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MONUMENTS AND URBAN NATIONALISM.
THE SKOPJE 2014 PROJECT

Abstract: For some time, researchers have recognized monuments not only as embellishments of the public space, but also as a means of underlining the related political and cultural connotations. Monuments are social symbols, their symbolic dimension closely related to social memories and identity policies. This article provides an analysis of the Skopje 2014 project, which involves the construction of more than 30 monuments and facilities in Skopje, and has fuelled extensive debate on the current and future influence of this project on society and cultural life.

Keywords: Skopje 2014 project, monuments, urbanism, nationalism, Macedonia

The Macedonian Orange Revival and Skopje 2014 Project

After a transitional and urbanistic sleep of nearly twenty years, the Macedonian capital of Skopje in 2006 began to wake up, following the election of a right-wing, Christian Democrat, and nationalist government headed by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski of the VMRO–DPMNE.[1] As promised during the pre-election campaign, the new government quickly began implementing its ambitious program called *Macedonian Revival.*[2] As announced by the party in power, this major cultural-urbanistic project aims to turn Skopje both into "a true capital of Macedonia" on the one hand, and a "European metropolis" on the other. Since the government holds that "the Republic of Macedonia, being a country that boasts a rich culture and tradition, as well as historic spiritual values, may contribute to the enrichment of the European culture and its spiritual values system," its 2006 program declared that the protection of the

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1   The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, IMRO–DPMNU.

2   The VMRO–DPMNE political program, *Revival in 100 Steps,* was launched in 2006. In 2008 the title was changed to *Revival in 100 Steps—updated and expanded*, and its aim was to "revive the spirit, revive what the citizens feel about their country, revive the economy, revive all areas of society" *(Revival in...* 2008: 5)

cultural heritage should be a priority (2006–2010 program of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia: 34).

The program envisions the complete restoration of the Skopje Fortress (*Kale*), work on archeological sites, investment in museums such as the Museum of the Interwar Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO) and the Museum of the Victims of Communism, the restoration of "authentic" cultural monuments such as the City Tower and the Skopje Theater, as well as the construction of a new City Hall. It also calls for the construction of a new concert hall and the renovation and improvement of church facilities (including the Millennium Cross[3]) (2006–2010 program of the government of the Republic of Macedonia: 34).

The VMRO–DPMNE program for the snap parliamentary elections in 2008 was presented as an "orange revival" and a continuation of the Orange revolution in Ukraine some years earlier[4] (2008–2012 VMRO–DPMNE revival program). Noted in the section on accomplishments achieved to date are: start of the construction of the Old Theatre building in Skopje, final preparations for beginning construction of the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra concert hall, completion of the restoration of the Stone Bridge guard tower, start of the construction of the Mother Theresa commemorative house, start of the construction of the annex to the St. Clement of Ohrid National and University Library, start of the erection of sculptures in the city center, completion of the first of the five phases of archeological work on the Skopje Fortress and its preservation and restoration (VMRO–DPMNE program for revival in 100 steps: 12).

The same program pointed out: "Culture is our identity. Culture is what makes us different and unique. But it is also what brings us together and bonds us with Europe" (p. 176).The VMRO–DPMNE had for some time expressed various ideas and projects on how culture and art should be managed in order to shape and reshape identity. It was only logical to expect measures for the reorganization of the Macedonian national culture and identity, expressed mainly through urbanism and architecture (Mijalkovi and Urbanek 2011: 76). However, at that time, the intensity and dynamics of the process were not yet clear.

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3   The Millennium Cross was erected in 2002 on the highest point of Mt Vodno, overlooking the city of Skopje. It is 66 meters tall, one of the tallest structures in the Republic of Macedonia. Construction was funded by the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and other donors. The cross was built to commemorate two thousand years of Christianity and the beginning of the new millennium. However, the involvement of the government of the then-prime minister Ljub o Georgievski in the construction of such facilities, coupled with the excessive dimensions of the structure itself, stirred intense debate within civil society and in the multicultural and multiethnic setting in the city and the state. These factors had a detrimental effect on the building of a civic and multi-religious society free from the burden of inter-communal doubts and mistrust.

4   Following the example of the Ukrainian supporters of Viktor Yushchenko, VMRO–DPMNE's new pre-election program in 2006 was colored in orange, symbolizing the revival announced in virtually all spheres of life in the Republic of Macedonia. An economic boom, a significant reduction of taxes and a reduction in the share of public spending in the GDP were announced. (Gruevski offers an orange revival... 2006; Revival program 2008–2012:6–9)

Early in 2010, under the auspices of the municipality of the center of Skopje, a 3D computer simulation of the Skopje 2014 project was presented to the Macedonian public. This animation walks the viewer through the center of Skopje in its "new clothes," adorned with new monuments and new architectural designs for several important institutions. The mayor of Center Municipality, Vladimir Todorovi, as well as the mayor of Skopje, Koce Trajanovski, and the minister of culture, Elizabeta Kan evska-Milevska, all attended the launch of the Skopje 2014 project simulation. After stressing that until then Skopje had only two monuments—the monument to the Titoist partisans who liberated the city after World War II, erected more than 60 years ago, and the Goce Del ev monument,[5] a gift from Bulgaria erected in 1966—Mayor Todorovi concluded: "Skopje needs a new look. The grey, Social Realist style should be remolded into something far more aesthetically pleasing. The Skopje center should be revamped and made into a comprehensive architectural and urbanistic whole that would give the city an artistic flair" (Presentation of the Skopje 2014 project, *Idividi* 4 February 2010).

During her introductory address, Minister of Culture Kan evska-Milevska pointed out that the VMRO–DPMNE government would like to leave "an important legacy, a valuable record of the period when they were in power." Upon completion of the project, she hoped that Skopje would become "a bustling metropolis, brimming with landmarks, monuments and buildings that exude the Macedonian identity" (Presentation of the Skopje 2014 project, *Idividi* 4.02.2010).

According to what was shown at the launch, another floor will be added to the Macedonian Parliament building,[6] and the roof will be adorned with domes. The lawn in front of the building will feature an equestrian monument of Nikola Karev[7] (photo 1), and, on the other side of the street, in the park now called the Park of the Female Fighter (*Žena park*), there will be a monument to the founders of VMRO and the ASNOM[8] presidium, as well as an obelisk commemorating fallen Macedonian heroes (photo 2).

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5   Goce Del ev (1872–1903) was one of the most significant ideologists, planners and leaders of the Macedonian revolutionary movement, which sought to liberate Macedonia from Ottoman rule.

6   The Macedonian Parliament building was constructed in 1938. The project, chosen by public competition in 1930, was won by Victor Lukomski, while the building itself was made by architect Victor J. Hudak (www.sobranie.mk). It represented one of the most monumental buildings in the era of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and it was originally an administration building for the administrative district (*banovina)* (Ka eva, Hristova & ori ovska, 2002: 58).

7   Nikola Karev (1877–1905) was a revolutionary and a socialist, a member and one of the heads of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, as well as one of the leaders of the Ilinden uprising in 1903. Macedonian historiography claims him to be the first president of the Kruševo Republic, although other studies explain that he had no other powers in it.

8   The Antifascist Assembly for the People's Liberation of Macedonia (*Antifašisticko sobranie na narodnoto osloboduvanje na Makedonija*) (ASNOM) was the supreme legislative and executive body of Democratic Federal Macedonia between August 1944 and April 1945. After this date it was restructured and renamed the National Assembly of Macedonia.
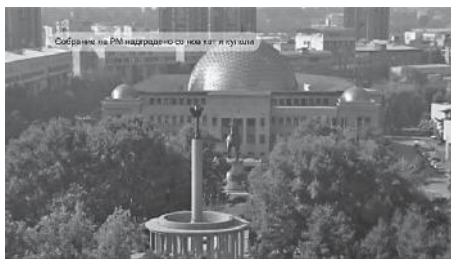
photo 1.   photo 2.

The Skopje 2014 project also includes renovation of the facades of buildings around Macedonia Square. The simulation shows the Macedonia Gate on the Pela Square, adjacent to a monument of the defenders of Macedonia[9] (photo 3).

photo 3.

In the same area, a church dedicated to Saints Constantine and Helen is to be built, and a business center will be erected on the former location of the National Bank[10] (photo 4). Macedonia Square will accommodate the monument of King Samuel, a central fountain, and Metodija Antonov   ento's[11] monument, whereas the currently empty space around the square will feature several hotels, the mayor's residence, and a registry office resembling the Officer's Building,[12]

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9   This monument is dedicated to the Macedonian police and army troops that were killed during the 2001 armed conflict in the clashes with members of the Albanian Liberation Army.

10   The National Bank was built in 1932, and it was one of the most important facilities in the period of the Serbian *banovina*. It was destroyed in the 1963 earthquake.

11   Metodija Andonov –   ento (1902–1957), the first president of the ASNOM Presidium, withdrew from office soon after being appointed because of disagreements with the communist government of SFRY. He was not only marginalized because of his discord with the federal policy of SFRY, but also received an eleven-year jail sentence. The official Macedonian historiography of the socialist period contained very little information about his life and work. In 2010, posthumously, he was awarded the Medal of the Republic of Macedonia, the highest award of the Republic.

12   The Officers' Building stood on the former site of the Burmali Mosque, and was one of the key buildings and symbols of the Yugoslavian royal hegemony in the South Serbian *banovina* (Ka eva, Hristova, and   or iovska, 2002: 56–57). It was destroyed in the 1963 earthquake.

as well as a monument to Justinian I and a monument of the *gemidžii*.[13] (photo 5).
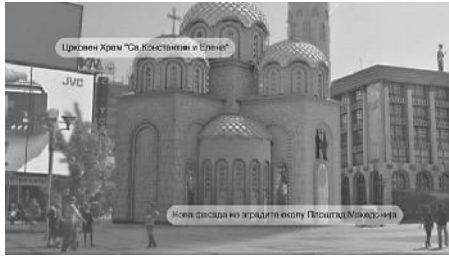

photo 4.

photo 5.

In front of the Stone Bridge, on the side of Macedonia Square, equestrian statues of Goce Del ev and Dame Gruev[14] will be erected (photo 6).On the other side of the bridge there will be monuments to Saints Cyril and Methodius and Saints Clement and Naum of Ohrid.

photo 6.

A monument to the honor of Petar Karpoš[15] will be built in the vicinity of the bridge. Two other new bridges are also presented in the simulation. The one is the Eye Bridge (*Mostot oko*) (photo 7), which will link the right flank of the Vardar quay on the one hand and the building of the Constitutional Court, the State Archive and the Museum of Archeology, on the other hand. On the left bank of the Vardar River, downstream, next to the building of the Constitutional Court (photo 8), will be the building of the Electronic Communications Agency, the Office of the Prosecutor of the Republic of Macedonia, the Financial Police building and the Independent Macedonia colonnade.

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13   The *gemidžii* were a clandestine anarchist cabal of young people, who, in the early 20th century, in cahoots with the Secret Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, organized a series of terrorist attacks in Thessalonica and Constantinople in order to attract attention to the group and their efforts to liberate Macedonia from the Ottomans.

14   Dame Gruev (1871–1906) was one of the founders and the most distinguished members of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. He took part in the 1903 Ilinden Uprising, aimed at liberating Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire.

15   Petar Karpoš (1655–1689) led the 1689 uprising for liberation from the Ottoman Empire.

photo 7.   photo 8.

The left and right banks of the Vardar River, in the area in front of the colonnade, will be connected via another bridge, to be called the Bridge of Arts (*Mostot na umetnosta*). Upstream from the Stone Bridge, the banks of the Vardar River will accommodate the Museum of Macedonian Struggle, the building of the old National Theater, and the Holocaust Museum, which are already under construction. Sculptures of lions will adorn both sides of the Goce Del ev Bridge (photo 9).

photo 9

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For some time, researchers have considered public facilities and monuments not only as simply embellishments of a public space, but also as a means of underlining related political and cultural connotations. The importance of the public monuments has received increasing attention, and the city is not seen as merely a material background. The places themselves represent meanings, thus becoming both a physical location and a vantage point for interpretation (Johnson 1994, 1995). Monuments become social symbols (Duncan 1990), their symbolic dimension closely linked to social memories and identity policies (Johnson 1995: 294).

The concept of "social memory" is associated with the development of emotional and ideological links to certain histories and geographies. By positioning memories in specific locations of collective memory, rituals of collective recollections of bygone days can be performed. The continuous

dimension of time can be reduced to a collection of key symbolic dates and events, their public ritualization expressed through what Pierre Nora (1989) calls *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory. These locations become markers, signs of geography and history, and strike a balance between official and popular culture. The public collective memory thus represents "a dynamic process in which groups map myths (in an anthropologic sense) about themselves and their world to a specific time and place" (Till 1999: 254). This mapping process becomes part of projects aimed at establishing individual and group identities, symbolically presented in public monuments and the accompanying ceremonies.

There are countless examples of how monuments are actively produced and consumed (Johnson 1995, 295). As Jonathan Boyarin (1994: 22) notes, "memory is not something that existed and dominated the past, nor it is merely a projection from the present, but it represents a potential for creative cooperation between the contemporary awareness and the experience, or the expression of the past." The development of extra-local monuments is key for the mobilization of the "imaginary community" of the nation (Anderson 2006) New memories are essential for the appearance of collective amnesia or the forgetting of old memories (Lowenthal 1996). Paul Connerton notes that "now it is exceptionally clear that in modern times, by organizing ceremonies/ parades and mass gatherings, the national elites invent rituals that assert continuity through the appropriate historic past and thus create the new ritual space" (Connerton 1989: 51).

The capacity that people possess to formulate and represent their own memories is usually curtailed by the discursive field they operate in, and, literally, by the space in which they create their expressions, both figuratively and literally. As Daniel Sherman (1999: 7) remarks, "commemoration (recollection) is also cultural: it inscribes or reinscribes a set of symbolic codes, ordering discourses, and master narratives that recent events, perhaps the very ones commemorated, have disrupted, newly established, or challenged." If memory is created as a recollection and representation of bygone days, it is equally, and by the same token, a recollection of the *places* in the past, where the imaginative geography of the previous events is in constant dialog with the contemporary metaphoric and literal spatial environment of memory markers.

This raises several questions about the influence of the Skopje 2014 Project on the social and cultural development of Macedonian life today. What are the ramifications of this state project on the socio-political and cultural life of the citizens of the Republic? How does the project affect inter-ethnic relations within the state? How does it influence the reshaping of the contemporary Macedonian nation? What is the impact of the Skopje 2014 Project on Macedonian ethnic identity? and on the image of Skopje as an open, multi-cultural and European city?

The Macedonian Context

In the Republic of Macedonia the negotiation of the meanings of key events and persons in the country's history has reached a phase in which it is being materialized through various forms of patriotism and commemorations. This is most evident in the appearance of the "political shrines" which serve as significant sites for the new rituals of recollection. The purpose behind these commemorative events is to anchor the memories both to space (the monuments) and time (the national holidays). This process is necessarily selective (Foote, Tooth & Arvay, 2000, 317).

If we study the program initiatives of the VMRO–DPMNE Party in the pre-electoral campaigns in 2006, 2008, and finally in 2010, we see that the "Orange Revival" was indeed intended to influence the reshaping of some essential features of Macedonian society. However, initially it was not possible to anticipate the intensity and degree of the government's political infiltration into the spheres of social and cultural life, which came to include large-scale urbanistic and spatial planning.

The idea that culture is "our identity, it is what makes us different and unique," on the one hand, and "what brings us closer to Europe" on the other, as stated in the 2008 VMRO–DPMNE pre-election campaign material, was paraphrased in the 2010 pre-election campaign as: "Macedonian culture is part and parcel of the Macedonian identity. Macedonian culture is our culture, but also European and world culture." This represented a focus on Macedonian culture and Macedonian identity, which is a part of both European and world culture (Reforms and Development Manifest, Skopje. 2010: 245).

Therefore, Skopje has became a central *topos* of the inscription and re-inscription of Macedonian identity by means of a conglomerate of public facilities, as well as a vast number of monuments that are being erected simultaneously in a small and relatively limited space.

What then of the influence of the Skopje 2014 Project on relations among the political subjects of the country? After fierce initial reactions from political representatives of the Albanian community, indeed also from the Albanian coalition partners in the government, the project has generally been ignored by the Albanian political parties. This attitude was expressed for instance by Fatmir Besimi, the then-Minister of Finance, who, in the early phase of the project, stated:

Personally I agree with those who have made this criticism. The country needs infrastructure. If we spend money from the budget, it should have higher multiplier effects. Statues are an odd priority during a period of tighter budgets and rising poverty. This is happening while many schools lack flushable toilets.

These remarks, originally made to the *Financial Times* (3 September 2010), were later reported in the Macedonian media.

When the Albanian partners in the government, the DUI party, as well as the rest of the Albanian political bloc, kept silent about this significant process, the Macedonian public could only speculate about the reasons. Many people interviewed for this study believe that the matter is a political deal: each partner is expected to take care of "its share," or "its space" of the "imagined geographies"—one for the Macedonians, and another for the Albanians. This assumption is substantiated by various events during the implementation of this project. First of all, for several years there were serious tensions while archeological work was carried out on the Skopje Fortress—the *Kale*, on the left bank of the Vardar River. This culminated in violent demonstrations between opponents and supporters of the excavations when—surreptitiously, but with the support of the Cultural Heritage Protection Administration and its director Pasko Kuzman—work commenced on the building of a church on the site of what had been designated to be a museum and an exhibition space. The *Kale* issue suddenly became the scene of a rough political fight between the Macedonian and Albanian coalition partners in the government, which spilled over into highly politicized violence in the streets. Consequently, the Skopje *Kale* was closed to the public and guarded by the police for an extensive period of time. The half-built and later demolished basis of the church construction can still be seen in the Skopje *Kale*. This shows that politicians in both the Macedonian and the Albanian communities see this space primarily as an arena where they can fulfill their political as well as nationalistic interests by marking and symbolically conquering space. But it is also clear that the Kale is yet another issue where the separation and segregation of this space is reflected in various spheres of contemporary life in Macedonian society.

During the summer of 2012, the Macedonian public was informed that on the top of the Skopje Kale, the museum-church will be joined by another museum: a mosque. The former edifice is to be built on the foundations of a medieval church, whereas the latter will be constructed on the foundations of an Ottoman turret, where, as explained by the director of the Cultural Heritage Protection Office, Pasko Kuzman, there was probably once a small, sacred *masjid*. The coalition partners agreed that there should be no visible religious symbols on either facility (Alpha TV, 9 August 2012).

Secondly, on the topic of separation of space, many Macedonian citizens see the start of the renovation of the square with an equestrian statute of the Albanian 15th-century hero Skanderbeg in its center, as a counterpart to the construction of Macedonia Square, on the other bank of the Vardar River. Also the Macedonia Square will feature a monument of a warrior on horseback (*Voin na konj*) (photo 10). Together the two statues and the surrounding squares symbolize the parallelism, polarization, and separation of Macedonian society.

The stylized part of the Skopje bazaar and the Most (*bridge*) shopping center was according to Kenzo Tange's urbanistic visions intended to present a physical and symbolic consolidation of the new and the old Skopje, the

European and the Oriental. However, according to many of my respondents, it has now acquired the exact opposite meaning (interviews, 2012).

Photo 10

Influence on the reshaping of today's Macedonian nation

A key moment in the process of reshaping the contemporary Macedonian nation was certainly the establishment of the independent state of Macedonia in 1991, after the breakdown of the Yugoslav Federation, where Macedonia had been a federative unit for almost 45 years. During this period, the foundations of the Macedonian nation were laid, and it became equal to the other nations in the Yugoslavian union. The modern Macedonian language was codified, and the first essential national and state institutions were launched. The idea of a Macedonian nation was based on the principles of brotherhood and equality, and of Yugoslav unity.

The nations and nationalities living in Yugoslavia, were unified on the basis of the values instilled by the war for liberation and against fascism, and organized by the Communist Party. These qualities were believed to be sufficient for finally dismantling all "anti-revolutionary," "pro-fascist," "reactionary," "capitalist," "nationalistic, "ethnic," and "religious" concepts and ideas, and for transforming the new reality into a "forward-thinking," "anti-fascist," "socialist," and "secular" state. Society would be "open" and subjected only to "the workers' needs." Soon, however, it became evident that the idea of creating a single Yugoslavian nation had reached a dead end, and it was abandoned.

The strong strategies underlying the ethnic concepts of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities, as well as their influential religious traditions, resulted in the establishment of a string of strong ethnic and religious identities, and not a civic or pan-Yugoslav identity.

After the declaration of Macedonian independence in 1991, an intensive process began for the reconstruction and redefinition of the identity of the modern Macedonian nation and state. Furthermore, Macedonian society started to reevaluate the religions considered indigenous in the country as well as the socio-political identities of each individual ethnic community living there. The key element in the creation of a conception of the contemporary Macedonian state and nation was the fact that instead of a civic concept the people opted for an *ethnic* concept. After 1991 this fomented nationalism and exacerbated the bifurcation of Macedonian society along ethnic lines, at the expense of the still quite weak and fragile civic concept.

As early as at the beginning of the 1990s the creation of Macedonian statehood was plagued by considerable hesitation and many challenges, from within and without, (the ambiguity of the phrasing of the question in the referendum on independence, the issue of the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from the country and the creation of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, the question of the currency—all presented different scenarios for the future of the state. The lack of trust between the members of the two largest ethnic communities—Macedonian and Albanian—who shared the territory of the Republic was the most striking feature of the time. Ethnic polarization and ethnic rather than civil concepts were imposed in the creation of the modern multi-party system. As a result, the Macedonian social and political scene is still determined by two big political blocs: the Albanians, and the Macedonians. This situation culminated in 2001, when an armed conflict erupted between members of the Albanian Liberation Army and the armed forces of the Republic of Macedonia. There have been more and more examples of segregation and separation in Macedonian society, of parallel worlds and lifestyles frequently so clear that the polarization of the two largest ethnic communities becomes evident even in the institutions of the state.

Many examples testify to the fact that the use of ethnic community symbols in all spheres of life does not support the creation or strengthening of a consistent, stable contemporary idea for a civic nation (Kolstø 2006: 678). This is shown also in the results from the recent survey carried out. In order to get a clear picture of the attitudes the citizens have towards the state, the state strategy, and the state and national symbols, IPSOS Strategic Puls in September 2011 conducted a survey of 1500 respondents in the seven Western Balkans countries, including Macedonia. The survey results show that the mean score of loyalty towards the national idea in Macedonia was 6.94 points on a scale running from +14 to –14 points, so this is above the country mean. Among the countries in the region, Bosnia-Herzegovina had the lowest score in terms of

loyalty, with only 0.56 points while the highest score was recorded in Kosovo, with 6,94 points (and 7.88 for ethnic Albanians). Interestingly, the loyalty of the two largest ethnic communities in Macedonia towards the country where they live is markedly different. Ethnic Macedonians showed almost 7.28 loyalty (or almost as high as the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo), whereas the loyalty of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia towards the state was –0.036. This low score shows that their loyalty towards the state and state politics is extremely weak. .

The aggregated figure for the loyalty score of all other ethnic communities living in Macedonia is 6.01.Responses to other questions in the survey show that attitudes on virtually everything is connected to ethnic identity—from the choice of names of streets and schools, the choice of state symbols (flag, anthem, and coat of arms), all the way to the projects for spatial rearrangement through various types of changes in architecture, urbanism, and the construction of monuments,.

In the Skopje 2014 Project, the monuments that are directly related to Macedonian national history as well as the buildings that will house public institutions are intended to showcase the "Macedonian ethnic character" only. Officially they are meant to glorify and celebrate the past of the Macedonian state, but the politicians' insistence on "Macedonian patriotism" seems to have shifted into vulgar ethnic nationalism.

Do the citizens of Macedonia feel that implementation of the Skopje 2014 Project is harmful to inter-ethnic relations between the Macedonians and the Albanians of the country? According to the responses in the 2011 survey, 40.9% of the respondents do not think that this project harms relations between the communities, whereas 34.4% believe it does. Taking into account the 23.1% of respondents who were undecided about this question, we can clearly see that there is a great discrepancy in the views of the public about this project and the future of inter-ethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians.

The strong correspondence between the ethnicity of the respondents and their support for the project casts an even longer shadow on the ability of the Skopje 2014 Project to maintain and strengthen amicable inter-ethnic relations in the country. Nearly 58% of the ethnic Albanian respondents surveyed fully or mostly agree that this urbanistic project is harmful to relations between the communities, while 38% of them are adamant that the project has a bad influence. Among the ethnic Macedonians, 47% believe that generally speaking the project does not harm relations between the communities, and 33% of them are fully convinced that the project does not damage these relations in any way. Among respondents from "other" ethnicities in Macedonia as many as 40% were undecided.

What these data show, then, is that while the Skopje 2014 Project is strongly supported by ethnic Macedonians, most ethnic Albanians are against it. That, of course, widens the gap between these two communities even further, exacerbating the bifurcation of Macedonian society. The indifference

or uncertainty of the "other" ethnicities, which are not directly related to the Skopje 2014 Project, underlines the fact that this project has failed both to consolidate the modern Macedonian nation and to reinforce civic values in the country. The project is indeed harmful to multi-ethnic relations between Macedonians, Albanians, and other ethnic communities.

Table 1. Responses to the question: "do you agree with this statement:
The project Skopje 2014 harms multi-ethnic relations
between Macedonians and Albanians and other ethnic communities?

	Total	Ethnicity		
		Macedonian	Albanian	Other
N	1559	1058	345	156
Fully disagree	27.7	33	14	20
Mostly disagree	13.1	14	9	18
Sum –	40.9	47	22	38
Neither agree nor disagree	23.1	23	16	40
Sum +	34.4	28	58	21
Mostly agree	15.8	15	20	9
Fully agree	18.6	13	38	12
DK	1.7	1	3	1
Total				
Mean	2.8	2.6	3.6	2.7

Impact of the Skopje 2014 project on Macedonian ethnic identity

The first thing that many people in Macedonia will respond when asked about the character of the Macedonian ethnic identity it such a thing does not exist. This denial has been a constant feature in the debate ever since individuals and communities began to identify themselves as Macedonians. It is still effective at several levels and in various ways. Even today, individuals, including representatives of political parties, ethnic communities, and other public institutions in Macedonia regularly, bring into question the ethnic identity of the Macedonians. Various external actors, including neighboring states, also attack and cast doubts on the separate ethnic identity of Macedonians. This is mirrored inside the country as well, as the same attitudes can be found among Macedonian citizens of other ethnicities. Moreover, also some ethnic Macedonians themselves question the existence of a separate Macedonian ethnic identity. This process has been intensifying since 1991, even if it seems to have culminated in recent years.

Debates about the features of the ethnic identity of the Macedonians have been led by politicians, but also by other public figures ("alternative researchers").

These discussions have focused on the issue of origin: on the historical continuity of *Macedonism*[16] on the territory of Macedonia, and, of course, on the nature of the ethnic character of Macedonians. Essentially, these discussions began with a gradual shift away from the official tenets of socialist-era history, which early on came under heavy political and social pressure. Such approaches are evident in the "alternative histories"[17] and in the intense political condemnation of everything linked to the previous social, political, cultural, and economic system. This describes a process of political and public rehabilitation of personages and events that for various reasons were marginalized in the previous system, always pointing out their struggle and aspirations towards an autonomous, independent Macedonia as the most important reason for this marginalization. The war for liberation, the Partisan movement, and, notably, the communist leadership in that war have been exposed to critical examination. Many questions have been raised in relation to the shadowy circumstances in which many Macedonian dignitaries lost their lives in that period.[18] So, the Macedonian public has started to debate the annihilation of the idea of the creation of a contemporary, war and postwar, anti-fascist and, mainly, communist Macedonian community which for the first time could grow into a Yugoslav community on a par with the others—while others complain about the harm done in that period, about how the path towards its autonomous, independent growth into a new and powerful European community, within its ethnic boundaries, has been curbed (Thiessen 2006).

The question of the origin of ethnic Macedonians and their "Slavic" and/or "ancient character" has spurred and accelerated the post-socialist process of redesigning and redefining the Macedonian ethnic identity (Vangeli 2011: 13–32). (See Photos 11 and 12)

16 Researchers of the process of construction of the Macedonian nation, as well as its identity, consider *Macedonism* to be a national movement that started between the two world wars and peaked after the creation of the Macedonian state within the Yugoslavian Federation. *Macedonism* is seen as a movement, but also as an ideology which incorporates the social and political efforts to safeguard what was achieved: the Macedonian state, the standardization of the Macedonian language and political autonomy (Vangeli 2011: 49–50; Maleska 2002)

17 Several Macedonian authors have written in this vein: see for instance Aleksandar Donski (Donski 2002) and Taško Bel ev (Bel ev 1993; Bel ev 1995; Bel ev 1996; Bel ev 2009), They talk of the existence of a Macedonian identity from a historical perspective, tracing it back several thousand years.

18 If we take a look at the last 20 odd years from the perspective of 2012, there have been several debates on this issue, which can be supported by the stenographic notes from the Macedonian Assembly, which show the views of the political parties in regard to these issues. This is especially true of the right-wing parties headed by VMRO DPMNE. Ever since the VMRO DPMNE/DUI coalition came into power in 2006, the opposing views noted in this article have become integrated in nationwide projects in several areas. The Skopje 2014 Project is one such example. Implementation of this project has again cast light on issues and people who had been neglected in the previous systems. This can be illustrated by the erection of the memorial to Metodija Andonov – ento, the construction of the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Statehood and Independence, as well as the building of the VMRO Museum and the Museum of the Victims of Communism.

Photo 11.
Ss. Cyril and Methodius,
Slavic Enlighteners

Photo 12.
Alexander phalange soldier

Essentially this question is a reaction to the concept of "independence" of the people and the fact that politicians have misused it in order to give one particular ethnic community, the ethnic Macedonians, the "historic right" to control a certain territory. In Macedonia of the 1990s, the important issue of the "ethno-genesis" of the ethnic Macedonians became a hot issue. Certain groups who have striven to abolish the socialist models of thinking, examined the issue of the origin of the ancient Macedonians and Alexander the Great, seeking to trace the ethno-genetic lineage of the ethnic Macedonians back to them. Their theories gradually supplanted the idea that Macedonians have Slavic roots and pushed out earlier theories about the age of this community (Slavevska 1992; Tupurkovski 1993; 1994; 1997; 1999). The search for Macedonian identity entered the *antiquization* phase, which reached its peak after the VMRO–DPMNE-led coalition came into power in 2006. This approach to identity policies was most evident in the activities of the Macedonian state institutions. The government, headed by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, claimed that what some people dismissed as *antiquization* was in fact an attempt to "unite" the entire Macedonian past and rekindle Macedonian national pride (Vangeli 2011: 57–59). This policy can be illustrated in the decision to rename the Petrovec Airport as Alexander the Great (*Aleksandar Veliki*) Airport; to rename the Brotherhood and unity (*Bratstvo i edinstvo*) motorway as Alexander of Macedon Motorway (*Aleksandar Makedonski*), to display original ancient artifacts in front of the Macedonian government in 2007, and so on.

This new understanding of the ethnic identity of the Macedonians has also been supported by comprehensive archaeological research, supposed to reveal the historical roots of the glorious antiquity of the Macedonian people. A main protagonist in these projects has been the director of the Cultural Heritage Protection Office, Pasko Kuzman, who is today also one of the most easily recognizable faces of the VMRO DPMNE government. In a documentary shown

on Macedonian television stations, he claimed that the grave of Alexander the Great is in fact on Macedonian territory, but that its discovery would cause a third World War (Vangeli 2011: 109).

In this sense, the myriad of monuments, new facilities, and neo-baroque and neo-classical buildings and facades of the Skopje 2014 Project have turned the center of the city, especially the central square called Macedonia, into a commemorative landscape of ethnic Macedonian history from antiquity until today (Foote, Tooth & Arvay 306). In what ways does the Skopje 2014 Project influence the image of Skopje? Specifically, does it turn what was an open city, a symbol of international peace, solidarity, and understanding into a claustrophobic place, full of spaces of ethnic exclusiveness?

Goran Janev and Blaž Križnik, two researchers who have explored the mapping of the symbolic reconstruction of Skopje, point out that many European cities throughout history have changed from being monumental 19th or 20th century national capitals to becoming the globally integrated, open cities we know today. The history of the city of Skopje, however, is different—almost the reverse (Janev & Križnik 1, 2).

Generally speaking, the development of contemporary Skopje is identified with the period following the 1963 earthquake. In that catastrophe more than 1,000 people lost their lives, while some 120,000 were left homeless. Nearly 70% of the dwellings and public facilities in the city were either destroyed or damaged beyond repair (Mijalkovi and Urbanek, 2011: 13).

Skopje then became a symbol of solidarity, since many countries and many famous architects, in a display of solidarity with the people of Skopje, participated in its reconstruction. Under the patronage of the UN, the aim was to build a new, open metropolis for the current residents as well as for those in the Republic who were yet to move to Skopje. Thus, in 1965, in order to realize their idea of "the open city of Skopje," a Special Fund of the UN together with the government of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and the International Architects' Association, invited forty Yugoslav and four international architectural companies to present proposals for the "Skopje center general plan" (Mijalkovi & Urbanek, 2011: 27). The recommendations of the international jury of experts included the following principles:

– The Vardar River, hitherto considered a physical and symbolic boundary that divided the city into two halves, should be converted into a unifying element by making both river banks one whole;
– The highest natural point in Skopje, the *Kale*, should not be burdened with tall structures, but instead be made a focal point of human activity by erecting cultural and recreational facilities;
– The old bazaar, i.e. the old city center, should not be turned into a "folk museum," but be restored and developed as an integral part of the modern city center;

– Living quarters should achieve the desired density by combining tall and low buildings, especially in the northern part of the city centre.

– The new traffic arteries should intertwine into the scenery and integrate the city center on both sides of the river (Mijalkovi & Urbanek, 2011: 27–28).

Kenzo Tange, a leading Japanese architect, won the public competition with his project. As noted by Mijalkovi & Urbanek (2011: 28), even though Tange believed that "the architect translates the structures of contemporary society into spatial structures," he was also forced "to deal with the ethnic reality of the Balkan city. The differences in structure and social conditions between the two sides of the city had a major influence on planning." There were two main elements in Tange's plan: a city wall and a city gate. The city wall encompassed the old and the new core of the city center with densely populated tall and low buildings, which were intended for up to 30,000 inhabitants. "The city gate" was an umbrella term for all major public facilities, as well as communication points like the train and the bus stations. "The gate was the center of the East–West axis, and was supposed to become the economic center of the city" (Mijalkovi & Urbanek, 2011: 28).

The core of the city center was to contain all public institution buildings and two central squares, one on either bank of the Vardar River. The traditional North/South axis, outlined by the Stone Bridge, would connect Maršal Tito Square on the south side and Freedom Square (*Ploštad sloboda*) on the north side. The East/West axis was intended to mark the symbolic center of the Republic, and, of course, would boast the building of the Central Committee of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia.

The 1963 Skopje reconstruction and modernization project resulted in a dramatic reconfiguration of home space and domestic practices, but was also reflected in the public space. As Keith Brown (1994) contends in his analysis of the spatial development of Skopje in the socialist era, modern Skopje seems to have cut its ties with the country which is an integral part of the Macedonian national sentiment. As a result, "some ethnic Macedonians (...) feel they have been robbed of a part of their authentic character" (Brown 1994: 327). In the public space of the post-earthquake Skopje, certain historic facilities were preserved, including most of the churches and mosques, the Skopje Kale fortress, and the Stone Bridge. These historic markers were joined by new monuments, generally commemorating events from World War II or individuals credited with securing freedom and the socialist set-up in Macedonia. As a result of these urban changes, the social and public spaces in Skopje were transformed: "instead of living in a city with its own history, the residents of the new Skopje were presented with a modern, urban landscape, into which the past was written only at various, discrete points; a landscape from which character had been effaced, but which was pregnant with identity" (Brown 1994: 327).

By 1980 the reconstruction of Skopje was largely completed, but some work remained: this was especially evident in the construction of the facilities planned to be within the perimeter of the city wall in the northern part of the center. According to Mijalkovi and Urbanek, as well as to many urban planners and researchers of the social aspects of urban space, the central area around the Vardar River was never completed in line with Tange's project, and never managed to become a unifying nucleus. On the contrary, it morphed into an urbanistic abyss. Frequently mentioned in this context is the area around the former bus station, which is now the Holocaust Museum, as well as the area between the buildings of the Macedonian National Theatre, Macedonian Opera and Ballet, and the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

For more than 20 post-socialist years, the city of Skopje managed somehow without appropriate urbanistic planning, and the development of the city center was not regulated or organized according to Kenzo Tange's plan (Mijalkovi & Urbanek, 2011: 27–28). The identity and political pluralism of the first 20 years of Macedonian independence was reflected in its urbanistic, architectural, and monumental arrangement. Political apathy, heavy commercialization, the lack of transparency and corrupt management of the public space in the center of Skopje became part of the social life of the people of this city.

The changes in the rearrangement of the social space in Macedonia increased in intensity after the 2001 armed conflict, with the enactment of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and the implementation of major laws stemming from the Agreement. The decentralization process and the new administrative division of Macedonian municipalities in 2004 were the biggest contributing factors to the changes in the city of Skopje. The previously adjacent rural municipality of Saraj, inhabited predominantly by Albanians, now became one of the municipalities of the city of Skopje. The physical and demographical appearance and composition of the city changed. The percentage of ethnic Albanians rose from 15.3% to 20.67%, and the threshold required for Albanian to become the second official language in the city of Skopje was thus passed.[19]

In 2006, after coming into power, the right-wing, Christian Democrat, and nationalist government of VMRO–DPMNE increasingly became involved in issues related to Macedonian national identity redefinition. Thus, after 60 years, the Center Municipality in coordination with the VMRO–DMNE ruling party started a procedure for redesigning the Skopje center from scratch. The new plan was drawn up by IN–PUMA (Mijalkovi & Urbanek, 2011: 76), a private institute for planning, urbanism, and traffic. At the time of this writing,

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19 According to point 6.6 of the Ohrid Framework Agreement: "In the municipalities where at least 20% of the population is made up of a certain community, the language of this community shall be considered an official language, in addition to the Macedonian language. The local authorities shall decide whether the languages spoken by less than 20% of the population in the municipality would be used in the public bodies" (Ohrid Framework Agreement, 2001).

it does not have a website available, so the principle of transparency has not been respected (Koteska, 2011: 1).

After the new plan for the layout of the Skopje center and the rapid and non-transparent procedure for approval of the changes to the urbanistic plans of the Skopje center were completed, the "Sculpture Project" was launched (Chaos and Grotesque, 2010; Gelevski, 2010; They're Stealing a City, 2010). More than fifty sculptures were erected in the center of the city, allegedly in an attempt "to move Skopje closer to the image of an ideal democratic city, where citizen participation can be seen even in the sculptures themselves." As Mijalkovi and Urbanek conclude, the "Sculpture Project" "essentially displays the thirst of the party in power for 'an end to politics'. The matter at hand is a common approach of contemporary urbanism and part of the transitional decorative aesthetics that turns the post-socialist society into global capitalism." (Mijalkovi and Urbanek 2011, 79)

Janev and Križnik describe this process as "nationalistic interventions in public space," and the events in the city as "a reverse transformation of Skopje from an open city to the capital of the nation" (Janev & Križnik 2008, 6). The eruption of nationalism or, at least, expressions of latent nationalism, may lead to Skopje changing from an open city to a claustrophobic city full of exclusive spaces (2008, 7).

Conclusions

Monuments and newly constructed public facilities are actively produced and consumed (Johnson 1995, 295). The development of extra-local memories is key for a social mobilization in the "imaginary community" of the nation (Anderson 2006) and the super-state, and the new memories are essential for "collective amnesia" or the forgetting of old memories (Lowenthal 1996). Political and national elites invent rituals intended to "assert continuity through the appropriate historic past, by organizing ceremonies/parades and mass gatherings and thus creating new ritual space" (Johnson 1995, 295).

The negotiation for the meanings of the key events and persons in Macedonian history at the end of the first decade of the 21st century in the Republic of Macedonia has reached a phase in which these are being substantified through various forms of patriotism and commemoration.

Skopje has become the central *topos* of the inscription and re-inscription of Macedonian identity by means of a conglomerate of public buildings and monuments that are being erected simultaneously in a small and relatively limited space. This has fueled extensive debates on the current and future influence of this project on the society and cultural life in the Republic of Macedonia today.

The Skopje 2014 Project examined in this article, monuments that are strictly related to ethnic Macedonian history, as well as the other facilities of public institutions, are meant to showcase only the "Macedonian ethnic character," glorifying and celebrating the Macedonian past. The politicians' insistence on "Macedonian patriotism" seems to be shifting into vulgar ethnic nationalism. It is evident that concepts of ethnic nationalism of the Macedonian communities have a serious impact on the structure and character of the Macedonian nation.

As to the influence of this project on the Macedonian ethnic identity (which brings to mind the fact that it is being denied by many actors both internally and abroad), it seems to be reaching new peaks of nationalistic expression. This can be seen in the questions as to the origin and character of the ethnicity of Macedonians. That debate is still underway, a point which supports the widely accepted understanding of identity as a dynamic category.

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Ljupcho S. Risteski

Spomenici i urbani nacionalizam. Projekat Skoplje 2014.

Apstrakt: Sa istraživa kog stanovišta, spomenici ve neko vreme nisu samo ukrasi jav-
nog prostora, ve tako e i sredstva za isticanje politi kih i kulturnih konotacija s kojima
su dovedeni u vezu. Spomenici su društveni simboli, a njihova simboli ka dimenzija
tesno je skop ana sa društvenim pam enjem i politikama identiteta. Ovaj lanak pruža
analizu projekta Skoplje 2014, koji podrazumeva izgradnju više od trideset spomenika
i gra evina u Skoplju i koji je pokrenuo najšire debate o aktuelnim i budu im uticajima
ovog projekta na društvo i kulturni život.

Klju ne re i: Projekat Skoplje 2014, spomenici, urbanizam, nacionalizam, Makedonija.