concrete physical location, as they transmit its inimitable character and identity. Such singular qualities are difficult to describe, and even though we have given them the name - "spirit of place", the language is most often insufficiently sophisticated tool to express their full meaning. The spirit of place is a puzzling concept – dealing with it requires almost metaphysical approach of the transcendental experience where self merges with the landscape as it gets to know it from the inside.

The term itself implies a certain characteristic of place, and as such it has been explored in a variety of studies (Norberg-Shulz 1980; Relph 1976; Tuan 1974). "Spirit" means "the non – physical part of a person which is the seat of emotions and character, the soul" as well as "the prevailing or typical quality, mood, or attitude of a person, group, or period of time", as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>1</sup>). Directly derived from the Latin "spiritus"<sup>2</sup> meaning "a breathing, breath; breath of a god" hence "inspiration; breath of life" hence "life", the term evolved through the Anglo – French "spirit" as "animating or vital principle

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<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2016), s.v "Spirit" by Oxford, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/spirit>.

<sup>2</sup> "Online Etymology Dictionary," 2001, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=spirit>.

in man and animals”, and Old French “esprit” meaning “spirit, soul”. In heritage studies Prats and Thibault (2003) approached the notion as a unique “synthesis of the different elements, tangible and intangible, that contribute to the identity of a site.” (2). Echoing the approach adopted in this study, Viel (2008) understands the spirit of place as “an emotion, an aura, a spirit that transcends the present challenging modes of intervention, memory call out and force to penetrate the world of the complexity.” (6, translated from French). She argues that as “an emotion felt throughout the place” (5, translated from French), the spirit of place is vital element in harmonizing the past and the present, our connection with the world and our feeling of memory enshrined in the very place and landscape of interacting nature and culture (Viel 2008, 5 – 6, translated from French). Investigating such notion exceeds the research of the material traces of the past kept in the frames of the physical environment. Rather, it implies a quest for the impalpable and elusive, the intangible component of the relation between the heritage and landscape which overpowers the confinements imposed by temporality. Much more than a mere encounter of self with the inheritance of the past in the moment of the present, through a spirit of place the inherited landscape becomes linked with the future.

Psychologist Claudio Neri (2000) also explains the spirit of place (addressed in term *genius loci*) as a soul of the place developed and formed through accumulated affects of people living there over a long time (6). Examining the concept through the social life of a group, he explored its fundamental role in preserving the identity of a place or a group (continuously through times of changes), and in maintaining the feeling of belonging, in addition to keeping the recognition between elements considered by group as internal and external, as well as keeping the harmony of the place or group “by weaving together different elements.” (Neri 2000, 4).

“When the *Genius Loci* leaves a place, that place loses its soul, it becomes an easy prey for an enemy.” (Neri 2000, 7). Nowadays, more than ever these words resound with our struggle to preserve authentic heritage values in societies ruled by mainstream culture and the incessantly changing globalized world. This applies particularly to sacred natural sites with their local communities, as they fully embody the uniqueness of indivisible thread between tangible and intangible heritage that had survived through millenniums of changes and history.

Since ancient times, sacred places and landscapes presented one of the most powerful manifestations of the singular nature of the spirit of place. In the mysterious atmosphere



propelled by natural surroundings, the anonymous individuals dared to wander throughout the world looking for the secluded places and environments of the supernatural beauty. There, these ancient explorers of a soul enthroned asceticism as an expression of the medieval understanding of life and the world. In the absolute self – renunciation, they went to deserts, mountains and secluded coves, and in the quiet of the cold shine of the skies, waited for divine revelation. Later, when the Churches took over the role of “the road to eternity and the centre of the entire life”, they went to convents and monasteries where their intangible legacy got permanently embodied in the material forms of the interplay between the nature and the culture.

Given that this form of heritage, understood at different scales from a monument to a landscape, implies an ambiguous relational context of material and immaterial values, their research also entails deliberation of ideologies and identities in interpretation of the environment as well as peoples’ perception of sacredness. The genius loci or spirit of place of those heritage sites is made up equally by aesthetic and physical features of the natural environment and landscape, and by particular activities and ascribed spiritual meanings maintained among the communities. With many of those heritage sites at the centre of conflicts, their authentic values are threatened with vanishing. To preserve and ensure their continuity (which could be instrumental for heritage practice as well as interfaith dialogue between concerned communities) thus implies to guard their spirit of place alive.

While sacred natural sites have been issue of the extensive scientific research and their management concern of work of many non-profit organizations, the concept of the spirit of place came to focus of heritage practitioners relatively recently, primarily in an effort and striving for a better understanding of the interaction between tangible and intangible heritage. The envisaged study brings together these two multifaceted concepts, applying the methodological approach of the practice based research. The focus of the study is the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge in southwestern Serbia, a landscape embodying religious and natural heritage. In the history of the country and the people living in the region, this sacred landscape has played a significant role for hundreds of years, both in the view of spirituality and in the national consciousness, development of culture and literacy. As a trace of one time, and a lasting inscription of human religious and spiritual activity in the environment, the human habitation preserved in the gorge to this date combine traditional monastic architecture of the Serbian Orthodox Church with the unique natural features of the landscape. Carved through the long history of complex geological and hydrological

processes, these features appear in an intrinsic combination of natural phenomena and aesthetic landscape qualities with great diversity of geological forms, flora and fauna.

In the context of the origins of the monastic inhabitation, the landscape of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge illustrates interchange of evocative spiritual qualities and inspiration, in particular ways of the interaction between the natural environment and Orthodox tradition. With the medieval beginnings linked to the Mount Athos, set in a historical moment that was a spiritual clash between two civilizations, simple monasteries scattered in the gorge testify how religious tradition and practices of the vanished Byzantine culture were transmitted over time and territories only to be reaffirmed in different cultural, political and historical context.

Historical events along with a particular nature of the activities taking place in the gorge have contributed for a significant part of the past, especially intangible heritage, to remain unknown. This does not diminish the ongoing attachment between the people and the landscape. Today, however, the gorge is facing a menace of irrevocable changes as its natural resources are envisaged through various development projects seriously disembodied from heritage preserved within the landscape and in particular, in the relationship between people and the land. Delving into such endeavour of research is also justified in the accelerated production of various unrealistic studies and publications which, driven by the prospects of narrow expertise and lack of intersectoral cooperation, with insufficient knowledge of historical facts, find their basis in the unverified oral traditions (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). As such, they provide context for interpretation of this heritage distanced from authentic values accumulated over history.

Over the course of this thesis, and for the large part due to the research topic, a methodological approach has been designed in such a way that on moments a researcher would be a critical observer and on moments a local inside a landscape. Hence, before going into the investigation, a question should be answered to explain the personal motivation.

“Why am I in this research?”

In outlining this research proposal and carrying out the investigation, I was driven by curiosity to comprehend the spirit of place as a facet of heritage invested in the meaning of the landscape, and by the love of a place. In my work and studies I have always looked into the ways in which our environment’s meanings shift and reassert through our interaction with the landscape. Much more than a scene or a place we gaze at through our eyes, the landscape is a confluence of ourselves with the world outside, a crossroads of all the ways in which we

interpret that encounter in our mind and in our emotions, summing up our feelings and senses, thinkings and doings, ramblings and silences, with other people and with our own self. My studies in landscape architecture pushed me more towards an environmentalists' outlook towards the landscape, but they also taught me a necessity that is for a designer to understand how one site becomes meaningful and legible. This journey also pointed that to fully grasp the meaning of the landscape and its interconnection with the embodied heritage values, it is fundamental to get to know its people, and how they build their sense of identity and identification with the land.

At the same time, engaging with artistic practice, an intriguing question came in sight - how art can help us to better know, and to feel and perceive the place, especially vast landscapes and heritage sites loaded with spiritual meanings. Ventures into urban sketching brought to light a drawing as part of inter-subjective process happening within the landscape where, as Thien (2005) observes, "the world is mediated by feeling." (451). Such approach could be valuable in seeking deeper understanding of one's relationship between the past, present and future.

As for selecting the particular landscape for the focus of such research, looking back now through time, the decisive influence came through powerful topophilia. Having been born in the city in close vicinity of the area of the case – study, in this research I am also partly a local whose oldest memories of this landscape reside in the childhood. Then I was a mere passer-by, stopping for a break during a trip. Yet, the memory of that first encounter still remains vivid, with the almost palpable atmosphere of the gloomy white clouds wrapping around the road and the mountains in the early summer morning; with the silhouette of the building looming from the top of the hill and eerily hovering above the waters. For many years afterwards, I've been coming back, not any more as a local, but rather for rare visitations, looking back to revisit that particular morning's landscape, lured and haunted even from afar by its mysterious quietude - and my memory. It is through such experiences that one comes to understand why would Camus wrote in such an enchantment, "Millions of eyes, I knew, had looked upon this landscape and it was still, for me, the first smile of the sky. It put me outside of myself in the most profound sense of the world..." (as cited in Relph 1976, 37).

## 2. RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This thesis is just a one more chapter in the story of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge in its effort to explore the concept of the spirit of place within the frame of natural and religious heritage preserved in the landscape.

The study will hypothesize that, embodied in the notion of sacred landscape that has been advertised and transmitted by institutional powers, the spirit of place of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge evolves in a process of negotiation that is exerted by people appropriating and interpreting its ascribed meaning through personal, emotional experience. The rationale of this argumentation has been developed around questioning the following statements. Firstly, with its origins being traced to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge has been considered as one of “the most significant civilized possessions” in the region (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012) rising to become important national and religious symbol for the people. Secondly, in the modern history of the country, the area has also reached a status of one of the most relevant national products, both in the context of heritage and tourism development<sup>3</sup>. Lastly, aside all that, local residents as well as the visitors of the area, religious tourists, nature enthusiasts, always emphasize a unique and powerful experience of the landscape as a whole, propelled by feeling of mysterious atmosphere of inexplicable tranquility and beauty.

The main goal of the research is to examine what are the constituents of the spirit of the place in the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge – how they emerge in the relationship between intangible and tangible heritage? What are the main means for the transmission of the spirit of place and information tools of its representation? Answering these questions should further clarify other relevant issues. Who are the guardians of these heritage values? What role do they have in the development of the local community, and on the national level? What are the implications of the proposed research for further conservation of the heritage site?

With awareness of all the research constraints, it is not expected to find answers to all these questions. The focus of the investigation combining narrative research and artistic practice is on the local community, people residing in the gorge. The permission to extend the research by including monasteries and monastic communities currently living in the area, with interviews and filming, has not been granted. Given such outline for the field work investigation, from the very beginning the limitations of the study were clearly recognized. The previously made investigations, mainly in the field of history and art history, served as the valuable foundation for the study. Yet, it should be noted that the research so far has been mainly a history of monastic buildings. Intangible heritage values, encompassing historical

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<sup>3</sup> According to statistical evidence, visits to the Ovcar Banja amounted to 3,701 visitors in 2015, but independently organized visits to monasteries were not surveyed (according to their information centres, the number amounted to 50,000 in the Blagovestenje monastery and 15,000 in the monastery Nikolje, while other monasteries have mostly below 10,000 visitors). (Department of Statistics of the Republic of Serbia, Management Plan for Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012, 9 – 11).

accounts and stories of traditional life and living religious practice unfolding behind the privacy of the monasteries' walls remain mostly unknown today. In a wider scope, such research would benefit from the perspective of the anthropology of religion and more comprehensive narrative research that would include close observations of the monastic life.

The analysis of the process of sacralization of the landscape and its evolution remains restricted by lack of material and written sources. In that regard, investigation in landscape archaeology should be considered as a significant asset for the future. Broadening the research to include remaining three locations that formerly existed as sacred mountains in Serbia can be a significant step towards defining the national context. Furthermore, a comparison with other similar heritage sites, specifically Mount Athos and Meteora in Greece, are recommended to reach an understanding of the transmission of the tradition and religious practice at the transnational level.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis brings the concept of the spirit of place in relation to the concept of landscape. Suggesting that this notion is rather ambiguous, as intimate and close as it seems distant and unreachable, the study questions its transmission through the understanding and experience of the environment itself. Accordingly, this reflected in the drawing up of the research methodology.

“Does the word landscape describe the mutual embeddedness and interconnectivity of self, body, knowledge and land; is it the world we are living in, or a scene we are looking at, from afar?” (Wylie 2007, 1). To answer the question of John Wylie, the understanding of landscape forms between all we are and all we perceive, as an image rather felt than seen. Built by our experience of the present, upon all we know and bring from our past, the image – “what we see” – inevitably changes upon the “way we see”. Though taking into account Wylie’s argument “so near and yet so far”<sup>4</sup>, the study relies on the phenomenological approach coherent with the understanding that as human beings we exist inherently with the environment and landscapes in which we live. To a large extent, this position is grounded in the work of Merleau-Ponty, as well as in Ingold’s position that “landscape is with us, not against us, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it.” (Ingold 1993, 154).

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<sup>4</sup> Wylie recounts that “a certain level of apartness, distance is integral to the concept of landscape” (NUI Galway 2014). This position was taken into consideration in outlining the role of the researcher as outsider and insider.

To reach the defined research goals the investigation used multifaceted approach combining desk survey and narrative research introducing drawing in practice based research. In order to address the relational dimension of the study, the author designed her own methodology. The combined methods allowed the researcher to shift in her role between being the critical observer and subjective insider, as visitor and local – an outsider and insider. “From outside you look upon a place as a traveler might look upon a town from a distance; from the inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it.” (Relph 1976, 55). This approach of combined methodology has been used in order to ascertain how the spirit of the place relates to the notion of landscape constructed and understood through different levels of shaping of the environment.

The theoretical framework of the study addressed concept of the spirit of place considering approaches of different disciplines, with particular attention to the concept developed within the frames of the heritage conservation. Furthermore, the work examined the ideas of landscape and place, taking into account the critical role of identity and ideologies in informing the understanding of the spirit of place and landscape. Providing an overview of the interwoven relationship of landscape and nature with spiritual aspirations, the notion of sacred landscape is discussed.

To outline the institutional shaping of the environment, the initial phase of the research analysed the history of the area, its national context and heritage making process. This was achieved in the form of a desktop survey of the existing and former research studies, planning strategies, and legal documents. Since the area of the research remained mainly undeveloped until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these documents are mainly restricted to the most recent, with the older records being lost due to the fact that many projects never reached the point of implementation. Given rather limited body of previous research, the study also consulted oral sources. Informal interviews were conducted with several experts and professionals employed in institutions that take part in the decision making process and governing the area (church officials, Tourist Organization of Cacak, local authorities, supervising institutes). Some interviewees opted to fill in a structured questionnaire, while most preferred unofficial conversations only. Significant part of the research about the history of the area relied on the publications realized as the most extensive studies to date. Conversations with the authors proved to be particularly valuable in orienting the proceeding research.

Narrative research comprised the second phase of the study. This research pursued the storytelling of the local residents as another perspective to examine the spirit of place and the meaning of landscape. Narratives behind personal stories were analysed in order to reveal how peoples' personal histories, memories and sense of belonging to this land contribute to intangible in the spirit of place, and further on, how it includes their sense of identity arising in the fusion of life and land.

Following Josselson's understanding of the narrative research as a way to obtain "a view of the participant's internal world" (Josselson 2013, vii), in order to "understand participants holistically, as an experiencing, meaning-making persons" (Josselson 2013, viii), the research relied on qualitative open interviews. Further grounded in the Spradley's pioneering work on ethnographic interview as "a complex speech event" (Spradley 1979, 474) and "a series of friendly conversations" (Spradley 1979, 464), the study applied an open conversational approach with a tentative questionnaire made of mainly descriptive and contrast questions (Spradley 1979). The interviews took place in a form of casual talks, with the examiner occasionally prompting the participants for details rather than directing conversation with leading questions. The respondents were encouraged to talk and behave in a manner they would normally do, in familiar situations and contexts with the people they know. For this reason, the conversations took place at the locations and in conditions interviewees preferred, either at their home or workplace.

In her book "Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry: A Relational Approach", Josselson compares an interview with a dance where interviewer follows the lead of a narrator (Josselson 2013, 7). With this consideration of interviewees as "actors rather than witnesses" (Josselson 2013, viii), the researcher took particular care to acquaint herself with the research participants. This later proved to be encouraging for the narrators to build and weave their stories spontaneously, in a form of an easy going communication flowing through a variety of issues relevant for the research questions. The friendly rapport developed through meetings and series of small talks prior to the officially scheduled recording of an interview. The tourist guide who lives in the gorge acted as mediator in conducting the field work. With the "empathetic attitude of listening" (Josselson 2013, 84), the interviewer repeatedly summarized and paraphrased questions in addition to explaining the scope and purpose of the research at the first meeting. Recording of all conversations passed through approval by informed consent form.

The conversations unfolded in Serbian language which was relevant not just for the reasons of authenticity and practicality. Sharing the same language was an opportunity for the interviewer to step out from the distanced role of examiner, and to reach for better understanding of the participants' outlook grounded in the same cultural background. The succeeding step of transcription and translation into English language allowed taking once again a distance in the data analysis, by turning into more critical reflective position.

The narrative research took place in April 2016. Overall, the primary sources comprised approximately seven hours and fifteen minutes of talks. Interviews mostly kept form of narration of personal stories about respondents' lives in the area. The main criteria in selecting the interview sample has been that the participants spent the majority of their life living in the gorge, 25 years minimum. The interviews' findings indicated several themes overlapping in the narrative, but also suggested certain topics as sensitive subject where interviewees tried to avoid in-depth elaboration. To decode these stories, the analysis took into account several criteria including the ones that Prats and Thibault (2003) consider as "components of intangible nature":

- Testimonies referring to the tangible component of the spirit of place – monasteries and other built structures, elements of the landscape and physical environment,
- Perception of the landscape – statements about the emotional and sensory experience, atmosphere, scents, feelings,
- Personal connection – intimate attachment to the place and references about family history or events from the life of respondent,
- References indicating distinctiveness – statements and terms referring to the unique values and particularity of the area,
- Testimonies linked to the uses and activities taking place in the area – religious practice and beliefs, cultural events, agriculture, etc.
- History – statements related to the historical events.

Following the narrative research, the field work continued through drawing practice that integrated walking and observation. In order to examine how this practice reveals the spirit of place allowing an intimate association with the place, and how perception and experience of the landscape itself is integral to the intangible of its spirit of place, the study grew on phenomenological approach.

At this phase the research consisted of a number of walks taken throughout the gorge over the period of three weeks. These were daily walks that allowed exploration of the environment



and included visits to the monasteries. Some walks were taken with an intent of making a particular drawing, as an intentional and purposeful, but for the most part, drawing happened spontaneously on locations that have been noticed along the walking route.

The author shifted into subjective position of an insider/local attempting to understand and get to know the outer world of the landscape and its atmosphere by engaging in this practice carried out in her own, more relational world of impressions, feelings and senses. The goal was to grasp the way in which the given landscape invokes an emotional reaction by which the “self” - one who observes, experiences and feels - becomes its inherent part. Drawing was regarded as a practice that, starting from the knowledge and perception of reality of the external environment (landscape), produces images that are not only the draftsman’s reflection, but anew generated world where fragmented reality blends with imaginary, subjective merges with objective, felt with observed.

This position is based in the understanding that in drawing, as an artistic practice, knowledge is inseparable from the feelings that give an emotional value and meaning to the contents from the outer world. Aside Tim Ingold’s seminal research on representative ways of thinking (Ingold 2011), anthropologists haven’t much treated this issue despite long tradition of cooperation between these fields. The potential of drawing “as a method and a technique... to reconnect observation and description with the moments of improvisatory practice” (Ingold 2011, 2) has been addressed and confirmed in the meanwhile (Alfonso 2004) turning into a subject of extensive investigation in other disciplines (Kozbelt 2011; Fava 2011; Finley and Knowles 1995).

The analysis of the drawings made during fieldwork focused on the story they told evolving with the time since they gradually shifted - pervaded by emotional and sensorial impressions of the landscape. In his considerations regarding the phenomenology of perception, Merleau-Ponty claimed that by revealing the outer world through his work, the artist uses his art to tell his special way of being-in-the world (Merleau-Ponty 2012). Analyzing work of Paul Cezanne who claimed, “...the landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness” (Cezanne, as cited in Merleau-Ponty 1969, 17), Merleau-Ponty went further to interpret this understanding of landscape through artistic practice as an endeavor to “make visible how the world touches us” (Merleau-Ponty 1969, 19). Similar to Merleau-Ponty, Dewey found the active perception of the world as a basis for creative work. Taking a pragmatic approach towards knowledge, he treated art, “created energy”, as experience itself (Dewey 1934), and extended the very notion of that experience by contemplative component

that allows the interrelation between the perceptual field (emotional) and the field of rational (cognitive) (Dewey 1934). In that context, the transition of images produced over the course of the fieldwork served as a record of the “knowledge born of immediate experience” (Ingold 1993, 152).

As a final outcome, the study brings together the previously applied methodological approaches summarizing their findings in a form of a video installation made of the recordings collected during the fieldwork. Showing one of the interviewees taking a walk, the video is a simple observation of an activity depicting a full body involvement in the environment that blurs distinction between the outer and the inner world. The choice of a medium is grounded in the growing body of recent scholarship on video as a mode of visual inquiry (Pink, Kurti, and Alfonso 2004) that call for visual anthropology based in “sensory and embodied ways of knowing which are acquired through practice” implying collaboration with the artistic practice (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2012, 26 - 28).

In the framework of the previously set objectives, this final stage of the research brings forth the issue of interpretation of heritage, looking into appropriate form of intervening that would enable interaction with the landscape’s spirit of place.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

##### 4.1. Spirit of place, sense of place or genius loci

The idea of the spirit of place has a history encompassing thousands of years. Yet, to date it remained a rather elusive concept. At the very beginning a puzzle appears whether it is the ancient idea of genius loci, the spirit of place or rather a sense of place that we are pursuing. The three concepts have been a continuing concern in a variety of scientific fields, from literature and arts to architecture and landscape studies, environmental psychology, geography, heritage conservation, urban design. The collision of the meanings occurred gradually as environmental perception came to the centre of cross-disciplinary research interests. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, philosopher Brook (2000) aptly observes that it is in fact “a nexus of ideas that is sometimes called genius loci, sometimes a spirit of place and sometimes a sense of place” (139). Though they are often used interchangeably (Jiven and Larkham 2003), the concepts imply intrinsically different meanings (Norberg-Schulz 1980; Relph 1976; Tuan 1974; Steele 1981).

In 1731 a British poet Alexander Pope (2006) wrote to his friend Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington:

“Consult the genius of the place in all;  
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall,  
Or helps th'ambitious hill the heavens to scale,  
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;  
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,  
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades;  
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines,  
Paints as you plant, and as you work, designs.” (245)

When observed chronologically, genius loci is the oldest term people used to express unique powers of place. Its origins over human history spread back to the classical period when it was also considered important for the identity of the place (Turgeon 2009). The Romans believed that particular divinities protected each place as guardian spirits. As such, they symbolized both things and living beings: “You also tend to give genii to the gates, to the houses, the thermae, the stables, and one has to assume that there are many thousands of genii for each place and all parts of a town so that no angle has to be without its own spirit”, (Aurelius Prudentius, as cited in Petzet 2008, 1). The idea of supernatural beings has been consistent in various forms in different cultures to this day (Petzet 2008; Eyles and Williams 2008).

In the above mentioned verse a poet and landscape gardener, Alexander Pope referred to the principles of garden design, advocating that one should always seek guidance in nature. The notion persisted in its original term as genius loci until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it started to fade away through the use of English translation, spirit of place (Jackson 1994). Soon after this semantic transformation, the concept reappeared in landscape theory and arts remaining one of the main principles of landscape architecture until today (Thompson 2012). With the rising of the new understanding of the aesthetics of landscape and nature in garden design in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the new notion of the spirit of place spread from the work of romanticist literary authors and painters. In particular, it was asserted by practice of landscape architects who sought guidance in Italian understanding of place and landscape (Dubos 1970).

The contemporary research has seen secularized application of the idea of spirit of place (Relph 2015). As the term became attached to landscape and place in general, including both rural and urban environment, authors investigating environmental perception, as well as urban

design and qualities of the environment, appropriated the concept. It is in that way that a confusion of meanings appeared, as the use often mixed up spirit with the sense of place (Relph 2015). Many studies dealt either with one or both concepts to clarify these nuances of the difference, but with discordant results. Cross (2001) explains this due to the lack of the common definition, a position shared by Peter Davis, who elaborated the "chameleon concept" as a diversity of meanings (Corsane et al. 2008, 240). In contrast, Yi-Fu Tuan recounted that "place may be said to have "spirit" or "personality", but only humans can have a sense of place" (Tuan, as cited in Eyles and Williams 2008, 16). Relph also emphasized that spirit of place "as inherent properties that lend quality to somewhere, can be distinguished from sense of place" (Relph, as cited in Eyles and Williams 2008, 16). Fritz Steele (1981), environmental psychologist, tried to extricate a clear distinction of the two meanings. "The sense of place... is the particular experience of a person in a particular setting (feeling stimulated, excited, joyous, expansive, and so forth)... the pattern of reactions that a setting stimulates for a person... These include feelings, perceptions, behaviours, and outcomes associated with one's being in that location." (Steele 1981, 11-12). Yet, Steele remains rather vague about the spirit of place offering more of an explanation instead of a definition, "the spirit of place... is the combination of characteristics that gives some location a special "feel" or personality (such as a spirit of mystery or of identity with a person or group)" (Steele 1981, 4, 11).

Isis Brook (2000) described the spirit of place as "something in or about place that is not easily defined" (141). Commenting "shades of meanings", Brook considered the spirit of place as a multifaceted concept lacking definition. "The ambiguity does not seem to arise from the number of disciplines involved... The term seems to shift its meaning even within one person's writing." (Brook 2000, 140). Brook wondered if spirit exists for any place, or there are regional spirits as well, and whether it can be limited, only to find answers in human involvement with the place. When we engage with the environment, the spirit of place comes in sight through our own interaction. Maintaining that these different theoretical concepts have been repeatedly "confused" in application, Jiven and Larkham (2003) suggest that genius loci or spirit of place ensues from users' experience of the place. In particular, they comment on the Norberg-Schulz's work about genius loci in architecture, based on phenomenological approach to place-making. Norberg – Schulz (1980) dismissed pragmatic approach and design based on functionality, and claimed instead that architecture can truly perpetuate the spirit of the place once it succeeds to band together all the place's properties. He regards the spirit of place through the lenses of something mysterious, primarily through

the built, physical setting. At the same time, nature remained as constant and unchanging, considered through a synchronic approach that limits the understanding (Loukaki 1997, 308). Conversely to Norberg-Schulz, preeminent researcher and essayist on American landscape J.B. Jackson argued that modern culture abandoned using the initial interpretation of *genius loci* in order to “describe the atmosphere of a place, the quality of its environment” (Jackson 1994, 24). In the framework of this thesis and interpretation of the concept in relation to its approach in heritage studies, Jackson’s standpoint was found especially relevant. Contending that spiritual undertones remain embedded even in this new name of the idea, the spirit of place, he approached the concept through a sense of belonging as factor stronger than the physical environment itself, based on the shared notion of the passing of time (Jackson 1994, 24 - 26). With his influential work in landscape studies, this understanding helps us to find the meaning of the concept in the interaction between humans and environment.

In the most recent studies, Joseph Stoltman (2011) summarizes the whole concept of the spirit of place in a single question, “What is it about particular places that attract humans to them?” (139). The perspective of connectedness and interaction of humans and environment facilitates understanding of the relation between the spirit of place (referring to the place itself) and sense of place (involving the ways in which we respond to those qualities). In answer to his question, Stoltman (2011) contended that peoples’ personal histories and identities play major role in this. Accordingly, spirit of place encapsulates natural environment, built environment and societal factors, which are “fundamental” (Stoltman 2011, 140-141). On his part, in the analysis of “connecting human and natural systems” through biophilic design, Stephen Kellert (2005) explores “a sense of satisfying and secure relation to one’s physical and cultural environment” (58). His position brings together Jackson’s work with that of Rene Dubos. Sharing the background in environmental and landscape studies, they both derive their thinking from the principle of togetherness of man and nature. Dubos understands the spirit of place as a combination of all attributes of one place that contribute to its uniqueness, including “physical, biological, social and historical forces that confer its singularity to any place or region” (Dubos, as cited in Crouzet 2009, 36). Dubos’ interpretation happens to share the holistic approach advocated in the ICOMOS definition of the spirit of place. In that, the spirit of place emerges as “... living ecological relationship between particular location and the persons who have derived from it and added to it the various aspects of their humanness. No landscape, however grandiose or fertile, can

express its full potential richness until it has been given its myth by the love, works and arts of human beings” (Dubos, as cited in Malhere 2002).

#### 4.2. Spirit of place in the scholarship of heritage studies

“Où se cache l’esprit du lieux? (Where does the spirit of place hide?)” (Petzet 2008, 8). With this line, Michael Petzet started his opening address to the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ICOMOS in 2008, gathered in Quebec to ponder the interplay between tangible and intangible heritage values. What we could further ask is also: why has this concept become so relevant at this particular moment of human history? What meaning does it yield to heritage values?

Recently a considerable literature has grown in the discourse of conservation studies with attention around the notion of the spirit of place. The sources further multiplied in close relation with the issues of the local distinctiveness, construction of identity and sense of belonging (Corsane et al. 2008). The milestone was made in 2008 with the official definition brought by ICOMOS, outlining the spirit of place “as the tangible (buildings, sites, landscapes, routes, objects) and the intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colors, odors, etc.), that is to say the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place... constructed by various social actors, its architects and managers as well as its users, who all contribute actively and concurrently to giving it meaning” (Quebec Declaration 2008).

The Quebec Declaration on the preservation of the spirit of place adopted on 4 October 2008 outlines the key principles and recommendations concerning the meaning of the concept, as well as its transmission, safeguarding and threatening influences. “As an innovative and efficient manner of ensuring sustainable and social development throughout the world”, the declaration resulted from a five-years long process to ensure preservation of living, spiritual and social nature of places (Quebec Declaration 2008). Five years earlier Kimberly Declaration (2003) initiated the process, linking the intangible heritage values and the local communities as their traditional guardians. Two years later, Xi’an Declaration recognized the importance of the preservation of context. This has been determined as a unity of tangible and intangible elements of the setting of the heritage monuments and sites (Xi’an Declaration 2005).

These steps were monumental in their indication of rising awareness about a variety of threats that heritage sites face in rapidly changing contemporary societies. At the same time, they subtly signaled a shift in considerations of heritage values that sometimes do not fit a frame of tangible or intangible specifically. The first document explicitly reflecting on the spirit of place in the context of heritage conservation came in May 2008 when ICOMOS Americas adopted the Declaration of Foz Do Iguacu (Declaration Foz Do Iguacu 2008). Identifying the main elements impacting and threatening the spirit of place, the declaration explained the concept as "interaction of the material and intangible components of natural settings and/or those built by humans" (Declaration Foz Do Iguacu 2008). The key message of the document is actually in highlighting the essential, living and evolving link that the spirit of place has with people of local communities and their identity in the context of heritage (Declaration Foz Do Iguacu 2008).

On these foundations, including new ICOMOS charters on Cultural Routes and on Interpretation and Presentation, the efforts to grasp the "indivisible nature of tangible and intangible heritage and the meanings, values and context intangible heritage gives to objects and places" culminated with the adoption of the Quebec Declaration in 2008. At the meeting in Canada the idea was explained as "a richer, more dynamic and inclusive vision of cultural heritage" - in a way, the spirit of place was asserted as a changing, relational concept that implies a plurality of meanings (Quebec Declaration 2008). Positioning local communities as key actors in the conservation process, the document calls for collaboration of various disciplines and relevant stakeholders. Formal (educational programs, digital databases, websites, pedagogical tools, multimedia presentations, etc.) and non-formal (narratives, rituals, performances, traditional experience and practices, etc.) means of transmission are equally acknowledged as tools of sustainable and social development on a local level (Quebec Declaration 2008).

The Quebec Declaration actually came after decades of struggle to define interconnectedness of tangible and intangible heritage elements. The Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (2004) presented a milestone in that journey, though the foundations for recognizing the spirit of place appeared firstly in the Nara Document on Authenticity from 1994. Michel Petzet (2008) points out to the article 13 of the Nara Document where the notion of spirit and the notion of place appeared for the first time together in the context of authentic setting addressing "location and setting, and spirit and feeling" (Nara Document 1994). Petzet's arguments about the spirit of place (which he does use interchangeably with *genius loci*) also reflect on the key

role of religious and spiritual implications for understanding of “dialectics between spirit and place” (Petzet 2008). Further on, when referring to the “authentic feeling” and emotional basis of the concept of spirit of place, Petzet recalls Riegl’s idea of the monument feeling and age value. He thus regards genius loci in parallel to the certainty of a global change through the perspective of “longing for survival” (Petzet 2008).

Retrospectively in relation to Petzet’s view, the interest in the spirit of the place appeared several decades prior to the Quebec Declaration. The questions of the indivisibility of the material and immaterial values in relation to the local communities appeared within the frames of new museology propelled by similar societal concerns. In fact, eco-museums are considered in recent studies as means that allow “preservation and full expression” of the spirit of place via community empowerment (Corsane et al. 2008). Once considered a revolutionary creation, eco-museum set foundations for the study of the spirit of place in the context of its social dimension – as a living entity where local community reflects itself. Largely conceptualized through the work of George Henri Riviere and Hugues de Varine, this new concept of museum appeared both as a cultural response and a means for concerned local communities to communicate their heritage as a “tool for local and community development” (De Varine 1996). In the circumstances of re-evaluation of social values, ideas of national unity and multiculturalism, ascent of new social movements, radical change of museological approach implied transformation of museum from an elitist establishment in the community-oriented open institution (Ross, 2014). De Varine (1988) maintained that their essence lies in the active participation of citizens and improvement of the role of the museum (as cited in Montanari 2015), while Rivard (1988) formulated this in relation of territory + heritage + memory + population (as quoted in Davis 2007, 402). Davis envisions eco-museum as “a community-driven museum or heritage project that aids sustainable development” (Davis 2007, 401). Together these studies indicate eco-museum as a radical departure from traditional curiosity cabinets that uses a holistic approach to heritage through the engagement of local communities and in situ protection of both tangible and intangible values (Montanari 2015). Recent studies evaluate the success of eco-museology reflecting on the spirit of place as social power (Maggi 2000; Davis 2008; Montanari 2015). Research has shown a significant change of awareness in relation to issues of history and heritage (Sola 1998), and in particular, the important political meaning of eco-museums in strengthening national identity (Pina, as quoted in Maggi 2000), as well as increasing “sense of common pride, respect and identity” (Montanari 2015). Concurrently, the issue of spirit of place gained in importance in light of the growing awareness of the different impacts and



threats that heritage values face at numerous levels. This relates especially with the concept of authenticity which is considered essential for the preservation and transmission of the spirit of place (Burgess et al. 2008, 6). In his reflections on the concept of *genius loci* or spirit of place in different schools of architecture, Loukaki concludes that constitution of authenticity and the essence of place conceals more important issues about the power and the privilege to define the standards by which certain place is understood and altered (Loukaki 1997). In line with its susceptibility to transformation and alteration, recent concerns address volatility of impact brought by the pressures of globalization (Messeri 2008; Bell and Johnston 2008; Szaktilla 2008; Burke 2008; Kask and Raagmaa 2010).

After decades of interdisciplinary theoretical dilemmas, the elusiveness of the concept of the spirit of place seemingly culminates in the heritage studies. The 2008 definition itself hints to all of the notions previously debated in various research fields. The concept includes heritage sites possessing outstanding qualities integral with the natural and physical surroundings and interrelated with the local communities in continuous re-construction of people's identities and cultural expressions. Contemplating his opening question about finding the spirit of place, Petzet (2008) explained *genius loci* as a guardian angel in our struggle "to ensure continuity... and preserve memory in a world that is changing as never before" (8). In the third millennium this understanding becomes vital when applied to the preservation of place identity and heritage sites affected by the times of change (Kask and Raagmaa 2010). Still, neither definition grasps the answer to the perpetual dilemma about the spirit of place – is it a connection for a number of individual tangible and intangible components within one term or is it rather just one multifaceted value?

#### 4.3. From place to landscape

In his seminal work "Place and Placelessness", Edward Relph (1976) wrote, "The spirit of a place lies in its landscape" (30). With this phrase he commented on Durrell's idea of people "as expressions of their landscape" (Durrell, as quoted in Relph 1976, 30). But what exactly is "place", and how one defines "landscape"? How do we make relation from one to another? In the light of this research place has been considered in relational context. The interpretation derives from a phenomenological approach of cultural geography, as developed by Relph and Tuan in particular. Depending on the scale, place tangles with heritage, especially in the ways in which people's identities and values they decide to preserve from the past can further direct the identity and development of the heritage site and its community. Yi-Fu Tuan observes that the subject of place has to be considered from an experiential perspective of

people. "Place, at all scales from the armchair to the nation, is a construct of experience... is created by human beings for human purposes" (Tuan 1975, 165). For him, place can only be considered to be truly lived in and real when experienced by those who inhabit it completely, through "complex often ambivalent feelings... through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind." (Tuan 1977, 18).

Human perception in approach of Edward Relph is a shared point with Tuan. Relph (1976) regards place through a complex dimension of all intricate ways in which human beings experience the surrounding world, as a "fusion of natural and human order" (141). Experienced directly and currently, a place includes physical elements and human relationships we build in our communities and beyond, the activities we perform in the physical place, as well as diverse meanings that we ascribe to places. Eventually, over time these interconnections become imbued with their residents' emotions. "The catalyst that converts any physical location - any environment if you will - into a place, is the process of experiencing deeply. A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings" (Gussow, as quoted in Relph 1976, 142).

Using the prism of human perception as ways of seeing, Relph relates landscape to place directly – thus, landscape is a constantly changing physical form of place which, on the other hand, appears as a constant (Relph 1976, 30). This contrast in the relation appears due to the element of time, the inevitability of its passing and memory we are left with afterwards (Relph 1976). Sometimes a place can become so powerful we take it with us, in remembering. For Dubos this "persistence of place" is due to its continuity and internal force, "a god within" or spirit of place (Relph 1976, 31).

In recent landscape studies, Jeff Malpas (2011) reflects on phenomenology of place and landscape concluding that all our interactions with place remain written and recorded in the representation of landscape (11). He delves deeper into this relation seeking the "revelatory character of landscape" which further unveils the relation that we build with place and landscape both (Malpas 2011, 22). We experience landscape through all our senses, as we weave threads of connections between each other, between meanings and between places within a landscape. That emotional and full sensorial engagement eventually leads us to the heart of the relation between landscape and place: "In the encounter with landscape, and with place through landscape, we do not merely encounter something apart from ourselves, but rather we come into contact with the place in and through which we ourselves come into being." (Malpas 2011, 20).

#### 4.4. How many landscapes is there in a landscape?

“Every river is more than just a river. Every rock is more than just a rock.” (Greider and Garkovich 1994, 1). These words summarize the seemingly everlasting dilemma surrounding the conception of landscape. The particular concerns have been pervading a variety of disciplines over a decade. John Wylie (2007) aptly describes the concept as a “recurrently haunting” tension, one that comes from the dualism and the ambiguity of meanings set “between proximity and distance, body and mind, sensuous immersion and detached observation.”(Wylie 2007, 1). In heritage studies, landscape is usually “cultural”, as regards through the lenses of synergistic effect of culture and nature. However, its notion far exceeds such a simple linguistic explanation. This chapter will present an overview of these different perspectives and approaches, as developed by several major theorists of landscape.

“Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” (Council of Europe 2000). This definition of landscape as set by Council of Europe in 2000 has opened new possibilities for understanding and interpretation of the landscape notion. By determining the concept through view of human involvement, the document asserted the role of perception and experience in landscape studies (Turner 2012, 135). The shift came after years of a momentum of the cultural landscape that followed the UNESCO recognition of its outstanding universal value in 1992. The declaration defined three main categories (Operational Guidelines, Annex 3, 2008) clearly defined and designed, landscape evolved organically and associative cultural landscape invested with religious or spiritual ascriptions.

Contemporary research in landscape studies is pronouncedly influenced by phenomenology and anthropology, offering new insight into heritage values embodied in a landscape. Tim Ingold (1998) in particular argues against the “dualistic thinking” between the ideas of culture and nature, suggesting instead approach of “dwelling perspective” grounded in phenomenology (as quoted in Wylie 2007, 154). "Meaning is there to be discovered in the landscape, if only we know how to attend to it. Every feature, then, is a potential clue, a key to meaning rather than a vehicle for carrying it... It is through being inhabited that the world becomes a meaningful environment.” (Ingold 2000, 172-173).

Essentially multidimensional and layered in a variety of meanings, the definitions of landscape come together from different fields of study and practice where landscape has become an

integral spatial category. Continuously evolving, the understanding always included two distinct indicators: human involvement with its interdependency with social factors, and ideological determinants of different political and cultural categories. Enclosed within and with the physical constraints of the natural environment, the ways we come to apprehend the landscape invariably differ and alter depending on numerous elements such as age, gender, education, political views, cultural and religious background. When it comes to the issues of religion, environmental perception, and national context, the conception rises to the narrative of complex constructions as well as products of heritage-making that take into account tangible and intangible dimensions equally. "...places or landscapes reflecting everyday ways of life, the ideologies that compel people to create places, and the sequence or rhythm of life over time are significant. They tell the story of people, events and places through time, offering a sense of continuity, a sense of the stream of time. They also offer a cultural context setting for cultural heritage." (Taylor 2008, 5).

These are conceptions of the landscape of the Western culture. The word arrived to the English language from the Dutch at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Schama 1995, 10). The term "landscape" originated from German "landschaft", but the three expressions share the same meaning of a land shape, implying the process of shaping that includes both physical and cultural forms (Sauer 1963, 321). The same meaning persists in the words used in Latin based languages, but what actually is "landscape"? During the past decades, this question stood at the centre of an interdisciplinary debate, in which competing ideas drew upon a great variety of research – art history and visual theory, anthropology, literature, geography. Diverse intellectual contexts developed by the leading theorists of landscape continued to influence the subsequent and current thinking in landscape studies. This applies particularly to the pioneers of the cultural landscape research, Sauer, Hoskins and Jackson, whose different approaches shared one major common ground – vision of landscape as a document of human history (Taylor 2008, 6).

It was Carl Sauer (1889 - 1975) who brought the term landscape, precisely cultural landscape, into the focus of research. According to Sauer (1963), there is always and first of all a cultural landscape, "fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result." (343). This argument about the role of culture was later on acknowledged and further reinforced by the principle 3 of the UNESCO Convention (1992), "cultural landscapes are at the interface between nature and culture, tangible and intangible heritage, and biological and cultural diversity; they represent

a tightly woven net of relationships that are the essence of culture and people's identity.” (Rössler et al. 2009, 35).

The most prominent thinker on landscape in the United Kingdom, W.G. Hoskins asserted the historical richness of landscape in his most known work “Making of the English Landscape” (1954). As a historian, Hoskins used chronological perspective to illustrate the evolution of British landscapes. In doing so, he made what Matless (1998) calls “lament for landscape” (274), dousing the idea in the nostalgic elegy of his present (Wylie 2007). “To those who know how to read it aright”, Hoskins (1954) writes, “[landscape] is the richest historical record we possess.” (14). Approached empirically and seen through melancholic longing for the country that preceded the Second World War, Hoskins’ landscapes consist of intricately depicted scenes of what was essentially the harmony and idyll of the authentic British countryside. “Hoskins sees the past as a source of solace and consolation, without the hope that it can be resurrected in the present. This country can now only be in the mind’s eye, and so that mind must be melancholy.” (Matless, as quoted in Wylie 2007, 34).

Though relevant, and influential, both Sauer’s and Hoskins’ approach have been sidelined in the contemporary theorizing of landscape. Recent studies that approach landscape through the perspective of anthropology and phenomenology resonate much more with the “phenomenological sensibility” established in theory by J. B. Jackson (Wylie 2012). This approach reflected the credo of Jackson’s work, “far from being spectators of the world, we are participants in it.” (Jackson 1997, as quoted in Wylie 2012, 57). Considered a key writer for the “maturation” of the American studies on cultural landscape, Jackson like Hoskins advocated comparative historical element as crucial for the discourse of landscape (Davis, as quoted in Wilson and Groth 2003, 77). In his view landscape presented “A rich and beautiful book [that] is always open before us. We have but to learn to read it” (Jackson, as quoted in Taylor 2008, 2). Comparing their positions Wylie argues that actually both Jackson and Sauer deliberately put themselves into a role of “insiders” in contemplating landscape, a fact “predicated upon an empirically close, even tactile, engagement with, and inhabitation of, the landscape. Their devotion to detail, their descriptive emphasis, and in particular their undoubted level of emotional and intellectual investment in landscape gives rise in their writings to a sense of proximity, empathy and attachment.” (Wylie 2007, 41).

During 1980s and 1990s landscape has been regarded through ideological and symbolic terms (Wylie 2007, 57). In his critique of a holistic approach to landscape Wylie (2007) described these different outlooks as “a way of seeing the world... an image, representation or gaze...

a particular set of cultural values, attitudes and meanings.” (153). Starting from this representational understanding, Hirsch and O’Hanlon (1995) offer the meaning of an evolving “cultural process” that develops through the experience of everyday life, ways of seeing and representation, shared system of beliefs and values. Everything we know as our past, present and future relies on a matrix of ties we build over time and space. On this premise, in their book “Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space” Hirsch and O’Hanlon introduce the idea of a physical environment containing a possibility of various landscapes within. This thinking has been actually echoing through the theories of several important thinkers of landscape. In his classic “Landscape and Memory” (1995) Simon Schama contends that every landscape implies one same physical environment - the difference appears in its symbolic meanings ascribed differently. Considering these elements originating from the culture, he links the notion of landscape implicitly with memory and identity. “Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.” (Schama 1995, 6-7). So in the end, any landscape is a product, however it might be shaped by our perception.

Schama (1995) recalls Ansel Adams’ depiction of the Yosemite national park, “...even the landscapes that we suppose to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product.” (9 – 10). Greider and Garkovich (1994) share Schama’s standpoint from the view of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Pondering about landscape as a social construction of the nature and the environment, they find that “any physical place has the potential to embody multiple landscapes, each of which is grounded in the cultural definitions of those who encounter that place.” (Greider and Garkovich 1994, 2). More than a crossroads for different values of human and social reality (Mitchell, as cited in Claval 2008), Claval (2008) further suggests the human mind, via perception and concepts loaded with intangible values (religious, aesthetic, moral, national), incessantly alters an external reality of the environment. Rather, landscape emerges as “a mental construction, reality that is collectively adopted and passed on from one generation to another... [that] help people to know who they are and from whom they differ.” (Claval 2008, 7).

Another proponent of the cultural construction of landscape, Ken Taylor (2008) regards the concept as “a living entity and record of social history” that embodies shared sense of identity (7), “a storehouse of private and collective memories” (2 -3). And because identity has essential relevance for *genius loci*, key role in relation of this “interactive phenomenon” with heritage belongs to the people and communities who inhabit it (Taylor 2008, 4). By re-examining and revealing what “once has been”, for people there is constant negotiation

between the experience, narrative and interpretation of memories. If the idea of memory is seen as a re-enactment, heritage becomes an interpretation of our past in the present, a choice – a process of conscious selection of the past events that we decide to preserve and remember. It becomes rather difficult then to separate an object of heritage from its place and actors involved – applied to landscape, this ambiguity resonates with the “invention” process of heritage-making as evidenced in the nationalist invention of nature conservation in the United States of America (Kaufmann 1998), building of memory through the notion of patriotism in France (Nora 1989), and with a particular love of place that encompasses feelings and experiences enfolding sense of belonging (Tuan 1974).

Yi – Fu Tuan defines love of place as “topophilia”, a notion that accumulates all of the people’s affective bonds with a particular place or setting, that encapsulates diverse responses - aesthetic, tactile and emotional, feelings that “one has toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood.” (Tuan 1974, 92 - 93). The opposite side is topophobia implying negative feelings of fear. As such, topophilia is subject to the influence of other elements such as awareness of the past, religious or national values (Tuan 1974, 92 – 93), but “...it is not the strongest of human emotions. When it is compelling, we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events and perceived as symbol.” (Tuan 1974, 93).

The landscape, thus becomes more than a special manifestation of the system of values, but a reflection of the ties we built with the physical surroundings and furthermore among ourselves and with oneself. It turns into a reflection of our personal identities, a legacy of stories, memories and feelings. And it is also guarded within the other side of the love of place - one that shows up when once adored environment alters irretrievably. It is the emotional sense of lost landscape (Taylor 2008, 2). “The past lives on in art and memory, but it is not static: it shifts and changes as the present throws its shadow backwards. The landscape also changes, but far more slowly; it is a living link between what we were and what we have become. This is one of the reasons why we feel such a profound and apparently disproportionate anguish when a loved landscape is altered out of recognition; we lose not only a place, but ourselves, a continuity between the shifting phases of our life.” (Margaret Drabble 1979, as cited in Taylor 2008, 2).

#### 4.5. Landscape as an abode of the sacred

"Human nature is polarized. Man plays two roles, the social-profane and the mythical-sacred, the one bound to time, the other transcending it." (Tuan 1974, 129).

This thesis is focused on the area of the natural and religious heritage that will be considered further in the research as a sacred landscape. Such term implies an ambiguous relational context of embodied material and immaterial values that, in the meaning of the landscape notion, reach the level of a social construct.

Throughout the history of humankind, nature and wildlife quite often held special attributes of the divine, as the mystical source of spirituality, inspiration and creativity. Arts, and literature addressed these qualities and mass religious traditions based their learning on the idea of divine revelation in wilderness. Though there are numerous studies dealing with the question of spiritual versus ecological values based on the premise of the nature as sacred (Milton 1999), the purpose here is not to open theological discussion nor to debate on the dilemmas of conservationists. Rather, the issue the study explored in this chapter is that of theoretical grounds of experiencing sacred in the nature and how that influences the notion of the landscape. Drawing upon theoretic positions from landscape studies in the previous chapter, the aim here is to explain the terms of sacred, sacred natural site and in particular, sacred landscape.

The term "sacred" holds different meanings, two of which are considered as relevant here. Firstly, the sacred might mean special emotional experience and impression of an environment that is considered as sacred through the intimacy of everyday experience in a variety of situations or rituals. An early morning walk in the forest offers a healing experience of restfulness and contemplation that becomes enriching and rewarding when practiced daily. Such a "fantastic, sacred experience" of landscape may wake up strong feelings and increase creativity through its inspirational and spiritual – restorative value (Burger 2008). Secondly, sacred traditionally implies a special spiritual dimension of the environment that is primarily propelled by religious source. That kind of a relationship between spirituality and nature usually comes alive in two basic types of activities: a pilgrimage and eremitic ideal of life (García-Varela 2008). "...On route to holy sites where a sacred presence is manifest, pilgrims travel through the natural world and enjoy the opportunity to perceive the spiritual dimension of nature and be a part of it." (García-Varela 2008, 51, original emphasis). Eremitism stands on the opposite end as "a static manifestation of direct contact with the natural world... Hermits close themselves off from the outside



world, be it temporarily or permanently, and live a life dedicated to prayer and contemplation amidst their own personal temple of nature.” (García-Varela 2008, 51). In his discussion on tophophilia, Tuan (1974) comments about the dual and contradictory meaning of the “sacred” and nature in the Christianity - it can be "a place of desolation, the unsown land frequented by demons, it is condemned by God", it can be "(a) a place of refuge and contemplation, or more commonly (b) any place where the Chosen are scattered for a season of discipline or purgation." (109). In his view, this is directly related with the double interpretation of the “vast wilderness” – “...for the ascetics, the desert was in effect at once the haunt of demons and the realm of bliss in harmony with the creaturely world... Early in the history of Christianity the monk's cell in the wilderness and the church in the world were held to be small models of paradise. Their presence lent an aura of sanctity to the environs so that something of the paradisaical innocence could be seen about them...” (Williams 1962, as cited in Tuan 1974, 110).

In the context of the experience of people in the places of religious significance, the sacredness is manifested in different levels within the awe inspiring impression of the natural environment. The sacredness is determined by the behaviours that occur in the place, the experience of users, and the meanings associated with the place with various groups (Levi and Kocher 2012, 917). Furthermore, research of Levi and Kocher (2012) also suggested that tourist interpretation, design, art, religious symbols and other means can be used to encourage the perception of sacredness.

Different forms of land and nature are revered as sacred. Particular aesthetic values of the landscape, the beauty of the scenery or textures, geological forms and other qualities certainly influence to the understanding of the particular power of those places. Because of their inaccessibility and peaks reaching upwards to meet the sky, mountains have a meaning of “holy places” in various religions, as a home of special beings and forces. “Their soaring summits, the clouds and thunder that swirl about their peaks, the life giving waters that flow from their heights, these and other characteristics imbue them with an aura of mystery and sanctity. In that aura, people of diverse backgrounds, both traditional and modern, experience a deeper reality that gives meaning and vitality to their lives.” (Bernbaum 2006, 1).

According to Bernbaum (2006) ten different dimensions of the sacred are attached to the mountains. Some mountain peaks are at the centre of mythological stories, and different religious activities such as pilgrimage, meditation and sacrifice, while others serve as a location of temples, monasteries, hermitages, groves and similar objects, or hold a particular

place in collective memory through association with life of important saints (3). Due to their physical features, certain mountains embody evocative aesthetic qualities and meanings that inspire feelings of awe and wonder, and are sought as a source of spiritual inspiration and renewal. Depending on the cultural background, these expressions of sacredness could be experienced in different ways: as high places whose summit hosts deities, as a centre of the universe (axis mundi, e.g. Navaho Indians), as places of high natural and supernatural powers (Bernbaum 2006, 3-4). These powers could be further perceived as derived from the presence of the divine forces, as an architectural place of worship, as a garden or paradise, an abode of the dead and link to the ancestors. The sacredness of the mountains manifests also in the understanding of the providing blessing and prosperity, and spiritual and artistic inspiration. In particular, it is an expression of a cultural identity, celebrated throughout the nation and wider (Bernbaum 2006, 6).

With the increasing influence of secular activities that slowly erode the boundary between sacred and profane, the vulnerability of the sacred places and areas has recently awakened the attention of various disciplines, primarily due to the great diversity of cultural and natural heritage. In this, nature conservation comes in symbiosis with the spiritual traditions. Research indicates that, sacred sites serve as “the oldest method of habitat protection” because “practically all religions and belief systems, from the mainstream to the local, encourage their followers to respect and care for the natural environment... (Higgins-Zogib 2008, 115-116). Indeed, in the heritage practice during the past decade, places of religious significance have acquired an essential role in the conservation of biodiversity. In close collaboration between the religious communities and indigenous people, academic community, managers and other stakeholders various projects around the world have been initiated to overcome the complexity of this connection between the faith and nature. Within the framework of the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (CSVPA) and Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Delos Initiative started in 2004 focusing on sacred natural sites in technologically developed countries. The initiative significantly contributed to the clarification of sacred natural site as a category in the domain of heritage, investigating case studies worldwide (Papayannis and Mallarach 2009, 15). The research realized within the project served as a significant step forward, towards the formulation of the practical guidelines for managers of sacred natural sites presented in collaboration of UNESCO and IUCN in 2008.

These studies were important in showing that the interconnectedness of natural features of the site and its sanctity integrates particular systems of values, social and cultural norms. They

have also illustrated how these tangible and intangible values become inherent to the environment through spatial dimension, varying from the level of species to the extreme of landscape (Ramakrishnan 2003, 8). The IUCN guidelines derives the definition of sacred natural sites as a subcategory of sacred site which includes “areas of land or water having special spiritual significance to peoples and communities” (Wild, McLeod, and Valentine 2008, 7). The evolution of these localities is an ongoing process. It happens over time in close relation with the traditions, mythology and narratives of their local communities. Infused with deep spiritual component, these heritage sites represent a peculiar thread between society and nature, which is retained in collective memory and through special intimate associations with the environment.

Estimations indicate that seven percent of the land area of the planet officially belongs to faith communities (Wild, McLeod, and Valentine, 2008, 10). In spatial context, these areas appear with great variation in scale. However, the studies usually focus on very specific locations on the built environment (churches, temples, monuments, etc.) neglecting the complexity of the wider context of the environment.

The research about sacred landscapes so far has been closely aligned with landscape archaeology. Studies especially gained momentum after the 1970s with the growing interest of the archaeologists for the landscapes and sacred geographies of ancient civilizations (Reese-Taylor 2012, 753). Sacred landscapes occupy the particular domain of interdisciplinary landscape studies, approached through the perspective of human activity and engagement with the environment, especially concerning their cultural construction and collective interpretation (Reese-Taylor 2012). In the view of Kathryn Reese – Taylor (2012), “a sacred landscape is a temporal and spatial fabric spread over a geographic region, unifying all the rituals conducted at the various sacred places within a narrative framework” (752).

As a “socio-symbolic aspect of human-environment interaction” (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, as cited in Reese-Taylor 2012), the sacred places and landscapes are fundamentally determined by the kind of activity they are used for. The archaeological studies of pre-historic landscapes have shown that for thousands of years human actions altered various elements of the natural environment, encouraged or directly related to religious practice and learning, beliefs and rituals. The transformation happened though the narrative of religious tradition, sometimes for military, economic and political purposes. In such way, these landscapes (e.g. sacred landscapes of Maya, in Reese – Taylor 2012) embodied a national ideology through explicit manipulation of the territory, with the topography spreading beyond the physical confines of the specific sacred places. In particular, spatial and social

reasoning stood behind the selection of locations for building the temples and monuments (Nixon 2006). In different traditions and culture places of worship often remained at hidden and inaccessible points, but keeping a system of connections throughout the landscape. In that manner, visibility and inter-visibility of religious structures within one landscape became an important determinant of its identity (Nixon 2009). Though qualities of the locations (aesthetic, physical, symbolic) played an important role in selecting certain places over others, the selected points were usually those that held high value in the interwoven thread of peoples' memories and ascribed meanings. "... Opposed to rituals that allow a mythical voyage in a sacred landscape distant from home... ", Michel Conan (2007) observes that some rituals "...can imbue a place with a sense of locality that reverberates upon the sense of identity of its dwellers, irrespective of the kind of social structure in which they participate." (10). Thus, whole landscape morphs into "an expression of some deeper reality" (Bernbaum 2006, 2), as a netting of symbols invested with special ideological meanings, shaped by different cultural and political factors.

## II. GORGE THAT BECAME HOLY MOUNTAIN

Le deuxième chapitre présente le terrain de recherche et ses éléments relevant du patrimoine naturel et religieux. En s'appuyant sur son contexte historique et national spécifique, le chapitre explique comment un paysage sacré s'est construit à cet endroit. A travers une perspective chronologique, le chapitre plonge enfin dans le récit conservé par l'influence conjointe de la religion et de la Nation dans le façonnement du paysage.

### 1. NATURAL FEATURES OF THE LANDSCAPE OF THE OVCAR – KABLAR GORGE

Cut as a narrow meandering passage between the rocky slopes of the Ovcara and Kablar mountains, the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge is located in the south-western part of Serbia, in the west of the Balkan Peninsula. Combination of unique geological phenomena and diversity of wildlife habitats contributes to the exceptional aesthetic and scientific value of the landscape. Ascetics started settling here in the secluded dwellings built in the steep hills, the cavities of the cliffs, and ancient forests at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Bringing new teaching of Orthodoxy, they were coming from the southern areas of the peninsula in hiding from the religious and political turmoil that engulfed the Southeast Europe.

In an area of 2,250.00 hectares, one river, the West Morava joins two mountains, two municipalities, two hydroelectric power stations with two lakes, and 12 sanctuaries scattered across the surrounding hills and valleys. For centuries the unruly flow of the river has been moulding the mountainous terrain into an intricate landscape looking as though the river suddenly stopped in that sculpting and turned its wave into a stone of these wild and inaccessible hills. Six sanctuaries stand at each of its coasts, built at a distance of six kilometres. For the most part, the gorge today attracts pilgrims in search of spirituality, history and culture enthusiasts, and people curious to see and feel what the medieval monks created here. Currently there are twelve marked hiking trails in the length of over 100 km in the gorge, as well as 21 mountaineers' courses and six sport climbing places to practice.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century travel writers described the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge as "a crack between the rocks" that the river cuts through (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 41). Though the gorge is nowadays accessible by car, back in 1872 an hour and a half was enough to explore the whole area, on foot. Once stepping inside the visitor first perceives a somewhat contradictory

image of the landscape - rocky cliffs of the mountain Kablar stand opposing to the dense and dark forests of the massive Ovcara Mountain with the river wavering in between.

Formed in the remains of a neogenic lake, the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge presents discordant transverse valley cutting through irregularly set physiographic elements (Ovcara - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). Very pronounced meanders of the river and the lowest parts of the valley with small islands of sediments present its main morphological feature. Due to the extreme meandering of the river, the total length of the gorge measured along the river bed is 16 km, which is almost twice larger than the straight line distance between its beginning and end (Management Plan for Protected Area Ovcara - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012, 1).

The whole gorge is characterized by landslides. The terrain features steep cliffs with rugged mountain sides and snakelike curving of the river measuring 100 meters of width in its narrowest belt. In the central part maximum depth of the gorge varies from 620 to 710 meters with the highest slopes inclined for over 30°, reaching 50° on the mountain Ovcara (Ovcara - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). These geological elements date from the Jurassic period, with limestone rocks from the Triassic period and sandstones from the Paleozoic era (Ovcara Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998).

Mainly composed of limestone and dolomite rocks, the Ovcara Mountain (985 meters) is a conical mound with concave slopes that become steeply inclined, about 50° towards the riverbed. (Ovcara - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). With its peak 710 m above the level of water, majority of slopes have a dense cover of vegetation. Mountain Kablar (890 meters) on the opposite side looks like its wavy limestone cliffs suddenly plunge into the river which is 610 m below the summit. To date, 30 caves and rock shelters have been discovered in the cliffs of the mountain Kablar (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 42). Historic records indicate their use for refuge and as a hermitage. In contrast, mountain Ovcara has one cave set below the summit that was used by monks in the past (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 5, 42).

The hydrographic peculiarity of the landscape is the appearance of springs of ground waters registered at thirty eight locations (Ovcara - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). The slopes just below the peaks of the Ovcara Mountain, directly above the two monasteries, abound in springs of water.

Rich in thermal waters, small village Ovcar Banja sits deep inside the gorge between the two mountains. According to the historical records its water has been used for health purposes from the medieval period and possibly earlier (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). Chemical analysis indicated that the thermal mineral water shows high quality and contains rare mineral elements important for the health benefit (Management Plan for Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012). Since 2012 the village is officially designated as a spa (The proposal for the establishment of the area Ovcar Banja 2011).

Great diversity of habitats, topography and geologic substrate, weather conditions of temperate continental climate which are conditioned by tectonic processes and fluvial activity, have influenced high level of biodiversity, both plant and animal life in the gorge. A particular micro-climate favoured this richness of flora and fauna through a variety of preserved habitats (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). Unlike in the river valley, the winters in the gorge are colder with shorter days because of the mountain peaks concealing the sun very early in the afternoon. Besides, throughout the year the days in the gorge start enveloped by dense clouds of fog, a fact that significantly affects the aesthetic values of the landscape image.

Aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems of the gorge present highly important refuge of numerous endangered, rare and relict plant and animal species. Combination of natural conditions and resources has enabled the survival of the tertiary flora. Despite investigations over the past 150 years, the flora of the gorge remains incompletely explored. Due to specific climatic conditions, the gorge has a characteristic phenomenon of inversion of vegetation - species that require warm conditions occur at higher altitudes, and those seeking cooler conditions in the lower parts of the gorge. Increased humidity and numerous sheltered coves with mountain streams and small rivers are another significant factor for abundant vegetation. Approximately 80 % (1728 ha) of the gorge is covered by forests (sprout forests in particular), mostly publicly owned (approximately 1052 ha) (Spatial Plan of the City of Cacak 2010, 78). Climax cover of vegetation is built by *Quercus*, *Carpinus*, *Acer* and *Ostrya* species (oak, hornbeam, maple and hop hornbeam), with *Fagetum montanum* (beech) forests growing beyond 800 meters (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). Meadows appear in the gorge as the secondary formations resulting from deforestation. Located mostly on the slopes on the left side of the river, they sometimes serve for grazing cattle. The belt of alluvial forests, located directly along the river, appears as a very narrow zone built from reeds, and forests of *Salix* and *Alnus* (willow and alder). This is an area of highly important ecosystems used for nesting of some endangered bird species, and a refuge of

various aquatic plant species. Consequently, these ecosystems are left to the spontaneous, natural regeneration (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998).

In the national context gorge is important as a refuge habitat of rare and relict flora important for increasing the genetic diversity, and diversity of species and ecosystems. According to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*, fam. *Amaryllidaceae*), all species of the genus *Cyclamen sp.* and seven species of the *Orchidaceae* family have *in situ* protection in the gorge (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998, 37 – 38).

People say that when you arrive to the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge wild duck will welcome you, and gray heron bid you farewell. Today cliffs and slopes of the gorge host over 160 bird species, with 100 species nesting there, and 54 species protected by regulations of the international conventions (BERN, CITES, SPEC 1-3, SPEC 4) and national Regulation on Protection of Natural Rarities (Management Plan for Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012, 30). Golden eagle, peregrine falcon, grey heron and rock partridge are registered here as some of the most important endangered bird species in the northern hemisphere. Due to the high number of species important for protection, since 2000 the gorge has the status of Important Bird Areas in Europe (area of 617,4 ha). More recent monitoring in 2014 defined 13 species which, according to their status in the international legislation, have relevance for the Natura 2000 network in the future (Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia 2014).

In addition to the 18 registered species of fish, all 35 mammal species living in the area have major ecological, biogenetic, and research significance, including all representative species of the bat family (*Chiroptera*) which are conserved by BERN and CITES conventions. International protection (BERN and IUCN) also concerns seven rare species of reptiles.

In terms of landscape values, Ovcar - Kablar Gorge presents a unique morphological whole, considered one of the most important and most picturesque gorges in Serbia (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). The uniqueness of the landscape image is best observed from the mountain peaks: curving meanders of the river, mountain slopes and vertical cliffs plummeting steeply into the river, numerous birds often visible high on the horizon circling around the mountains, specific colour scheme due to the dense vegetation constantly changing during the year in contrast with the rocky geological forms. This image of natural features might be occasionally interrupted, depending on the position, with silhouettes of monasteries, often hidden in the shadows of forests and rugged mountains. Considered in



their entirety, these elements of cultural, spiritual and historical heritage intertwine with the ambience showing the landscape for its unique interaction between human creativity and nature.

## 2. PLACES OF CULTURAL AND HISTORIC HERITAGE IN THE LANDSCAPE

The whole ensemble of 12 sanctuaries in the gorge is considered as one of the highest civilization achievements in this part of the country (Rajic and Timotijevic 2006, 287). However, their significance implies primarily the preservation of the more or less unmodified spatial organization of the monastic life within the landscape, surviving as a unique group through several centuries. Though many monasteries within the group embody significant cultural and historical value, art historians point out that their achievements remain behind the most important medieval monuments of religious and cultural heritage of Serbia, some of which are inscribed as the UNESCO list of world heritage, in terms of architecture and fresco painting alike (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Such discrepancy could be explained in the particular organization of monastic life and continuous reconstructions and demolitions over the history. The two dominant types of monastic inhabitations have persisted to this day: monasteries and cave-hermitages.

The architectural style of the buildings showcases typical elements of the medieval religious architecture of Serbia, Raska and Moravska Schools. These monasteries differ from the major medieval monasteries in that they show less splendour, both in architectural decorations and painting achievements (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). The oldest temple in the gorge, Nikolje monastery is the only temple that preserved its original style and appearance from the medieval times.

In accordance with the anchorites' way of life in the gorge, the interior of many monasteries remained simple and had never been painted. In addition to the main monasteries, folk tradition mentions as many as 40 more small churches, hermitages and chapels that existed in the gorge (Radosavljevic 2002). Their existence is, mostly, maintained through the oral tradition. Though we cannot say how the medieval monks built their temples, each major monastery existed, to date, as a complex of the main church with several smaller ancillary buildings such as the bell tower, residential buildings, funerary space, stables, workshops. Many monasteries have courtyards with decorative and medicinal gardens which extend beyond the fence into the vast monastery estate (usually the forests, sometimes vineyards or cultivated fields). The most striking impression at these places emerges in the harmonious

setting of the buildings within particular features of the surrounding landscape. In the following pages, style, architecture and artistic features of the monasteries will be shortly explained.

### **Monastery Vavedenje**

On a journey through the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge first monastery, Vavedenje, stands directly on the bank of the river. Though in direct vicinity of the road, the closeness of the river contributes to a sheltered and peaceful ambiance overlooking the forest covered slopes of the mountain on the other side. Still, its location deviates from the rest of the monasteries as it is entirely in the open, at the very entrance to the area today designated as protected. Perhaps it was such exposed position that conditioned its turbulent history marked by repeated demolitions throughout centuries.

The origins of the foundation remain unknown. The first mentions of the monastery Vavedenje appeared in 1525 in the Turkish records (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Not much is known about the history of the monastic life and about the original architecture of the church neither. Stylistic features of the currently visible remains of the original temple indicate 16<sup>th</sup> century (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 86). The original iconostasis of the church has been destroyed, and the interior of the church was not painted. Monastery archives still preserves the Four Gospels, printed in Belgrade in 1552.

### **Monastery Vaznesenje**

Monastery Vaznesenje is one of the oldest temples in the gorge, built on the north slopes of the Ovcara Mountain, with a view towards the river. Enclosed by dense hornbeam and oak forests between two steep mountain sides, the complex resides there, hidden from the eye of the travellers coming to the gorge. Believed to date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was demolished during the Ottoman period of the Serbian history only to be reconstructed later in 1937 (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

Today, the church has a roof made of copper sheet, and very simple interior without fresco painting. The entrance to the church stands on its north side, instead of the usual western. It is a single building with a low dome above the central aisle and a semicircular apse at the altar area (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). The monastery Vaznesenje played significant role in the development of literacy as a place where Four Gospels were made in 1570, one of the most relevant manuscripts in Serbian art.

## **Monastery Jovanje**

On the left bank of the West Morava River, the Jovanje monastery stands on a small plain below the mountain Ovcara, at the foot of the hill known Jovanje. In that place the river goes around the hill, making a large and sharp curve so it seems as though the monastery sits on some peninsula. Access on the side opposite from the asphalt road is possible only by boat, across the river. (Radosavljevic 2002, 27, translated from Serbian).

Repeatedly plundered and demolished, the monastery Jovanje has been mainly abandoned until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Turkish sources indicate its origin around 1540, though some writers believe that the temple dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with travel writers assuming its central function in the gorge with the offices and main bell tower (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). After the Second World War the medieval temple was torn down by decision of the new government in order to allow construction of hydroelectric power plant (Radosavljevic 2002). One of the biggest female monastic communities in the gorge disappeared in this way. Five years later, a new building was consecrated and the nuns repositioned the monastic cemetery, stones and pillars of the original temple on the hill where the monastery stands today. The dome and bell tower of the new monastery include dripstone taken partially from the destroyed temple. Stylistic influences of the new monastery belong to the Moravska School (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

## **Monastery of Uspenje**

Monastery of Uspenje stands at the top of the Jovanje hill, on the left riverbank, at the very heart of the river meanders in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge. This is one of the most impressive settings in the landscape since the clouds tend to lower above the river, making the building seem floating in the sky.

Visible archaeological remains revealed that the tower once stood nearby current church, built for the protection with several stairs, basement and rooms for transcribing activities. Monastery of Uspenje stands at the top of the Jovanje hill, on the left riverbank, at the very heart of the river meanders in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge. This is one of the most impressive settings in the landscape since the clouds tend to lower above the river, making the monastic building seem looming in the sky.

Visible archaeological remains revealed that the tower once stood nearby current church, built for the protection with several stairs, basement and rooms for transcribing activities (Radosavljevic 2002). Its top held a bell whose ringing used to send signal for all the

monasteries throughout the gorge to start the service, as well as to warn them in the case of a danger (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Small church was built on the foundations of the old temple beside the remaining walls of the tower in 1939, and renovated in 2001. The building is very simple in architecture, with no paintings or any decorations.

### **Monastery of Nikolje**

Situated at the foot of the massive slopes of the Kablar Mountain, on the left riverbank accessible by boat, “between two tunnels and two roads”, monastery Nikolje is the oldest temple in the gorge, dating from 1476 (Radosavljevic 2002, 169). The records from the 16<sup>th</sup> century indicate that transcribing school operated in the monastery over centuries, including a large writing room where the oldest manuscript Psalter was made in 1534 (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009b, 3). Due to the inaccessible position almost on the river, in wartime the monastery served as a refuge to people, and although the church suffered two fires, the records show that monastic life during almost six centuries never extinguished (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009b, 3).

Monastery Nikolje is the only monastery in the gorge that preserved its authentic medieval architectural form (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 201). The church is an example of the Moravska School, with only six small and very narrow windows, illuminating the interior that nevertheless remains gloomy. A separate room existed below the narthex, as a hidden room accessible by a wooden ladder (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 201). The dominant construction material is roughly crushed limestone whose irregular shapes can be discerned below the plaster. Fresco painting features strong dark contours and very large eyes. With the exterior plastered with yellow sand, modest architecture of the small church without a dome blends harmoniously into the natural surroundings of the gorge (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

The rich treasury of the monastery still keeps Karan gospel from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, along with collections of icons and manuscript books, with stamps from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The monastery also keep a rich library.

### **Monastery Preobrazenje**

Monastery Preobrazenje is the smallest in the group of the Ovcara – Kablar monasteries. Though Turkish censuses mentioned it in 1525, the origins remain unknown. The location just below the Mountain Kablar suggests its connection with the neighbouring caves. “Surrounded from all sides by the Ovcara and the Kablar, (the monastery) really stood in that beautiful and scenic gorge like in some nest, especially because lush shrubs, bushes, poplars, willows and

other trees grew everywhere around thanks to the Morava. The gigantic rocky Kablar rose on its northern side, just above the monastery, with two caves high above the foot, not so far one from another, so that together with this small monastery they made a triangle... (Radosavljevic 2002, 287 – 288). Folk tradition keeps the memory of these caves as hermitages, one of them supposedly used by Saint Sava.

In 1911 the monastery was demolished due to the construction of the railroad, and was reconstructed on the other side of the river opposite to its original location in 1938. Nothing remained of the medieval temple. Sources from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century speak of the Raska School influence in a church built with the very simple architecture, in stone (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 302). New monastery Preobrazenje kept simple architecture with no painting, but in the altar and dome. To this date the monastic life unfolds following the rules of the so-called Hilandar typicon<sup>5</sup>.

### **Monastery Blagovestenje**

The record above the entrance to the monastery Blagovestenje indicates that the church originates from 1602 though the oldest manuscript originates from 1372 which indicates traces of monastic life before the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Radosavljevic 2002). The interesting architecture with wooden roof shows the influence of Raska School, especially the building itself built in the form of the inscribed cross which is a characteristic of Byzantine influence (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). The monastery keeps many valuable icons, while its frescoes count for some of the most beautiful examples of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Serbian church painting (Radosavljevic 2002, 229). When arriving in front of the building, the most impressive is the one showing the Last Judgement, painted entirely outside on the wall of the west facade of the entrance, covered by a porch.

This monastery also assumingly hosted a transcribing school. The most important manuscript made here is Blagovestenje Gospel from 1372, bound again in the monastery in 1799 and currently part of a collection of the Vienna Library (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Until 1946 the monastery included large property with 260 ha of land, but newly established communist government after the war confiscated all possessions, except for one villa, in addition to taxes collected through the grain and meat (Radosavljevic 2002). Since 1960 extensive conservation works started at the monastery. Today this is one of the most visited locations

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<sup>5</sup> Hilandar is Serbian medieval monastery on the Mount Athos in Greece where Saint Sava (Rastko Nemanjic) wrote Hilandar typicon in 1200. Written on parchment, the manuscript determined the strict norms of monastic life in the monastery, as well as the organization of the monastery administration.

in the gorge, with approximately 50,000.00 visitors per year (Management Plan for Protected Area Ovcara - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021), 2012).

### **Church Ilinje**

This church called a monastery by people stands below the Kablar Mountain, on the hill accessible from the path through dense forest. The location is one of the most beautiful in the gorge, on a clearing opening in the forest in a shape of a horse saddle or a terrace, overlooking the surroundings of the other three monasteries in the horizon and terrifying slopes towards the river on the opposite (Radosavljevic 2002, 282). The present building dates from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was built on the place of the former church destroyed in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to archaeological research, the original temple was larger and included a tower where monks copied and decorated gospels and prayer books (Radosavljevic 2002; Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). The building has no decorations as a simple construction without dome. Since renovation until today it has never been inhabited.

### **Monastery Svete Trojice**

Set on the southwestern forested sloped of the Ovcara Mountain, Monastery Svete Trojice has remained to this date practically secluded from main travel directions and roads. Its church is considered the most important architectural monument of the gorge, as well as one of the most important architectural creations of the Serbian religious architecture of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Most probably the monastic community from the neighbouring monastery Sretenje founded the monastery around 1594 – 1595, the period indicated by the oldest writing sources produced here (Radosavljevic 2002, 364).

The architecture of the church belongs to the Raska School, built using crushed limestone as a single building with inscribed cross and Byzantine influence (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Except for the central and entrance area, the nave and narthex, the interior has no painting. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, great floods activated landslide that damaged the church in great measure. The monastery, then closed the door and became a property of the Sretenje monastery until 1937, when major renovation works took place.

### **Monastery Sretenje**

This monastery is located in the quietness of the hilly wilderness, just below the Ovcara Mountain summit, on the very place where spring of water appears from the hill. “During the summer it is surrounded with waterfalls of greenery and by high piles of snow in winter,

which makes it entirely secluded from all roads and civilization. The beauty, but also ruthlessness of the nature surrounding the Sretenje inspired the monks to renounce worldly values and dedicate to prayer, fasting and preparing for eternity.” (Kanitz, 1985).

First mention of the monastery indicate 1528 which is also confirmed by the architecture of the church, its marble baptismal font, and marble rosette (Radosavljevic 2002). It is assumed that during the 18<sup>th</sup> century the monastery suffered damages, only to be reconstructed afterwards, then demolished again, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The renovations marked the period when the monastery flourished as spiritual centre and economically, extending its large estate (Radosavljevic 2002). Then based complexes of vineyards still exist, and monastery estate during the 1990s recovered a significant portion of the lands and woodlands confiscated by Yugoslav government.

The original architecture of the medieval building remained unknown, while the renovated church contains no exterior decorations. Built in stone with the tin roof, the interior of the church is shadowed and dark since the light enters just through several narrow windows. The unique feature of the monastery is entirely walled painted iconostasis, created and retained as the constructive solution of the original design, which is a rarity in the Serbian church architecture (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Iconostasis raises to the ceiling so together they form a painted unity.

Little is known about the content of the treasuries, due to the damages of the monastery, but one of the most valuable objects is engraving created in Vienna in 1845 displaying a renovated monastery and monks who welcome the bishop.

### **Savinje**

The chapel dedicated to St. Sava, known as Savinje, stands inside of the limestone cliff of the Kablar Mountain, in the naturally created protrusion. According to the oral tradition rock shelter supposedly served as a hermitage to Saint Sava and is situated on the site where the spring known as Sava’s waters appears from the rocks. A steep path leads to the chapel, carved on the edges of the highly steeped vertical mountain cliffs, climbing above the gorge, and offering magnificent panoramic views of the landscape.

The appearance of the springs of water is considered one of the most obvious indications of ascetic monasticism in the vicinity of the hermitages - it was a characteristic of the medieval Orthodox understanding of the sacred space, given that healing waters were not just an association to the baptism of the Christ but served for the purification from impure forces

(Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 247). Healing waters showing up from the mountain cliff intrigued travel writers so Felix Kanitz remarked, “Every first Sunday after the full moon, everybody, young and old, come to drink water from this spring, and even more to clean their eyes, because it is believed to be mysteriously healing.” (Kanitz 1860, as quoted in Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 248).

The current chapel came as a result of the renewal that was initiated in the gorge by Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic in 1930s. As a first step, the path was breached through the rock, and the construction works followed afterwards. The small chapel construction was quite a feat because of the hard and arduous terrain. Savinje has a specific architecture that followed the natural features of the environment so only two church walls were built, and the mountain cliffs serve as the remaining two (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). To date the church remains desolate due to the position and natural inaccessibility.

### **Cave Kadjenica**

Not far from the Ovcara Banja, the cave Kadjenica is located on the right bank of the river upstream. Its name originates from the historical event of a death of the entire refuge of people from the surrounding villages hiding inside the cave during the Uprising against the Ottoman authorities in 1815. According to the folk legend, the soldiers discovered the cave whose entrance was then closed with burning straw and branches. This caused for everybody to suffocate from smoke, around 500 hundred people, according to the archaeological investigations inside the cave (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 302). In 1936 the cave was consecrated as a refuge – church and sometimes liturgy is held there. The human remains were collected in two stone sarcophagus set inside arranged altar apse. The entrance is marked with large metal cross outside, but despite a path and the stone stairs, this place is even today almost entirely invisible.

### **Medieval transcribing activities**

The monasteries of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge appeared and developed in the times when, especially between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cultural life stagnated due to political and social turmoil in Serbia. In such circumstances, they acquired particular role in continuing spiritual traditions and preserving literacy. Material and artistic restoration of the monasteries took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, marking a beginning of special transformation. This was a time when artistic life flourished through painting, iconography, transcribing activities (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). For several monasteries in the gorge, there are assumptions of existence of special structures and places intended for transcribing activities,



especially in the Jovanje monastery (Radosavljevic 2002; Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a; Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). This kind of work within the monasteries' walls reached the peak in the second part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Rajic 2014, 87). Today however we can only guess what was hidden behind the doors of these treasures.

Due to scarce resources preserved over the history, the analysis of this form of creative life in the monasteries of the gorge remains limited primarily to the several manuscripts. The Four Gospels from 1570 is considered one of the most relevant examples of the transcribing activities that continued early medieval traditions (Rajic 2014, 87). The document, made in the monastery Vaznesenje and nowadays kept in the National Library in Belgrade, contains 364 sheets with wooden binding, covered with leather.

Following newly found insights from the beginning of the 2000s, Rajic (2014) indicated that the illustrations of the old printed books served as a basis for the painting of the nave of the church of the monastery Nikolje (87). The treasury of this monastery still preserves the Karan's gospel created in 1608, stored in a special wrapping of linen and paper. A rare example of Serbian miniature painting, the book was made by an Orthodox priest and a Muslim master calligrapher, with painted elements pointing to multiple stylistic influences – it is a unique example of the influence of Islamic art in the decoration of manuscripts in the history of these territories (Rajic 2014, 88). The manuscript still has well preserved pigments, in decorations indicating the harmony of colours and refinement of the drawing, though with poorly shown human figures (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 221).

In addition, the Nikolje monastery has also kept over centuries the oldest written document in this area - the St. Nicholas Gospel which is today part of a collection of the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. The manuscript, probably hidden in the National Library in Belgrade during the First World War, disappeared in an unknown way only to appear later in a private collection (Danicic 1991, as quoted in Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Created in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century on parchment (dimensions 16.5 x 10.5 cm), the book has rich illuminations in colour, decorated in silver and gold (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 221-222). Drawn on the 147 sheets, the manuscript is interpreted as a possible transcription of the older Glagolitic manuscript. Due to the similarities in the writing, Danicic (1991) thought that it was a work by the same author who made The Bologna Psalter from 1404. The manuscript has been digitized in 2005 and is now available in the online version as well as printed.

### 3. RESEARCH SO FAR

As a testimony to the particularities of the six centuries old culture and artistic inheritance, the Ovcar - Kablar monasteries inspired many researchers. In the modern Serbian state these studies began with Vuk Karadzic<sup>6</sup>, who visited the gorge in 1820 during his journey through Serbia with a purpose to unveil insufficiently known parts of the country's history, particularly regarding manuscripts and languages. Descriptions left by Vuk Karadzic today bear unique historical value, since many irreversible changes occurred in the years following his visit - demolitions and re-constructions of the monasteries, treasuries' looting, irrevocable alterations of the natural environment (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 33). Austro-Hungarian ethnographer and travel-writer Felix Kanitz<sup>7</sup> came here in 1860 leaving behind numerous drawings and engravings of the monasteries that together with detailed depictions of the environment, social and religious life form a valuable historical testimony.

As for the artistic achievements of the Ovcar - Kablar monasteries, until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they rarely came to focus of research (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 36). In the modern era, historical research of the Ovcar - Kablar monasteries combined photographs, drawings and textual description of the monuments. Despite shortcomings, these text built up valuable literature, because many authentic traces and material remains originating from the medieval times disappeared due to the construction of hydroelectric power plants in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 1960s the National Museum in Cacak and the Regional Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments assumed jurisdiction over the monasteries. Since then, art historians focused investigation on individual monasteries, fresco painting, iconostasis and treasuries. The turning point in research about the area happened with publication of Turkish inventories from the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which revealed new data about the origins of the monasteries.

To this date, research conducted by historian Timotijević and art historian Rajic, and theologian Archimandrite<sup>8</sup> Radosavljevic remained the most extensive study of history and heritage

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<sup>6</sup> Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic (1787 – 1864) was philologist and great reformer of the Serbian language who made the standardized Serbian Cyrillic Alphabet. He conducted the first major study of the Serbian folklore and translated the New Testament.

<sup>7</sup> Felix Phillip Kanitz (1829 – 1904) was Austrian archaeologist, naturalist and travel writer. Author of several ethnographic studies where he combined text with engravings, he travelled through the Balkans and left travelogues about its people and cultures.

<sup>8</sup> Archimandrite - highest monastic rank to the bishop in the Orthodox Church.

values of the area. These studies, however, came through investigation done with very different approaches and focus.

Archimandrite Jovan Radosavljevic spent years studying the life of monks in the Ovcara - Kablar monasteries. In addition to his research related to monastic life and hesychasm, he left a series of observations focusing special attention on the times of great renovation, and life under communist government afterwards. Aside his personal testimony about many important historical events, the greatest contribution of this work can be observed in the detailed descriptions of life happening inside of the monastic walls, with portraits and biographies of many prominent monastic figures.

On the other hand, Rajic and Timotijevic followed new insight they found in the treasures of the monasteries and on the basis of the many years of research, historical changes of the gorge and monastic buildings. Their monographs focus in particular on detailed analysis of architecture and art, offering a detailed presentation of each monastery.

In 2005 investigation around the fortification next to the Church St. Elijah, often called the monastery Ilinje, discovered the materials originating from the Byzantine period. This information launched a number of new questions about past life in the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, preceding the appearance of the monasteries. Based on these new findings, Zorica Zlatić Ivković highlighted many neglected or misinterpreted data related to the monastery Uspenje, including assumptions about the previous cults in the gorge, the tradition of hesychasm, analogies with other 'holy mountains'.

In the past three decades the monasteries in the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, as well as the entire area suffered considerable changes due to the impact of urbanization. Consequently, they have primarily become a significant tourist attraction, which will accelerate the emergence of publications characterized by superficiality and ignorance of their true value and significance. Scores of articles, as well as continually set assumptions based on the superficial knowledge of history helped the creation of the mythical image of the past of this region (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012.).

Traditionally, the magazine Gradac established by the National Museum of Čačak publishes most of the research papers on the history and conservation of the monasteries in the gorge. In the meanwhile, the Tourist Organization of Čačak initiated a biannual Journal of the protected area Landscape of Outstanding Features Ovcara - Kablar Gorge which updates all

relevant information about the gorge through continuous research of natural and socio-cultural aspects, in particular environmental studies, tourism, and sustainable development.

#### 4. SACRED LANDSCAPE OF THE OVCHAR – KABLAR GORGE

Ovchar – Kablar Gorge played important role in the spiritual life of the local communities, strengthening their sense of national identity over centuries. This was closely related to the religious influence and historical circumstances in the times following the foundation of the monasteries in the Middle Ages. This particular relationship built up fuelled by narratives that lauded the landscape in the epithets of national pride. Moreover, the notion embodied in the sacred landscape, through the sense of “loyalty to one’s roots”, succeeded to maintain the communities in an image of collectivity through country’s numerous historical turbulences. In such a process of mental construction of the landscape (Sörlin 1999), the sacralization presented a way of articulating territory by political and social entities.

##### 4.1. Medieval beginnings: Outlining the historical and national context

Due to the specific geographic and strategic position at the crossroads between the continents in the southeastern Europe, for centuries the Balkan Peninsula has been a point of collision of different national and international interests, political and military aspirations of its own states, the West and the East. Charles Montesquieu once said, “Happy is the nation if its history is boring.”<sup>9</sup>

History of the Serbian state has been for the large part a history of the Serbian Orthodox Church<sup>10</sup>. Both institutions have medieval origins. Like other Pagan<sup>11</sup> South Slavic tribes, the Serbs came to the Balkans during the Great migration period over the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, but the important change occurred under the Byzantine influence: a process of Christianization began at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. For the understanding of the forthcoming history, words of Adrian Hastings (1997) resonate as a very apt introduction: “Christian conversion in the medieval world again and again constructed national identity around a particular kingly line and particular holy places, precisely through the closeness of the

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<sup>9</sup> StatusMind.com. Charles Montesquieu Quotes. <http://bit.ly/2bMmRv6>

<sup>10</sup> Perica (2002) explains this in the following approach, “Under the long Ottoman rule, Serb clergy actively participated in popular uprisings and wars for the restoration of statehood. Serbian Orthodox Church became a warrior-church devoted to the preservation of ethnic identity and the struggle for statehood and nationhood.” (7).

<sup>11</sup> Paganism was based on the practice of magic, idolatry and believing in forces of nature personified by individual deities. Despite receiving Christianity, traces of old Slavic paganism was held in Serbian folk religion, customs of the rural population and ceremonies related to life cycles and holidays in the annual calendar. Inseparable from the normal practice with respect to “biological reproduction, material production and social relations, folk customs and beliefs expressed in this sense the essence and spirit of the pagan religion” (Jovanovic 2006, 14).

church's identification with royal power. It elevates, consecrates and stabilises that power, but is also effectively subordinated to it." (189).

After a period of crisis in the first ruling family Viseslavic, Stefan Nemanja took over the throne of Serbia in 1170, initiating the centuries-long period of the rule of the dynasty Nemanjic. Their reign was marked in the territorial expansion of the state and the tradition of patronage and building the monasteries<sup>12</sup>. Historian Slijepcevic (2002) describes Rastko Nemanjic (Stefan Nemanja's youngest son) as the essential and intellectual creator of the idea of Serbian statehood, since he was the one who continued and completed the work started by his father (34). "It was St. Sava, previously a monk on Mount Athos, who stabilized Serbia's Christian conversion, established bishoprics and monasteries, commissioned the translation of books from the Greek into Serbian, and, above all, provided Serbia's normative pattern of a particularly close integration of church and state." (Hastings 1997, 129). To this date, the figure of St. Sava remained deeply etched in the sense of national identity on which historian Stanojevic (1919) remarked, "Even today... when a Serb thinks of its history, he firstly and mostly remembers of *that* state. History of *that* state, that is the main content of the medieval history of Serbian people; that is the state of the Dusan's Impery, that is the state of the Battle of Kosovo, from *that* state originate almost all peoples' traditions, and all characters, mentioned in Serbian history and tradition of the Middle Ages, played the role in *that* state. All the pride of the Serbian people regarding their past is related to *that* state, and renewal of *that* state has been the content of longing and desires of people for centuries." (Corovic 1920, 23, translated from Serbian, original emphasis).

Rastko Nemanjic was born in 1175 and at the age of 16 left the court to become a monk on Mount Athos, where he received the name Sava (Bakic - Hayden 2010). There, side by side with his father, he built the monastery of Hilandar returning to Serbia in 1206 to bring back his father's relics to monastery Studenica. Upon his return, Sava settled a conflict over the throne that arose between his two older brothers. Consequently, his second brother was proclaimed a king by papal legates in 1217 taking the name Stefan the "First-Crowned". However, countering the king's closeness with the Roman Catholic Church, two years later Sava travelled to Nicaea to visit the exiled Patriarch of Constantinople from whom he received the title of autocephalous Archbishop of Serbia (Radic 2007a, 233). Following this

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<sup>12</sup> After surrendering the throne to his second son, Stefan Nemanja took monastic vows as Simeon and moved to the Mount Athos where he lived as a monk until his death in 1199. He was canonized as St. Simeon. The most revered monastery, Hilandar was built 1198 on Mount Athos by Stefan Nemanja and his youngest son Rastko (canonized as St. Sava). Besides the Hilandar, the most important benefactions of Stefan Nemanja were monasteries Djurdjevi Stupovi and Studenica, inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

event, Sava repeated the coronation process for his brother, in the monastery Zica<sup>13</sup> which, as the Stefan's endowment, became the seat of the Serbian Archbishopric (Radic 2007a, 233). In the years afterwards, Archbishop Sava played a key role in "cultural and ecclesiastical Renaissance" of Serbia that included establishment of schools, numerous parishes and monasteries, development of literature and arts (Slijepcevic 2002; Radic 2007a; Melton and Baumann 2010). Therefore, portraits of St. Simeon and St. Sava "became a permanent part of the iconography of Serbian churches, and the frescoes with the parades of the Nemanjic family and scenes of dynastic history were multiplied" (Radojicic 1961, as quoted in Slijepcevic 2002, 35, translated from Serbian). In this way, Slijepcevic (2002) concludes, both the father and the son grew into "two guides of national history and two saints." (34, translated from Serbian).

In the decades after the death of Sava<sup>14</sup>, Stefan's successors in the family Nemanjic continued the tradition of building monasteries and supporting churches, cultural and artistic life. The church preserved its strong role in the archbishopric form until the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when it was promoted to the Patriarchate based in Pec. The event took place in 1346 when the then King Stefan Dusan assumed the title of imperial tzar (Radic 2007a, 234). During those 112 years in between, the impacts of the Serbian Archbishopric spread out in parallel with the borders of the state, to the north and south of the Balkan Peninsula (Slijepcevic 2002, 93 – 133). Following the Dusan's death in 1355, his empire crumbled due to deep dynastic conflicts, and the pressure of the Ottoman Empire from the east. After the Battle of the Field of Kosovo<sup>15</sup> in 1389 Serbian state practically ceased to exist for the next five centuries. Serbian lands initially became a tributary state to the Ottoman Empire, but after 1459 the whole territory was turned into a Turkish province (pashaluk) (Radic 2007a, 234). As with the major part of the peninsula, these lands came into the centre of conflicting interests between Hungary on the north, and Turkey from the east and south in the upcoming

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<sup>13</sup> Monastery Zica is located in the city of Kraljevo, about 40 km from the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge. Today, this is the seat of the Diocese of Zica, one of the oldest and the most influential dioceses in the Serbian Orthodox Church, which has jurisdiction over the monasteries of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge.

<sup>14</sup> After pilgrimage to Holy Land, Sava died in Bulgaria and his relics were placed to Mileseva monastery in 1237. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they were burned by the Ottoman authorities in Belgrade. At the site of burning of the relics in Belgrade today stands the Church of Saint Sava.

<sup>15</sup> Battle of Kosovo happened on 28 June 1389 between the advancing Ottoman army led by the Sultan Murat I and a joint Bosnian - Serb army led by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic. The historical account of the battle is "somewhat indecisive" given that both leaders were killed, and though "for some it actually looked like a Christian victory... the invading Ottoman army rapidly withdrew." (Hastings 1997, 131). In the aftermath, Serbia became a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, and the figure of the Prince Lazar came to the center of the growing body of epic poetry, and mythical stories "celebrating the battle which further became central to the Serbian national ideology." (Perica 2002, 7).

centuries. “The pressure of Hungary upon the Slav peoples to its south was, however, little in comparison with the pressure from the Ottoman Turks in and after the fourteenth century. Their conquest of most of the Balkan Peninsula meant that it became in religious terms a double frontier zone not only one between Latin and Orthodox but between Christian and Muslim as well. For the next five hundred years all the South Slavs were either subjects of the Ottoman Empire, subjects of Vienna, or football kicked to and fro across the military frontier.” (Hastings 1997, 130). After the war between Turkey and Austria-Hungary in 1718, the regions north of the Danube River became the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the rest remained under the Ottoman reign until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Since the consolidation of an independent state of the Nemanjic dynasty in 1166 until the death of the emperor Uros in late 1371 the fate of the Serbian state was directly linked with the fate of the Serbian church, which evolved into an independent class with great rights and privileges. During the hundreds of years of the stateless period that began at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the relationship between people, culture and spirituality remained through churches and monasteries (Hastings 1997; Corovic 1920; Pantelic 2011). The particularity "of the Serbian church is that... not only survived the Serbian medieval state, but adopted its national idea and held it awake until a new Serbian state resurrected at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century." (Slijepcevic 2002, 133, translation from Serbian).

For centuries, historians have been investigating the medieval origins of the Serbian statehood, religion and their peculiar relationship expressed through the nation. The studies have been especially multiplied in the context of nationalism following the fallout of the Yugoslavian state and war conflicts at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Anderson 1991; Perica 2002). Positions of researchers in this debate have been also divided. Particularly relevant for the understanding of the historical and national context of the thesis subject, the two standpoints on this relation are noted. In his research on the relationship of ethnicity, nationhood and nationalism of the South Slavs, Hastings (1997) describes this through epic and mythical narrative that was nurtured in collective consciousness (969 – 132), because “...the memory of the old kingdom defeated by the Turks was preserved in song and heroic story, and, perhaps more to the point, in the daily liturgy of the Serbian church which has canonised most of its kings” (Hobsbawm 1990, 75 - 76). Adding to these baseline arguments tradition of mythology and paganism in rural areas of the country (Cajkanovic 1973), Pantelic in 2011 contended that over the duration of the Ottoman conquest the “apolitical” peasants maintained connection with religion through priests and monks, rather than “distant and disinterested church elites” (445). “Neither song nor liturgy

perpetuated historical memory. In the minds of the apolitical peasantry, the ancient kings and princes were not historical figures but supernatural beings feared and venerated for their magical and healing powers or admired for their fantastical exploits... Under the many layers of myth that accumulated over the centuries in the Balkans, there is not much historical memory to be found. There was no one to sustain it.” (Pantelic 2011, 461). The historical overview above has been presented to shed light on the national and historical circumstances that surrounded the foundation of the monasteries in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge, and conditioned the further evolution of the area as a sacred landscape. In this perspective, it will be illuminated how its narrative has been maintained and survived throughout history in the close relation between the church and national identity.

History of the Ovcara – Kablar monasteries began at the time of the collapse of the medieval state of Nemanjić. In the late Middle Ages, especially with the invasion of the Ottomans in the Balkan Peninsula in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century monastic mountains turned into a stronghold in the defence of orthodoxy (Popovic 2007, 264). The Battle of Maritsa in 1371 signaled the beginning of a large migratory wave across the Balkan Peninsula, from the south towards the north amid the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in southeastern Europe. In such movement of the population, many monks stopped in their retreating towards the north staying in the wild and inaccessible setting that the West Morava River moulded between Ovcara and Kablar mountains. Creating hidden dwellings deep in the thick ancient forests and high up in the caves and rock shelters of the steep mountain cliffs, they chose this landscape to continue their life of seclusion and silence.

Mostly the sinaitic monks practicing a particular hesychastic tradition populated cliffs of the Kablar Mountain at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (hieromonk Amfilohije 1981, as quoted in Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 11). It is assumed that the first wave of settlement began earlier in the 14<sup>th</sup> century due to the withdrawal of monks from Mount Athos in front of the mercenaries of the Catalanian Company (Radosavljevic 2002). Research to date has assumed traces of monastic hermitages in the caves at a total of 31 localities in the gorge (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). “Looking for a solitude and hidden, inaccessible areas in a time of the Turkish invasion, occupation, wars and the ever-present danger, Ovcara – Kablar Gorge offered a refuge, peace and some safety for monks who were coming from Mount Athos and monastic centres of southern Serbia, as well as other areas that were losing independence.” (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 11).



Carved with numerous caves, cliffs of the mountain Kablar suited to anchorite way of monastic life (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012; Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a). The roots of this monastic tradition date back to the first centuries of Christianity (Ostrogorsky, 1970), while hesychasm entered as the official learning in the spiritual life of the Byzantine Empire in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Tahiaos 1971, 93-103). In Serbian Orthodox Church these traditions were introduced by St. Sava (Popovic 2007), and monasteries further evolved into an important spiritual centre for work on medieval manuscripts (Rajic 2014).

In the Eastern Christian thought and religious practice of the Byzantine world "monastic desert" and "sacred mountain" had a particular importance as a peculiar kind of sacred and monastic space where a special kind of monks resided - "holy men" (Popovic 2007, 253). Features of the natural environment and the landscape played important role in choosing the place for these ascetics – “life of a monastic group happened in an environment that had to possess all the conditions and attributes needed to become evocation of earthly heaven” (Popovic 2004, as quoted in Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 46, translated from Serbian). These were usually placed with a particular configuration of the terrain, whose "sacred aura" reflected through the unspoiled harmony of the natural world. Written sources explain monastic mountains in a similar pattern. These are seen as “a metaphor of spiritual ascent, and the most important in the Orthodox world, Athos, presents the embodiment of heaven and the "holy meadow", with the most extraordinary, "heavenly people" living under its "holy summit." (Popovic 2007, 265, translated from Serbian). In that view, mountains, deserts, and caves constituted elements of a special unity between natural and spiritual life, as places of prayer, fasting and hesychasm, places of tranquility, irreproachable life and simultaneous constant struggles with demons (Popovic 2007, 253).

Hesychastic tradition implies a solitary life dedicated to rigorous fasting and prayer. The word hesychasm originated from the Greek word “hesychia” meaning silence, quietude (in Serbian, “tihovanje, bezmolvija”) (Dobric 2008, 126). Hesychast thus means silent, speechless. In Serbian religious practice the term was further derived into a verb “tihovati” meaning to practice the silent, inner prayer (Dobric 2008, 126). “In the late Byzantine era, Hesychasts were essentially those monks who have devoted themselves to a perfect tranquility – hesychia. Their ideal was a purely contemplative life, and the first and main demand inner composure, continuous and uninterrupted inner prayer, the so-called mental prayer through which one came to a state of inner silence that followed man's victory over the passions and led to the comprehension of God. The constant internal concentration led the hesychasts into a certain state of ecstasy, creating a feeling of ineffable bliss and

experience of heavenly light, that is, the culmination of life in hesychia.” (Ostrogorsky 1970, 207 – 219, translated from Serbian).

In medieval Serbia at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the strong position of the Church made a place for monasticism to flourish. Mystic movement of hesychasm enjoyed the support of rulers, strengthening at the same time spirituality and monasticism, the development of education and literature, and “strengthening the Christian, patriotic feelings of the people”, especially during the Ottoman rule (Radosavljevic 2003, 52). There are indications that the movement of sinaitic hesychasts had a distinct cosmopolitan character with distinguished intellectuals from Byzantine culture, but little has been confirmed due to the lack of sources. Radosavljevic (2003) explains this pointing out to the growing rift between the monks defending this new tradition, especially from Athos, and strong opposition of the moderate Byzantine clergy, although hesychasm has been officially recognized by the Constantinople in 1341 (17). First large settlements of ascetic monks in Serbia appeared late in the Middle Ages in the surroundings of the major monasteries. It is unclear how far into the past this form of monastic life reached, but it was practiced in areas surrounding major ecclesiastical centres, “including the monasteries on the “Serbian Mount Athos” in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge” (Radosavljevic 2003, 54- 72).

There is no data indicating the moment in history when references to the landscape of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge as sacred first appeared. The term “sacred or holy mountain” in its original Serbian phrase presents a literal translation of the Greek name for the Mount Athos (“Άγιο Όρος” in Greek). However, with the exception of the Mount Sinai and Mount Athos, mentions of monastic mountains in these lands started appearing in written sources only after the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Popovic 2007, 263). Supposedly four sacred mountains existed in Serbia in the late Middle Ages (Popovic 2007; Zlatić Ivković 2009a; Rajić and Timotijević 2002). They all shared similar characteristics of the natural environment<sup>16</sup> - in addition to the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, records of transcribing activities within monasteries mention “Little Holy Mountain” in the mystical canyon of the river Crnica in the eastern Serbia, “Holy Mountain of Zeta” on Lake Skadar (modern Montenegro), and “Holy Mountain of Mojsinje” mentioned first in 1566 (Dumić, Djokić, and Stević 2006; Popovic 2007). In 1673 a certain monk referred to "Serbian Holy Mountain" as he wrote in a panegyric, "beneath the

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<sup>16</sup> With the exception of the area on the Lake Skadar, all monastic groups appeared in the remote destinations around the Morava, the largest river system in the country (South Morava passing through southern Serbia and West Morava in the southwestern and central parts of the country; together they form the Great Morava (Velika Morava), flowing into the Danube).

mountains of Ovcara and Kablar, on the Morava River, in a meager structure in a large rock, called Lestvica" (Popovic 2007, 264, translated from Serbian). Of these four monastic groupings, the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge outlived the others during the history, reaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the relative unity of natural environment and cultural values (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

No written sources have been preserved explaining the earliest life of the Ovcara - Kablar monasteries. On the Kablar Mountain there are traces of a fresco painting high under the vault of the cave currently known as a hermitage – church Savinje. These remains indicate a possibility that the cave previously hosted a chapel, a place where ascetics from the surrounding kllies (rock shelters) gathered to pray (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a). One painted scene from the nave of the church of the Nikolje monastery from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is also considered the first material evidence of the hesychastic tradition in the gorge (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

Unfortunately, many vestiges testifying the history of the landscape have been lost during the period of the renewal of the monasteries, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until our times. Such an example is the presumably oldest monastery, Nikolje where re-construction works in the 1930s and in the last two decades erased many material traces of its origin (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). Due to such a lack of reliable material and written sources, Rajic and Timotijevic (2012) set and discuss two assumptions. First one is grounded in the fact that the local population in villages strongly celebrated other Christian cults (precisely, cult of the Virgin Mary) that could have possibly led the medieval monks to this region, as well as to the temple of the Virgin of Gradac (today's church in the city Cacak). The two historians further contended that some monasteries continued to celebrate the Virgin, in particular two at the entrances to the gorge. This assumption so far has not found confirmation in the research. Another also unconfirmed supposition, Rajic and Timotijevic (2012) explain, is related to the secluded position of the monastery Preobrazenje which could provide conditions for anchorite way of life and whose holiday “slava”<sup>17</sup> even mentions the hesychastic tradition.

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<sup>17</sup> Slava is important holiday celebrating the particular saint, believed to be family's protector. The celebration includes a series of rituals as a tradition passed down in family through the male line, while women have particular role in safeguarding and transmitting the knowledge about the meaning and the performance of rituals. Since 2014 the tradition is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/slava-celebration-of-family-saint-patrons-day-01010>).

## 4.2. Sacred topography of the gorge

The most probable explanation for the appearance of so many sacred sites within a relatively small area is that the inaccessible natural surroundings of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge inspired spiritual aspirations of the medieval monks, as an area with a particular “spirit of place” (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 47).

The analysis of the sacralization of the landscape is approached through symbiosis of the environmental features and particular activities taking place within its territorial frame. Inaccessibility and wilderness of the gorge (provided in a combination of two morphologically very different mountains and a river) offered particular acoustic values required for the activities and life of monks in hesychasm. The peculiar landforms carved by a snake like line of river enclosed the space so the whole scenery evokes the impression of gradual ascent upwards, resembling to a metaphoric image of the passage towards the sky. These landscape values could have influenced the spatial organization of the monastic area to some extent, which comes to light in the position of the buildings.

Confined within the mystic and remote gorge of the unpredictable river, monasteries appeared on the banks between Ovcar and Kablar mountains at first glance seemingly dispersed throughout the gorge. Travelogues from the 19<sup>th</sup> century depict looming and declivous, perilous entrances to some monasteries (Karadzic 1820, as quoted in Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a). Within the monastery complex, the church usually occupies the central part of each monastery courtyard with different buildings around, whose outer walls represent port walls. Although monasteries stand relatively close to each other geographically, there were no roads in the gorge until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Going from a monastery on the Mount Ovcar to those on the mountain Kablar required using a bridge in one of the two neighbouring towns, because crossing the river by boat usually imposed a great danger (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 45).

Elements of invisibility and inter-visibility between the locations of sacred places play an important part in the topography of sacred landscapes (Nixon 2009). The positions of the monasteries in the gorge illustrate three types of locations within the fabric of the landscape (Figure 1 in Appendix 1). Certain monasteries were built immediately on the bank of the river (probably initially accessible only from water, as it is the case with the monasteries of Jovanje, Vavedenje, Nikolje). There is also a secluded position tucked within the landscape – those monasteries (such as Vaznesenje, Preobrazenje, Blagovestenje, Sretenje, Svete

Trojice) remain entirely or mostly hidden from view by stone cliffs and dense forest. Position high at the top or near the mountain peak provides an overview of the whole gorge. This applies especially to the monastery of Uspenje, and church Ilinje. Built in such a specific natural environment monasteries had no need for special individual security, boundary walls nor defensive fortifications. The entire monastic group was instead rigorously guarded and controlled from two prominent locations that had a clear view of the wider surroundings (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 16-17). In the tradition of organizations of other medieval settlements in Serbia (villages, manors, royal endowments, monasteries), two protective monastic fortresses most probably controlled the entrances on the west and east side of the gorge (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 21).

The remains of one fortress were discovered on the top and partly at the base of the hill above the Blagovestenje monastery near the village Ovcara Banja. Dominating in the image of landscape, the hill provides a view over the most of the gorge including its entrance on the west side. Under the assumption that the remains originate from former monastery, a church was built there to mark the renewal of the Ilinje monastery in 1939 (Rajic and Timotijevic 2004, 223 – 226). Other sources indicate that there “once was a demolished solitary tower whose walls, in Romans, were ingrown into the ground so that they could be barely discerned” (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 22). Latest archaeological research has confirmed that remains indicate early Byzantine culture dating from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when the locality probably constituted the network of the early Byzantine fortresses that spread over the today’s territory of the city of Cacak (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 47).

On the opposite side of the river, the remains of the fortification exist on the hill above the Jovanje monastery in front of the today’s monastery Uspenje (Figure 2 in Appendix 1). The investigation suggests origins from between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, with some traces as old as the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 47). Today, there are visible massive stone walls of the building at the place of the former tower known as “Kulina”. The nuns from two neighbouring monasteries remember that before the demolition in 1939 the ruined tower reached up to 6 floors, without a roof, while the analysis of preserved stone walls confirmed the existence of the basement room (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 36 -37). Overlooking the whole landscape from the island set at the very centre of the river meanders, the tower could have served as a watchtower and fortification. The 19<sup>th</sup> century travel writers, however hint a possibility of additional function (Kanitz 1985). Austrian travel writer Felix Kanitz (1985) assumed that the tower relates with the functions of the large

monastery Jovanje nearby that exercised the central management and church-judicial authority over the entire monasticism in the gorge (532). Drawing upon the records of the 19<sup>th</sup> century travelogues, Archimandrite Radosavljevic (2002) writes, “It is probable that the top of the hill was secured by a fortress-castle and a fence... A high tower called Jovan Tower with administrative offices was right beside the church. According to a legend, its sole purpose was protection from the enemy. The tower ended with a big bell, which used to send a signal for the start of divine services to the other monasteries in this Holy Mountain ... Upon its ringing, bells of all monasteries and churches answered and echoed around the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge... ” ( 22, translated from Serbian). The use of the bells was introduced in Serbian religious practice in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but was forbidden by Ottoman authorities two centuries later when monks returned to use metal and wooden clappers (Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a, 57). It remains unknown until what moment the sound of the bell resounded through the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge. Narrating about the anchorites and ascetics living in isolation of the outer world, Kanitz in 1860 (1985) described the landscape where “beside the strokes of clapper, on working days no sound disturbs the solemn silence that reigns all around” (534).

#### 4.3. Stepping through the past: historical changes

The Ottoman period in the history of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge and its monasteries symbolized the times of alternating flourish and destruction. Though the local population was still allowed to profess Christianity, the process of Islamization intensified at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in western parts of Serbia (Timotijevic, 2009). This probably explains why monasteries at destinations remote from the roads and in the wilderness survived, including those in the gorge of the West Morava River (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). There are few testimonies revealing how life went on in the area following the downfall of the state and the patriarchate’s extinguishing. Thanks to the efforts of the surviving monastic communities, the Ovcar – Kablar monasteries went through renovations, but life proceeded slowly and with difficulties (Radosavljevic 2002). The first written mentions of the majority of monasteries originate from the Turkish population census from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century (the Nikolje monastery in 1476, the Jovanje monastery in 1536).

The overall political situation in Serbia at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the general uncertainty in the Balkans joined with the uprising in the north of the country and the burning of the relics of Saint Sava in Belgrade. However, in 1557 the Ottoman authorities allowed the re-establishment of the Pec Patriarchate, which initiated period of the architectural and artistic renewal of the monasteries in the gorge. The cultural and artistic life continued to

bloom until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (including major renovations and frescoing of the monastery Blagovestenje), but the following decades remain shrouded in mystery. One of the rare records from that period tells of the attack of the Tatars at the Sretenje Monastery in 1623 (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 67). Another rare data from that period dates from 1662, left by the Ottoman travel writer Evliya Çelebi (1967) who visited the area during his journey across the Balkans, leaving a description: "There are seven monasteries there and several shops, so it resembles to a small town. Nearby this big settlement in the mountains surrounded with forests there are baths of the village Banja. Even at the time of the Christian kings beautiful high towers were built here..." (332, translated from Serbian).

Historians of the Ovcara – Kablar monasteries describe the 18<sup>th</sup> century as an era of destructions (Rajic and Timotijevic 2006). This was the aftermath of the war between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire after the Battle of Vienna in 1683. During the Austrian-Turkish conflicts on the territory of Serbia in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, which will end by merging the northern areas to the Habsburg Empire, the military border stretched along the mountain Kablar provided that the whole gorge remained within the Turkish authority (Milicevic 1973, 317). The spiritual, architectural, artistic and scribal activities in the monasteries died down, but despite the border that between 1718 and 1739 divided both the two empires and the people of the area, monastic life in some monasteries maintained its continuity (Rajic and Timotijević 2012, 74). Records indicate that monastic communities struggled amid looting and violence. This information came from the pen of the Austrian officer who travelled in western Serbia, recording and drawing maps of the travelled route. He described the monastery Nikolje as a small fenced church with two nearby huts covered with straw inhabited by three monks, and while there was only one monk in the monastery Blagovestenje, monastery Svete Trojice was illustrated as a ruin where two monks reside (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 76). After the armistice, the restoration of churches and monasteries started in the territories of the Belgrade province. With this improved situation in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, monasteries again became gathering place for the broad masses during religious holidays, but renovations did not take hold in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge - excluding works in the monastery Vavedenje and binding of the Four Gospels in the monastery Blagovestenje, there is not much data preserved (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

First Serbian Uprising<sup>18</sup> started in 1804, and after the liberation of the region of Cacak monasteries between Ovcар and Kablar mountains started recovering. However, the imminent collapse of the uprising in 1813, failure of the Hadzi-Prodan's Revolt<sup>19</sup> in Cacak area in 1815, as well as the start of the Second Serbian Uprising in 1815 soon transformed the gorge into the refuge for a large number of people from the surrounding villages (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). In this interim monastery Nikolje provided a shelter for the leader of the Second Uprising, Milos Obrenovic<sup>20</sup> and his family (Rajic and Timotijevic 2006).

Censuses from 1837 show that among 49 monasteries in the territory of Serbia, the monastery Nikolje stood out as the largest parish with 11 villages and 4006 inhabitants (Djordjevic 2011, as quoted in Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). When Kanitz visited the region in 1860, his attention was particularly captured by monks living in silence of the Ovcар – Kablar Gorge. That kind of monastic life he deemed possible “as long as the communications were not built as they will bring a new dimension of modern life.” (Kanitz 1985, 526-527, translated from Serbian). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century local municipalities became aware of the potential of the geothermal water springs in the Ovcар Banja, while the episcopate advocated construction of roads to the monasteries. In contrast, the local monastic communities’ strived to preserve centuries old peace of the gorge (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 87). These events also hinted that the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the modern state started weakening. “Penetration of the ideas of materialism, positivism, and secularism has undermined the foundations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The modern state with its institutions was becoming increasingly less dependent on monasteries and monks’ work at the national, educational and every other field... Suffering in the First World War only further weakened monks and monasteries, as well as the whole Church.” (Radic 2007b, 636 - 645). In the Cacak region, the piety also weakened, manifested in superstition, renewal of paganism, and folk rituals (Timotijevic 2009).

The Ovcар – Kablar Gorge entered into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the slow renovation of monasteries in 1920s that would last until the Second World War. “Slow and fragmentary renewal of the monasteries was not accidental, but reflected the spirit of the time between the two world

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<sup>18</sup> First Serbian Uprising (1804 - 1813) was an uprising of the Serbian population in the Belgrade pashalik and six surrounding provinces, which started as a rebellion and grew into the first phase of the process of liberation from the Ottoman rule.

<sup>19</sup> Hadzi - Prodan's Revolt was a rebellion, organized in 1814 in the province then including the Ovcар - Kablar Gorge; represents an intermediate stage between the two uprisings for independence.

<sup>20</sup> Milos Obrenovic (1780 - 1860) was the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising who later reigned Serbia from 1815 to 1839 and from 1858 to 1860. During his first reign Serbia became an autonomous principality within the Ottoman Empire and feudalism was abolished.



wars. Bad conditions within the Serbian Orthodox Church and the growing influence of modernization gradually estranged the church, monasteries and monks from the people. Spiritual life was fairly neglected. On average two to four monks were kept in monasteries, while the female monasticism almost disappeared. The monks came mainly from lower social classes, often illiterate and of poor theological knowledge. The economic situation of the monasteries eventually improved, and hesychastic movement of monks reappeared.” (Radic 2007b, 650 - 652, translated from Serbian). During this period, new church of St. Sava was constructed as well as new Monastery Preobrazenje, while the Kadjenica cave was consecrated as a memorial in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge. New chapels were also built for Ilinje and Uspenje monasteries. Credits for this belong primarily to the Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic whose work, in a variety of activities, established the current state and organization of the monastic communities in the gorge (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). “... activities of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic will give critical life to the reconstruction of religiosity, the creation of new forms of piety and promoting a special way of life that was kind of preparation for the monks.” (Timotijevic 2009, 100 - 142).

During the Second World War, due to the closeness of the cities Uzice and Cacak, the gorge was caught by bombing (Timotijevic 2009). Archimandrite Radosavljevic (2002) in his writings collected many stories and detailed testimonies of the monks and nuns in the gorge illustrating the difficult conditions during this period. In these circumstances life continued during the war and German occupation, as well as in the times of the establishment of a new Communist government after 1945 (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). As a result of strengthening of the new ideology, after the Constitution of 1946 which officially separated the church from the state, political structures in the country initiated the process of agrarian reform, nationalization and expropriation, which will change the economic basis of the church significantly (Timotijevic 2009). With laicisation as a prerequisite for the process of the modernization, diverse infrastructure projects have begun in the gorge transforming the landscape (period 1947-1954). With new communications the area became open for traffic and visitors. The construction of two hydro power plants brought to the Ovcar Banja new residents employed there - in contrast to the traditionally rural area with a small population scattered in the peripheral parts of the gorge. This was reflected soon in the divisions among the newly created local community, which will confirm the interviews realized within the narrative research. The construction works resulted in the sinking of the monastery Jovanje by decision of the authorities, an event that as a personal witness of the upcoming changes in the life of monasticism in the whole area, Archimandrite Radosavljevic (2002) described

with these words: “The new communist government in the post – war Yugoslavia made a larger number of hydropower plants on the rivers for the electrification of the villages. On this occasion, several monasteries were demolished and relocated, mostly those that were near the rivers. When the new government decided to build two hydroelectric power stations on the West Morava, in the Ovcara Banja and the Medjuvrsje, below Jovanje monastery, then this Nemanjić’s monastery and one of the oldest Ovcara - Kablar monasteries bothered them, and was sentenced to the sinking.” (57). During this period, the monks lived under pressures and surveillance by police, arrested and persecuted, sometimes physically harassed (Radosavljević 2002). In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between the 1950s and 1980s, conservation works on the monasteries were substantially upgraded and their heritage values recognized through legislation (Rajić and Timotijević 2012). These decisions have prevented decay of the monasteries as a whole, but the fundamental change happened in their restrictive definition and recognition that didn’t affirm intangible values related to religious influence and activity – “immovable cultural property - monuments of culture of great importance” (Official Gazette of Serbia, no. 14/79).

It is a question to which extent these infrastructure projects and administrative changes were successful - if interpreted as attempts of the atheistic political structure and ideology to "reconstruct" the landscape into technical. These changes over time primarily manifested in the quality of the environment, while the perception of the landscape as a spiritual sanctuary for the collective has not changed much. “During the epoch of communism, a number of people came to the monasteries in secret, hiding. Couples got married, children were baptized, a spiritual consolation was sought, and the monasteries in the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge were places where these activities took place. The peasants from the surrounding villages came with more freedom and with less fear during the major holidays. The monasteries under communism survived mainly through persistent faith and self-effacement of the monks, especially the female monasticism...” (Timotijević 2009, 164-213).

#### 4.4. New age, new visions

Once completely outside of the traffic flows, the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge entered into the 21<sup>st</sup> century open and accessible for the visitors, with the natural resources waiting for exploration. The administrative area includes the territories of the Ovcara Banja and seven neighbouring villages. According to the latest population census the total population counts to around 2680 people, though there are only 320 permanent residents within the administrative border of the protection (Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Serbia,

Census 2011). The population is declining, aged 45 – 50 on average (Tourism development program for the area "Ovcar Banja" and the protected area Ovcar – Kablar Gorge 2012).

End of the 1990s saw the return of the people to churches in the aftermath of the collapse of the socialist political system with the growing number of "new believers", renovation of monasteries and monastic communities increasing (Timotijevic 2009). The transformation of the landscape of the Ovcar-Kalar gorge in such conditions continued. Initially, it was railroad and highway construction that propelled significant alterations, disrupting the tranquility of monastic prayers in silence (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012, 91). First railway in the area originates from 1912, and continues operating at the moment for passenger and freight trains that pass without stopping. The tracks stretch within the boundaries of the gorge for about eight km including seven tunnels. Until 2007 highway extended to the length of ten km inside of the administrative border of the area. After the construction of the ring road around the Ovcar Banja nine years ago, transit traffic has been diverted and the old direction currently serves as a gateway to the village.

Following the Second World War two hydroelectric power plants started operating on the West Morava River. With their construction, natural flow of the river changed, including the creation of two artificial lakes. "Ovcar Banja" plant stands at the entrance to the gorge, built parallel to the main water course at the bend of the river, with its intake structure situated just on the main water flow. Its construction resulted in the creation of the Ovcar - Kablar Lake in the length of around seven kilometres. At the exit from the gorge, another plant was built in the river bed. In this way, Medjuvrsje Lake was formed, as currently the largest artificial lake on the West Morava River. The surroundings of the lake are mostly forested hills, while the right bank now includes a track for sport fishing in the length of 800 m (Management Plan for the Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012, 5). As a result, natural riverbed on the section between the dams operates with a relatively small flow of water during most of the year (Management Plan for the Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012).

As these infrastructure projects took place, the gorge overnight became the attractive recreational area with the river and lakes used particularly for leisure and fishing. This also often reflected in the exploitation of land and forests (especially in the privately owned areas) (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). Consequently, a very intensive construction of cottage facilities has followed in recent decades. Overall, small scale residential construction remained at traditional locations (primarily in the rural area of

villages), but the cottage construction constantly conquers new high quality locations, nowadays also inside the zones with vulnerable and endangered ecosystems (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998). Both municipalities' assemblies that are in charge of the area adopted the Decision for the Study of protection of the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (1998), by which they have committed to "ensure the ban on the continued construction of facilities" (7). Furthermore, the Spatial Plan of the City of Cacak (2010) also commits to "radical sanctioning and suppression of illegal construction, especially in the areas of preserved environmental values (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge) and in rural areas" (120). The situation, however persists and conversations with the residents in the gorge reveal current number of around four hundred of cottages, built and used mainly by people from other cities who visit the gorge for the purpose of recreation, weekend and summer vacations (Ovcar - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998).

Nowadays, the gorge is facing the illegal logging of forests and endangerment of wildlife due to various forms of pollution, particularly the river. Basin of the West Morava River is very large, and in this respect, the most threat comes from the pollutants upstream of the entrance to of the gorge, where there are several large cities with their economies (Management Plan for the Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012). Though these activities didn't reach secluded monasteries' positions nor threatened the traditional monastic life, growing level of environmental degradation served as a basis for the designation of the entire gorge into a zone of nature preservation and cultural-historical heritage in 2000. The area is designated for the landscape of outstanding features as a natural asset of first category: "Ovcar - Kablar Gorge is an area of extraordinary landscape diversity, beauty and attractiveness, unique and very important cultural and historical site with nine monasteries, religious and other sacred and memorial objects and features, outstanding monument of geological heritage as a significant example of the interaction of geological, geomorphological and hydrological processes and phenomena, area of diverse and multiply significant flora and fauna." (Regulation on the protection of the landscapes of outstanding features "Ovcar - Kablar Gorge". Official Gazette of Serbia, No. 16/2000, translated from Serbian).

This was the first time that the context of conservation encompassed intangible and tangible values of the gorge - in legislation, landscape of outstanding features is classified as the area of distinctive presence with significant natural, biological and ecological, aesthetic, cultural and historical values, which has developed over time as a result of the interaction of nature, natural potentials and traditional way of life of local residents (Art. 33 of the Law on Nature

Protection, Official Gazette of Serbia, No. 36/2009, 88/2010).The designation is further based on the provisions of the Law on Environmental Protection (Official Gazette of Serbia, No. 66/91, 83/92, 53.93, 67.93, 48/94), and Law on Cultural Property (Official Gazette of Serbia, No.71/94). Monasteries previously got designated as a cultural monument of great importance for the Republic (Official Gazette of Serbia, Nos. 14-79). By special ministerial decree adopted in 2000, the established regime of nature preservation includes second and third level of protection (542, 77 ha under the second, and 1 707, 23 ha by the third level) which foresees primarily environmental protection in sets of high restrictions (Regulation on the protection of the landscapes of outstanding features "Ovcar - Kablar Gorge". Official Gazette of Serbia no. 16/2000).

Accordingly, conservation and management activities are coordinated with the guidelines provided by the several responsible ministries (for forestry, water management, urban planning, science, culture and education), but with the final approval of the main ministry in charge, for environmental protection. Tourist Organization of Cacak is set as the guardian of the area, to ensure the implementation of an annual program of conservation and development. Plans and programs of all activities that encompass the protected zone must be harmonized with the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia which acknowledges the gorge as a protected area with monumental heritage (Regional Spatial Plan for the Zlatibor and Morava Administrative Districts 2012). Spatial Plan of the city of Cacak (2010) foresees the preservation of natural resources and cultural monuments; improvement of forests, water, plant and animal species, infrastructure equipping the area for tourism and recreation, reconstruction of existing and construction of new facilities in accordance with the planning regulations and the protection, scientific research and presentation of natural values and cultural goods (88).

Twelve years after the designation of the area of preservation, the Ovcar Banja has been officially designated a spa (The proposal for the establishment of the area Ovcar Banja 2011). The development of the Spa as a sanatorium was outlined also in the master plans of the municipalities of Cacak and Lucani as one of the key points of tourism development. Located at an altitude of 279 m, the spa has several tourist facilities with infrastructure, but still awaits realization of one of many envisioned development projects. A health centre opened as part of the health system of the General Hospital Cacak offering a spa and rehabilitation services. The village also has a hotel and several small restaurants. On the bank of the river at the foot of the mountain Ovcar, campsite "Ovcar Banja" covers an area of 25

000 square meters with 300 camping parcels, 12 bungalows and three built facilities (Management Plan for the Protected Area Ovcar - Kablar Gorge (2012-2021) 2012, 7).

Following these legislative foundations for the preservation of the landscape as a whole, the further development of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge is nowadays directed towards tourism. The Strategy of the tourism development (2012) in its analysis indicates as a weakness, lack of collaboration with monastic communities and slow changes of mentality within rural populations regarding the tourism as a priority direction of the development (49 - 50). At the same time the document positions the cultural heritage as the highest priority in the touristic offer of the region (Tourism development program for the area "Ovcar Banja" and the protected area Ovcar – Kablar Gorge 2012, 35).

This ongoing situation in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge indicates one more re-construction of the landscape – now into a touristic and a natural one. Political and institutional entities at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century represent heritage values as an asset of tourism development. They are also advertised and used as a tool for marketing, articulating the territory of the gorge in the narrative of abundant and wild nature that needs to be preserved in order for people of the new age to experience its own sacredness. There is a number of officially published tourist brochures, putting emphasis on the heritage values of the gorge in the context of pleasure for consumers (Figures 3 and 4 in Appendix 1).

## 5. HOLY MOUNTAIN: MANY LANDSCAPES OF THE GORGE, ONE NARRATIVE

In the modern history the application of the narrative of holy mountain has seen the transition of implicated meanings, bouncing back between religion and tourism, scientific research to media. In this term the gorge is recognized in the southwestern region of the country as a symbol of the national past (Spatial Plan of the city of Cacak 2010, 185). However, the analysis of the history of the complex narrative woven around these three words was not simple. In the lack of primary sources, the research focused on the consultation of experts, oral sources and literature.

In addition to informal conversations with some researchers, two anonymous experts agreed to interview (details of the questionnaire are available in the chapter Primary Sources). Subsequently, their outlooks were revelatory. The tourism expert lives in the city of Cacak in the immediate vicinity of to the gorge and the art historian lives in Belgrade. This was important for the investigation to compare the local and distanced view given that they both

worked on the subject for decades. The interviews followed similar thinking concerning the inherent qualities of the area that could be described as a spirit of place. These are seen as "a unique combination of modest medieval monastic settlements and authentic natural environment of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, speaking of the need for effective conservation, and inherited cultural patterns at a time when this goal was difficult to achieve." (Anonymous 2, 2016), and as "a preserved tradition and authenticity in a unique natural setting. A variety of different elements and content that nowhere else I find so unified. A unique and inimitable blend of nature and spirit. " (Anonymous 1, 2016). It was the interpretation of the notion of the "Serbian Holy Mountain" that indicated important divergence between the two interviewees' perspectives. The tourism expert extended the notion to include cultural and natural elements in a broader scope, referring to the national value of the heritage, "the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge with its natural rarities and characteristics, with the monasteries that have for centuries and in continuity maintained and preserved spirituality, culture and tradition of the Serbian people, by number placed in a small area called "Small Serbian Holy Mountain", presents the important and the diverse unit not only in Serbia." (Anonymous 1, 2016). The question was elaborated entirely differently by the art historian, "At the local level, they (monasteries) are significant... because they represent in some way natural and cultural asset which residents perceive as their own and identify with it. At the regional and national level their values are absolutely not recognized in the extent to which they should be." (Anonymous 2, 2016). With this, the experts' interviews pointed to the major discord between this heritage and its narrative: praised as national, it has been recognized in the local context.

Tracing backwards to its first mentioning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Popovic 2007), the possible assumption is that the name used for the gorge as "Serbian Holy Mountain" has been maintained in oral tradition and written sources mostly originating from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and later. Austrian travel writer Kanitz (1985) wrote in 1860, "Serbia also has its Monferrato and its Athos... only, it is not like the first which emerged from the earth like a high pile surrounded by hills, nor as the other one that like a mountaineering Cathedral of Anatolian Christianity lords the waves of Strymonikos bay; in the deep gorge between Kablar and Ovcara four monasteries lie on both banks of the river, with their stories of former miracles, so hidden from the eyes of the passers-by that a foreigner rarely wanders towards them." (as quoted in the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge: Study of protection 1998, 5, translated from Serbian). The main peculiarity of these sources is the use of the name to describe and shape the concept of the sacred landscape in the attributes of national symbols and identity. These

records came from the pen of the travel writers who were among the first researchers of these territories (Karadzic in 1820, Vujic in 1826, Kanitz in 1860). Along with ecclesiastical literature, all major publications and studies realized about the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge in the subsequent period largely rely on the indicated travelogues continuing the use of the narrative in the similar way (Radosavljevic 2002; Radosavljevic 2003; Zlatic Ivkovic 2009a; Rajic and Timotijevic 2002; Rajic and Timotijevic 2006; Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).

On its path through time, the narrative of the holy mountain persisted as a significant element of the social construction of the sacred landscape in “articulating national identity” (Kaufmann 1998). Approaching the concept through relationship of culture towards the nature, Kaufmann (1998) described this as “nationalization of nature... the process where a nation creates a homeland by settling, naming, and historically associating itself with a particular territory” (690), in which landscape becomes “expressions of national authenticity” (Kauffman and Zimmer 1998, 483). The religious influence that underlined the idea of the nation since medieval Serbian state served as a catalyst placing this sacred landscape as a central component of the narrative about national identity. Looking back into the history of the area, monasteries passed through alternating periods of destruction and renovation until the state’s independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most intensive restoration and a kind of "Renaissance" occurred in the period between the two world wars, especially during the 1930s. This decade included restoration, reconstruction of existing and construction of some new churches in the gorge, including the church dedicated to Saint Sava, which was the result of renewed religious enthusiasm and most of all, the work of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic<sup>21</sup> (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012). His influence in the revival of the gorge as the spiritual centre of whole country persisted to this day. A theologian and writer, the bishop spoke, “Let it be blessed this Serbian Holy Mountain with all the monasteries, refuges of martyrs, healing waters, historic monuments and tombs! Through the centuries for Serbian nation, it has been a source of strength and health, a source of

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<sup>21</sup> Nikolaj Velimirovic (1880-1956) was a Bishop in the Serbian Orthodox Church, canonized in 2003. Considered “one of the twentieth century’s major Serbian Orthodox thinkers” (Falina 2007, 5016), Bishop Velimirovic is often seen by historians and theologians as controversial for his views based in consideration of “the ethnic, national identity (as) a very important element in understanding the Church as a human society” (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia 2006, 7). The Bishop is considered one of the main creators of “svetosavlje” or culture of St. Sava, which sees the foundations of national culture in the life and teachings of St. Sava (Bakic – Hayden 2010, 53). In his view, “...it is the national church, embodied in the person of St. Sava that is given all the credit for the creation, maintenance and survival of the Serbian nation.” (Falina 2007, 521). During the Second World War the Bishop was imprisoned in the Concentration Camp Dachau in 1944, after which he “agitated against the Tito regime from exile in the United States.” (Perica 2002, 26). In between wars his figure was at the center of the Movement of Bogomoljci (God – pray – ers) which was instrumental in revival of monastic life during the 1930s (Binns 2002, 139). In the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge the movement grew to be very influential conducting comprehensive renovation works (Rajic and Timotijevic 2012).



renewal of ethical and spiritual power, the source of Christian and national consciousness, the source of practical piety and fraternal harmony, and an inexhaustible source of all good inspiration for all the good work.” (Velimirovic, as cited in Journal of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge 2014, 9, translated from Serbian).

Such narrative has been instrumental in transmitting the image of landscape as inaccessible and wild where the bravest and purest of people went and in pursuit of spirituality sacrificed their own identity for the sake of the national. Such ascription that was at the same time source of feelings of belonging to the collective and the nation, and religiosity, enveloped the natural environment itself. ”Standing vigilantly on the bumper of the Orthodox religion and education of St. Sava, Small Serbian Holy Mountain also awakened the national consciousness of its enslaved people.... There are many written testimonies about great, arduous and the relentless national work of the Serbian Holy Mountain among its people in Turkish period, but also those preserved in the nature – these are "refuges" or "cave - refuges", where people were hiding from Turkish taxes and in monasteries kept contact with the leaders of the uprising. It is a sad, but glorious history of the refuges in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge." (Radosavljevic 2002, 9, translated from Serbian).

The narrative “re-appeared” in times of turbulent historical events to empower national consciousness embedded in the poetic image of the medieval state as well as to recall the importance of the church “as spiritual and moral authority” (Falina 2007, 506). Philosopher Dvornikovic’s reflection on the medieval origins of this interconnection may be a good explanation, "Religiosity and Ecclesiasticity of the Nemanjic was at the same time their statehood. The backbone of Serbian statehood remained in the national church, and then the Turkish disaster has reached the state... Religion and psychology of self-preservation found themselves nestled close to each other." (Dvornikovic 2000, 968, translated from Serbian).

In the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the role of the church in society significantly diminished, while newly enthroned ideology continued with the reconstruction of the sacred landscape intervening at the level of physical environment rather than poetic storytelling. The process of modernization changed the landscape physically and socially with infrastructure projects, while the narrative around the Ovcara and the Kablar mountains changed the tone. Instead of the medieval ascetics, the landscape became a home of different heroes that were relatable with the society of the period, as illustrated by traditional folk song "From the Ovcara and the Kablar". This is one of the most popular creations of traditional folk music in Serbia, generally considered a partisan song that appeared during the Second World War (Djokovic

1990). The most complete review of its evolution offered two journalists who conducted separate studies with the period of several decades in between (Djokovic 1969; Djokovic 1990; Ilic 2015). Their findings indicate that for almost a century and a half same melody has been sung, but the text changed following historical changes in the country (Ilic 2015). Djokovic initiated the studies in the 1960s, following the traces of the ethnology studies of folk art in the region of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge (1969). Mrs Ilic extended the research over the last years investigating oral sources. In a personal communication via e-mail with the author on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, she pointed out that a renowned Serbian poet Branko V. Radicevic, who lived in the Ovcara Banja, first “discovered” that the song actually appeared long time ago, “in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of Herzegovinians to defend Ovcara and Kablar from the Turks”. The melody originally developed as the typical shepherd's song in the region of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge and surroundings of the closest cities, where, according to the narrative, “it has been sung as an anthem” (Ilic 2015).

Later sustained by ethnological studies, the poet Radicevic suggested that the song served as “a frame”, with only a melody and title unchanging (Djokovic 1990, 322 - 325) – depending on the historical period and the audience, the song has been telling a tale of love whose protagonists then altered from shepherds and peasants, to soldiers in the Second World War who liberated the country and brought the unification (Djokovic 1990).

Always referring to the people of the same region, the song was at those times interpreted glorifying the partisans' victory. "The song was inseparable comrade to partisans on the frontline, in the background, at the march, in rest ... The song delighted them, cheered and strengthened them to persist in an uneven fight ..." (Orovic 1961, as cited in Djokovic 1990, 191). During those decades the notion of the sacred landscape disappeared only to reemerge again with ideological changes in the country that would allow the stronger role of the church<sup>22</sup>.

Pursuing this storyline, the conversations with the experts have shown that nowadays the term “Serbian Holy Mountain” used with the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge resonates primarily with the people in the wider region surrounding the gorge and among the population of nearby towns, as well as the scientific public and researchers, connoisseurs of the spirituality and the

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<sup>22</sup> Sociologist Blagojevic (2005) remarked on this period, "the collapse of socialism-communism and the situation of civil and international war created the general geographical and social framework in which Orthodoxy restores its cultural dominance, institutional significance and the influence that it once had" (as quoted in Falina 2007, 505).

church, in the tourism sector. Following the designation of the gorge as a heritage site in 2000, the representation of the heritage shifted, trying to merge spirituality with the tourism and nature conservation. Over the course of that process, the official language of the plans and development strategies adopted the narrative advertised in ecclesiastical publications. The national Spatial Plan (Regional Spatial Plan for the Zlatibor and Morava Administrative Districts) (2012) defines the gorge as the “area with objects of cultural value – “Serbian Holy Mountain” in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge” (24). The program of tourism development of the area "Ovcara Banja" and protected area Ovcara - Kablar Gorge (2012) also states, “All 12 monasteries of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge present the most important segment of the tourist offer of the Ovcara Kablar Gorge, which has been proclaimed the Serbian Holy Mountain based on them.” (35). At this point the narrative now summons vision of the national past in the unique natural environment of the landscape which is to be experienced and consumed.

“The church does not adapt to the spirit of the land: it imparts spirit to its environs...” (Tuan 1974, 148). In line with the physical moulding of the environment, narrative embroidered around the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge as a holy mountain evolved imparting to the local communities a sense of homeland rooted in the national past (Kaufmann 1998, 667). The relationship between the population and the landscape became a direct link to the history, maintaining through the alternating interference of different ideologies. This has resulted in the current landscape of the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge as a hybrid, blend of sacred and natural, technical and touristic. These mental constructions have been all assimilated by the narrative of the holy mountain which echoes with what Sörlin (1999) describes in term “landscape as a language”, an articulation of territory by means of a story, a narrative, advertised by different entities (108). As a mental conception grounded in the idea of nation imposing collective identity at the local level and as a means in “symbolic creation of a national political identity” (Benvenuti 2000, 252), such landscape echoes with White’s argumentation on the ambiguity of discourses of hybrid landscapes and relativity of scales in regards of a space as a social product (White 1999, 977 – 979; White 2004). The importance of such evolution of the conception of the landscape is outlined at this moment of the study for implication it could have in the further investigation with local communities, illustrating the joint role of the nation and religion in the social construction of environment. Such assumptions and contentions, however, must be further substantiated and tested in the future investigations.



### III. STORIES OF THE LANDSCAPE: SPIRIT OF PEOPLE

Ce chapitre présente les résultats de la recherche narrative. L'enquête a consisté en plusieurs questions définies dans l'approche méthodologique afin de mesurer la compréhension de l'esprit du lieu par les communautés locales. Les récits des enquêtés ont confirmé le caractère insaisissable du concept en essayant d'exprimer sa signification. L'analyse a également montré que la notion d'"esprit du lieu" pouvait se confondre avec celle de sens du lieu, identifié à différentes échelles de sentiments.

#### 1. VOICES OF THE OVCAR – KABLAR GORGE

“To know the spirit of place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which in a whole. You start with the part you are whole in.” (Snyder 1999)<sup>23</sup>

In the course of analysing the findings of the narrative research, attempts to decode the spirit of place have further proven elusiveness and strong ambiguity of the concept. The interviews illustrated the adversity to actually extricate its meaning primarily because people's sense of place emerged in parallel. At moments it seemed as though they overlap in the confusing interlace of meanings.

In response to questions, interviewees predominantly retained narrative from the perceptual angle, relying on experience and interpretative perspective. Even so, the stories recorded in the research confirm the dualistic nature of the spirit of place as a unity of two defining components - tangible and intangible elements. For these reasons, the examination of the recorded narratives started with the residents' sense of place. The relationships people described with the landscape were then approached as clues towards the constituents of its spirit.

##### 1.1. “Home” on the bank of the Morava River

When a traveller arrives to the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, just before entering the Ovcara Banja, a restaurant stands on the very bank of the Morava River, named “Dom” (in English “Home”). The narrative research starts at this place interviewing Vidoje, 58 years old entrepreneur from the city of Cacak. He is the only interviewee who was neither born nor grew up in the

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<sup>23</sup> Snyder, Gary (1999). *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry, and Translations 1952 – 1998*. Counterpoint. Retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/339493-but-if-you-do-know-what-is-taught-by-plants>

gorge. As the conversation unfolds, it becomes obvious, however, that the fact does not lessen his fierce attachment to this landscape.

Since 1976 Vidoje has been a regular visitor of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge as a member of the Fishermen’s Association. Then suddenly, 25 years ago, he moved permanently to live and work here. “Usually a man is tied by destiny, so let’s say that I am fatefully connected with this area... Since childhood, I was visiting monasteries with my family so perhaps that is where this link with the gorge and its monasteries came from.” (Vidoje 2016). A special sentiment envelops both the nature and the sacred places, they constantly interchange as he explains, “I visited the Mount Athos... And this is ours Holy Mountain, for a reason small. With good reason, because the churches are small... I'm talking only about the churches, as those are the most important parts of the monastery - whatever you have around the walls, residences, which are much larger than the churches, they do not matter... These are small because they were so inaccessible, and such a small number of believers came to the service...” (2016).

Vidoje (2016) made the decision to move here in 1991 building a house, “Just across the river, opposite to the place where I used to fish... I like to be a loner, and in one moment I noticed an abandoned building standing there, demolished and ruined... No one showed there, it was abandoned for a long time ... And using that ruined, hanging bridge, I used to cross over there – the fish wasn’t coming, it was a bit boring, so I visited that place, the ideas appeared, and so I started the story...”. As he admits, he had an opportunity to leave the country at that time, but he decided to stay where he was born so his children could grow up surrounded with their heritage and culture. In the volatile wartime drowning in divisions and nationalism, for Vidoje the gorge served as a harborage to define his “personal national identity”, grounded in the traditions and values of the country that was then long forgotten. His restaurant thus evolved as a metaphorical materialization of his newly found sense of belonging, a place of home.

Vidoje’s narrative illustrates the difficulties of new beginning in the environment where he is, to this date, a “newcomer”. This, he remarks, has been made easy due to the peculiar friendship with a poet Branko V. Radicevic who lived in the Banja, and with other personalities who gave the area its particular meaning. He is rooted through a variety of ties. “There are so many things in the Banja, I am here for a long time now. Since the beginning when I was a child, then afterwards as a fisherman, and then when I started working here... the contacts and relations with the elders of the monasteries, with those people who are so

far above us, the holy fathers, archimandrites, bishops, a patriarch... All this is something that embeds you in here..."(Vidoje 2016).

Reflecting about many changes in the gorge, Vidoje (2016) observes, "The Ovcara Banja itself hasn't changed, it is almost frozen in time." Explaining inhabitants' hopes awakened by projects that never reached realization, he reflects on disappointment with the results of the designation of the gorge for preservation after 2000. Though he personally invested efforts in the process of the designation, the pressure of environmental restrictions has become overpowering for people living in the gorge. Yet, all along "they find that there should be some wellness centres here, fierce concrete buildings, monuments of their personal existence in this landscape. I think not. While it lasts, it lasts.... Everything is fleeting. Monasteries remain, rocks remain, the nature remains..." (Vidoje 2016).

The spirit of the place in Vidoje's narrative emerges in the meaning of the sacred landscape, as a synthesis of his understanding of cultural heritage and national identity. Both these sites and people are seen as the guardians of the authentic values of the past and the history. For him, the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge is as a home. His contentment and decades-long persistence in starting over at the bank of the river below the Kablar Mountain attest to that. "We are aware, we are playing a game in this life and then something painful happens brushing off everything... If the game is significant, then that, like monasteries, stays... This now is our third flood on the Morava..." (Vidoje 2016). While the interview takes place, Vidoje's restaurant is flooded to the roof, as he waits to start renovation works anew. "It seems to me, I am one of the few satisfied with his life here... When I get up early in the morning, hearing the birds singing and seeing the view - for someone that is just enough. To wake up to be happy... I came to this area in 1964 (*referring to the first time*), and I could have gone someplace else, but I did not... I love Ovcara Banja, and I stayed here." (Vidoje 2016).

## 1.2. "I would leave this place"<sup>24</sup>

The second interviewee is Nenad, a professional diver in Ovcara Banja where he has a private swimming school. He works also as a guide on the hiking trails through the gorge, mostly with tourists. The gorge is his birthplace and by his own admission, although he has a family living in the Netherlands so he travels very often, he is always coming back here.

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<sup>24</sup> Nenad, interview by author, Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 19 April, 2016.

Nenad explains his life in the gorge through the joy of such kind of work where he has an opportunity to get people acquainted with his area, organizing various activities for his guests, whether skiing or hiking in the mountains, fishing on the river, showing them the caves, and especially the Kablar summit, which he deems as “the most beautiful lookout point in Serbia”. He says he is proud of the nature that surrounds him and the heritage that the area keeps from the past. “...on such a small area you have two mountains, you have the river so very specific and interesting that you have a lake that meanders in a specific way, to have this kind of spirituality, monasteries that were constructed and scattered as the real gems in the most attractive places of the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge, you have a specific flora and fauna, and the thermal water...” (Nenad 2016).

Despite many opportunities to leave the country, Nenad explains how he stayed to live in the gorge where he has built a house looking towards the river. In his life, river has a special meaning – it is a place of his fondest memories of his youth, a place where he looks at from the home. Nenad is also bonded with the river in direct and physical engaging, his work as a life saver. “Because of God and Nature”, his awe of this landscape comes precisely through his different experiences on the river, “I feel awe and I believe that the good returns with good... I dove into the totally murky waters of the lake, I'm looking for someone who has lost his life, has died, I do not know yet... and I hear myself at some point... Get over it, it has to be done. I know that I may have just 5 minutes of air in the bottle, but I say, just a bit more, God, help me to find him. And each time, I do, trust me.” (Nenad 2016).

“I went to the summit 1500 times, but every time it was interesting... I like to ride bicycles along the old route, where once there was a railway, around 1970. I like to go fishing and hiking, to be in the monasteries.”, Nenad (2016) says as he explains that he comes from a traditional religious family - his brother is a priest, and both of his nephews. For staying true to their family tradition which meant that they continued going to the monasteries when it wasn't recommended during the communist government, they grew up in poverty and ostracism. “They looked at us as black sheep”, he remembers the childhood (Nenad 2016). He narrates of these difficult times as a period when the only support his family found in the monasteries who dealt with worse repression. “I remember perfectly... 47 years ago, I went like a kid to a forest to cut the Yule log for Christmas, I am pulling it and from one building where the policemen lived, they regarded me as an enemy.”(Nenad 2016). Nenad maintained close connection with many monasteries to this date and describes numerous stories - “legends” about their history. He also vividly remembers the construction of hydroelectric power plants in the 1960s that he considers as an initiating point of inevitable changes of the



area that brought many hardships for monks. "The biggest impression was the construction of hydro power plants. Patriarch Pavle<sup>25</sup> has left here... There was a monk, they spit on him as he passed..." (Nenad 2016).

At the very end, in contrast to his enthusiastic interview Nenad remarks (2016), "If I were to get these last 20 years back, I would certainly have gone from here, due to various reasons..." His talk is pervaded with disappointment over the institutional politics over the past couple of decades which he sees as "a missed opportunity". "If nothing changes here in comparison to today, over the next three years, I'll leave this place. I think, not only me. It's just there is no one left to go ... I say with great bitterness that I would leave this place" (Nenad 2016).

### 1.3. Let me tell you a story...

"I love Ovcara Banja more than Branko Radicevic<sup>26</sup> loved Strazilovo", exclaims Milutin (2016), 65 years old retiree at the very start of the interview. The gorge is his birthplace, "I am here my whole life" (Milutin 2016).

As his father used to work in the hydro power plant, Milutin (2016) explains how he makes part of the group in the community that grew up in communism, but "...went to the church nevertheless". In his narrative the spirit of place is ever present surfacing in numerous stories about the history of the region, adorned with personal memories, and occasional hints of superstition. They build up an image of the lost illustrious land of heroic people, at moments infused with melancholy. These stories depict different historical periods – from the Nemanjic kings who "...built all these monasteries", legends about Saint Sava, who was praying in the cave for water that then showed up from the mountain, times of liberation from Turkish rule and the new 19<sup>th</sup> century state "when the Morava flooded John's castle", to the world wars. Milutin's stories abound in the details about the period of construction of hydropower plants and the various attempts of exploitation of thermal springs. Yet, as with some other interviewees, Milutin's narration is loaded with discontent over the current institutional management of the protected area. A passionate hunter and fishermen, he describes strict environmental regulations for wildlife protection as unrighteous in comparison with illegal construction of the cottages. "A man is the largest polluter. Four hundred cottages on the Morava ... It is sadness." (Milutin 2016).

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<sup>25</sup> Patriarch Pavle (1914 – 2009) was the sixth head of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

<sup>26</sup> Branko Radicevic was a prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century Serbian poet, whose work was largely influenced by his hometown and its surroundings, Strazilovo.

The river still plays a vital role in his life in the gorge, as he explains numerous changes it had brought to the area over the time. "...in 1836 part of the mountain collapsed and rearranged the river. For eight months, the water filled that area... Then Morava flooded everything..." (Milutin 2016). These narratives talked about within his family illustrate very particular relation between the spirit of place and these people's sense of place. "You know we, the old "Banjci" (*the collective name used by the inhabitants of the Ovcara Banja among themselves*), we are attached to the Banja so much...", Milutin (2016) elaborates. Through family ties the stories become an element of the collective identity of Milutin's wife and their 10 years old son. It doesn't matter that she arrived to the gorge only a decade ago after the marriage and that their son is too young to understand the full implications of the told, the storytelling has become the element that binds them into the landscape. As a dimension of the spirit of place storytelling propels strong topophilia and feelings of belonging – in stories they do not tell the history of the geographic area, they tell tales of a homeland.

#### 1.4. "Neither path is the same"<sup>27</sup>

On the occasion of the first personal encounter with the mediator of this field work research, Goran decisively declares his wish to be interviewed as a resident of the gorge and member of the local community rather than an expert. With his saying that the place is slowly dying, this only hinted to his poignant attachment to the landscape of the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge.

Goran (54 years old) is considered one of the greatest connoisseurs of the area. He is employed in the Tourist Organization of Cacak, as a coordinator of the research sector in the protected area of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge. His earliest and most precious image of the gorge returns him back to the memories of childhood built around the old mill deep in the forests near the monastery Sveta Trojica. For Goran (2016) the gorge is "an oasis of tranquility I would never leave". He is another "newcomer" here, though, and his narration delicately illustrates how a spirit of place influenced his sense of place "I was born on the mountain Javor<sup>28</sup>, the first house just below the summit. There was an old lodge that served as a Border Post between Serbia and Turkey, all the way until the Berlin Peace. My father used to work there as a forest manager. So I was born there but I started walking in the Ovcara Banja." (Goran 2016).

Goran reveals in the conversation how he was lucky enough to combine his work with what he loves over the past 13 years. Grounded in his far away memories shared side by side with his father who worked as a forest manager for 40 years in the gorge, his love for nature

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<sup>27</sup> Goran, interview by author, Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 20 April, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Javor is a mountain in the western Serbia.

influenced both his work and hobbies. He sees the job as an opportunity to make things better for people and for the gorge, and he's been trying to achieve this both in research and as a tourist guide. Explaining tiny satisfactions brought by installation of new bike paths, he says, "Much prettier part of the work is research. This territory was indeed the target of the researchers and has not yet been sufficiently explored; it is working with researchers of different profiles and professions, whether they are biologists, geologists, geographers, historians, archaeologists, which is always interesting, and every terrain is a new finding and expansion of some knowledge that provides a new image, a new dimension to the whole area. This is currently the best part of the work for me. The second is... working with visitors, attempts to use potentials of Ovcara Banja in the best possible manner..." (Goran 2016).

In Goran's narrative tangible and intangible values of the heritage embodied in the landscape, natural environment and culture make a unity. Thus, the perception of sacredness relates both to the deep experience brought by landscape and spirituality. "Neither path is the same. I have had an opportunity to climb (the Kablar summit) for three or four times per day, and each time I wished I didn't have to come down... I see these fragments, they are beautiful, but as a whole, the whole ambience is truly beautiful. Perhaps they wouldn't be if they were extracted from those surroundings and put elsewhere. I don't know. Perhaps Sretenje (monastery) wouldn't be as it is if it didn't have that Ovcara above, that Kablar behind, that the river isn't below ..." Goran's words (2016) also reflect deep concern over the changes brought to the area by man's influence. He explains them as a threat as they could erode all people's efforts for improvement. Over 48 years that he lived in the gorge, Goran explains, the area saw numerous changes so he has personal feeling of responsibility to preserve its value. His story is moving in a strong expression of love for the land, place and its people, its history, but moreover for the simultaneous intertwining of hope and a certain despair of losing all that permeate his words. At the end of the things, Goran sees it as a personal responsibility and a mission to educate and introduce the people to all the richness of this landscape, as the most effective way to preserve it: "The true guardians of the values of this area are people who know it best. As long as they do not know, they are not aware of the need to preserve, nor what to preserve..." (Goran 2016).

#### 1.5. "The days had gone, chained in silver"<sup>29</sup>

During a visit to the Nikolje monastery, the prioress advised that this research wouldn't be complete without a family Đukanović, their oldest parishioners. Every weekend for 63 years

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<sup>29</sup> Dragoslav and Dobrila, interview by author, Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 21 April, 2016.

of their life as husband and wife Dragoslav and Dobrila go either to the Nikolje or to the Jovanje monastery from their home in the Rosci village, walking by foot for one and a half hour, along the railway track and river, through the tunnel.

Immediately after settling in their dining room to talk, the 91 years old Dragoslav begins his special story: Dobrila was born on Christmas Day 82 years ago. They met each other in the Sretenje monastery, and later got married in the Nikolje monastery, on the day when the church celebrated the Holy Trinity holiday. As their joint interview unfolds, gradually it reveals a life inexplicably embroidered into the fabric of the landscape. Born in two neighbouring villages of the Ovcар – Kablar Gorge, Dragoslav and Dobrila are now the owners of a vast property. They started, though, with a humble farm house which they built themselves. The entire life they lived in the village bellow the Kablar Mountain. It has been a typical traditional rural life<sup>30</sup> of agriculture. In the first minutes of the interview, it became evident that this would be an unusual narrative as Dragoslav opens a large notebook with a handwritten title – “The days had gone, chained in silver”. In these pages for decades, he’s been recording a story of their life, a tale that resonates peculiarly as a testimony of one different Ovcар - Kablar Gorge.

“I was born here. The father and mother gave birth to eight children here. One farm with only one small room, one double and one single bed, eight children. The father fought (in the First World War), crossed over Albania on foot, there is his picture... I completed four grades of elementary school, studied catechism ... we grew up poor, but my father was always reading the Gospel for us... Here, it is the same now: lantern, a candle, a prayer book, morning, noon, evening, prayer...” (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016). For Dragoslav, being born in this region makes a major part of his personal identity. This shows in his depictions of building his farm from nothing but a memory of his fathers’ struggle and hardship. Also, he was proud of being called “Ovcар - Kablar beast” while in the army, because the term itself encapsulated fearlessness and resistance that these people symbolized for hundreds of years. Still, both Dragoslav and Dobrila mourn the loss of those times in front of modernity, especially many folk customs that used to empower the sense of identity in the gorge. “No more, it's gone”,

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<sup>30</sup> Piety was one of the central elements of rural life in Serbia, especially in the period between the two world wars, and quite distinct from the one in the cities. The farmers used to go to church and monasteries in the days of major holidays, but their piety was essentially based on a strong respect for folk customs and traditions that had kept in all the rituals strong pagan influence (e.g. prayers for a fruitful year, harvesting songs, etc.). "Slava" was the most important religious celebration that also had great social significance in the life of each village. Ecclesiastical clergy, however, considered many folk customs to be disparaging religion, trying to return the people towards their teaching and traditions of the Christian Church (Timotijevic 2009, 95 -100).

they explain lost tradition of harvesting songs and pull out the old photos showing what their life has once been (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016).

When asked about the future changes of the area, Dobrila cryptically replies, “We do not have the eyes to see, only God knows when and what will be.” (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016). Their narrative is, thus, very subjective, as well as their understanding of the faith and relationships with the monastic community. Souvenirs of intimate family moments tangle between the stories of historical changes that the gorge faced in the last decades. This understanding also shapes their interpretation of the area – the gorge is a place of their ancestors and their birth, place of their home, their farms and their churches - it is an interface of all their ties which threaded throughout the time and space defined who they are.

In this interview sacredness of the landscape rises primarily through a dimension of religious influence, asserted through the respondents’ weekly visits to monasteries for liturgies. “Nikolje, Jovanje (monasteries), we go mostly there. Once to Nikolje, once to Jovanje. You see, we make it all in the calendar...”, Dobrila explains their dedication to daily rituals and fasting (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016). Dragoslav reaffirms again that this was the way of life he inherited from his father and grandfather. And as they both continue to narrate the lives of their children and grandchildren, the satisfaction and pride in succeeding to pass on this family legacy are almost tangible. At last, for them, the gorge turns into a place for their successors.

“We are humble here, and we live nicely”, Dragoslav and Dobrila (2016) conclude. Their story is merely a glimpse into some other world, and other life in the gorge, one that has been swept away by change and time. It is a traditional rural life that now mostly belongs to the past, it is a legacy of authentic folk tradition that they cling to only through wistful longing and nostalgic memories.

## 2. DECIPHERING NARRATIVE RESEARCH

The above explained interviews indicated several ways of peoples’ relating with the landscape. These associations emerged as fundamental constituents in the transmission of its spirit. The analysis focused to extricate those connections and testimonies concerning the physical and built elements of the environment, perception and experience, memories and history, activities and practices. In addition, the study took into account descriptions and phrases expressing distinctive features of the landscape as a whole. Such indicators, however, cannot be understood as universal, nor unique, given that the inhabitants foster their ties with the

landscape under the influence of different qualities of the environment, separately and jointly. This comes next to subjective and bias reference driven by social factors (Gottmann 1952, as cited in Amit – Cohen 2008).

Analysis of the respondents' narratives led to conclude that the ways they acknowledge the spirit of place vary, but is founded in emotional dimension. All the stories predominantly included the "before-after" perspective. This outlook revealed in the narratives a strong feeling of nostalgia for a far – off past followed closely with the perception of the local community as a sort of a synergy of several groups. Primarily, there exist "locals", that is, natives born in the gorge, and "newcomers", as those who arrived after the Second World War. Even between the locals, a labels circulates between "ex-communists" and "true believers". These all make one group, however, opposite to the latest arrived cottagers. Spirit of place materializes through a variety of bonds linking people with the landscape. Its elements emerge through expressions of topophilia and rootedness. The perspective "before - after" showed as particularly useful as it indicated strong attachment to the landscape, pervaded by aspirations conflicting between pursuing a better life and preserving the authenticity of the area. This came about especially in expressing a foreboding sentiment of losing a beloved landscape. Finally, all interviewees praise their ancestral roots in experiencing and interpreting the "Serbian Holy Mountain". Its meaning holds them together in the cohesion of collective memory and awareness of the past.

#### 2.1. "We can live wherever we want, we must go back to the roots."<sup>31</sup>

In response to the questions inquiring about unique and distinctive elements of the landscape, the respondents mostly referred to heritage values and the notion of the sacredness of the landscape embodied in the name "Holy Mountain". Those elements emerge connecting them all in their sense of local and national identity, and feelings of belonging to the community. These answers particularly appeared when conversation reached the topics of the meaning of the landscape and possibility of leaving it.

Rootedness is the strongest relation, permanently linking people to the gorge. With etymological origins associated with the ceaselessly evolving natural world, the notion of rootedness instantly evokes an image of a root in a forest that bind to the bedrock and seamlessly interconnects all the cells. Relph (1976) defined it as a need for "a secure point

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<sup>31</sup> Vidoje, interview by author, Ovcar Banja, Ovcar - Kablar Gorge, 17 April, 2016.

from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular." (38).

The interviewee Nenad (2016) explains, "It is a drive, some instinct that pulls us right back where we were born... I am proud to say that I come from here - because of these ten monasteries, because of these two beautiful mountains, because of the river..." Nenad's feelings of "loyalty" to his birthplace culminated as a manifestation in the built environment. "When I was five years old, I promised myself to become an athlete and to build my own house when I grow up. And I did it.... I am emotionally attached to the river, and all the stone that I used comes exactly from here, from the Ovcar Banja. I didn't want to build its foundation using some other stone. All the stone, I found it in this river." (Nenad 2016).

In the interviews, the respondents' answers reveal the meaning of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge as a homeland, place of ancestors through which they foster fragile thread with the former, traditional life of the gorge that's been gradually vanishing. That is primarily rural life abundant with folk traditions that's been showing strong demise in the whole country in the past couple of decades. Dragoslav holds on to the relationship via his perseverance and cherishing traditional values of the farmer's life. For him, it is a thing of a family legacy above all. Today, those customs shimmer in remembering. "It has been like that from the very Genesis, you keep cattle and you sing, you go to the water and you sing... if we were to sing now, they would say we are crazy", explains Dobrila (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016).

Vitek (1997) reflected on rootedness through a sense of community which implies "an awareness of simultaneous belonging to both a society and a place" (2). Conan (2007) extended the understanding in relation with sacred landscape as "metaphorically rooting one's personal identity in well-defined part of the material world" (7). These points came obvious in the conversation with the residents of the gorge. In the case of Vidoje, the landscape itself acted as an agent enabling him to validate his place in collective, but also to redefine who he is as an individual. Vidoje moved to the Ovcar Banja in the 1990s, and for him, the gorge is an anchor into the community, his connection with the roots and national identity. This becomes clear as he explains the decision to move from the city, which has been "fated". Similar reasoning permeates Nenad's inability to dissolve the perpetual dilemma about leaving the gorge to pursue a better life. He keeps postponing the decision in the hope of something making him to stay, "...I am ready to leave it all, but I do not want to leave it. Just like when you have a match in the ring and there are 15 seconds left so we have

to keep the guard... I think I have those 15 seconds more to do something splendid here.” (Nenad 2016).

All the interviewees express a strong sense of place in a reaction to the notion of the “Serbian Holy Mountain” - for them the name sole implies uniqueness of the landscape, a blend of nature and spirituality. This ambiguous relationship roots the people through strong identification with the region, and the nation. “Morava is a source of life here, the natural one, and the monasteries are another, spiritual life for the Serbs. We have a great privilege that we can go every day to a place of sanctity, great sanctity, can actually see them all in one day”, Vidoje (2016) remarks. The identities and values of the interviewees are engraved in the fabric of the land with all the beauty and hardships the landscape itself embodies. These are the places to which they keep coming back again and again, a nexus to which their roads always lead. That is best manifested in a lifelong weekly pilgrimage of Dobrila and Dragoslav to their monasteries, a journey explained in Dragoslav’s letter titled “Tunnel”, which he sent to the municipal authorities 13 years ago.

“I live and we live in the area and in the immediate vicinity of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge... looking from the sky and the earth, wonderful landscape, urban, full of greenery and peace, it seems to me it's nice to live there; let us pass to the Ovcara Banja along the former Cira railway, now the paved road below which waters of the Rzava River run noiselessly. Gratitude to the builders: on the right, hills and the hunters, on the left, the lake and boats, fishermen; the surrounding hills and valleys hum in monastic bells of our Serbian Holy Mountain, while Morava’s meanders respond to them, singing the glory of Serbian arms.” (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016). “This was written in the wall on the side...”, Dragoslav stops to explain what was once written on the riverbank and then proceeds, “Not to mention all the other adventures, the beauty and charms, the board standing by the Kamenica River tells it itself - at the end it is written “Area of Exceptional Importance of the First Order, the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge”; near the bridge there the board stands...” He stops to remark, “Well, let us see if it is exceptional when you are in the tunnel. The hallmark of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge of the first order is that it is protected by the state. It is well said there that it is under the state protection, we’ll see if it is so.” (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016).

“So, let's descend under the ground through a darkened tunnel: behold, we see that we do not see - we do not see ponds, puddles, mud. Near the entrance and exit portals there are disposed sticks which we use to draw on the walls when passing through the tunnel... We, pedestrians, fire the light, we fire the lantern - but they go off, a flashlight also turns off; wind extinguishes the candles we lighted. If we pass in a group, we fight the darkness and



call each other, “Where are you? Here I am”, so we play hide and seek. Funeral processions pass on the way to the graveyard and the candles barely help us to see where we go. People who pass for the first time therefrom by the approach wail, “Where I went into the ground alive!” When I happen to pass pushing a bicycle, and I hear approaching tractor with no light - the tunnel roars, roars brutally, and I just wait when it will crush me... In the winter time the tunnel is full of icebergs, with icicles hanging from the height reaching the head of the man. We are forced to wear some kind of wool socks over the footwear to master the ice...

I have 80 years and the described trouble, and I wonder when people shed light on the whole city and the suburbs, whether anybody remembered to set a few bulbs in this darkened tunnel that used to be the only road to the Ovcar Banja 40 years ago, or remembered to put the board near the Nikolje monastery. They already remembered to put boards for the protection of birds and wildlife, and not for a man... When I saw those boards, my head started to hurt, because I realized that everything is protected but a man. So let this story be neither a request, nor a demand, only a statement. I do not ask anything. Signature...” (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016).

As a construct of community, the landscape reflects not just peoples’ values to those within and outside of that community, but also transmits messages of ownership and belonging (Amit - Cohen 2008, 1). As Dragoslav and Dobrila demonstrate in their narrative, no negligence and change imposed by the political and institutional structures nor physical barriers of the nature can disrupt this connection between the gorge and its people embodied in the medieval origin of the holy mountain. In a return to their devotedness, the landscape continually reiterates who they themselves are, and substantiate their vision of the nation. In this, the gorge becomes an expression of their identity, heritage of the ancestors and a pledge for all the descendants – while its spirit amalgamates the spirit of the nation. Vidoje (2016) concludes, “Some man also made all of this with a faith in a God. And every icon he painted, he painted it with a belief in the God, and left the mark of his own hand. Every day we leave some kind of a mark. Now, whether it is good or bad, history will judge... Those true values, that tradition, that long persistence in the faith, they survived with a reason. That in itself puts some mark and significance. Not many things survive, but here they did and they certainly have a great importance for Serbia and for these people living here. We can live wherever we want, we must go back to the roots.”

## 2.2. Storytelling as remembering

The research has shown that stories constitute a significant element of the intangible in the spirit of the place in the gorge. Next to the historical narrative about the notion of the holy mountain, oral tradition preserved and enriched stories of various past events and moments in the collective memory of the community. People continually tell tales that surpass the walls of their homes and the monasteries, reaching far into the past and gradually enveloping the nature with their often romanticized notion and almost mythical scale. Though undeniably biased, while passed on between people, they illustrate a strong historical awareness lying behind the sense of place.

The meaning of a place relies significantly on its history (Kask and Raagmaa 2010). Often with a touch of exaggeration, the stories primarily unfold around heroic figures and events from the national history that also affected the past of the gorge. In that, the oral tradition ascribes particular mystic atmosphere to the land as the one where saints with healing powers once resided or as a place of bizarre events resonating in superstition. The gorge is thus hailed as a place once inhabited by St. Sava. These stories are built around the inaccessible cave of the mountain Kablar where currently stands a church. Today it is a place of pilgrims and the courageous ones. The cave also hides a spring called “Sava’s waters”. “Do you know the legend”, Milutin (2016) asks, “they say that St. Sava walked through that water, and afterwards the spring would dry up if a sinful woman came to use it.” In his own version of the story, Nenad (2016) narrates how the church construction went, and proceeds to tell a story of another “living saint”, the late Patriarch who became a monk in the monastery Blagovestenje in 1946 and kept spending summers in the gorge until the death.

In stories the gorge has become a land of the lost treasure of the Nemanjic kings. Nenad explains how people still wonder where it could have been buried. Every historic period added new layers illustrating how from the notion founded in the vision of the medieval state different ideologies influenced the landscape. The protagonists in these stories are usually portrayed as a threat of change for the traditional vision of the gorge. In particular, Nenad’s interview is rich in stories and memories of the communist period – through them, he describes how the monks suffered under the repression of the political system. Goran also mentions the stories shrouding the bizarre events around the monastery of Preobrazenje. In 1909 the monastery had to be demolished by decision of the authorities and rebuilt nearby due to the construction of the railway (which operated until 1971). “At the first passage of the train in 1912, right at the place where the monastery originally stood, a locomotive allegedly stopped

by itself, and an engine driver saw the silhouette of a monk in the middle of the railroad. The scene lasted for about 10 seconds, then a monk turned and continued down the track. The locomotive then launched again all by itself and continued the journey.” (Radosavljevic 2002, 295). This story further spread, enriched with details about the tragic lives of the people involved in the railroads construction and destruction of the monastery. Nenad (2016) narrates, ” They first asked people who will go on to topple the monastery, but no one wanted to climb on the roof and starts taking off the roof tiles. The man who first accepted ended up on the opposite side of the site. There's a rock from which he fell down and died. The man who designed the tracks in this way ... he ended up in a mental institution.” In addition to this, in his own narration Milutin (2016) added, “My grandfather told me how all those people mobilized after the Second World War who accepted to move the cross from the Preobrazenje and Jovanje monasteries ended bad. That is a story, but perhaps a bit of a superstition also.”

Milutin’s sense of place is in particular shaped under the influence of stories. He evokes detailed versions which he remembers from childhood, illustrating many historical events and personalities who passed through the gorge. “This (*referring to the Ovcara banja*) was an uninhabited place in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were surrounding villages Rosci and Vrncani from which the people descended here. Morava flowed here, and afterwards got fenced there, when the plant was built. During the Ottoman time Nemanjics first began to build monasteries here in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and monasteries for one time served as schools of transcribers. After John's Gospel with Orthodox, the oldest book was St. Nicholas gospel... I'll tell you about it, it was stolen from the monastery Nikolje. After the failure of the First Serbian Uprising, Milos Obrenovic with his wife Ljubica and with children was visiting a certain elder monk at the Nikolje monastery ... There, one child of Milos died, and he was buried there; Petar was his name (the boy was five years old). Milos built a residence there later when he became Serbian Prince and he helped these monasteries a lot. There is that building, you saw it just beside the lake, the Residence of Milos. He used to fish there... There is also another story: he planted two pine trees in the courtyard there. When he happened to be there visiting that monk, one Gypsy woman passed nearby. One of those two trees died and the Gypsy told him, “You have two sons, one will die, another will live. That is at least the legend that’s been told...” (Milutin 2016).

Kask and Raagmaa (2010) observe that, with history, narratives, including stories from personal experience and legends all constitute the spirit of place and identity of the local community. In Milutin’s case the influence of the spirit of place is thus profound, sustained and

consolidated through the ties of kinship. The stories are shared with his wife who became part of the gorge through marriage. Joining the interview she shares the narrative and fills in the details. “During the Second World War the Blagovestenje monastery served as a seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church. There exist still traces of a bunker where all valuables were supposedly hidden...” (Milutin 2016). Their 10 years old son follows the conversation and on moments joins the narration. The only remaining student in the only elementary school of the gorge which stopped working this summer, he is growing up surrounded by myths of the former times, aware of the heavy duty to keep them further alive.

When regarded through this element of the interviews, the spirit of the place weaves a tale of the landscape almost as a person. What stands out is that the focus of these narratives remains around figures and events from the national history. In stories, those collective memories are in continual reconstruction and alteration, since facts get often mixed and embellished with descriptions and superstition added across generations of storytellers. Yet, as Pierre Nora (1989) observed, this “interplay of history and memory” continues to live as long as people like Milutin and his family refuse to forget, as long as they persistently show “will to remember”.

### 2.3. “Mystic, mysterious, magical, impressive, dreamlike... green”<sup>32</sup>

Topophilia stands out as one of the most powerful relationships between the interviewees and the landscape. This form of attachment derives primarily from their personal memories, and in the intimate perception of different elements of their surroundings, built and natural equality. Vistas, sounds, atmosphere and places, all encapsulate strong feelings that respondents identify in the terms of the spirit of place. In fact, in the narratives, the inciting elements spread both in the direction of the features of the natural environment, and towards the experience of spirituality and sacred places. In that, use of specific phrases and epithets in descriptions of particular qualities proved to be rather useful.

“When I come back from the trip and enter the gorge, I cannot explain my feelings. I feel different, fulfilled, delighted. You can feel the air, the hills... The situation can be bad here, but when I come, my heart is full. That is what I always feel, it’s not just the atmosphere. I feel the river, the air, the mountains, the freshness. That freshness is the most striking.” Nenad (2016) explains his love for the gorge. The river encapsulates particular meaning for this topophil. ”For me the Morava is the life... I love it when it is fast and when it is murky

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<sup>32</sup> Goran, interview by author, Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 20 April, 2016.

and when it is powerful and when it is dirty. I've told you how much it means to me. I do not want to use any kind of rock (*to build his house*). I take it from there, from my Morava." (Nenad 2016). Similarly to Nenad who built his home so he can enjoy the view of his adored river, Dobrila and Dragoslav built their cottage house in the favourite spot in the woods. Above the bench next to the cottage enveloped in the forest of alder trees, they set the board saying, "House of Open Heart" with a message for any passerby, "Under the alder and nine oaks, next to the small clear well, from desire my sight has stilled at a place of repose and peace. Adorn, dear children, this garden as a gift from God, enjoy all of it as your lord." (Dragoslav and Dobrila 2016). Both of these narratives stood out in the analysis for the interviewees' particular attachment to the landscape arising from the physical contact. Dragoslav and Dobrila are led in this by their rural life that envelopes a life span marred by difficult physical labour. "The small farmer or peasant's attachment to land is deep. Nature is known through the need to gain a living...The farmer's topophilia is compounded of this physical intimacy, of material dependence and the fact that the land is a repository of memory and sustains hope." (Tuan 1974, 96 - 97). However, both in the case of Nenad, and Dragoslav and Dobrila love of place evolved symbolizing the successful path from poor beginnings to well – being, and that induces a very particular topophilia grounded in "possessive pride in his estate, in the transformation of nature to a fruitful world of his own design." (Tuan 1974, 97).

As Nenad proceeds to explain that residents altogether grew up on the river, his narrative intertwines with that of Goran. Born at a similar age, their stories illustrate childhood and youth spent in the 1970s, golden years of the former state, shared beside the river and in the forests of the gorge. It was also the time when, despite the risk of political repercussions, monasteries formed an important part of their growing up. Both narratives contain elaborate stories of the numerous trails and paths permeating the gorge, from the riverside to the monasteries and further into the mountains. Their memories, thus extend to portray the emotional inwardness of the gorge that is all-embracing. Most importantly, the value of these answers shows in signalling how intangible and tangible constantly overlap, intertwine and interchange as two sides of a one. In this dimension, affection stems both from familiarity attached to the environment as a home and from direct physical involvement yielding powerful sensations in the body and in the mind.

"Mystic, mysterious, magical, impressive, dreamlike...", Goran (2016) enumerates many impressions about the landscape. "You see, it is too ordinary, but for me it is so very important - in the certain period of a year it is so green, and that is the main impression for

me. That is the most significant one and I love it the most then, from April until the end of September. That view, that greenery from the Kablar or from the Ovcara summit when everything in front of you is completely green, that is somehow my strongest impression...” he continues to explain adding, “And not just for me. We had a reporter from Germany... During the boat ride he asked how he can go to the Kablar summit... So we went up, and when we arrived to the top he said that he’s aware that that was outside of the schedule, but he would appreciate if he could be alone for ten minutes to just sit there with nobody speaking to him... And truly, it was a day after the rain, when the sky cleared, and all around us everything has been just green. As though someone lowers you there, just like that. Truly a feast for the eyes, for the soul, just to gaze in silence, you don’t need a thing.” Goran’s stories indicate love of place propelled by state of well – being, physical as well as psychological expressed in the sense of contemplative peace and restorative experience of the environment. The environment here might produce affects of wholeness both in an experience of nature and in experience of spirituality.

As Tuan (1974) argued, the topophils in the gorge expressed their love for the landscape with great variation “in emotional range and intensity, including fleeting visual pleasure, the sensual delight of physical contact, the fondness for familiar places such as home, and joy because of health and vitality” (247). They shift from restrained as in the case of Vidoje to almost fervent and elated as shown by Nenad and Goran. The perceptual relation is largely subjective, but this doesn’t diminish the intensity of the sentiment aligned with the place. Lane (2001) described it as a dualism between the environment and self through which they condition mutual alterations (103). In this interaction, the interviews indicated that environment primarily leverages perception two-way: via experience of natural features and that of sacredness.

### 2.3.1. Love of nature

“When I arrive to Banja, I await first to see the Ovcara and the Kablar”, Milutin (2016) starts his story of the enduring beauty of the nature in the gorge. The perception at the first glance indicates elements that provide special feelings of serenity, contemplation, relaxation. In Goran’s experience natural surroundings propel emotions overlapping with the deep experience of spirituality, one that comes from the religious influence and turns into elation in beholding the gorge from the monastic courtyard, glimpsing several rainbows intersecting above the peaks of Kablar after the rain, feeling the gusts of wind while installing the weather station, observing how river changes its colour after the storm... The enjoyment of landscape

scenery is joined with the affection brought by familiarity and physical involvement in the environment. In all the interviewees' narratives bond with natural environment pointed out specific places and elements within the landscape: mountains with their summits and cliffs, forests hiding many paths and wellsprings, and above all, the river.

“Morava is a lifeblood, it gives life to the gorge and has a profound effect... We are probably not aware enough how essential it is for everything, how it changes both Ovcar and Kablar, and how it affects our lives...”, Goran (2016) observes. The river binds people to the gorge as a place of their fondest memories, where they fished and spent summers in careless joy of their youth. In the narratives of Nenad and Goran it is primarily place of childhood adventures, “We all learned to swim early. We all swam and hung out here ... There's a rock down under the bridge, from the direction you came over the bridge, we used to jump from that rock ... the river left the deepest impression on us, children, here.”(Nenad 2016). There is a certain romantic notion of nature in this dimension of the perception, much resembling to what Tuan (1974) referred to as "gentle, unselfconscious involvement with the physical world that prevailed in the past when the tempo of life was slower, and that young children still enjoy" (96).

Topophilia in relation to the natural features of the landscape appears most obviously in the aesthetic appreciation of the landscape, and then in personal memories that ascribe particular meanings to the environment – through activities people perform there, through attachment brought by familiarity, feeling of well - being as well as patriotic feelings. Through this connection, elements of the landscape acquire meanings that set them inside the identity of place and collective. The nature may be perceived as untamed (the river in particular), but it is far from pure, a fact indicating people's perception of urbanization. “Loyalty to home, city, and nation is a powerful sentiment”, Tuan (1974) writes, "Once society had reached a certain level of artifice and complexity, people would begin to take note, and appreciate, the relative simplicities of nature." (102 -103). People notice the most negative aspect of the modernization of the gorge in the sometimes inappropriate behaviour of the visitors, either regarding the sacred places either the nature. In their stories Tuan's argument of antithesis of environmental value seems to be confirmed – only after facing the threat of the loss of the environment they appropriated by feeling (even more when the threat is brought by non – locals), residents voice the concerns. This also emerges in the awareness of the nature not as a wilderness as much as untamable. In regards to this notion of wilderness in topophilia, future investigations should especially focus on its perspective in ascetic tradition and monastic life in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge.

Otherwise, the narratives reveal a strong awareness of the intrepid power of nature that recurrently disrupts the serenity of the gorge. This association repeatedly unravels with the river which people behold as a source of all good which inevitably takes away back in its ferocious destructiveness. Goran (2016) remarks, "It seems to me now that many people start to fear the river... Morava has defined and significantly changed the look of the Ovcara Banja. The great flood happened in 1896 when the Morava literally wiped out everything that existed in the Banja so no vestiges remained behind. It was then when it broke into new flow, even the name of the Ovcara Banja was brought into question. The thermal springs thus are no longer under the Ovcara, but under the Kablar Mountain..." As his little son recites the lines of the folk poem, "Hey Morava, Hey Morava, my plain village, when you are plain, when you are plain...", Milutin (2016) further observes, "The Morava is impetuous river. It swells rapidly and then just charges. In a few days it takes everything in front of you."

The floods came to form a part of life in the gorge. For several times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century all the buildings on the banks of the river, including the monasteries, were submerged in water. This happened in the spring 2014 and repeated in the spring of 2016. Yet, in the stories of the respondents the river remains a vibrant source of life, an element of identification with the community, and the nation. This at last shows patriotic sentiment linked with the natural environment. In light of this question, the interviews indicated two conclusions. A strong love for the natural environment stems from its perception as an element integral in their vision of homeland to which they are anchored through strong awareness of the past. As Nenad and Vidoje explain the damaging effects of floods that force them to repeatedly reconstruct the properties, their resilience is a reflection of such deep topophilia - an unconditional devotion and intimate association with the same river that inscribes them into the landscape they worship. The sentiment is concealed in delicate ties attached not to the vast territory, but particular landforms, river, places and buildings.

Tuan (1974) framed the understanding of that specificity in this quote, "...patriotism as emotion is rarely tied to any specific locality: it is evoked by abstract categories of pride and power, on the one hand, and by certain symbols, such as the flag, on the other... Modern man has conquered distance but not time. In a life span, a man now - as in the past - can establish profound roots only in a small corner of the world." (100). Wars, historical and political turmoil and interferences took turns with different effects on the lives of the people of the gorge, but in the residents' stories, like monasteries, the river remains a constant. Milutin (2016) states about this, "Morava, you know what is the Morava? That is a heart of Serbia."



### 2.3.2. Sacred views

The narrative research has shown that in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge, the spiritual relationship stands at centre of the topophilia on the other side of the nature. As a complex relationship between people and the landscape, beyond experiential dimension, it firmly anchors peoples' sense of belonging and identity. The perception of sacredness in the narratives of the interviewees has been approached from the relational perspective, as anchored in behaviours, emotions and place identity (Levi and Kocher 2012). "Like the perception of beauty, sacredness does not exist in the person or in the environment, but rather in the relationship." (Levi and Kocher 2012, 917). In the peoples' perception of sacredness, the analysis has shown that the most dominant influence comes from the set of behaviours and activities taking place in the gorge, especially as officially declared as sacred by the Church. Beside the physical manifestation of this sanctity through monasteries and interaction with the monastic communities, sacredness is largely perceived as authentic through the place anchored perspective where history of religious use and historical events testifying the religious association further affect the sacred view for the interviewees. Emotion based dimension of the perception is particularly strong in feeling of respect and in relating elements of the natural environment with particular feelings of awe and peace, though in some stories like Nenad's this also related with the memory shared with the monastic community.

Emotion anchored perception implies dependency from people's individual and cultural background (Shackley 2001, as cited in Levi and Kocher 2012, 917). In most of the narratives this has been predominantly related to the respondents' individual feeling of religiosity that appeared close in explanations to their understanding of heritage values and national identity. This has been particularly the case with Dobrila and Dragoslav, and Nenad. Their interviews reflected this influence in every topic touched by conversation, underscoring largely their personal identity. This pervades the depictions of their family lives and past, and extends beyond the religious heritage in the physical environment (monasteries, churches). Moreover, this way of perceiving sacredness tangles with the landscape as a reflection of national identity, as expressed in referring to the members of the local community, especially monastic communities who give meaning to the very place. The interviewees talk about the past events and personalities that became part of their symbolic relationship with the sacred landscape, as guardians of the heritage and tradition. Nenad (2016) narrates about this, "I had a great honour to know the Patriarch Pavle. He became a monk here and I had a great pleasure and opportunity to talk with him, to drive him. A

remarkable character. He used to come here, stayed for a whole month sometimes, usually during the summer. Beside him, as the greatest and most impressive figure of our place, there are also other monks who left me with great impression... Somehow they have, like it had been once, preserved our history... and remained consistent, they keep our Serbian identity, our tradition.” His explanations of monastic communities in the gorge indicate how peoples’ influence builds up very much the intangible component of the spirit of the place. This influence is contained in the memories of sharing the hard life in the communist period. Furthermore, for Nenad this expands into the perception of sacred places as “behaviour settings” (Levi and Kocher 2012, 917). The sacredness comes from the activities taking place there, and interaction with the monastic community. “The Church of St. Sava is new from around 1939 but it was neglected until 30 years ago. We went there as children... In the 1990s, we carried there the material to make reparations, and for me it has been a pleasure. Five times I went down the hill, I carried the cement on my back into the mountains. I pasted all those stones, of course with the monks from the Preobrazenje monastery. And let me tell you, I did all of it with easiness” (Nenad 2016).

Place identity, including the historical events and people informs the peoples’ perception of the sacred, but even more this is in regards to the landscape as a whole seen as designated – since the Church has consecrated and declared all the sacred sites in the gorge (Vukonic 2006, as cited in Levi and Kocher 2012, 918). Further combined with stories and customs, the connection endured, impervious even to ideological influences throughout the time. Milutin (2016) describes it as something almost incontestable. “I was close with the Patriarch Pavle and with Branko Radicevic, the poet. Pavle ordained in the Blagovestenje monastery... He christened me in 1951, and I went to his ’slava ‘, he says, and then adds, “We are the children that grew up in the communism. We are not against it but we are also not such a devoted believers. But we go, we go to the church... My father was a communists, my uncles also. But my father celebrated “slava” - he wasn’t afraid of anyone, he celebrated it. “ In his interview, Goran (2016) reflects on this transition, “I think that in one period it has been a way of life and that reaction was often unconscious, just like when after the Second World War until the 1990s it was not a conscious reaction of rejection, but was due to the way of life, human fear, repression... I think that now it’s becoming clear, and that it’s becoming an individual choice of a person and feeling of religiosity... even those people who will today say they are communists and do not believe, and those who are not communists but just atheists, they all respect the tradition, spirituality, the culture, history...”

Reese-Taylor (2012) observed that the duration of sanctity correlates directly with the duration of the time that actions remain kept in the social memory (752). Perception of natural features that provide conditions for a particular atmosphere significantly improve the perception of the sacredness. The spiritual relationship and experience of the sacred in the narratives gradually extends and at moments envelops the natural environment and the entire landscape, as though its “aura” exceeds to pull in the surrounding forests, wellsprings, and hills.

Goran’s storytelling at that point builds up in experience of the sacred that wraps around the monasteries, vistas and wildlife merging with the profound feeling of the environment. His poetic depictions make the atmosphere almost palpable. This kind of perception of the surroundings is at the same time strongly informed through emotions. “Awe – inspiring environmental features overwhelm the observer and create a sense of being a small part of a larger, spiritual system.” (Keltner and Haidt 2003, as cited in Levi and Kocher 2012, 917). So, as Goran narrates of the climbing paths, they appear as intimate rituals to delight in the voyage between sacred places and comprehension of the nature. “I heard one monk, who was a guest in the Uspenje monastery, saying: “You see, here, there are so many monasteries, and probably there were even many more. They are here for centuries, and in every monastery there is a bell. All those bells and all those centuries of prayer in this space must have left some trace, some energy, some spirit...” Also, there was a poet whom I followed to visit the monasteries. Amazed with the landscape, he said “It is no accident that God selected for his servants and pilgrims exactly these places...” And indeed there must have been something that led them to this place, and then centuries of their being and working here further enriched it.” With that Goran (2016) concludes the story, “...somewhere, in joining of the one and another, what we have today was created. Perhaps modern man altered that with his interventions and attempts to make his life easier ... But, I think that that is so powerful that it cannot be destroyed, and it cannot be broken. That whole environment, as that man said “God didn’t select these places for his servants for no reason”, and then those centuries and centuries of monasticism, and daily bells, and daily prayers, and how many and what kind of people have been among those monks and nuns... All that has left something here.”

Overall, delving into the narrative research has shown that interviewees possess a strong awareness of the spirit of place maintained through their cultivating sense of place. The strongest relationships behind this connection are revealed as rootedness, historical

awareness and toponophilia developed through the perception of sacredness and natural environments.

Deep attachment to the landscape highlights the feeling of national identity. Ideological interferences trying to re-construct the conception of the landscape as sacred throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century seem to have been powerless against the complex association that people maintained through the original narrative embodying the vision of the medieval past and its church. The vision of that landscape of that state kept resurfacing in respondents' referring to the heritage value of the area. In telling legends and folk stories, people developed their own local narrative which they use to resuscitate that very past. The illustration of this is great reverence for a hermitage that is according to legend used by St. Sava, whose figure to this date remains "...an exponent of vernacular religious culture closely associated with his family's political achievements... a unique example of Serbian identity." (Radic 2007a, 234).

"An individual recognizes the greatest extent of sacred space at the local level in his present home, ancestral home and church, as well as in important historical sites in the local community and historical and related events important to him personally." (Jackson and Henrie 1983, 97). The people of the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge keep negotiating the meaning of the landscape between different ties they build through individual connection with the land, such as kinship. Though on occasions pervaded by patriotism, for some people toponophilia is deeply influenced by personal memories and individual experience of the immersion into environment culminating in a love for nature. These feelings ground them in remembering that is pervaded by a sense of disappointment and loss emerging among contradictory aspirations for modernization and its detrimental effects. This foreboding sentiment of losing authentic landscape of their ancestors resounds with Hoskins' conception of finding solace in the landscape of the past (Hoskins 1954).

#### IV. LEGACY OF SILENCE: IDEAL LANDSCAPE

L'approche de ce chapitre se déplace pour découvrir le dessin comme vecteur d'une expérience immersive. Ancré dans l'approche phénoménologique, le processus de travail sur le terrain a donné lieu à l'analyse des dessins en tant que reconstitution de la rencontre intime avec le paysage. Dans ce processus, l'esprit du lieu se dégage finalement dans la contemplation. Le concept présenté par l'installation vidéo suggère le silence comme un certain comportement pour la transmission de l'esprit du lieu, comme l'interprétation du patrimoine.

##### 1. DRAWING STILL PLACES

"I am the space where I am." (Arnauld 1950, as cited in Bachelard 1994, 137).

However defined, from geography to conservation studies, spirit of place remains as something in the landscape that is omnipresent, but perpetually out of reach. We surely recognize it, but lack the language to express it. Instead, we find it in our perception and experience, in feeling.

The narrative research with the residents in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge has shown that the spirit of place appears side by side with people's sense of place, confirming the close relation between the two concepts, in line with Relph's argument on sense of place "as (individual) awareness of spirit of place." (Relph 1996, as quoted in Kask and Raagmaa 2010, 163). In the next stage of the study, using sense of place as a guide, the author left her role of observer who performs the analysis by immersing into the experience of the landscape, to a point of feeling "profoundly inside the place" (Relph, as quoted in Kask and Raagmaa 2010). In particular, the approach relied on the empathetic insideness which Relph (1976) explains as "a willingness to be open to significances of a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols – much as a person might experience a holy place as sacred without necessarily believing in that particular religion." (54).

This phase of research consisted of walking through the landscape between different places, drawing on location and observing. The idea for the methodology came from the previous experience of the author in her work with urban sketching, particularly concerning the situationists' methodology of *derive*<sup>33</sup> where "one should abandon oneself to the attractions

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<sup>33</sup> *derive* (or "drift"), was one of the central notions of the Situationists, "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances", involving "playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects" (Debord 1958, as quoted in Bassett 2004, 401); "more than just strolling; it was a combination of chance and planning, an "organized spontaneity", designed to reveal some deeper reality to the city and urban life." (Bassett 2004, 401).

of the terrain and the encounters (one) finds there.” (Bassett 2004, 401). Though similar to the Debord’s strategy of *derive* in following the pull of certain elements in the environment, this was an intentional journey. The three activities are brought together with a purpose to enable complete “lived experience” of the environment, with the drawing as the focal point of investigation. Given the complexity of the spirit of place, the artistic practice is introduced in the methodology because as an approach it is less restricted by rational thinking – instead, as a creative, practical activity it could facilitate expression of the lived experience - the unconscious, felt and perceived. Walking thus serves as an intermediary activity, whose nature implies a particular condition of “alignment of mind, body, and the world” (Solnit 2001). In formulating this approach, beside Solnit and Debord, the inspiration came from Richard Long, a British land artist who defines his multifaceted work as a process of experiencing the landscape as a living entity. Along with walking and drawing, observations were recorded in the form of notes describing the momentary experience of the senses, and contextual indicators of the locations visited. They were made for the personal use only to facilitate author’s subsequent analysis of the produced drawings. Central in the process, the drawing practice is considered as a means to better comprehend the spirit of place by acquiring knowledge of the experienced world through the experience itself.

In his seminal work on the phenomenology of soul “Poetics of Space”, Gaston Bachelard (1994) quoted Noel Arnauld - “Je suis l’espace ou je suis” (137). He argued that every space and every place is made through its own experience, and that poetic image of the world appears in our consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul of the human being, much before the thought itself. Bachelard thought that the mind itself is in fact shaped through the space and place where man dwells because those places and spaces (which are essentially produced by nature and culture) affect our memories, feelings and thoughts. In this way, through the experience, landscape becomes a place of an intimate encounter – “*from which* arises both a sense of self, and a sense of landscape.” (Wylie 2012, 58, original emphasis). Though drawing by the nature of the practice implies ambiguous interaction of distance and closeness between the object and the artist, the seeing is understood at this point of the study as an inherent element of the lived experience. Instead of assembling the pieces of the landscape in the mind, seeing comes through engaging directly with the environment – observing, exploring, “moving about in it” (Ingold 2000, 55). According to Ingold (2000), rather than a product of imagination or mental creation, thus gained knowledge of the environment shows up eventually through “creative acts of discovery” (56).

In such encounter with the landscape and all qualities through which it is revealed, the drawing evolved as a practice influenced by the encounter in the moment of depicting the experience. Applying this to the relationship between landscape and art, painting in particular, Merleau-Ponty set as an example Cezanne's art (Merleau – Ponty 1969). Cezanne himself elaborated his methodology of making the series "Mont Sainte-Victoire" as individual experience of landscape that exceeds the mere gazing, and comes from the entire body and all its senses (Hawkins 2012, 195). When this consideration of experience where one is merged with the environment applies to the drawing of that very landscape in the very moment of the experience, the boundaries also disappear. "His gaze enters the landscape, is entered by landscape." (Wylie 2007, 3). In lived experience, the seer and the seen become one.

The field work spanned over the three weeks at authentic locations in the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge. The drawing unfolded as in situ activity, taking one to three hours per one drawing on average. All drawings were done in a sketchbook of dimensions 22 x 14 cm. While drawing (as an activity) served to capture and visualize the immediate experience, the change in the drawings (as images) happened as the walks conquered more and more of the landscape. This transition encompassed technique and materials. To provide understanding between the cause and the effect of this shift, the analysis developed in two ways: drawing as a practice and drawing as an image. In the first case, short texts were compiled to articulate the setting of experience from memory and personal observations of the author during the field work. They illustrate the context for drawing as an activity at a particular location. Afterwards, as an image produced through that activity, drawing is analysed as a record to interpret the experienced. When reviewing the small collection of produced drawings, there is an intertwining of several motives permeating the images: passages on the path, monastery gates, glances through forest, vistas.

### 1.1. "Onwards and Upwards"

"It starts with a step and then another step and then another that add up like taps on a drum to a rhythm..." (Solnit 2001, 16). Walking from the Ovcar Banja the journey started in the direction of the Kablar Mountain. Once the small village remains behind, the road is partly paved in asphalt, partly covered in pebbles left after the flood, crunching under the feet. The river flows noiselessly on the right side of the path, in contrast to the high, sharp verticals of white-grey rocks of the mountain cliff on the left. Apart from a pair of mountain hikers heading higher into the mountain, there is no one in sight. So, gently, the path opens for the atmosphere of tranquillity. The more appropriate description should be peculiar quietness

since it makes everything imperceptible, even the sound of a car passing by towards the monastery. At the point where the road starts slipping into a corner between the sharp rocks, the quietness becomes almost eerily deafening. While the horizon, seemingly, plunges into the wilderness, the drawing began.”

When that first day the hand touched the paper for the first time, little of the above experience turned into a drawing (Fig. 1). Though such an intense experience came as overwhelming immediately upon starting the walk and coming from the city, it turned out rather difficult to let go of rationalizing numerous perceptual influences. The mind kept trying to gather the pieces of the emotional experience and reaction of senses assembling them into the logically explanatory mental picture of the regarded scene. So, because they are naturally light stone, the rocky walls of the mountain remained white on the surface of the paper - though in the reality of the landscape experience they felt threateningly obscure.

“Further down the road, after a visit to the monastery Nikolje, tunnels start recurring. They are only getting longer, and the brightness decreases. Inside of their darkness that quietness reappears, multiplied in intensity. At the exit, the surrounding cliffs enclose the view. As though everything comes together in a peculiar shadow box of wavy stone walls, and labyrinth of passages.”

Two more drawing sessions happened, focusing on the scene of a tunnel, before its entrance and looking towards the exit from inside (Fig. 2 – 3). The process still involved the lines and details, but the intensity of colours increases. The contrasts deepen and though they are difficult to distinguish in the blend of shadows, the forms are still clearly defined. Most notably, the contrast of dark and light subtly grows to indicate a sense of the unknown.



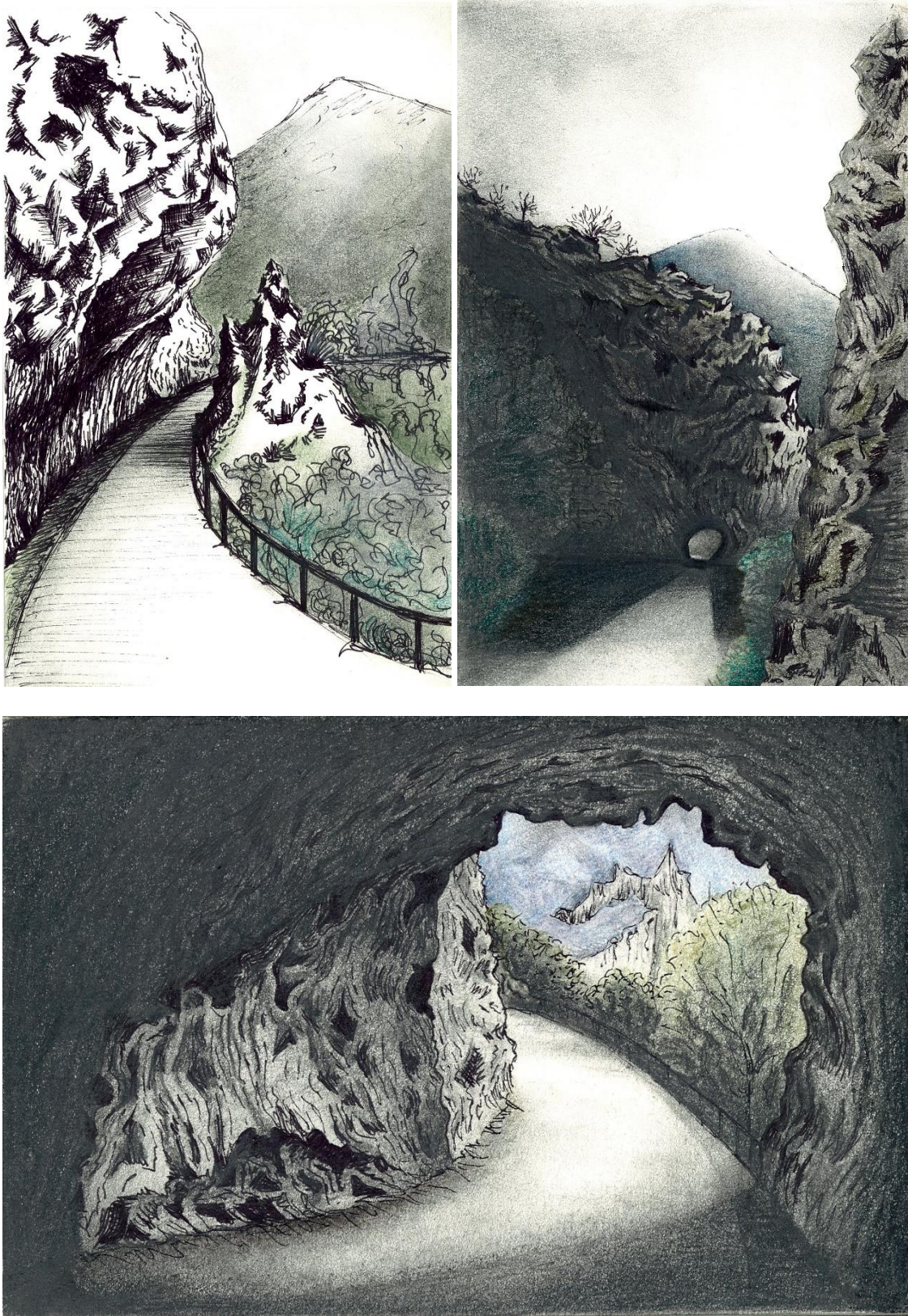


Fig. 1-3 from left to right. Fig. 1. *Tunnel I*, Fig. 2. *Tunnel II*, Fig. 3. Exit - *Tunnel III*. Source: Nevena Tatovic, 2016, mixed media on paper, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.

## 1.2. “Places in between”

“Whichever direction one takes in this gorge, at some point it will end in front of one of the monasteries’ gates. These are mostly stone gates, with stone arched walls, eaves and usually cumbersome wooden doors. They are often very massive, but light in colours, sometimes extending into the walls of the monastic courtyard. Some show signs of recent renovation and refurbishment. Some might have the door open, a sign that the service is taking place in the monastery.”

Every time the path ended in front of such gate during these walks, it has been like suddenly stepping into a limbo space. Area confined on a few meters around the vertical stone construction that looms above the ground, as a forewarning, imposes quaint impression of remoteness and closeness, separateness and togetherness, private and public. In stark contrast with passages where natural surroundings, dominated in experience, with the gates it was this anthropogenic influence that prevailed. As an architectural solution given to the landscape by man, the gates mark entrance into the monasteries, but imposing above the surroundings, they primarily exude the distinctiveness, solemnity, grandeur (Fig. 4 – 5). They are a subtle, mute reminder for visitors that they are about to enter a space where different laws of thinking and behaviour apply (Fig. 6 – 7).

“If perhaps open, the gate frame the scene of the inner courtyard as an obscure foreground. If closed, a faint sound of steps might be heard behind the door. In such particular instances, the gate gives a peek inside only hinting the difference between outside and inside (Fig. 8 – 9). As such the gates stand almost as a divider between two entities of one same landscape, while the natural world unhindered wraps around the walls, wood and stone, accompanied only by silence.”

In such places the immersion into experience became baffling. The imposing walls ahead and the road behind building up for a feeling of something mysterious. The light and shadows compete in all these drawings, trying to conjure a concurrent duality of inside and outside diffusing slowly between the self and the landscape.



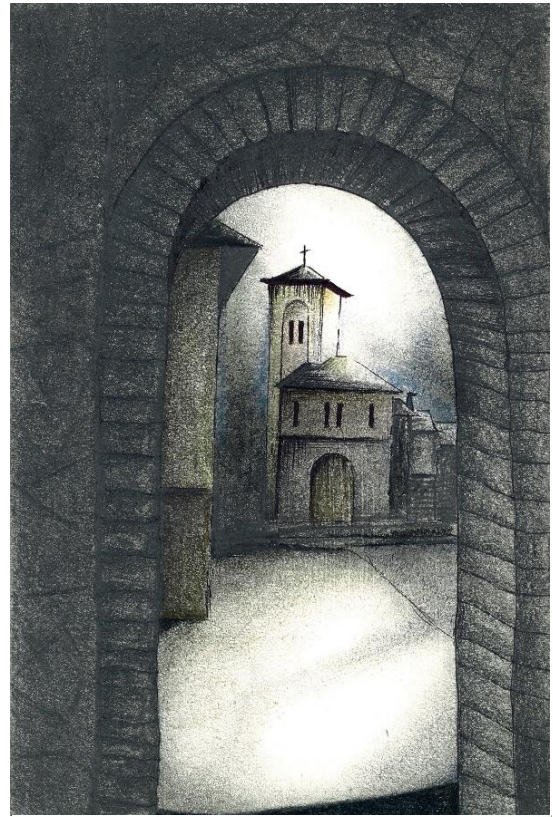
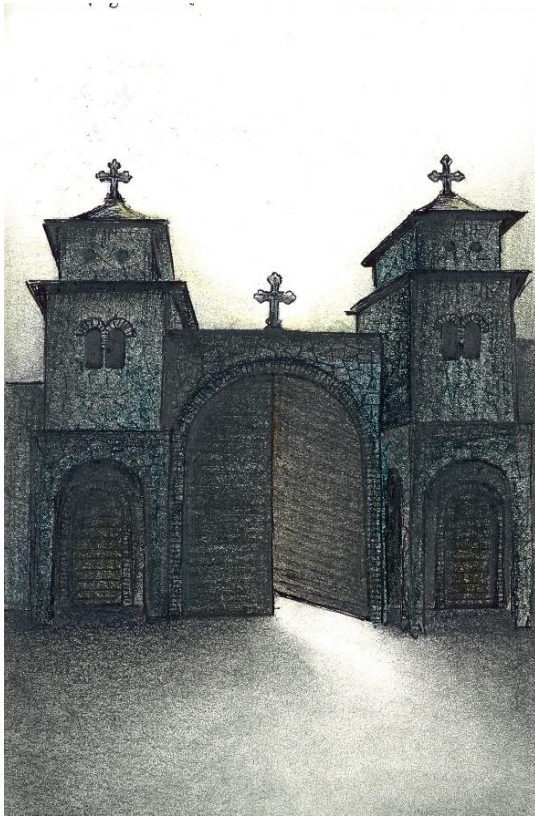


Fig. 4 – 7, from left to right: *Gate I – monastery Vaznesenje*, *Gate II - monastery Vaznesenje*, *Gate III – monastery Uspenje*, *Gate IV – climbing to the monastery Uspenje*

Source: Nevena Tatovic, 2016, mixed media on paper, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.



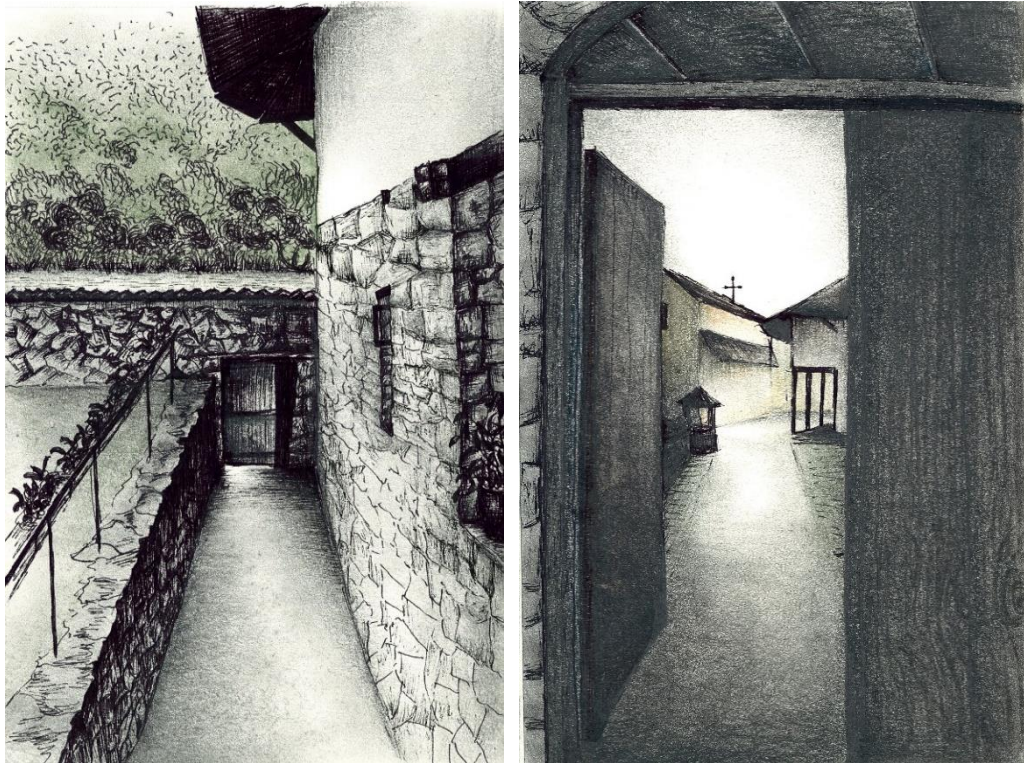


Fig. 8 – 9, from left to right. *Gate V – towards the river, monastery Nikolje, Gate VI: turn at the exit, monastery Nikolje.* Source: Nevena Tatovic, 2016, mixed media on paper, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.

### 1.3. “Gaze inside”

““Once passing through the gate, the walls of the monastic courtyard enclose everything inside of the atmosphere of peacefulness and serenity.

Within these walls the nature seems temporarily tamed and the colours are brighter with the lavish gardens blooming in April flowers. The building of the church is at the centre of each courtyard, dominant to the eye from the entrance and all the paths. The air hints of scent of candles and incense. The light - golden colours of the buildings make a deep contrast to trees. All sounds are muffled. In the Uspenje monastery the visitors whisper. The quietness reverberates in everybody and everything, as though the time exists no more – yet, signs of aging and the passing of time are everywhere, in the stone walls, inside the church, in the graveyard of the Sretenje monastery. The silence is broken with the sound of a singing voice coming from somewhere inside, echoing across the walls and around the forest. In here, everything seems to silently swirl around that one building, while the self stands still aside.”



Fig. 10 – 12, from left to right. *Inside I* – monastery Blagovestenje, *Inside II* – monastery Jovanje, *Inside III* – monastery Svete Trojice. Source: Nevena Tatovic, 2016, mixed media on paper, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.

In these drawings while the contrast of light and dark remains strong, as well as a form, golden brown tones appear in the light spilling of violet and greens (Fig. 10 – 11). The tactile movements become more prominent in the misty textures of colours rubbed on the surface of the paper. At some places they indicate the direction of light (Fig. 12) or smear demarcation between the contour of vegetation and sky. The scene consistently observes a single element, a silhouette of the imposing building as a central component of the composition.



#### 1.4. “Glimpses from within”

“In walking throughout the gorge, the forest is just starting to turn green so the whole vision is pervaded by slim branches and stems of the trees and shrubs. In some places they move away for the gaze to notice contours of the buildings far away in the distance, or in the clearing where the sun lightens up everything. All along these paths, there are glimpses of scenery. When enclosed from all around with the trees, the light decreases and every action becomes intimate – listening to the trees and buzzing of bugs, the scent of the crispness of the air, feeling the soft soil below the shoes, inhale, exhale. When the path cleared into a meadow around the Ilinje monastery, the building appeared suddenly brighter in the serene greenness (Fig. 13 – 14). From below, it seemed to loom from the dimness of the tree branches. Deep in the forest towards the cave, where crumbling stone stairs lead upward into the cliff, the path narrows, and sense of gloominess envelops everything, serene and yet restless (Fig. 16). At the same time it is a solitude, and powerful togetherness.”

The intensity of the light and dark increase in these drawings. Light is usually distanced, permeating the drawing through the linear dark forms of the trees. Within, the forest is becoming drawing inside where dark is no more constraining, but enveloping. (Fig. 15, 17). Because the body now moves not around, but within, more of the coloured surfaces are blended in touch.



Fig. 13. Nevena Tatovic, *Glimpse I – Ilinje church from below*, 2016, mixed media, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.



Fig. 14, left. Nevena Tatovic, *Glimpse II – Ilinje church, open in the meadow*, 2016, mixed media, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.

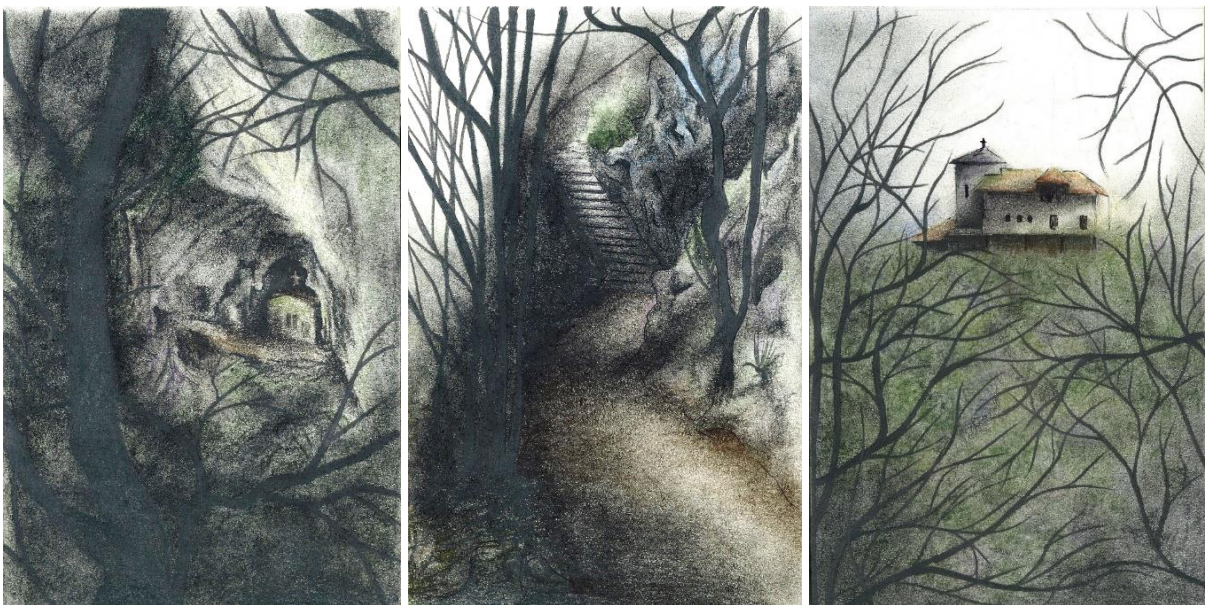


Fig. 15 – 17, from left to right. *Glimpse III – Savinje cave*, *Glimpse IV – stairs in the woods*, *Glimpse V – far away at the hill, monastery Uspenje*. Source: Nevena Tatovic, 2016, mixed media on paper, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.

### 1.5. “High Places”

“Hill – walking turns out to be an ascent full of trials. The place at the top is hidden from the view – there are many steps to climb once the gate of the monastery Uspenje is passed, there is a sudden emergence of the Sretenje monastery on the foreground of the mountain (Fig. 18 – 19). Once overstepping that last stair, a moment came when the time stood, and everything else withdrew in front of an all-encompassing glitter of light - and absolute stillness. As though between the earth and the sky, there seems to be nothing else at the top of that hill residing over the gorge. When turning around, the gaze reaches towards the rolling hills in the horizon, sweeps over the sleeping valley of the indocile river (Fig. 20).



By that moment, the atmosphere of peacefulness and quietude has become compelling – it permeates everything around and the very hand that draws itself; it inbreathes the wind and the sound of the forest behind and around. In a strange way of silence everything blends, “...quite suddenly and unexpectedly, I slipped a gear, or something like that. There was not me and the landscape, but a kind of oneness: a connection as though my skin had been blown off” (Maitland 2008, 63).”

These images implode with the light. Though lines and forms are very prominent, even more severe, the whiteness pervades the pristine image cleaned of haziness. It is settling over too detailed forms as a clarity.



Fig. 18. Nevena Tatovic, *View I – monastery Uspenje, at the center of the gorge*, 2016, mixed media, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original



Fig. 19. Nevena Tatovic, *View II – Sretenje monastery*, 2016, mixed media, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.





Fig. 20. Nevena Tatovic, *View III – Kablar Mountain*, 2016, mixed media, 22 x 14 cm, scanned image of an original drawing.

## 2. DRAWINGS: RE-ENCOUNTER AND MEMORY

When the process started, the initial idea had been to use drawing activity only to produce sketches, but as the immersion of the self and the landscape grew, the drawings evolved significantly. The venture to grasp how the spirit of place arises was very much bewildering. It is easy when there is the vast greenness, disrupted by hints of greys, whites, blues and yellows, but how to capture the scent of fresh wind on the top of the hill, the warmth of sunlight on the face in the middle of the forest meadow? Is it possible for a hand to draw stillness and quiet permeating everything?

With spontaneous engaging with the environment while walking between places, within and outside, backwards and forwards in the landscape, the experience repeatedly altered by novel elements and influences. Drawing *situ* allowed to describe the relationship established in the landscape at the moment of its very development, within the experience of feeling, hearing and seeing, touching and smelling. In doing this, relying on emotional association, the drawing (as an activity) became a simultaneous link between the experience and its interpretation. The drawing as an image produced in such way eventually came to indicate knowledge of the lived experience. Hence, it became a tool to identify what it is in the outer context of the experience, in terms of the qualities of the environment that propelled particular emotional reactions and awakened the senses.

Initially the drawings appear in analyses as an articulation of different viewpoints and places in the landscape. Then they shift from mere description to reveal landscape as an image of the felt visualizing momentary relationship of self, body and environment confined by temporality of the experience, as a moment within it.

The evolution is most apparent from a chronological perspective of the produced drawings (the collage “Chronology of the drawing” is available in digital form in the Appendix 1 on the CD). The change of materials becomes striking towards the end: initially dominant fineliners and graphite are pushed aside by more intense use of pastels and aquarelle pencils. Almost sketch-like approach of black and white has been substituted with application of stronger colouring palette and contrasts. Gradually, lines turned into planes of colours which also followed a slight change of form - though in all drawings the form remains fiercely distinguishable to the very end. The contrasts of light and dark occasionally might disrupt the form slightly. The application of pencil and line decreases over the time, and tactile influence appears in smudgy effects of haziness. Both of these alterations became recurring in the last drawings. As such, they indicate a measure of the depth of immersion of self, body and the landscape through the process of drawing.

In order to decipher what directed “lived experience” through drawing, a relation has been made between the dominant elements expressed in the drawings and the emotions they were interpreting. The analysis is based on the deciphering "colour expression" (Itten 1970, 83), with the objective to make drawings intelligible interpretation of the experience. Though relying on Goethe’s theory of colours (1975), it should be noted that the analysis did not engage deeper with the psychology of colours.

Johannes Itten (1970) contended that “each individual sees, feels, and evaluates colour in a very personal way” so that “colour combinations constructed as harmonious by each individual... represent individual subjective opinion” (84). Following this argument, the analysis focused on the relation of the colour and emotional response expressed through it. This process is grounded in the memory of the experience of the author and the reflection and analysis of the drawing activity. Once defined, the link colour - emotion served as a pointer to the particular qualities and elements of the environment that propelled such a powerful feeling of the landscape, i.e. constituents of the spirit of place.

In line with the view of Viel (2008) and Neri (2000) on spirit of place as an emotion (or soul), this process has been a quest to meet the spirit of place through the intimate association of the draftsman. More than just registering its own process, the drawing has been used to record the emotional knowledge gained through involvement between self and body with the landscape. The scheme of colours and emotions below indicates the personal language that the author used to express the momentary experience towards the particular influence of place (Table 1).

<b>Colour</b>	<b>Emotion</b>	<b>Quality of the environment</b>
yellow, ochre, golden, copper tones	serenity, cosiness	courtyards, spaces within the walls or trees
green	calm, connectedness	vegetation, sounds and textures of forest
violet, purple grey	melancholy, tranquillity	signs of aging, scent
dark tones of grey, blue, brown, black	power, duality, remoteness, mystery	high/massive forms, cliffs, walls, gates, tunnels
white	stillness, elation	silence, light, vast/open vistas

Table 1. Analysis of the drawing by colour expression

This gradual immersion peaked in the tactile drawing as the way of understanding the world through the experience of the body (Harty 2015). Interpretation of the images was in fact an analysis of the experience through mental re-creation and re-imagining of the process of drawing (Rosand 2002, as quoted in Harty 2015). Its understanding has been approached through the subjective perspective so existing knowledge of the author about history, stories, and features of the landscape as well as her own cultural background must be taken into account. Without prejudice to which kind of emotional reactions it would cause, the spirit of place emerges in the end as a set of emotions that together in experience build one value resonating in self-contemplation through the multi-fold context of the tangible and intangible.

### 3. HOLY PATH CONCEPT

In the last step of the research, the author merges her two alternating approaches of outsider and insider in a video installation of the “Holy Path” concept. The video is following the interviewee Goran on his climb on the Mountain Kablar. The camera records his own “lived experience” of the landscape while the author follows him on one of his most favourite walks in the gorge (video is available as mp4 file “Holy Path” in the Appendix 1 on the CD).

The research builds on the previous phase switching to the “drawing with our feet” (Pink 2011). The video has been chosen as the most comprehensive media to grasp the multilayered encounter with the landscape in walking. “...(video) entails moving through a surface, leaving a trace of footprints, breath and scent... inscribes the route in the video-as-text, represents the experience of the walkers, generates a sense of intimacy *and* is descriptive, all at once.” (Pink 2011, 148, original emphasis). In the montage process the recordings have been considered through “the lenses” of the researcher, drawing from her perspective of

insider and memory of her experience. Bachelard (1994) observes on this alternation between the insiderness and outsiderness as close and intimate "...they are always ready to be reversed" (218). The final video thus turns into a blend of the two perspectives to illustrate how the experience of the landscape immersion may facilitate understanding of the spirit of place, by making the environment more meaningful and readable.

The video shows the ascent on the so called "Monks' path", a steep climbing trail through the forest and rocky cliff which leads to the cave below the mountain summit. Present location of the church Savinje, the cave is a place where the waters flow from the vertical rock, next to the hermitage whose ceiling hides traces of a wooden frame with fresco pigments originating from the Middle Ages. The rock shelter nearby hides a nest to the last family of grey eagles in this part of the country. Going upwards, every arduous part of the climbing trek is replaced by surprising panoramic views where, with wonder, the hikers behold the landscape coming to light like some new world between only the river, mountains and the sky. It is in beholding that landscape from its own insiderness when "the boundaries between person and place, or between the self and the landscape, dissolve altogether." (Ingold 2000, 56). Slowly advancing in the tranquility of the narrow path once used by anonymous medieval ascetics, on the way to the top the hikers unknowingly go through trials, of mind and body. Simply standing in the enthralling silence on the bare rocks washed out by rain and time is enough to fall into contemplation that gradually reveals the emotion. In such moment, silence inevitably conjures the question of comparing the moment of now and then, in rethinking of the past assimilated to the landscape.

The concept of the "Holy Path" in this way suggests a silence as proposal of behavior that would allow full and authentic transmission of this landscape's spirit. The path is thus a journey in contemplation of and in the landscape, spiritual as much as geographical. Such proposal is not unfounded. Silence has emerged in the research as the profound and compelling feature of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge that underlines the origins of this sacred landscape, as a source of inspiration empowering the experience of spirituality, and underscoring peoples' intimate association with the environment through sense of place and topophilia.

In interpreting heritage the intervening too often ends in physical adjustments to make heritage site more relatable and attractive for visitors. Over the course of this research, many such considerations were taken, either as possible design solutions, content and activities, scenarios that would allow for such trajectory. Indeed, that is how the idea initially appeared, but after the investigation and field work experience, it became obvious that such a

“solution” could easily turn into superfluous and manipulative. Sometimes it is easy to forget that there are other forms of mediation, and that sometimes certain sites need to be fully experienced. How otherwise to transmit and preserve the emotion that is the spirit of place, hiding beneath strata of history, memory and meanings inside of the landscape?

The silence is proposed as a subtle form of intermediation. Echoing Tilden’s argument about experience of the senses as the true way to interpret heritage, Dufour and Hamel (2008) considered this way of interaction with the spirit of place by establishing quiet zones in Quebec. They argued this to be the most adequate way for the spirit of place to maintain unique identity of the place shaped through the relationship between the place and the culture of people who inhabit it (Dufour and Hamel 2008, 1). Similarly, Centrum Waerbeke in Flanders introduces the concept of “heritage of silence” to address cultural heritage as a means to improve the quality of life. “Intermediation means listening. And what else is listening than being attentive through being silent inside? This results in openness, and gives room for insight, empathy and mutual comprehension.” (Jaspaert 2009, 157).

Drawing from these works, the concept of silence proposed by the “Holy Path” does not imply silence in its original meaning of the complete absence of the sound<sup>34</sup> (Oxford English Dictionary). The concept rather builds around the inner quietness of reflection – the stillness of self – that makes room to feel the spirit of place. In her memoir “A Book of Silence”, Sarah Maitland (2008) explained this as “a real, separate, actual thing, an ontological category of its own: not a *lack* of language but other than, different from language; not an absence of sound but the presence of something which is not sound.” (28, original emphasis). In the journey of the “Holy Path”, silence is hence a medium that empowers the meeting between individual and the landscape, from within. Such process unfolds through sensual perception, evaluation of one’s memories and feelings, reflection. It may also require time, but it is the comprehensive way to grasp the spirit of place reverberating throughout the natural environment as one value reaching from the past towards our present.

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<sup>34</sup> *Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2016), s.v “Silence” by Oxford, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/silence..>



## V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Le dernier chapitre revient sur les conclusions les plus pertinentes de la thèse. En situant le paysage à l'hybridation de différents niveaux de façonnement de l'environnement, l'étude a montré que son esprit était une émotion qui échappait, entre l'héritage du passé et l'instant présent. Le paysage est esprit de la Nation, voix de la communauté locale, et sentiment du silence de soi.

Throughout this thesis the concept of the spirit of place has been explored in the notion of the sacred landscape, its interpretation and meanings. In doing so, the conception of landscape has emerged as a hybrid of multilayered shaping of the environment. The study also illustrated how different cultural layers and social factors tangle with history and memory in peoples' understanding of heritage.

The sacred notion of the landscape of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge significantly influenced the sense of collective identity in the local community and region. For centuries the notion has been maintained in the narrative built around national identity. The shifts in the narration indicated turns in the institutional framing and articulating the territory, as seen in the narrative of the sacred landscape as the one immortalizing ancestral past of medieval state and medieval church. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the secularization embodied in the narrative of a new national consciousness of atheistic ideology advertising development projects that ascribed modern but profane contents to the landscape. Most recently, in the last couple of decades, process of heritage-making, especially via narrative of tourism and conservation, formulated a vision of historical past preserved in the “pristine” natural landscape fitting the consumerism needs of the society of new age. In this way, the study has shown that the spirit of the landscape arises also as a spirit of the nation in the feeling of belonging that, with a singular cohesive effect, held the population of the gorge together through centuries.

The narrative research of the study revealed a peculiar biography of the landscape and its people. It is a complex story where in the tangled play between history and memory past constantly reappears to refine the meaning of the present reality of the landscape. In people's storytelling the sacredness is perceived in historical awareness, as a spiritual anchor into the collective, and as a homeland. The feeling of sacred, therefore exceeds religious heritage to encapsulate a sense of rootedness and belonging, patriotism and nostalgia. The stories are continuously repeated as a reanimation of the past, further passed on through kinship.

Unscrambling their meaning, the study revealed that the spirit of place can actually get its own voice - through the telling of its people.

The study illustrates that sense of place is an effective guide in the study of the spirit of place. The inevitable issue of their intermingling would benefit in the further research in assertion sustained by psychological theories on emotional knowledge, in regards to the heritage and to the landscape. In heritage practice, this can become a valuable ingredient of the interpretation, to support the transmission of the spirit of place in better understanding of the ways in which tangible values interlace with intangible.

We are all ultimately shaped by our personal and mutual histories, places and landscapes in which we live, and as their integral component, construct them and experience them through our complex backgrounds, social, cultural and religious, national and local. In the ideal creation of the environment, perception appears at the heart of the complex interrelationship of landscape and heritage. At the level of inter-subjective immersion into the landscape, the spirit of place is an emotion, attained in silence. Being in the landscape fully engaging with the mind and body, senses and emotions, allows us to contemplate the knowledge of ourselves, which is instrumental to conjure the image of ancestral past and then step into it. Ubiquitous throughout the landscape, its spirit thus arises as a value timelessly and irrevocably joining heritage and landscape, constructed itself as ineffable emotion that summons memories. In feeling it, we await the future knowing our place in the present, and in the past.



## **VI. PRIMARY SOURCES**

### **INTERVIEWS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Vidoje. Interview by author. Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 17 April, 2016.

Duration of the interview: 1 h 02 min

Nenad. Interview by author. Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 19 April 2016. Duration of the interview: 1 h 17 min

Milutin. Interview by author. Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 19 April 2016.

Duration of the interview: 1 h 01 min

Goran. Interview by author. Ovcara Banja, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 20 April 2016.

Duration of the interview: 01 h 21 min

Dragoslav and Dobrila. Interview by author. village Rosci, Ovcara - Kablar Gorge, 21 April 2016. Duration of the interview: 2 h 33 min

Total duration of the interview recordings: approximately 7 h 15 min

Informal conversation with a cottage owner, by author, Ovcara – Kablar Gorge, 17 April 2016.

Informal conversation with a resident working in the Hiking Society Kablar, by author, Ovcara – Kablar Gorge, 18 April 2016.

Informal conversation with a local, female resident working in a restaurant, by author, Ovcara – Kablar Gorge, 23 April 2016.

#### **Interview Questions:**

1. How long have you lived in this area? For what reasons did you decide to move here?
2. Why and would you leave this place and move elsewhere?
3. What do you usually do in the gorge?
4. How often do you walk in the gorge or visit the monasteries?
5. What are your favourite places and viewpoints in the gorge? Why?
6. How would you explain the connection with nature in your life here?
7. How much did the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge change during your life here? How would you describe those changes? When did that change happen? Do you remember a story about that event or period?
8. How do people keep the memory of past events in the gorge and the history of this region?
9. How do you usually tell and pass on these stories?
10. How do you see this landscape in future?

11. Can you describe your earliest memories of the gorge, the image of the landscape that you remember?
12. How would you describe the atmosphere and the emotions that image provoked in you?
13. How does living in the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge determine or affect your everyday life?
14. What is it that ties you to this place?
15. What does the Morava River mean in your life?
16. What does it represent for the Holy Mountain?
17. How would you explain why is this landscape “Serbian Holy Mountain”?
18. What is the meaning of the Ovcara – Kablar Gorge for you personally?
19. Can you describe an image of this landscape that you carry even when you're not here physically?

## **INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS**

### **Anonymous 1, interview by questionnaire, Cacak, 30 April 2016**

Questionnaire Translated in English Language

1. Please describe your professional relationship with this topic.

- By the decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge is declared for protected area of category I as a landscape of outstanding features, and Tourist Organization is designated for the management of the area. I am employed at .. the same Organization as a manager of the department for the promotion and development of tourism. I am also an editor of the Journal which deals with publishing of papers arising from the results of research and monitoring in various fields, and covering the segments of the spiritual and cultural heritage, tourism, special interest as the basis of sustainable development, reflections (essays), and is a significant manifestation of the segment of events and contents of tourist experience in the protected area and the centre of spirituality... Among other things, I take part in the creation and implementation of events (such as Days of calligraphy and iconography and the like). As a licensed travel guide I accompany the tourist groups on a tour of monasteries and the natural attractions of the area. I work with a professional and research associations and organize professional training for students from several faculties that are realized in the tourist organization.

2. How long have you worked in this field / dealing with this question?

- It's pretty long, but continuously since I started working in the Tourist Organization of Cacak (01.02.2006.)

3. What is the key element that defines the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge as a “Serbian Holy Mountain” today? Explain.

- The Ovcar - Kablar Gorge, with its natural rarities and characteristics along with monasteries which have for centuries and continuously maintained and preserved spirituality, culture and tradition of the Serbian people, by a number placed in a small area called "Small Serbian Holly Mountain", presents the most important and the most diverse unit not only in Serbia. Good communications and transport connections (used to be a wasteland and completely inaccessible area) provide an opportunity for easy and quick access (it is well positioned), while simultaneously retaining the authenticity and atmosphere of primeval past and spirituality. It provides the possibility for an individual to find complete peace here. Good signalization and a large number of pedestrian paths allow easy access, but without compromising the monastic life. Every corner of the gorge has its own story, its legend, and few vantage points provide a most beautiful view of this natural and spiritual treasure.

4. What is the role and the importance of the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge as a natural, cultural and historical heritage of Serbia at the local and regional, and which at the national level?

- " Ovcar - Kablar Gorge" has great significance as a spiritual oasis and education centre (hundreds of thousands of people pass through the area per year, only the monastery Blagovestenje had around 60,000 visitors). Controlled tourism development and promotion of the preservation and protection of the area can bring, in perspective, economic benefits to the local and regional level and at the national level to become a significant factor in promoting and attracting foreign guests.

5. What is the main conflict and what the priority for the sustainable development of the area in the future?

- The main conflict represents uncontrolled illegal construction and insufficient investment in infrastructure.

- The priority of sustainable development is urgent further development of regulatory and development plans, definition of the infrastructure facilities necessary for the construction, defining purpose and content, as well as activation of the potential of the medicinal properties of thermal water in Ovcar Banja.

6. What is the appropriate strategy for future protection and management of the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge, which will allow the preservation of the identity and authenticity of the area as a 'sacred landscape', combining the spiritual values and traditions with the natural, cultural and historical heritage values?

- The absolute application of legislation governing this area and harmonization of development so as not to disturb the unique spiritual unity of monastic life. Raising environmental awareness of visitors to the highest level. All adaptations, upgrades and

reconstruction as well as construction of new facilities have to be harmonized with the natural environment preserving the authenticity of the area. Sustainable development as a priority with all the amenities that comply with the requirements of conservation and promotion of the identity that combines spiritual values, traditions, cultural and historical heritage and nature with the needs of modern man.

7. Who are the key actors for the realization of this form of development?

- Local residents, local government, relevant Ministries, institutions of science and culture, and Serbian Orthodox Church with monasticism, the Manager.

8. In your view, what constitutes a 'spirit of place' of this area?

- Preserved tradition and authenticity in a unique natural setting. A variety of different elements and content that nowhere elsewhere, I find so unified. A unique and inimitable blend of nature and spirit.

### **Anonymous 2, interview by questionnaire, Belgrade, 10 July 2016**

Questionnaire Translated in English Language

1. Please describe your professional relationship with this topic.

- As a conservator, I was involved in drafting the decision on designation Ovcara- Kablar monasteries for the spatial cultural historical unit. About the monastery of Svete Trojice, I wrote a monograph that is currently in progress.

2. How long have you worked in this field / dealing with this question?

- 12 years of service in the protection of immovable cultural heritage, 6 years of research on the Ovcara- Kablar monasteries.

3. What is the key element that defines the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge as a "Serbian Holy Mountain" today? Explain.

- A large group of sacral buildings (monasteries and monastic hermitages) in the specific and the relatively small area of the gorge which had, up to only a hundred years ago, been very inaccessible, corresponds to a type of "monastic mountain", whose archetype is Mount Athos.

4. What is the role and the importance do the cultural monuments of the Ovcara - Kablar Gorge have at the local and regional, and which at the national level?

- At the local level, they are significant (Lučani-Cacak-Pozega) because they represent in some way natural and cultural asset which residents perceive as their own and identify with it. At the regional and national level their values are absolutely not recognized in the extent to which it should.

5. What is the main conflict and what the priority for the sustainable development of the area in the future?

- The main conflict is represented in the road and to a lesser extent rail infrastructure with a large volume of traffic, while the other is illegal construction made possible by transport infrastructure and caused by the natural beauty of the landscape. It is assumed that the first conflict shall be resolved with the construction of Corridor 11 from Preljina-Pozega.

6. In relation to the analysis of the position of of monasteries within the protected area, to what extent one can consider the issue of of planning and organizing the use of landscape in the function of religious activity on the part of the original medieval monastic communities?

- Monastic communities have no problem in carrying out their activities and to a great extent they have adapted to the large number of visitors, traffic volume and noise.

7. What is the appropriate strategy for future protection and management of the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge, which will allow the preservation of the identity and authenticity of the area as a 'sacred landscape', combining the spiritual values and traditions with the natural, cultural and historical heritage values?

- Relocation of cargo transport, construction of complete infrastructure and communal services, increased jurisdiction of protection of natural and cultural resources. Removal of illegally constructed buildings and the behaviour of the host P.I. "Srbijasume" as the controller of most of the areas of the Ovcar - Kablar Gorge.

8. Who are the key actors for the realization of this form of development?

- Cacak and Lucani Municipalities, Public Enterprise "Srbijasume", Serbian Orthodox Church.

9. In your view, what constitutes a 'spirit of place' of this area?

- The unique combination of modest medieval monastic settlements and authentic natural environment of the Ovcar- Kablar Gorge, which speaks of the need for effective conservation and inherited cultural patterns at a time when this goal was difficult to achieve.

Informal conversation with an art historian. 02<sup>nd</sup> November 2014. National Museum of Cacak. Cacak.

Informal conversation with a theologian. 12<sup>th</sup> August 2015. Monastery Jezevica. Cacak.

Informal conversation with a tourism expert. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Tourist Organization of the Cacak. Cacak.



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Fig. 2. Island in the center of the river meanders, overlooking the landscape from the entrance to the gorge.  
 Source: Dragan Antic. "Ovcar - Kablar Gorge - 12 Serbian sanctities in heaven of unspoiled nature.  
 [In Serbian: Ovčarsko-kablarska klisura – 12 srpskih svetinja u raju netaknute prirode]" *Sjajne Vesti*. N.p.,  
 12.04.2016., Website. Accessed 12.08.2016. <http://bit.ly/2bgs1hm>

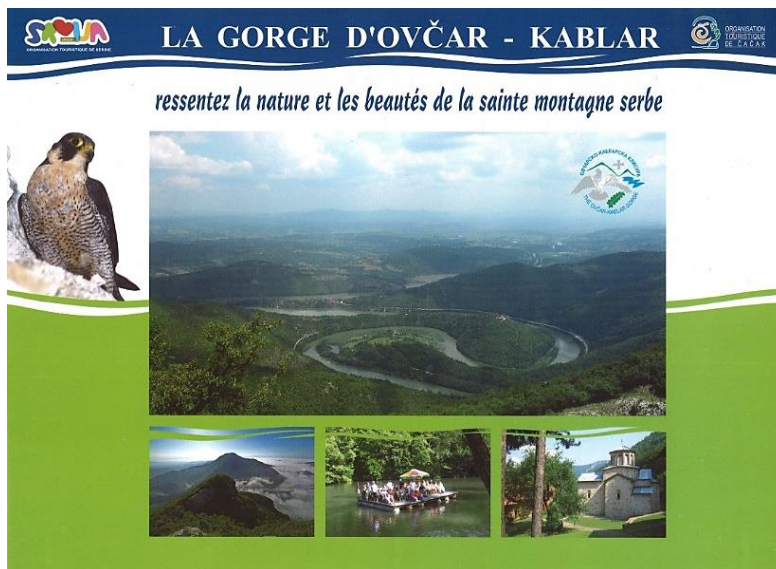


Fig. 3. "Front Cover of the Brochure." In Brochure Ovcar – Kablar Gorge, in French. Ed. Tourist Organization of Cacak, Cacak., 2011.

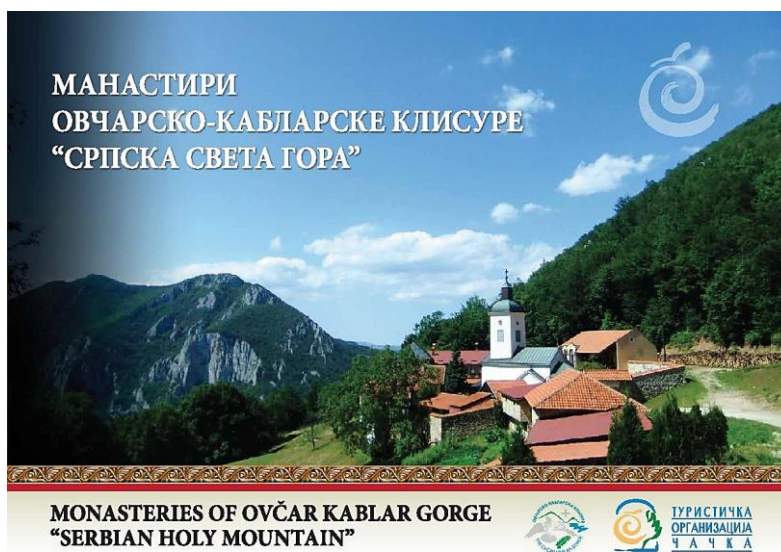


Fig. 4. "Front Cover of the Brochure." In Brochure Monasteries of the Ovcar – Kablar Gorge "Serbian Holy Mountain", in English and Serbian. Ed. Tourist Organization of Cacak, Cacak., 2014.



## **IX. APPENDIX 2.**

### **TUTORED PROJECT: Electric Transformer Story**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The group project developed about the heritage of electric transformer over the two years of the Master. As a part of the curriculum, the project evolved in relation with the history of science and technique.

In accordance with the initial agreement reached by the team members, the project combined working together with individual work. With the always available counselling by the group's tutor, this approach has proved to work quite well by enabling the team members to keep their selected research topic integrated and well balanced within the project as a whole. Moreover, this outlook allowed each team member to continuously improve and perfect the work through valuable feedback. In this way, each member of the team was allowed to develop their personal research skills and critical thinking while building the overall project in synergy of all our work, skills and professional perspectives.

From the very beginning, the group worked in the atmosphere of equality using our weekly sessions at the University for brainstorming, re-evaluation of the realized research and coordination of the progress. Due to the unexpected circumstances, after two years the group reduced from five to three members. This shift required adapting the initially set expectations and scope of research in the new reality, resulting with re-framing the concept of the project to the confinements of the temporality.

Following text will highlight the process of the development of the research in the group, and the author's individual research conducted as part of the team project.

Upon the group's first meeting to start work on the project, the students agreed to take on a research that would be presented in a form of a website. The main goal of the research is to provide historical information about the invention of electric transformer, and to indicate the significance of the addressed subject in the wider context of the science and society. Initially, the research envisioned shedding light on the different aspects of the history of transformers from its invention to manufacturing and contemporary application. Due to the reduction of the team, the investigation has been reassessed to focus particularly on the invention process in the context of the transmission of knowledge and technology transfer.

The website project is realized using open source platform Omeka that has a long practice of application in humanities' research for web publishing of archives, collections, exhibits. This

part of the project unfolded under the supervision of the PIREH Lab (Pôle Informatique de Recherche et d'Enseignement en Histoire) of the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

The website *Electric Transformer Story* is envisioned as a virtual journey through the electric transformer invention, from the scientific and technical legacy of the first industrial revolution, to the faces and events that shaped its trajectory.

Delving into the *Electric Transformer Story* is, thus, like listing a book, passing from one virtual chapter to another to further consult digital archives, glossary and bibliography for those visitors interested in learning and exploring more about the subject. Based in three virtual exhibits and three collections, the website offer users to inspect numerous strata of information, including archival records such as patents, historic photographs, journal articles, documentary films and correspondence. The particular approach to storytelling has been recognized as engaging and simple enough for the general public interested in the topic, but also for the professionals and academic public familiar with the history of electricity or electric engineering.

Combining different types of sources to communicate and interact with the audience, the purpose of the website is to learn about the topic and actively participate in sharing the memory about the technology (and the people standing behind it) that has largely shaped the world we inhabit today.

The missing link for low-cost transmission of electricity over long distances, the use of electric transformer has opened a new chapter in the development not only of science but industrial and technological advancement, and everyday life of ordinary people. The whole 20<sup>th</sup> century could be explored as an exciting history of its evolution, through numerous and diverse changes of the design, materials and application. The story of its discovery, however, was written over the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Taking place in very different geographic, economic, political and cultural circumstances, it was shaped by many elements beyond the circulation of scientific and technical knowledge, from the role of places and exhibitions in reaching the general public, to biographies and innovative, visionary entrepreneurship.

Within the team, the project has been divided in three parts addressing historical analysis of the pre-invention period, the research about inventors and the study of the representation in the heritage context at exhibitions. This author's work focused on the research about the invention of the transformer approached through biographies of the scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs who played vital roles in this process.

## 2. PEOPLE BEHIND THE OBJECT

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Using the fundamental principles of electromagnetic induction set by Michael Faraday, Lucien Gaulard and John Gibbs developed a system for transmission of electricity, then called a secondary generator, in an effort to solve the reverse salient in the lighting system of London at the beginning of the 1880s. Although the litigation over patents brought into question both their professional reputation and validity of their invention, the historians of electricity nowadays agree that the credit for the first electric transformer concept goes to Gaulard and Gibbs (Hughes 1983). From their hands, the invention got transferred to the east, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to the west, in the United States. Renowned Hungarian engineers of Ganz factory attended demonstration of the Gaulard-Gibbs' transmission system at a Turin Electrical Exhibition in 1884, while George Westinghouse bought the patent rights after learning about the system at the International Inventions Exhibition in Kensington, London in 1885. Investing its industrial capacity and resources at the same time with hiring the rising young scientists and engineers in the field of electric energy, Westinghouse skilfully employed the advantages of the US market to surpass Ganz factory in the development of the long - distance electricity transmission system. The start of the mass production of electric transformers played the role of a milestone in the subsequent arrival of the alternate-current system (an endeavor made possible mainly through the work of William Stanley Jr.).

Considering the role of inventors and their biographical data, the chapter will analyze how the invention process of electric transformer took place in the framework of a global system of transfer, and circulation of knowledge and techniques at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in geopolitical, economic and social context. In chronological line, this topic will be explained and illustrated in the web presentation by historical and bibliographic facts, archival documents, newspaper articles and patents, presented in exhibits and interactive virtual exhibition (consulting patents, journal articles/publications, and exhibition encounters). The main focus of the research, however, remained in the review of literature sources that, as the research will show, can be misleading as pervaded by different narratives of interpretation. In particular, taking into account the two contrasting cases that Ganz factory and Westinghouse Electric represent in the history of transformers, the work will seek to support the main goal of the project: to examine whether and how the development and transfer of this technology resounded with the society and its own value systems.

Research limitations, goals and sources:

The limit of this project has been set from the beginning by the time frame, the character of the project and in particular, the availability of the sources. History of the invention of the transformer was often overshadowed by debates over the patent priority, jointly with biased accounts of the invention - "Patents and patent litigation shape memories so strongly that disinterested accounts based on them cannot be assumed." (Hughes 1983, 110).

In defining theoretical framework, secondary sources were consulted. In particular, the seminal work of Thomas Park Hughes (1983) served throughout this investigation as the foundation for the research. A Major section of the topic has been covered thanks to the Budapest University of Technology and Economics Department of History Archives. Use of web publication Grace's Guide and the Library of Congress, helped design of the website project as well, with online archives of many nineteenth-century editions of scientific and professional magazines, collections of photographs, documentaries and magazine articles. Email communication with the IEEE History Center at Stevens Institute of Technology, and Edison Tech Center was also useful in preparing the web presentation of the project.

Accordingly, with the envisaged website project, the research set out to answer several questions. Who were the inventors of the electric transformer and how their relationship with entrepreneurs affected the invention process? How did the invention process unfold in the context of the circulation and transfer of the knowledge? How did the process of invention and initial implementation of the technology correlate with the social, economic and historical context of the period? These issues, however, were, rather, an important guideline in the project since it would be too ambitious to expect answering these questions at this level of investigation. They leave space for further investigation in the future.



Fig. 1. "Beginnings of the Transmission System". Screenshot of the developed webpage. Electric Transformer Story Website. Accessed 23.08.2016. <http://bit.ly/2bh965G>



Fig. 2. "Modern Electric Transformer". Screenshot of the developed webpage. Electric Transformer Story Website. Accessed 23.08.2016. <http://bit.ly/2bPP2JU>

## 2.2. BIOGRAPHIES

The study primarily focused to shed light on the biographies of the people who played fundamental role in the invention of the transformer. In this investigation, different sources have been used depending on the availability and very limited access to primary sources. The research looked to examine particular figure in the context of their contribution to the invention, in close connection with their financiers. The research in the field of electricity was grounded in the collaboration of three types of experts: scientists who invested formally acquired knowledge, practical inventors who relied more on the skills and empirical work, and entrepreneurs as organizers (Mokyr 2010, 32). Hence, the history of the transformer was in a way a peculiar story of partnerships that joined financial resources with the knowledge. Hughes (1983) sees this as an illustration of "how manufacturers related to independent inventors before engineering-and-development departments and research-and-development laboratories were organized" (119). Web presentation of this part of the project has been created in a form of virtual exhibition in simple pages, divided into the below indicated sections. In addition to historic photographs, and documentaries that are linked to the website from other sources and online archives, there are other documents (e.g. personal correspondence, newspaper articles, tributes and obituaries, notes) which have been deemed relevant to portray these relationships.

### 2.2.1. Gaulard and Gibbs: beginnings of the transmission system

In the history of electricity and transformers, work of Lucien Gaulard and John Dixon Gibbs holds a very particular place. As a monumental step towards the long-distance electricity transmission, its story continues to fascinate and engage professional and scientific public more than a century later, bringing to the focus never-ending debate on the authenticity of invention and validity of innovation process versus anachronism and copycats.

For most of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, electric lighting system relied on a series of primaries supplying arc lamps and on the increase of the secondary voltage over the primaries (Uppenborn 1889). This very expensive mode of transmission rose to become a significant reverse salient<sup>35</sup> of the entire system in the 1880s. At that time, an engineer of French origin living in London, Lucien Gaulard found a partner for his scientific ventures in

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<sup>35</sup> A concept in the technological systems analysis, which implies an underdeveloped system element that hinders progress, preventing technological system as a whole to fulfill its intended function and purpose (Hughes, 1983)

John Gibbs, an English born financier. Little has been illuminated about the role of Gibbs or his biography. Matouk (2010) just applies a reference in relation with Gaulard's work, "Helped by an English capital holder met in electricity exhibition" (152). Interested in the principles set by Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction as many of their contemporaries, they got curious to investigate what was causing the imperfections of the London's lighting system manifested in great energy loss. The result of this joint endeavour came in the form of a new electricity transmission and distribution system, that though named "secondary generator", essentially presented the first authentic transformer ("Gaulard-Gibbs"). The professional community deemed the invention to be complex, yet, theirs was a first system whose design involved a connection of primaries connected into a high voltage alternate current circuit, based on a breakthrough principle of iron core transformer acting as a magnetic circuit; the secondary of transformer consisted of four sets of four vertically positioned bobbins tied with wire, while an insulated copper conductor wound on a hollow paper tube served as a primary (Hughes 1983, 88). This structure of the system provided great flexibility as a key feature: since the bobbins were able to connect between each other in different ways, their sets of four were also able to bind in a variety of ways, as the iron core of the primary was able to bend inside and out of a set of bobbins (Hughes 1983, 88).

There is no information regarding the exact time they started their experiments, but in the autumn of 1882 (18<sup>th</sup> September 1882) Gaulard and Gibbs officially acquired the British patent from the Office of the Commission of Patents, "for the new system of distributing electricity for the production of light and power" (Sagafi-Nejad 1981, 44). In the following year they participated in the Westminster Aquarium Exhibition, with the first official public display of the system (Beauchamp 1997, 166). This event was preceded by the publication of an article in the renowned professional magazine, *The Engineering Journal* in the same year (Hughes 1983). In the text that went into a detailed description of the system design, Gaulard and Gibbs elaborated their logic derived from the study of current UK legislation, in particular, Article 18 of the 1882 Act of Lighting.

The work Gaulard and Gibbs produced attracted the attention of the peers, as a subject of great controversy. The design based on the use of an open rather than closed core was considered as just one of the many system's deficiencies (Uppernborn 1889). The critique especially focused on the use of primaries in a series which was interpreted as an indication of their lack of expertise and inventiveness (Hughes 1983). Gaulard and Gibbs tried to intervene with smaller improvements and fixes of the system over the next couple of years, but with

no success. It turned out in the end that the voltage regulation that solved the reverse salient of the previous lighting system, became the key reverse salient of their own design (Hughes 1983).

Morally and financially drained and discouraged, Gaulard and Gibbs moved to Italy, where a large exhibition on electricity was to be organized in Turin in 1885. Seizing the first prize, they continued a series of successful system demonstrations taking part in the Inventions Exhibition at Kensington in 1885. These events could be seen today as rather important as they presented an opportunity for a personal encounter between the key figures that would later determine the direction of transformer development and production. In fact, after the Inventions Exhibition George Westinghouse bought the patent rights from Gaulard and Gibbs (“Gaulard-Gibbs”), which propelled the progress of his own electrical industry and its dominance in the US market several years later. The polemics surrounding the Gaulard – Gibbs’ invention got especially fueled with the patent litigation process that spread over several years, getting its epilogue after Gaulard's death (“English Decisions Relating to Electric Light”. *Scientific American*. v59. N.06. 1888-08-11, 81.).

When the lawsuit finally reached its end, the electric transformer system was already on the path of rapid development. By that time, Gaulard’s health rapidly deteriorated with all the events from the past years having had a detrimental effect on his mental condition. He passed away in 1888 in the psychiatric hospital Sainte-Anne in Paris (Hughes 1983, 94). As for historians and engineers, there is still an on-going discussion on what was supposed to be the real outcome of patent litigation. Different sources provide different views on the whole story shrouding Gaulard - Gibbs work and its merit. Many French journals and publications from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century listed Gaulard as the inventor of the "first electric transformer" (Angelis 2013), while some authors attribute the invention to the three engineers of the Hungarian Ganz Factory (“History of Transformers”). This might be partly due to the fact that Gaulard and Gibbs named their device “secondary generator” (Cooper 2015), while the International Society of Electricians officially accepted the term “electric transformer” in 1884 (Angelis 2013), which is approximately around the Hungarian patent submission. Sagafi-Nejad comments on this, “Controversially, Hungarian historians insist that engineers of Ganz factory actually invented the transformer."It is the historical merit of the Ganz Works, a pioneer in alternating current technique, and of its three engineers Zipernowsky, Deri and Blathy that rapid development of electrical engineering became possible through the realization of the transformer system in 1884-85" (Asztalos 1986, 6 - 7). Gaulard met with Blathy at the exhibition in Turin, where both he and Zipernowsky were

interested in transformer system, though “Blathy later acknowledged that both he and Zipernowsky only saw how transformer should not be built” (Sagafi-Nejad 1981, 45).

In perhaps the most complete and the most comprehensive study of the topic, Hughes (1983) concludes the story of a phenomenon that represented Gaulard-Gibbs system, “They merit a prominent place in history because they invented, developed and demonstrated a system that was, to use the apt German expression, *Entwicklungsfähig*. Once demonstrated, their invention stimulated a stream of improvements. Their system was a combination of known principles and devices, but it was a unique combination that functioned to solve a problem and correct a reverse salient. Nevertheless, when this invention was introduced, its potential was quickly sensed; inventors and engineers were aware of the flaw in the DC system and eagerly set about solving the problem. Thus it proved to be difficult to give Gaulard and Gibbs credit for their contribution in a court of a law.” (95).

#### 2.2.2. Engineers of the Ganz Factory: Zipernowsky, Déri and Bláthy

Amidst controversy and debate that the invention of the Gaulard - Gibbs system opened among scientists, engineers, and even the general public, an electric lighting system composed of transformers was introduced in 1885 in Budapest, allowing transmission of alternating current over a distance with significantly reduced losses. Three young engineers employed in the Hungarian Ganz factory, Zipernowsky, Déri and Bláthy, stood behind the invention.

While United Kingdom struggled to overcome deficiencies of the electric lighting system in the 1880s, at the same time Austro-Hungarian Empire was trying to strengthen its role of the leader and carrier of the development and modernization on the other side of the continent. Although holding a secondary position in the overall economic and political picture of Europe as a backward country, in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Austria-Hungary started developing infrastructure, transport system and the industrial sector as a whole (Freifeld 2000). Founded in 1845, the Ganz Factory positioned itself during those decades as a national leader of industrial development, with a special focus on the steel industry and railways, and furthermore turning into “one of the most successful electrical engineering enterprises of Central and Eastern Europe, supplying whole ranges of equipment from generating plant and electrical urban tramways to dynamos.” (Mathias and Todorov 2002, 31).

Following the death of the founder Abraham Ganz in 1875, the major reorganization of the Ganz Factory took place under the new leadership headed by András Mechwart. Recognizing the potential of electricity, Mechwart founded the Electrotechnical Department



of the company in 1878 hiring promising young engineers (“Ganz Works”). Led by the trio Zipernowsky, Déri and Bláthy, this department would take the Ganz Works to transform into one of the most powerful industries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Berend 2013). The engineers’ knowledge and training was certainly an important asset of the intellectual capital that Ganz Factory implemented to race for the position of one of the key players in the European stage of innovation, science and technology – for the country that remained predominantly agrarian, the Austro - Hungarian universities provided excellent technical training and education for many aspiring engineers (“Ganz Works”).

Initially in 1878, Mechwart employed Károly Zipernowsky as the head of the Electrotechnical Department, but he was soon joined by Miksa Déri, a graduate of both the Budapest and Vienna Technical Universities, as well as by Ottó Bláthy, who received his training at the Technical University of Vienna (“Bláthy, Ottó Titusz”). Over 1884 and 1885 Zipernowsky, Déri and Bláthy developed “electric transformer”, a new induction device that allowed transmission of the alternating current over long distances (Sagafi-Nejad 1981).

“It happened that a young Hungarian engineer, Otto T. Blathy from the Electrical Department of the Ganz Works in Budapest was present at the fair, since Ganz was also among the exhibitors... Blathy was interested in the Gaulard-Gibbs system, but had a keen eye for its weaknesses, namely the difficulties in voltage control inherent in in-series connection as well as the unfavourable magnetic conditions resulting from the open core... Returning from the fair Blathy reported his experiences to the head of Ganz's Electrical Department K. Zipernowsky, who was permanently experimenting in company of Deri, Blathy's report gave new impetus to the research in progress at Ganz on the subject of the "subdivision of electric light".”(Asztalos 1986, 6).

The new apparatus included a groundbreaking modification that involved reversed positions of the iron and the coils. The Hungarian engineers abandoned connection in series opting for parallel connection instead, and separated high-voltage, wide supply network from the low-voltage consumer network. This resulted in the transformer with closed iron core, with low loss and low drop of voltage. In fact, they presented two versions of the device: closed –core transformer (with two coils arranged around the closed ring of the iron core) and shell – core transformer (with coils in the form of the copper induction cables set through the core) (“Bláthy, Ottó Titusz”).

The Ganz Factory presented the electric transformer to the public in 1885, during the National Exhibition in Budapest. Officially supported by the Crown Prince Rudolph, the purpose of the fair was to showcase the country’s power as a relevant factor for the stabilization and

modern development of the Eastern European region, including the display of the new infrastructural advancement and electrification as “the latest technology that anticipated a bright future” (Freifeld 2000, 252). Taking part of the Industrial Hall, the Ganz Factory applied 75 small shell – core transformers to light the exhibition by alternating current (“Ganz Works”).

Following the success of the 1885 Budapest Exhibition, the company received several orders for the construction of power plants and lighting networks in major European cities, especially in Italy and Austria. David and Bunn (1988) point out that in 1886 Edison Company purchased rights for the ZBD transformer, but how “patents were not exclusive, Edison was not attracted by the prospect of competing with Westinghouse”, and they expired by 1890 (David and Bunn 1988, 184). The application in Europe continued including a project for the electrification of the Valtellina railroad on the north of Italy in 1897, which was the first European main railroad line.

At the turn into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the company continued its steady growth, strengthening its relevance in Europe, but the aftermath of the First World War and shift of economic policies to protectionism resulted in the Ganz Company losing its partners equally as the overall role in the international market (Berend 2013, 151). The success of the Westinghouse Company in the transmission of electricity would far surpass the achievements of the Ganz Company in Europe.

The political and economic circumstances that the Austro-Hungarian Empire dealt with at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century created a significant obstacle for the global rise of the Ganz Company, restricting a possibility for the worldwide application of the electric transformer system developed by Zipernowsky, Déri and Bláthy. In contrast, the United States possessed insurmountable advantage wielded through firmly established industrial basis relying on the grounds of the stable capitalist system, economic and natural resources. Married with high level of technological innovation, technical and scientific knowledge, these factors allowed the United States companies to upgrade and adapt Gaulard – Gibbs invention for the mass application.

### 2.2.3. William Stanley Jr. : modern electric transformer

The creator of the modern, practical transformer was American inventor William Stanley Jr. In 1886, on the 20th of March, he demonstrated the first lighting of a downtown area in the history achieved by the transmission of electricity. The event took place in the Great

Barrington, MA, USA, a community of 4500 people, with the support of the Westinghouse Electric Company ("William Stanley").

In 1884, Stanley (1858 - 1916) entered into the employment of George Westinghouse, who was developing his industrial empire in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Stanley will work as the chief consulting engineer of the newly founded Westinghouse Electric Co. from 1885 till 1888 ("William Stanley"). By that time, he was already interested in the European design of electric transformer developed by Gaulard and Gibbs, who sold the patent rights to the Westinghouse (Leupp 1918). Due to the respiratory ailments that deteriorated in the Pittsburgh's polluted environment (though Hughes (1983) considers rift with the Westinghouse), Stanley moved his laboratory to the neighbouring Great Barrington, where he spent most of his childhood (Great Barrington AC Power Milestone 2014). Working in the small laboratory financed partly by Westinghouse, he perfected the design using Westinghouse 25hp steam engine and old Siemens 6,000W single phase AC generator, installed in the abandoned factory Rubbermill on the periphery of the city (Blalock 2012). In the March of 1886 he performed the demonstration of an actual transmission of the alternating current sent from the mill across the frozen river to light the Main Street of the town.

"... two No. 6 wires were stretched down the main street of the village and fastened to insulators nailed to the elm trees bordering the sidewalks.... The length of the line from the center of town to the laboratory [mill] was about 4000 feet. After the wiring had been completed, a half dozen transformers were installed in the cellars of the buildings to be lighted. The units were housed in wooden boxes and kept locked on the premises. Facilities were extended to light thirteen stores, two hotels, two doctor's offices, one barber shop and the telephone and post offices..." (Press Release from the American Institute of Electrical Engineers on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Stanley's Demonstration)

Soon afterwards, Westinghouse put the device in the commercial application under the name Westinghouse alternating current system. However, by 1889 Stanley and Westinghouse parted their ways and Stanley returned to the Berkshire, Pittsburgh. In his analysis of the topic, Thomas Blalock in fact refers to Westinghouse as "once an employer and later a nemesis." (Blalock 2012). In 1891 Stanley founded his own company Stanley Electric Manufacturing Company, where he continued successful work on alternating current system participating in the project of the Folsom Power House ("The Folsom Power House 1895"). In 1903 the major part of the company was bought by the General Electric Company that will fully absorb Stanley's original factory by 1907. Pursuing his other interests beside

electricity, Stanley continued producing various inventions and eventually became the advisory board member in the General Electric (On human side 2011).

#### 2.2.4. George Westinghouse: an entrepreneur behind the invention

Industrialist and inventor, George Westinghouse (1846 – 1914) played one of the leading roles in the history of electric transformer and electrification. In 1865, having dropped out of college after three months, he obtained his first patent for a rotary steam engine (Leupp 1918). Three years later he invented the air brake for trains and after receiving its patent in 1873, he founded his first company, Westinghouse Air Brake Company. In the beginning of the 1880s, he started getting interested in the potentials of the alternating current. In 1885 Westinghouse Electric Company was founded, but its founder was worried over the limitations of the direct current system that was proving to be a large limitation for his growing industry in Pittsburgh. The main potential of the transmission over long distances reflected in eliminating the high costs of reaching the consumers and high fixed costs – thanks to the potential of transformation of energy in voltages, the energy could be sent from generating facilities relocated to the least expensive peripheral city zones and delivered successfully to the urban centres that accumulated most of consumption (David and Bunn 1988, 175). Looking for more suitable solutions, Westinghouse will go about hiring a circle of young electrical engineers in the future - William Stanley Jr., Italian Guido Pantaleoni, Swiss engineer Albert Schmidt, Oliver B. Shallenberger, Nikola Tesla, Reginald Belfield, etc. (Leupp 1918, 130-135; David and Bunn 1988).

Already acquainted with the Gaulard and Gibbs' work, he met them personally in 1885 during the trip to the UK, for the International Inventions Exhibition in South Kensington (Leupp 1918, 135). Upon return to Pittsburgh, Westinghouse ordered several of their transformers, though Hughes (1983) remarks that he had no support in his company for the venture he was about to start. "Opposition by ALL the electric part of the Westinghouse organization was such that it was only Mr. George Westinghouse's personal will that put it through." (Reminiscence of G. Pantaleoni, April 1939" , in Westinghouse Electric Company files and quoted in Passer, *Electrical Manufacturers*, p. 132, as cited in Hughes, 102, original emphasis).

Convinced that Gaulard and Gibbs in fact confirmed his longtime assumption that, just like the gas, electricity could be sent over longer distances through a system of transformations, Westinghouse started with testing of their by his own engineers. Though successful, these tests showed that the device was weak, which is why Westinghouse will arrange for Stanley

to start developing a stronger system in Great Barrington (Prout 1921, 111-113). At the beginning of 1886, the company already bought the patent rights from Gaulard and Gibbs.

However, it remains unknown the level of the involvement Westinghouse really had in the transformer development in these initial phases (Hughes 1983, 102). With the success of the Great Barrington experiment, and subsequent additional testing that asserted its efficiency, he started implementation first in Pittsburgh. After Stanley got the patent, the company initiated the design of the components for economic and mass production, supported by intensive advertising (Hughes 1983, 105).

In contrast to Edison who, though perceived still as "the archetype of the inventor... but his real ambition, however, was to be a business builder and to become a tycoon", Peter Drucker (1993) positions George Westinghouse (along with Werner Siemens) as an example and exceptional case of a great inventor and a great business leader, who both left behind companies existing under their names to this date (12). Biographers of Westinghouse highly emphasize his character traits in explaining his success with the alternating current system, despite public pressure and negative publicity that surrounded "War of the Currents" (Scrabec 2006; Leupp 1918). With his business empire exceeding the borders of the USA and branching with the companies in Canada, Europe and Russia, Westinghouse showed a particular form of entrepreneurship that was a novel for the time. "He changed industry, technology, and Pittsburgh forever. This was a man loved by his family, employees, and city. More so than Edison, he gave light to the world. His air brake revolutionized the railroads, and his steam engine revolutionized agriculture. He inspired genius, much as Nikola Tesla and Henry Ford. He had won the "war of the currents" making AC current the power source of the nation. He was behind the great Niagara Power Station. In 1930, 55,000 present and former employees erected a memorial on voluntary contributions, fulfilling his own hope— "*If someday they say of me that in my work I have contributed something to the welfare and happiness of my fellow men, I shall be satisfied.*" (Scrabec 2006, 237, original emphasis). Scrabec (2006) defined this as "idealistic view of capitalism" which was influenced by his background (personal and religious) and reflected in "paternal management style." (11). His approach to business was best illustrated in establishment of Wilmerding, Allegheny County, PA. Advertised as "The Ideal Home Town", this was a company town of Westinghouse Electric designed for the employees of the town's factories. ("From The Wilmerding News, September 2, 1904").

Westinghouse received his 361<sup>st</sup> patent four years after his death in 1914. A milestone that turned him into a leader of the second industrial revolution was pioneering alternate current

transmission based on three – phase transformer that happened in the 1890s through his partnership with the inventor Nikola Tesla. Though he did not directly participate in the invention, his involvement in the process was fundamental – the patents and system he possessed were instrumental to apply Tesla’s findings.

#### 2.2.5. Tesla, Ferraris and Dolivo – Dobrowolsky: arrival of the polyphase system

According to the historical accounts, the credits for the invention of the three-phase transformation system go to three scientists who came with the solution separately between 1885 and 1888: Galileo Ferraris, Mikhail Dolivo – Dobrowolsky and Nikola Tesla (David and Bunn 1988).

Nikola Tesla was born in 1856 in present Croatia, then an administrative territory of the Habsburg Monarchy. In tradition with his family’s background (his father was a Serbian Orthodox priest, though “his mother came from a long line of inventors” (Hughes 1983, 112) he was destined to enter into Seminary and become a priest. After a long and difficult struggle with cholera at the age of 17, his father fulfilled his desire to follow his interest in science by sending him to study electrical engineering at the Graz Polytechnic in Austria (which he left, and later completed his studies at Prague University) (Tesla 2010). Much like in the case of Westinghouse, historians and researchers are intrigued by Tesla’s approach to the work of invention. According to his writings, his work as an inventor was particularly affected by his abilities for hypersensitive visualizations. In his memoirs, Tesla left detailed explanations on how he would always first test his experiments in images of his mind, before writing them in formulas on a paper (Tesla 2010).

Over the period 1882 - 1889, Nikola Tesla worked on different concepts trying in different ways to grasp the design of the multi-phase voltage system. After studies where he started thinking of this, it took him five years to file for the patents. In 1887 he obtained patents for two - phase AC system with four lines. He made it connecting a generator, a transmission system and multi-phase motor (Hughes 1983, 113 – 114).

In 1888 Tesla arrived in Pittsburgh, where he held a speech at the American Institute of Electrical Engineers (Tesla 2010). This was the first meeting between Tesla and Westinghouse, who soon afterwards bought more than 40 Tesla's patents in addition to Tesla becoming an employee of the Westinghouse Electric (Hughes 1983, 115). As he described in his autobiography, Tesla was hired to construct a motor of large dimensions, but the job required great level of adaptation between the system used in the company and his own

invention - eventually, he will leave the company and return to New York one year later (Tesla 2010, 27 - 28).

Simultaneously and separately, another step towards the three-phase system of transmission had been made by Italian inventor Galileo Ferraris who constructed the first induction motor based in two phases in 1885. In this invention Ferraris used the rotating magnetic field which was in a controversial situation also claimed by Tesla for his finding. Hughes highlights Ferraris' system for "convergence of scientific and technological information" (117). He however, did not patent his invention until later, at the same time as Tesla, which will lead to yet another debate around patent priority (Hughes 1983).

Both Ferraris and Tesla focused in their experiments on the two-phase scheme, but Dolivo – Dobrowolsky will show in his works between 1889 and 1891 that the solution lies in the three – phase. Marcel Deprez also tried long - distance transmission between Crail and Paris in 1885, but Dolivo - Dobrowolsky was first who successfully demonstrated this at the Frankfurt International Electrical Exhibition in 1891 - where artificial waterfall was powered by electricity through the wires from the power station located 175 kilometres far from Frankfurt, in the town of Laufen (Stefanovic 2011). The demonstration was possible by use of the three-phase transformers which were patented by Dolivo – Dobrowolsky in 1889.

Engineer of Russian origin, Michael Dolivo - Dobrowolsky (1862 - 1919) was born near St. Petersburg, but studied at the Darmstadt Higher Technical School where he later became a professor. Afterwards, he moved to Berlin based AEG where at the time of his inventions he worked as a technical director (Stefanovic 2011). Dolivo - Dobrowolsky based his work on the foundations of the Tesla and Ferraris, questioning their findings, and proving that solution was in the three - phase scheme with increase of voltage and use of three instead of four lines. He named the system "turning, or rotating current"... and patented the simplest and most practical induction, or asynchronous, motor with a short-circuited rotor, a motor that has been widely used and copied." (Hughes 1983, 119). In such way, Dolivo – Dobrowolsky established the grounds for the three – phase power transmission of alternate current that's been in application ever since.

In the aftermath, both USA and Germany continued development of the system (Hughes 1893). Most notable events were the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago 1893 for which Westinghouse Company had contracted and illuminated the event using Tesla's inventions. In 1895, General Electric Company built, for the time, longest transmission line in North America in Folsom Power House. The power plant used original Stanley's air-cooled transformers. ("The Folsom Power House 1895"). In the same year, as a result of

Westinghouse and Tesla's venture, Niagara Falls hydroelectric power plant will start operating and in 1896 successfully transmit the electricity to the Buffalo as the first power plant built entirely by patents of the induction motor and alternate polyphase power system. Hughes concludes on this, "The introduction of the polyphase motor and system in the early 1890s and the earlier production of the transformer, which was soon adapted to polyphase function, permitted the alternating-current system to match the capacity of the older... Furthermore, the polyphase system corrected the fundamental flaw, or reverse salient, of direct current - its uneconomical transmission" (120).

#### 2.2.6. Circulation of knowledge

As for the situation in which the process of the transformer invention happened, Mokyr (2010) contends that research in electrical engineering bore three main features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century technological change:

1. Multinational character : "a community of scholars that had little interest in national identity but only cared about pressing forward"
2. Synergy of the emerging techniques with their epistemic base;
3. Multiple discovery and patenting as a common feature, due to the accessibility of knowledge and expectations of high economic profit that, therefore, justified high costs of experiments." (32).

Circulation of knowledge unraveled in such circumstances that the confusion and controversy surrounding priority over invention were inevitable. Major scientific and professional publications recorded in writing and detail all ongoing research (e.g. *The Engineer*, *Electrical Engineering*). Once the system was presented to the public, it would become available for testing, which implied a certainty of improvement in the near future (Hughes 1893). Exhibits also served as an important part of the circulation of knowledge implying more than a physical demonstration of the system and its operation. Exhibits at that time made place for building social capital – allowing direct encounter and interaction between not just different inventors but between inventors and entrepreneurs (Hughes 1983). In a series of events, exhibits alone played essential role in the invention of the transformer – in 1884 Gaulard and Gibbs displayed their system in Turin, where Blathy observed the demonstration, and they also met Westinghouse on the occasion at exhibitions in London a year later (Hughes 1983; Asztalos 1986).

Amid growing interest in the potentials of the alternate current, experimenting intensified, so much that manufacturers used to loan the equipment to engineering schools for work on



experiments (Hughes 1983, 109). "This is a reminder that new technology must be used in order to be improved, or to put it differently, post-innovation invention and development are common. The originators cannot envisage all of the opportunities and needs of diverse-use environments."(Hughes 110).

In website presentation, this section of the research is presented in collections of the patents that were most relevant in the evolution of the invention process, as well as an overview and access to digitized most notable publications (scientific and professional) where the progress of the invention has been discussed and presented. The topic of exhibitions makes the third part of the project investigated by a fellow team member.

In the spirit of the designated approach and team effort, the final part of the website presentation appears as a virtual interactive exhibit that brings together the three sections treated by students individually. In creating the website, assignments were divided according to the level of computer skills that students had prior to this.

### 3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The history of the electric transformer was a history profoundly resonating with a changing society in the circumstances of the accelerated industrial revolution (and vice versa, as it has been case with the Ganz Factory). "Democratization" of the processes of scientific work reflected in the increasing number of channels and means for the exchange of ideas and knowledge that opened to include the general public, had two-way course of contradiction: circulation of knowledge happened in a more transparent way that stimulated creativity and innovation process, but at the same time had restricted the individual to a very limited context of recognition for his accomplishment. The history of invention of electric transformer in that perspective presented a story of the legal and ethical struggles over patent rights and originality. Those stories, that essentially encapsulated the 19<sup>th</sup> century's incremental innovation, were at the same time woven by partnerships that showcased fundamental and increasing value of capital for the science. Approaching this from the point of economy, Drucker (1993) concludes that there is no "explanation as to why entrepreneurship emerged as it did in the late nineteenth century..., nor why it is limited to one country or to one culture. Indeed, the events that explain why entrepreneurship becomes effective are probably not in themselves economic events. The causes are likely to lie in changes in values, perception, and attitude, changes perhaps in demographics, in institutions... perhaps changes in education as well" (13). Concurrently, not much can be concluded in this research on the innovation – entrepreneurship link that surrounded the development of the transformer, except that it was undeniably relevant.

A fact remains that these particular and often peculiar human interrelationships did interfere, sometimes in controversial ways, with the process of innovation and transfer of technique, as well as with the public perception of the progress and technology development. The latter is best illustrated in the creation of a simple term, “westinghoused”<sup>36</sup>. Thus, a question remains on how much did the psychology and mentality of a businessman acted as a stimulant for the inventors of the transformer. Though biographers tend to emphasize personality traits, such hypothesis need to be examined through in-depth analysis of some future studies.

Nowadays we can state that the invention and development of electric transformer set foundation for the discovery that changed human lives irrevocably, but had in that process overshadowed the achievements of the people, inventors and entrepreneurs, who made it possible. Their legacy in the perception of the general public remains insufficiently recognized, a fact that could be aptly described in these words of Nikola Tesla (2010), "It is difficult to grasp what these unusual phenomena meant at that time. We aspire for new sensations, only to soon become indifferent towards them. Wonders of yesterday are a common occurrence today." (31, translated from Serbian).

In regards to the overall outcomes, by its nature, the group project has over the span of the two years empowered the collaborating students to improve their teamwork skills, bridging the gap of differences conditioned by diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. Overcoming the language barriers and adapting to different learning environments while switching universities between the semesters, the students developed a well-coordinated, yet dynamic working ethic. One of the most positive outcomes of the process has been persisting in being open - minded to new ideas and different approaches in an effort to reach a certain level of transdisciplinary perspective. In this, insights given by the other team members have often shown to be a valuable upgrade in the pattern of critical thinking and analysis of research problems normally based on our previously acquired professional skills and knowledge.

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<sup>36</sup> To be electrocuted, killed by electric chair. One of the first applications of AC generators manufactured by Westinghouse Electric was for this purpose. The term was coined by Edison during the war of the currents as he would demonstrate the dangers of the AC current to the reporters publicly killing animals by simulating effect of electric chair (King, 2011).

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