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Kujtesa kolektive nëpërmjet arkitekturës në qytetin e Prishtinës

Collective memory through architecture in the city of Prishtina

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Abstract. This research aims to focus on the topic of “collective memory”, what does collective memory mean and what are the main approaches to its use and preservation? Which is the role of Architecture as a discipline in all this vicious circle of collective memory, considering as a special case study the drastic transformation in the city of Prishtina. On this occasion, the golden periods and the flourishing years of architecture in Prishtina will be presented, in order to a better understanding of the genesis of Modernism in Prishtina and the socio-economic and political factors that influenced the destruction of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the city, years and architecture which represents the most extraordinary connection with the collective memory in the city of Prishtina.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Modernism, Brutalism, Prishtina.

Introduction

“The city is the best organ of memory, which so far man has managed to create”

Trying to understand, theorize, and define “collective memory” is fraught with many difficulties. First and foremost, the term is derived from a number of disciplines, including History (and Historical Studies / Historiography), Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural and Literary Studies, Psychology, and Political Science. Second, the study of collective memory certainly, and rightly, presents a range of theoretical and methodological dilemmas for the social sciences, suggesting the overwhelming complexity involved in this field of study.

Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist, first used and introduced the phrase “collective memory” in his book *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925 [1925]) and in his posthumously published *Collective Memory* (1980 [1950]).

Halbwachs mainly builds his hypothesis on a collective memory perspective as an individual, socially manifested psychological capacity. His conception of collective memory is based on a contrast between collective and individual memory. Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1877-1945, pp. 22-44) calls individual memory “personal” and “autobiographical” while collective memory “social” and “historical”. After Halbwachs, various scholars from different academic disciplines have used the concept of collective memory as an interdisciplinary concept.

“Collective memory equips both the individual and the society with a time map, unifying a nation or community through time as well as space. Collective memory specifies the time parameters of the past and future, where we came from and where we are going, and also why we are here now.”

The concept of collective memory did not remain exclusively as a sociological and psychological term. It gradually entered the architecture and literature of urban design after the 1980s. Aldo Rossi the Italian neo-rationalist architect, is the first critic to use the concept of “collective memory” in the environmental design literature.

Rossi's critique does not focus on the sterility of forms or the rejection of stylistic images in modern architecture, but rather, as the title suggests, on the neglect and destruction of the city, as the repository of human collective memory. He reminds us that individual reputation and achievement are less important than our own cities. Rossi's denial of the importance of scale in the city context is a direct attack on most twentieth-century urbanism. Aldo Rossi referred to the city as history in a part of his famous book, *The Architecture of The City*, and then distinguished two historical methods in the study of the city (Rossi, 1982, p. 128)

- *The city as a material artifact built with time and preserving the traces of time*
- *History as the study of the formation and current structure of urban artifacts*

Reflection on the degradation of modern Post-World War II architecture in Prishtina

Kosovo, which after World War II remained (under the Serbian Federation) part of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was built and deconstructed several times in the name of progress and prosperity, with the nation working hard to absorb influence from neighboring countries. This process was adopted under the name of modernity and the construction of a modern identity in Kosovo. In these political and social circumstances, Yugoslav architecture influenced (Gjinolli, 2015, p. 28). However, it is the Byzantine and Islamic architecture that has given Kosovo most of the iconic buildings in today's collective memory, such as churches, mosques, Turkish baths, open bazaars, etc., while various political movements have forced major changes in Kosovo's architecture and culture identity of Kosovo's cities, which until the late 1940s retained their medieval structure, begin to change dramatically in the name of modernity in the post-war period.

According to (Gjinolli, 2015, pp. 156-158) the spirit of modernity brought about the greatest transition in Kosovo cities through the process of urban regeneration. In this period, with the new administrative system, there was a greater demand for adequate infrastructure. Through various legal acts, many private properties became public property in order to assist in the development of new administrative centers. In this spirit, new urban nuclei were built, differentiating themselves from pre-existing historic centers. As a result of the strengthening of the labor force (Ismajli, 2011, pp. 131-145) says that the opening of factories, the promotion of education and employment in various administrative positions, the number of people in the cities of Kosovo began to increase. Therefore, it was understandable that there was an urgent need for the construction of new city centers, the growth of cities as part of a new urban movement, the construction of a large number of industrial and public buildings, the development of new neighborhoods and development of tourist spots.

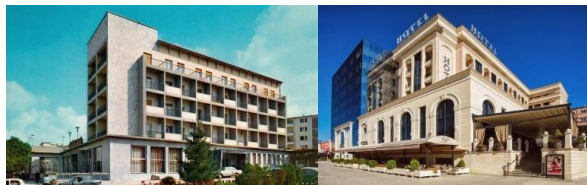


Figura 1 Hotel "Bozhur" Then vs Now (Source: Photo borrowed from the website <https://www.facebook.com/220136944685004/photos/a.753938474638179/3271136602918341/?type=3&heater>)



Figura 2 "Rilindja" Press Then vs Now (Source: Photo borrowed from the website <https://www.porta3.mk/kazhuvanja-na-otvoreniot-chas-vo-chest-na-profesorot-georgi-konstantinovski/>)

The role of architecture as a discipline in the memory of the city

There has always been a strong relationship between the natural needs of the environment and man in the formation of cities, based on these relationships cities are formed, developed and experience so many transformations over time, which have changed them and affected their appearance in different aspects. So cities, or rather their characteristics, are the results of the overlap of various transformative factors (Rossi, 1982, p. 34), events that have affected them in the past, resulted in their current state and prepare them to face the future.

Aldo van Eyck's phrase that "a house should be as a small city, a city as a big house", is a suggestion that urban space should be conceived in terms of interior space. According to Aldo van Eyck the urban environment must be able to absorb socio-cultural meaning, or it must be disposed to in such a way as to allow the individual and the collectivity to project experiences onto it - to design semantic content in syntactic configuration.

Regarding to this that was mentioned above any research, any attempt to try to unravel the fate of Kosovar history, culture and architecture, would be empty and meaningless if it does not aim to elevate to the pedestal of merit the names and works of authors who designed, built, wrote and compiled detailed plans for every corner of Prishtina's image. They are the ones who with their iconic works stand as a paradigm of time and exciting architectural achievements of the most precious memories and collective memory over the years (Gjinolli, 2015).

I am starting by mentioning each of these authors and presenting their architectural masterpiece works, in the modern Kosovar architecture after the Second World War.

"Rilindja" Press palace - Giorgi Konstantinovski & Grand Hotel – Bashkim Fehmiu, Dragan Kovačević



Figure 3 & 4 Press Palace, Prishtina 1972-1978 & Grand Hotel, Prishtina 1974-1978 (Source: Old Prishtina website https://www.facebook.com/pg/PrishtinaOLD/photos/?ref=page_internal)

Albanological Institute - Miodrag Pecić & National Library - Andrija Mutnjaković



Figure 5 Albanological Institute, Prishtina 1974-1977 (Source: Kosovar Modernism - an architecture primer, 2015, Prishtina, p.91)



Figure 6 National Library, Prishtina 1983 (Source: Photography borrowed from the internet <http://monumentalism.net/Prishtina-national-library/>)

Boro and Ramiz - Živorad Janković, Halid Muhasilović, Srećko Ešpek & Kosovo Film - Sali Spahiu



Figure 7 "Boro Ramizi" Youth Palace, Prishtina 1976 (Source: Photograph borrowed from the Old Prishtina website https://www.facebook.com/pg/PrishtinaOLD/photos/?ref=page_internal)



Figure 8 Kosova Film, Prishtina 1981-1987 (Source: Kosovar Modernism - an architecture primer, 2015, Prishtina, p.105)

Reflection through images

If there are still skeptics who still believe the fact that the image of buildings and the image of the city of Prishtina has not been changed, we present here the facts! The former Bozhur Hotel has been completely disfigured behind styrofoam and decorative elements neoclassical.

The image of the Technical Faculty behind the demit facade has been completely destroyed in the name of renovation and energy efficiency, ostensibly to meet the insulation needs of this building!



Figure 9 Collage of the Transfiguration of Hotel Bozhuri (Collage edited by: Drilona Berisha)
 Figure 10 Collage of the Transfiguration of the Technical Faculty (Collage edited by: Drilona Berisha)

It is completely stripped of the masculinity that once represented the "Rilindja" Press Palace. Unfortunately, even the architect who designed this building, Georgi Konstadinovski, did not recognize his work during his last visit in Prishtina. And as a result of all these transformations that have happened to the city and the buildings of the city of Prishtina, we have remained in the mercy of fate to see the continuation of this wicked plan that has begun long ago and is continuing to become even worse.

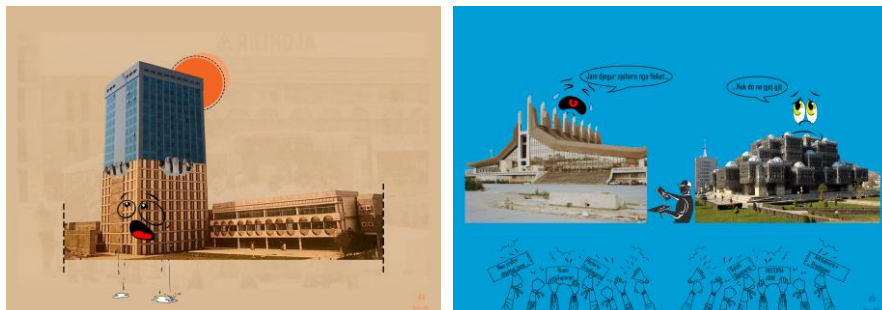


Figure 11 Collage of the Transfiguration of the Press Palace "Rilindja" (Collage edited by: Drilona Berisha)
 Figure 12 Collage of the protest for the protection of the "Youth Palace Boro Ramizi" and the "National Library" (Collage edited by: Drilona Berisha)

Methods and literature used for the research

For such a research it is essential and extremely important to target the adequate literature in order to create and understand in a wider observational dimension the architecture in Prishtina, the history, the authors and the irreplaceable craftsmen who contributed to the formation of the image of the city of Prishtina. Therefore, the

literature reviewed for this research is divided into two categories: primary literature and secondary literature.

This paper uses a quantitative methodology, with a questionnaire as a second instrument. The questionnaire consisted of several closed questions. The respondents were not selected randomly, the targeted respondents were architecture professionals. Most of the participants were residents of the city of Prishtina, while the rest have lived for a long period of time in Prishtina. In this case we can say that 90% of the following results are based and are a source of thoughts and knowledge of the professional circle.

All the questions of this research had as their main purpose, the verification of the loss of the originality and identity of Prishtina, the connection and nostalgia with the old architecture, as well as the highlighting of a new building which we can say that represents us with dignity after the 2000s, thus bringing to attention the "causes" for the situation of architecture in Prishtina as a form of reflection and reaction on what the city of the goddess on the throne, Prishtina, needs the most right now.

Respondents were asked how important do you think city buildings are in creating memories, when about 92% of respondents say that city buildings are very important if not essential in creating memories, while a very small percentage of 8% say that city buildings are of medium importance in creating memories. Asked if the city of Prishtina has changed over the years, 94% of respondents say that the city of Prishtina has really changed a lot over the years, and only 6% of them think that the changes in the city of Prishtina are of a medium average. Most of the respondents stated that the identity of the city of Prishtina has been destroyed with an average of 45%, while stating that the main factors that led to a transformation of Prishtina's image were ideological / political factors with an average of 66%. The next question was referred to which is the icon building in the city of Prishtina, when about 40% of the respondents agreed that National Library is the iconic building of the city of Prishtina. According to respondents 26% of them think that the building that tops the list of buildings that do not represent architectural value is the building of the Institute of History "Ali Hadri". The majority of respondents 56% strongly agreed that there is not such a building built after the 2000s, which we can say that represents us in the new century.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly the city of Prishtina has failed to preserve the meaning and spirit of the city. The city is still remembered through some of the iconic buildings built from the period After the Second World War until the end of the 90s a large part of which have already been totally disfigured.

The old urban structure has not been taken into account at all during the new developments in the city which have paradoxically affected the degradation of this structure. The city of Prishtina has deepened the identity crisis, has lost its unique distinctive characteristics and features and with this pace of "developments" and one-on-one transformations that are happening to the city, for a very short time it will no longer be able to continue to act as a guide for the people who live in it. Based on the

research findings we can say that forgetfulness or faded collective memory can be fatal and destructive to a city's heritage.

On this occasion we can say that we have successfully answered the research questions. In the question "What does it mean for a city to be forgotten by the collective memory" we have come to the conclusion that such a thing results in "LOST ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY". While in the question "Is there a building built after the 2000s which represents us with dignity", based on observation of buildings built after the last war in Kosovo but also in the research findings, unfortunately there is not such building, except for buildings built in the period after the Second World War. Given this fact, we as professionals and as a society in general need to be aware of the values, the architectural heritage and collective memory as the most precious treasures of our social and city development in general, because monuments, buildings, regardless of their size, location, shape or materiality carry an aura of eternity, unity and universality. In most cases they help to celebrate national history and provide a sense of closure of a historical period, which is why they should remain as they are untouched in their most original form as the most important element of the city in so that they are remembered and help to transmit that collective memory from generation to generation, because our choice, of preserving or destroying the structures built in the city forms our collective memory and identity.

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