

BORGES'S LABYRINTHS, KOSOVO'S ENCLAVES, AND URBAN/CIVIC DESIGNING (III)

Intimations of What Is: Enclaves, Objects, and Kosovo

Perhaps the starkest examples of ethnic enclaves in Kosovo are found in urban areas simply because they have the largest concentrations of more or less monoethnic communities, displaying their evocative objects that are infused with meaning, thereby offering understanding and stirring emotions within persons, prompting them to sometimes act in fairly predictable and well-defined ways

These objects that are tied to particular nationalist ideas and passions, when placed in the home, are fairly innocuous. It is unlikely that they will offend or provoke outrage in onlookers, since the onlookers are either their owners or like-minded family and friends who have accepted an invitation to enter the home. It is when these objects pass into public space, viewed by more and more people, that problems begin to surface. The space into which they enter becomes increasingly more public when they are moved from one place to another: from being hung from a wall in one's bedroom to being draped over a window shutter or flown from a flagpole in one's backyard, and then beyond to the car that is plastered with decals and driven around town, to the façade of government buildings, to city squares, to billboards on hilltops. In this way they eventually form parts of cityscapes; cognitively, emotionally, and conatively informing people in different ways, acceptably for some and unacceptably for others.

Enclaves and Evocative Objects

For instance, members of a dominant ethnic group may see a particular array of objects as infused with meaning that harkens back to an ethno-paramilitary group that was instrumental in the creation of a new state that is largely ruled by the dominant ethnic group itself, thus empowering those objects to stir pride in members of that same ethnic community.

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However, the ethnic group that had the territory wrestled from them and that are now just another minority may gaze at these same objects and infuse them with meaning of a past defeat with all its atrocities, stirring in them seething hatred and desire for retribution. Clearly, these evocative objects serve as boundary markers, as clear indicators of domains of ethnic dwelling. Members of the various ethnic groups know full well where they are. These objects are much more, however. They are instrumental in

creating and sustaining the enclaves themselves. They do this because evocative objects are both centripetal and centrifugal in their affect. Take the example above. On the one hand, the objects of the dominant group in that place encourage others of that group to come together. These objects are centripetal for them; they make members of the dominant group feel welcomed in that place and help to build cohesion of that ethnic group. On the other hand, these same objects are centrifugal for members of the once powerful ethnic minority. These objects discourage them from being in that place, from interacting and establishing new relationships with the dominant group. A particular message is sent to the minority: "You are not welcome! You are not one of us!" Of course, the landscape would be very different in a place dominated by a minority-majority population because the centripetal and centrifugal outcomes would be reversed.

More insidious for both parties, however, is that by not living or even visiting a place that place becomes "pure idea" for them, a place that someone else has told them about. And so it is an "idea" that can be easily manipulated by each other's local leaders, including politicians, members of the Fourth Estate, and educators. These persons of influence can exploit ignorance, uncertainty, and fear to promote the xenophobia and chauvinism of their respective ethnic nationalisms. Ethnicity or blood trump the fact that they share the same geography and, more importantly, that they are citizens of the same country.



Adem Jashari, an architect of the Kosovo Liberation Army who was killed in 1998

Such outcomes become more significant when we realize that these evocative objects function not only to claim public space and make a place home. They are also about making group identity more visible, particularly ethnic national identity, which in turn is about claiming political power, control, and agency. And let's not forget the gloating, the showing off of group superiority that is a part of this. Where individuals have made this group identity their dominant public identity, particularly as it concerns the political in their lives, the perceived need for boundaries and control, both materially and symbolically, becomes great. Moreover, when the situation is one in which a once strong ethnic minority and a weak ethnic majority have traded places of power and governance, objects that are ethnically nationalized become just another means by which the political struggle remains alive. And it remains alive especially for those leaders who want to take advantage of a "captive audience" to solidify their political power and to increase divisiveness and uncertainty among their community. Where does Kosovo stand in this regard?

The Case of Kosovo

There is a preponderance of public objects in Kosovo's cities that carry different nationalist ideas and passions. Take, for example, Prishtina. It becomes apparent after only a short tour of the city that the flag most displayed by its Albanian residents is the double-headed eagle flag of its southern neighbor Albania. And whenever there is a perceived challenge to Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, especially when Serbia is involved, you can be sure that the Albanian flag will be in mass, as was the case during the June protest after Kosovo's parliament approved an EU-brokered agreement on normalizing relations with neighboring Serbia. Of course, segments of the population can rally to give its support as well, even with the blue Kosovo flag in hand. This was the case during the same month when residents of Prizren gathered to support Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Among the flags of Turkey, Albania, Bosnia was the flag of Kosovo, with its six white stars symbolizing its major ethnic groups.

This preponderance is confirmed when buildings in the capital are examined. Take, for example, the Sports Complex in the central part of the city. The east end of the building faces the Newborn monument, which marks the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo. On the same end is an Albanian flag and a large photo of Adem Jashari, an architect of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), who was killed in 1998. The photo shows Jashari dressed in full combat regalia. The international airport in Prishtina is named in his honor, as well. But the use of the Albanian flag to claim public space is also found within government buildings, such as in the office of the Ministry of Diaspora. The Albanians in Kosovo are not the only ones displaying evocative objects that anchor their particular nationalist narratives. Granted, there are not many objects of Serbian nationalism in Prishtina itself (the unfinished Christ the Savior Cathedral at the university is the most obvious), but crossing the Mitrovica Bridge over the River Ibar brings one face-to-face with an array of objects that serve the Serb nationalist cause in their enclave of north Kosovska Mitrovica.

Both state and civil flags of Serbia are commonly displayed. They can be seen hanging from light poles and university buildings, as well as on a hilltop billboard. And it is not uncommon to find a photo of someone like Slobodan Milosevic displayed in the business district. In addition, the Serbian dinar is used as currency and the music of the Serbian singer Ceca, known for her turbo folk, a blend of nationalist folk and techno music, can often be heard emanating from homes and cafes. The atmosphere is one of being in Serbia and not Kosovo. Whether it be a flag like Albania's double-headed eagle or Serbia's tricolour, or a photo like that of Adem Jashari atop Prishtina's Sports Complex or a calendar photo of Slobodan Milosevic hanging on the rear wall of a bakery in north Kosovska Mitrovica, these objects are clear indicators of domains of ethnic dwelling. They reflect the boundaries that describe the fragmented nature of Kosovo society.

**Tomorrow:
Borges's Labyrinths, Kosovo's Enclaves,
and Urban/Civic Designing (IV):
Intimations of Change: Urban Design**

Serbia Focuses on Minority Rights

Among the most important tasks facing Serbia in its membership negotiations with the EU are standardizing human and minority rights and implementing existing regulations, reports Southeast European Times. Chapters 23 and 24 of the EU's 35 negotiation chapters deal with justice and human rights.

"During the negotiations on Chapter 23, the candidate state is required to adopt efficient mechanisms for fighting against all forms of discrimination," said Suzana Paunovic, head of the government's office for human and minority rights, adding that the government recently adopted a five-year anti-discrimination strategy.

"The implementation of this document will be very significant in the process of negotiation. It is our task, regardless of how complicated the process of its development might be, to finish the action plan as soon as possible, and also define the deadlines for the realization of the measures it proposes," Paunovic said.

She added that for Serbia to make the implementation of the anti-discrimination law fully possible, it must establish precise records on reported and processed cases of discrimination and provide protection for victims from further discrimination.

"The government still strongly supports the improvement of the position of ethnic minorities and enabling their full inclusion in society. In the following period we must examine the law on ethnic minorities' national councils, laws on media, information and data protection, as well as the election law for ethnic minorities," Paunovic said. Sonja Biserko, president of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Serbia, said Serbian regulations on human and minority rights are adequate, but still must be fully implemented.

"The problem facing the current government is the fact that this political fraction, led by the Serbian Progressive Party, was a part of the problem with the lack of tolerance in all fields. During the 1990s, [as members of the Serbian Radical Party] their policy was completely opposite to the standards they will now have to uphold during the process of negotiations with the EU," Biserko said.