The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban setting.

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Challenges to Democratic Representation in the Public Space of Societies in Transition:
case study of the city of Skopje

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Abstract

Today the reality in most European cities is that they have grown to become places where diverse realities mix, social interaction happen and cultural expressions materialize, generating conflicts related to multiculturalism. Management of cultural diversity at city level positions two dilemmas. The first related to the tension among the cultural expression of the state culture and the recognition of groups with political demands and cultural expression different from those of the majority and the second, the subversion of the equality principle when rights based on group identities are claimed (Tatjer, 2004: 248).

How can the cities accommodate cultural difference? What kind of practices of the public domain and shared public space should be developed so that the participation and representation of different ethno-cultural groups and their cultural right are taking part in defining and redefining city`s boundaries, use and management?

The paper looks at these questions from the point of view of the city of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia and its urban practices which profoundly cut and pasted fragments of its history, image and identity.

Introduction

Access to publicly shared space and achievement of cultural diversity in shared public spaces pose a great challenge for multicultural post-socialist societies with experience of violent inter-ethnic conflict. The transitional process taking place during the last decade of XX century and the beginning of the millennium in the countries of the Central and South-Eastern Europe was characterised among all with severe social changes and value break (ideologically and politically) within the individual and the collective matrices of identity through which people and social groups had been functioning for generations. The value-vacuum inflicted social misbalance and distortion of the democratic institutions (which were designed in constitutions and desired in political programmes of parties) into a new practice of collectivist identification (Frckoski, 2000: 1). As a result of the equilibrium of floating values and practices in post-communist societies, a magma of confused identities and fear for the future induced collective paranoid attributes which was subjected to populist manipulations and nationalist communitarism (ibid.).

In such context, the dominance in the public realm was utilized by the groups in power (in the context of SEE the ethnic majority group(s) and its management and symbols represented the vision and standards of that group(s), setting in such way a framework for understanding reality. Cultural forms and expressions not fitting into the agenda as those of the minority interest groups and ethno-cultural minorities were excluded from representation within and identification with 'the public sphere'. As a result, the 'public space' had become increasingly 'unshared', introducing on one hand, constraints toward democratic exploitation of multicultural society, while on the other, leading to a need for more open debate on the management of diversity.

This becomes evident on a city level. The cities are described as "the best place where mechanisms and practices leading toward multicultural society in the context of liberal democracy can be developed" (Tatjer, 2004: 248). Tatjer (2004) assigns such an important role to the cities in the prospect of their capacity to accommodate cultural difference and facilitate coexistence among different ethno-cultural groups. Both pose a driving force for cities` social and economical development. Moreover, in her views, cities can create opportunities and mechanisms for ethno-cultural minority groups to address difficulties that the state has not foreseen and allow existence of sense of belonging that does not clash with different cultural identities (ibid. p.249). However, she argues and reminds us not to idealise the capacity of cities or to propose a panacea for the conflicts that the presence of ethnical diversity can create in the society (ibid). Therefore, taking insight into the mechanisms that facilitate integration at city level and improves the social interaction and intercultural sociability in the public space is fully justifiable and essential learning for the cities of difference in which we live today.

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How can the cities accommodate cultural difference? What kind of practices of the public domain and shared public space should be developed so that the participation and representation of different ethno-cultural groups and their cultural right are taking part in defining and redefining city`s boundaries, use and management?

The paper looks at this question from the point of view of the city of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia and its urban practices which profoundly cut and pasted fragments of its history, image and identity. The city of Skopje is undergoing a massive architectural reconstruction titled "Project: Skopje 2014", setting as the final target new makeover of the country`s capital until 2014.

As usual, this story has two sides. While the proponents of the project claim to make efforts to lastly transform Skopje in a metropolitan city and an architectural and urban integrity, the picture is much more complex. In fact the project intertwines the city cultural image with the Macedonia's national identity, compensating in such way for the political battles that the Macedonian Government is unable to triumph. The project is labeled as mono-national, gender insensitive, defensive, and past-oriented and haunted by the romantic myth of cultural creationism. As in other cases, the re-imagining of the city of Skopje is an expression of fear and aversion, fear of change, particularly, of the changing ethnic composition of the neighborhood, which Sandercock (2000: 15) argues to grow and are increasingly becoming constitutive elements of planning practice in cities of difference. How might planning and management process respond to such fears?

Actions taking place in Skopje surely support the need for setting a critical context for managing cultural diversity in shared public spaces that could work towards democratic and diverse society.

 Introducing diversity research into management of public space

Traditional diversity research has been largely focused on business-related aspects such as employment policies, organisational identity, productivity, customer relations, business ethics,

etc. An important aspect in introducing diversity research into management of public space, hence, mainstream diversity management into city development studies is reconsideration of concepts as, social dynamics, public space, governance, integrating diversity. Further, a short intro on these concepts follows.

a. Social dynamics in public space

The studies of public space and the social dynamics happening within have been developed in direction of providing a greater understanding of its potentialities as a structural element of cities. Several authors, such as Lynch (1960), Jacobs (1961), Portas (1968), Lefevre (1973), Borja (1977), consider that 'the city is the public space', leading to consideration that the public space plays an important role regarding formal, economical, social and environmental issues (Pinto, Remesar, Brandão, Nunes da Silva, 2010: 1).

While public space is usually considered neutral ground, which is open to all citizens, in practice, it varies widely in the ways it is used by different groups and individuals, making the concepts of 'public' and 'space' both being open to interpretation and contestation (Briggs, 1963; Sennett, 1974; Habermas, 1989; Goheen, 1998). Individual usage and social interactions in public spaces are influenced by many factors, including how the spaces connect and the design, maintenance and management of the natural and the built environment (Holland, Clark, Katz and Peace, 2007: 1).

The public space plays a key role in the urban structure and city life, becoming a privileged element in order to promote territorial cohesion. It thus becomes possible to think of public space as an element able to promote continuity and order the territory, but also with a natural ability to create and maintain strong local centrality, environmental quality, economic competitiveness and sense of citizenship (Borja, 2003) (Pinto, Remesar, Brandão, Nunes da Silva, 2010: 1).

Claiming social space and being seen in public becomes a way for social groups to legitimate their right to belong in society. Yet because they can be used by everyone, public spaces are frequently considered contested spaces; places where opposition, confrontation, resistance and subversion can be played out over 'the right to space' (Mitchell, 1995, 2003). These contestations may involve people from a range of social groups based on gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)ability, social class and so on (Valentine, 1996; Malone, 2002). They may centre on the different meanings attached to different spaces, or draw on deeper struggles about social representations, or collective 'myths', about spaces (Cresswell, 1996 according to Holland, Clark, Katz and Peace, 2007: 1).

The demand for cultural diversity, in practice, often results in greater segregation and differentiation. These unexpected effects are combined with the dimension of antagonism in the

'Us and Them'. Nevertheless, one of the functions of culture, in its widest sense -as a way of being, doing, feeling and saying- is to shape the relationships between individuals and groups, in order to build common sense.

b. Diversity management: understanding of the concept

Diversity management is considered to be the latest development in policies and strategies across the world aimed to get excluded minorities better represented in the public life. The concept of 'diversity management' originated from practitioners and academics who concerned by business purpose and market advantage undertook researches related to diversity of the workplace and the workforce. The basic business logic of this approach is to encourage working environment of cultural diversity where peoples' differences are valued and enables people to work to their full potential, be more creative and more productive (Wrench, 2007: 3). According to Wrench (2007), some of the advantages of diversity management lie in the more positive approach toward diversity as opposite to avoiding transgressions of anti-discrimination laws. In his view, diversity management approach avoids some of the 'backlash' problems associated with affirmative action, as unlike previous equality strategies, diversity management is not seen as a policy solely directed towards the interests of excluded or under-represented minorities. Rather it is seen as an inclusive policy, and one which therefore encompasses the interests of all employees, including white males (ibid.).

The practice of diversity management in the USA is by definition multidimensional and the dimension of ethnicity is generally near the top in priority for managers in organisations. This is also the 'angle' which has perhaps most stimulated interest in the subject by practitioners and politicians in Europe. European governments are becoming increasingly concerned about issues of the social inclusion and exclusion of immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities within their borders (Wrench, 2007: 5). In that respect there is need to shift the conceptual framework from a business model to a people-based model and to consider integration in a wider social context, as cities and communities.

c. Approaches to cultural diversity in a wider social context

There are varieties of policy models for approaching cultural diversity. They originate from different countries in a different political context, national self-understandings of power, place in the world, culture and the position of others, all which framed the concept of thinking and policy-making related to cultural pluralism in the era of nation state building and colonialism. Today these conceptions shape the way the states are dealing with economic reconstruction, consumer capitalism based on a mass migrant working class and a new international order (Bloomfield and Bianchini, 2004: 50). Bloomfield and Bianchini (2004) identified five distinct policy approaches to immigration, integration and citizenship, as:

- corporate multiculturalism in Britain and the Netherlands;
- civic integration in France;
- the 'melting pot' approach in the USA;
- ethnic nationalism and the *Gastarbeiter* system in Germany;
- The Southern European laissez-faire unregulated regime in countries of former emigration, and its shift to a restrictive regime as countries of new immigration.

They also consider 'transculturalism' (a paradigm derived from international organisation, as UNESCO) as a sixth approach to cultural diversity which has greatly influenced cities in Europe (ibid.).

From a critical point of view, it is legitimate to ask how applicable are the existing diversity management models to the management of public space in post-conflict societies and do the local contexts, politics and culture create unique situation that makes the attempts toward more universal model superficial and in that sense, a specific model based on sustainable social dynamic in public space more feasible?

Maja Muhić (2004) emphasises that these multicultural models are highly contextualised and an off spring of different analytical and historical framework in the countries, and therefore, in her view, 'it is highly questionable if not dangerous to try to apply these models' in the Balkan region. She further claims that much of the supposedly successful models in the Western democracies or immigrant nations are functioning because they had none of the difficulties that the countries in the Balkan region have faced. In her view, the pressure toward countries in the Balkan region to apply and adopt Western models of multiculturalism are expression of their neo-colonial pretension and perils and proves that today, the world enters into a worldly, planetary *international capitalism*. In the same time, adoption of Western multicultural models and minority rights is set as accession criteria for entering the European Union. Muhić (2004) concludes that the historical complexities and the multifaceted layers of cohabitation in Eastern and Central Europe may prove that the practices of post-socialist countries are far more instructive for the future theoretical understanding as well as practical application of multiculturalism than those proposed and imposed by the Western democracies.

d. *Models of cities that integrate diversity in governance*

In general, there are two main approaches in dealing with multiculturalism, a partial and a universal one, different at both normative and conceptual level. At conceptual level, a communitarian (partial) and liberal theories (universal) collide; the former, defending a society based on community and on allegation of group over individual rights, and the latter, positing the individual as the sole source of legitimacy (Tatjer, 2004: 249-250). At normative level, this conflict is translated into law and defines the ways in which universalism and partial approaches conceives mechanisms of regulating multiculturalism. While universalism proposes

accommodation as the guiding rule in the public arena, the partial, proposes establishment of specific approaches for specific sectors. The universal approach accommodates difference in each of us and the recognition of difference rules out genuine integration of ethno-cultural minority groups and serves as a means for avoiding a discussion of the inequalities of the capitalist paradigm. This approach is also criticised for benchmarking Western cultural norms as the standard to which other cultures should adjust to, primarily those which assume equality of all members of a community (Fenster, 1999: 148 according to Sandercock, 2000: 17).

In opposition, while the partialists risk the loss if a more general vision of regulating multiculturalism, they see the recognition of difference as a means to achievement of justice and equality and claim that different civilisations have different cultures which need to be understood and judged within their own terms which means acknowledging gender and class inequalities as part of those cultures (Fenster, 1999: 148 according to Sandercock, 2000: 17). Then again, they are silent to the idea that ethno-cultural minority groups have to adopt the dominant culture and privatise their culture as a condition for integration (Tatjer, 2004: 250), moreover, this approach is criticised for taking stance of cultural relativism where acknowledgement of and respect for cultural difference can be in conflict with the realisation of human rights and poses a dilemma of how much policies can offer flexible solutions which may be amenable to change over time, as cultural values are likely to change or what Tovi Fenster (1999) terms as "mapping the boundaries of social change" (according to Sandercock, 2000: 17).

The discussion over the particular and universalism brings at front the question of which integration model can accomplish the goals of multiculturalism/interculturalism and will it work in the cities? (Tatjer, 2004: 250). Furthermore, a particular dilemma of `co-existing in cities of difference' poses the question of what it might mean to manage difference in ways that could be transformative rather than repressive (Sandercock, 2000: 13). Furthermore, Sandercock (2000: 22) asks whether by framing the issue of cultural diversity in the language of `managing (cities of) differences are we still trying to dream the rational city? Does `management' always imply, as Foucauldians would have it, containment, control, manipulation?

The right to difference and the right to the city

Urban segregation on ethnical, cultural or other basis is harmful for city cohesion and it is why, new models of diversity management are needed. Emanuel Castells is among the authors who believe that increased cultural and ethnic diversity in the city will essentially compel city administration to essentially manage cultural exchange arising from ethnic difference and to solve situations of inequality caused by a lack of integration (Tatjer, 2004: 252). In this respect, citizen's participation is regarded as important aspect of city governance; furthermore, promoted social dynamics and sociability in public space could accommodate the demands of the ethno-

national minority groups (Tatjer, 2004: 253). The understanding of public space in this paper is similar to the syntagma 'intercultural space', based on the idea of singe shared diverse public space rather on organisational and socially separate spaces. According to Bloomfield and Bianchini (2004: 39), equal access and participation to a single public space which reflects the diversity of the citizens in addition to the obligations of citizenship can lead to overcoming of ethnic segregation. Kymlicka and Norman`s "theories of ethnic conflict" pose a multicultural integration based on the existence of common institutions which respect ethnic identity (Tajter, 2004: 253).

All these questions will again be touched upon through the analysis of the urban practices in the city of Skopje.

The city of Skopje: The political, economic and social image of the city

The city of Skopje is the capital of the Republic of Macedonia and represents its largest political, economic, educational and cultural centre. Its original name Skupi dates back to 695 A.D. at the time the arrival of the Slavic tribes to the Balkans. Throughout the history it was often concord, destroyed, rebuilt, and struck by natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods etc. After the World War II, the city started gaining a contemporary appearance and at that time its main cultural institutions were established. On July 26, 1963 the city was struck by a catastrophic earthquake that left the city in ruins, and destroyed almost all of the city's cultural places. It was thanks to the solidarity of peoples from all over the world that Skopje was rebuilt and renewed. The city of Skopje lies on the banks of the river Vardar with an area of 1.818 square kilometers and administrative division of ten (10) Municipalities. According to the 2002 Population, Households and Housing Census for the Republic of Macedonia (State Statistical Office, 2002) 506.926 inhabitants live in the city.

Skopje is estimated at approximately 750-800,000 inhabitants and its composition reflects the multiethnic and the multicultural character of Macedonia with its population of 66.75% of Macedonians, 20.49% of Albanians, 4.63% of Roma, 2.82% of Serbs, 1.7% of Turks and the rest of Vlachs, Bosnians and others (ibid). The minorities are represented with more than 50% in three municipalities, in two municipalities the minority is Albanians and in the third municipality the minority population is Roma.

Situated along the river Vardar, which threatens to become strong geographical, historical and psychological border among cultures, Skopje is labeled as "the most desired place to live in Macedonia". Because of that, the city is characterised by heavy urbanization, strong migration from the centre to the periphery all of which causes the city's urban parts to slowly merge with the neighboring rural municipalities. This trend increases the poverty, the social exclusion, the

spatial and social divide, as well as polarization between rural and urban population. In a nutshell, Skopje is growing into a multicultural, multiethnic centre that will eventually grow into a metropolis with all its problems and advantages.

Public policy on diversity at national and city level with particular focus on application of diversity management

The process of decentralisation and reforms of the local government were initiated in 2005. The increased powers of local structures of governance are linked to the greater prerogatives of communities to self-govern themselves. It is why, it was expected that the decentralisation process would lead toward improvement of the inter-ethnic relations on local level and would promote the participation of non-ethnic Macedonians in the public arena. Moreover, it was expected to upgrade the implementation of the principle included in the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) –*equitable representation of ethnic communities in the public arena*.

Nearly ten years after the signing of the OFA, the decentralisation process is rather advanced. However, regarding the inter-ethnic relations, physical segregations can be noted, be it in local administration, primary and secondary schools, professional and cultural associations and CSOs. Policy decisions and changes are made without the political and ethnical consensus, although it was promoted as the basic element in decision-making processes on both national and local level. The latest examples taking place in the city of Skopje, moreover, the several conflicted decisions in the educational field, shed light to the level of competences and skills held by the public administration for management of intercultural dialogue in ethnically heterogeneous communities. Such events lead toward ethnic polarisation of the citizenship and further segregation may threaten the cohesion of the state, if this process is not accompanied by building common values and a common vision for the future development of the country, which are crucial preconditions for a sustainable multiethnic state like Macedonia.

This poses a challenge for the institutional, political, social and cultural setting on local level to provide policy responses sensitive to multiethnic issues.

Why considering the project 'Skopje 2014' as a case study for reviewing democratic representation of minorities?

The selection of the 'Project: Skopje 2014' as a case study for the current review has several reasons. The project came as a tornado on the political, economical, social and cultural scene in the country. Along the politico-economical debate over state priorities, the meaning of the phrases such as, "capital investments" and "unproductive revenues", the socio-cultural

dimension of the project gave rise to questions related to the importance of the identity policy in current times for the country and the role of the state in its creation, the need for revitalisation of the cities, the dividedness of the society on ethnic, religious, faith and political affiliation and the fragmentisation of the civil scene and disempowered citizens to fully participate in the city.

The project received considerable media attention, initiated numerous opinions pools and pro/contra discussions. During a long period of time a public debate over city management and imagining were missing, so the current situation had potentials of a deliberative and participatory democracy based on opportunities for equal participation of all citizens.

But, was it really like this? Were the solutions an after-math of a debate or vice-versa?

Initiated in 2008, in a period of two years, all legal procedures were made, tenders announced, architectural designs instructed, winning solutions selected, integral video animation of the project proliferated through YouTube and only after these events, a debate initiated. In such atmosphere, a criticism given by citizens and professionals was perceived as cacophony which transformed the debate in a useless investment of time, this not resulting in any changes from the initially drafted project plan and ending only as a simulation of democratic participation.

How it all began?

There is an anecdote in the Balkan region about politician`s imaginary of the cities, as seen through the statement of Božidar Vucurević, a mayor of the city of Trebinje which in 1991 served as rear area for the then Yugoslav Army during the siege on Dubrovnik, a UNESCO world heritage site. In one occasion, Vucurević stated: 'If needed, we'll create an even more beautiful and even older Dubrovnik!' This vividly shows the anachronism and unimaginative that politicians hold for the city`s image.

In the case of Skopje, the aforementioned statement complements the actual intentions of the governmental authorities. There is alignment of neoliberal and conservative ideology expressions through which an idea of "more beautiful and older Skopje is built". And it was all only written in the election programme of the currently ruling Demo-Christian party, so 'We', the citizens of Skopje should have know what was about to happen. But did we? No. The citizens of Skopje learnt of the decisions after the fact! Only after dozen bulldozers and building blocks occupied the main square and the pedestrian sidewalks of the river Vardar and intruded the usual urban scenery.

New commercial centers, new hotels, new governmental administrations offices, new philharmonic hall, new justice building, two new bridges, a bridge bedecked with statues of lions, new museum and new theater, a triumphal arch are all springing up, transforming the

centre of town. All in neo-classical and baroque style along with hundred monuments of Macedonian historical and cultural figures, topped with a 30m high statue of Alexander the Great and different statues, all in radius of 2 kilometers and along the central area of the banks of river Vardar.

The procedures were done in silence with the citizenry and at narrow line of legitimacy of decisions taken both at national and local level. There was an announcement in a national news paper with least popularity, known also as a supporter of the current government; there was a commotion in the process of gathering public opinion and organising the legally prescribed public debate scheduled, there were changes in laws which allowed the local self-government of the central city district-the Municipality of Center, to take over portion of the building projects as its Annual Programme of work (as a reminder, the current mayor of the Municipality of Center is supported by the ruling Demo-Christian party) and finally, there were citizen`s clashes among supporters of the project and citizens united under the auspices of First Archi-brigade (students in architecture) and Plastid Slobodan[1] (civil association) which culminated in March 2009.

The project was announced to cost 80 million Euros. However, the realistic projections made by the oppositional parties and the media are exceeding 200 million Euros.

Disorientation of messages (conceptually and ideologically) sent by the central city area

The government decision to rebuild several buildings, hallmarks of pre-earthquake Skopje, in their original form and location in the central area, together with the decision to rename streets, highways and buildings with names of ancient Macedonian figures was presented as a project for reconstructing the authentic identity of Skopje.

Identity is a social construct and as such can be interpreted through the local culture, art, architecture and other forms. However, art and culture can also assure new city identity. Looking from this perspective, Suzana Milevska (2010), art historian from Macedonia, highlights the Solomon Guggenheim museum in Bilbao as a good example of how a city with a new architectural attraction can become recognisable, although the concept doesn`t have any direct link with the oppressed Basque minority identity[2].

Further in her views, Milevska emphasise that although art and architecture can represent a metaphorical echo of the identity and can serve as an active creators of new identities, unfortunately they do not have the potential to resolve fundamental ethnical problems that arise

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[1] Translation: Square Freedom
[2] Interview published at http://okno.mk/node/4932

in multiethnic societies (ibid.). In her opinion, identity politics and ideologies are much more complex that aesthetics and both exceed the domain of art and culture.

This questions the potential of the 'Skopje 2014' to establish itself as a statement of new identity of citizens living in Macedonia and to resolve the identity problems which are burden of the state in the last twenty years.

The current debate of the role of culture, art and architecture in the 'Project: Skopje 2014' can only be simplified in what Chin (1992: 1) describes as:'...politics, power and the ways in which culture is embedded into the social matrix...representation, people`s feeling of infringement (or oppression) and exclusion'. The reason why the project`s critics are so painful is that they strike at the very heart of who people think they are.

The project intervenes into a nation-state building process that itself is rooted in negotiating political realities with almost all neighbors and an understanding of multiculturalism as constitutional category acknowledged after the events happening in the country in 2001. The project promotes the past and the tradition in a way that Nebojša Vilić, an art historian, illustrates as only 'a shelter for the fearfulness, uncreative and close-minded spirit toward risky changes – a safe walk on the way over established and accepted values' (2010: 17).

The values inscribed in the urban vision of Skopje are in Sarkanjac` words (2009) an expression of ideology of confronting with the past and not building new values. In a context where the oppositional reactionary ideology lost power as rectifier of the governing ideology, the urban vision of Skopje can only be an outcome of the conservative ideology (ibid.: 18).

Art historians, architects and a group of citizens interpreted these ideas as a pathological resurrection of the past and creation of a new "reality and truth" which will propagate the supremacy of one ideology over another (the demo-Christian over democratic ideology). The participants of Forum-Skopje 2009 - a meeting of architects, artists, cultural workers, sociologists, philosophers, theoreticians and city planners which took place in Skopje between 8 and 14 June 2009 alerted that there is a lack of a structured institutional discussion concerning the semantics and symbolic meaning of the project`s elements, moreover, there is un-visionary urban plan where churches and contemporary kitsch architecture are promoted as identity milestones. The conclusion of the Forum was that all ideas concerning city development and branding, hence the means used for their appropriation should be critically folded and observed in light of the spatial, historical and social context of the city[3].

As an effect, the renaissance of the authenticity of the cultural past had its impact on the process of revising the notions of national identity and national culture and gave rise to a myth-making

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[3] For more information, please visit http://www.forumskopje.com/

process of the cities' cultural image while underestimating the power of contemporary culture in city branding. The current ideological and instrumental view on culture, the domination of the ethnic majority and the exclusion of different minorities from the public sphere, the aggressive surveillance and expected congruity and subjugation to the governing parties will have strong cultural and psycho-social effects on the new image of Skopje; a new image build upon the conservative ideology that the current government promotes (Vilić, 2009). The cultural practice in Skopje, as Nebojša Vilić, an art historian, describes them are a "schizophrenic wandering between the instrumentalized past, the politicized present and a future lacking ideas". The paradigm based on non-proactive engagement and the lack of novelties in any form, produces complete cacophony, code noise and disorientation of the cultural message. These are an expression of an era without ideas, in which Skopje lives and creates non-progressive view of the future (Vilić, 2009). The idea to re-brand Skopje into a city of public sculptures while putting up 30 sculptures at once into a 1.5 km long walking zone, in Vilić`s view, is not only distasteful but equals to madness. From his point of view, we get an art that we deserve in a sense that it reflects the society in which we live in.

As a protest to the reshaped and visually violating cultural image of Skopje, an anonymous group of architects, urban planners, artists and cultural workers under the pseudonym of Pavel Shatev[4] placed a golden toilet bowl in the centre of Skopje and titled the work "Discharge".

How open the city is?

In the 1960s, after the catastrophic earthquake, the city of Skopje grows out of the solidarity of the world which was severely inflicted in the Cold War, divided into pro-Eastern and pro-Western countries, Berlin was hermetically divided city and under threat of a nuclear war. Significantly, these reconnecting events gave the opportunity to the city to serve as a therapy for all aggressive feelings during the times. As, Milan Mijalkovič (2011), a architect and co-author of the book "Skopje - The World`s Bustard: Architecture of the Divided City" states with little exaggeration: '…one can say that Skopje, the plans and visions for the city saved the world in some way'[5].

In that time, the planning process led by an international team of experts was strongly oriented towards the future. The city was declared an open city, city using the benefits of new technology, a world symbol of solidarity. Then it was believed that the planning area is huge tool to achieve utopia.

Today, however, there is obviously a disappointment regarding the partly realized plan since the

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[4] Controvert Macedonian revolutionary, 1882-1951, whose political ideas on Macedonia are today in part translated in the political ideology of the governing party VMRO-DPMNE
[5] http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=52511956209&id=26&prilog=1&setIzdanie=22291

1960s. Skopje is not certainly a divided city as Belfast, Mostar or Mitrovica from our closest surroundings, but the fact is that Skopje is divided among Macedonians, Albanians and Roma, divided by age, language, alphabet, religion but also through architecture. Each of these groups has its own media, political and educational structures, special centers. Discussing the heterogeneous and multifaceted character of Skopje, Mijalkovič (2011), concludes that urban and architectural Skopje failed to become a unity.

Some of the practices in the past have deepened the gap between communities. On one hand, the residential living was guided by the belief that all people, regardless of their ethnicity, have same needs and on the other, the struggle to create a center that will be a symbol of utopia. Mijalkovič considers both decisions as errors from a architectural standpoint and a path toward segregation in the city (2010). Today Skopje is struggling with housing segregation based on ethnicity while the city central area is a fragmented buffer zone between the two parts. Although, this part of the planning process has high potential for integration and coexistence, the project 'Skopje 2014', in some ways complements this buffer zone. The focus on just one story and only one identity for the city wakes reactions, memories and desires for other truths. Mosque versus church, square "Skender-beg" as opposed to the central square where central element is Alexander the Great.

During 2010 several agencies and media were interested in the public opinion related to project "Skopje 2014", whether the citizens support, what they think of the buildings and monuments and the amount of money spend on this particular project. The daily newspaper *Dnevnik* in the period from 12 to 15 March 2010 conducted an opinion poll on representative sample of citizens from the country and documented that 39 percent of the citizens support the project, out of which 19 percent totally, and 58 percent of the citizens were against the project. Moreover, the survey showed that the project has more support from citizens living in Skopje than from other cities in Macedonia which are not satisfied with the idea of the national budget being spent centrally in Skopje. The survey also showed that although the media had important role in informing and developing critical attitude toward the project, citizens did not received clear idea of the project through the media.

Moreover, the study reports a great division in the views Macedonians and Albanians have regarding the project 'Skopje 2014'. The results showed that 49 percent of Macedonians in full or mostly do not support this project, while the percentage of Albanians who said they do not support is almost double - 86 percent, out of which 82 percent reported that they fully do not support the project.

The building of the National Theatre is supported by 61 percent of the citizens, the Philharmonic building 55, the Constitutional Court 52, the House of Officers 49 percent, the monument of Alexander The Great 47 percent, while the bridge Eye has support from 41 percent of the

citizens. Thirty-four percent believe that if we build a church on the square, we should there also build a mosque, and just as we should have a church but not a mosque. Almost one in three respondents (28%), however, thinks that we should build neither church nor mosque.

Despite the analysis and citizens views, the Government and the local authority of the Municipality of Centar, under whose territorial jurisdiction the make-over is made, continue with their initial plan.

Conclusion

As in other cases, the re-imagining of the city of Skopje is an expression of fear and aversion, fear of change, particularly, of the changing ethnic composition of the neighborhood, which Sandercock (2000: 15) argues to grow and are increasingly becoming constitutive elements of planning practice in cities of difference. How might planning and management process respond to such fears?

The vision for the development of Skopje should be created through a forum for the identity of the city. As Mijalkovič (2011) concludes: 'through use of history in the public area, the city accidentally awakens a potential where space, in this case Skopje, would be a mediator in these regional conflicts, without exaggerating the influence of history'. In this pursuit, urban processes should be reassessed, new public functions to be implemented and new residential functions applied. The city needs defining of its geopolitical role, which it will play in the European context, one that is realistic and desirable, and at best original. In the process of determining the future role, it seems that it is especially important to evaluate the different origin of the 'bastard' and space to maneuver as it opens'.

The main conclusion of the paper is that: **Increasing diversity challenges intergroup relations in the cities and the social dynamics in the public space. The expectations and demands of the ethnically diverse citizens are of concern for both city representatives and different ethno-cultural groups. Successful management of the dynamics among diverse stakeholders taking place in the public space lies in the development of solidarity practices, city consultation processes and institutional reform, participatory process of local governance, intercultural competence and intercultural sociability which enhance citizenship, inclusion and interaction among citizens in the public space.**

Finally, governmental authorities and institutions should reconsider the democratic governance they practice, to accept public debate, discussion and exchange of ideas. A debate of these historically needed and socially important issues are debates for the future and not for the present.

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