MA THESIS

Title:
The role of cultural heritage in the process of reconciliation between Serbia and Croatia

Case studies: Vukovar, Knin and Gospic

Supervisor: Dr Ioannis Armakolas
Student: Milena Milanovic

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Abstract

This thesis examines the process of reconciliation between Serbia and Croatia in the period after the Homeland War through cultural policies and cultural management in contemporary Croatia. The aim of this thesis is to show how collective memory and ethnic identity are created through reconstruction of cultural heritage and how this process influences the process of reconciliation. Using as case studies cultural heritage of Vukovar, Knin and Gospic, this thesis explains how cultural heritage in once self-proclaimed Republic of Serb Krajina was managed under Serb control and under Croat control once the territory was reintegrated to Independent Croatia.
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Introduction

The process of reconciliation in post-conflict societies can be approached in different ways. Some of those ways are through transitional justice, trials in war crime tribunals and distribution of justice to the victims, public apologies etc. This thesis aims to show how cultural heritage can play its role in the process of reconciliation between conflicted parties. In post-conflict societies the basic meanings of reconciliation imply variety of ways in order to establish grass-roots structures for peace. As most definitions on reconciliation highlight justice, relationship-building, truth and acknowledgement, healing, reparation, and co-operation, thus, the relationship between cultural heritage and reconciliation is a complex one and this thesis aims to explain it.

Cultural heritage and the diversity of cultural symbols can be used as a means to consolidate differences and idiosyncrasies.¹ It can play a very important role in the aftermath of a conflict since, as Johansson argues, it contributes to the process of healing by helping victimized groups strengthen and regain their sense of pride.² In that respect, cultural heritage can help in the process of reconciliation if it encourages the process of healing and if it can bridge the disputes between two or more societies. The reconstruction of war damaged heritage begins right after the end of a conflict and it is supported by conventions provided by the UN, European Union, UNESCO and other supranational bodies, but the post conflict society (state bodies) is the key player in managing the reconstruction of heritage and as such it can use heritage in

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¹ Margoth Sonnebo (2005) Cultural Heritage without Borders, Cultural heritage, Reconciliation, Restruction, Hopes for the future, p. 9
order to achieve its’ political goals rather than to protect it as a cultural value of high significance. As Ashworth puts it: “Intentioned or not, reconstructing heritage will always be a political act.”

This thesis will examine how cultural heritage has been managed in post-conflict Croatia, to be more precise in former Republic Serbian Krajina. It will focus on three case studies:

1. The case of Vukovar.

Vukovar has been labeled as a “martyr town” ever since the siege by JNA and until the Croat forces retook the control over the town. In literature, Vukovar has been presented as unique case where both destruction and reconstruction played a leading role in Croatia’s national narrative (Kardov 2007, Zanic 2008, Hajdinjak 2008, Brit Baillie 2012). Kardov uses the case of Vukovar as an example of divided settlement where Croatian national identity was formed in the aftermath of the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia to Croatia. The time frame in his article includes the period of reconstruction of ethnically Croatian cultural heritage and the creation of memorials to the fallen defenders of independent Croatia. Thus, he provides a lot of information on cultural policies and heritage management and its effect on national identity. Zanic on the other hand, explains the reconstruction of Vukovar in both period from its fall until its reintegration and from its reintegration onwards. His aspect is similar to Kadrov’s with main difference in approach to the topic- Zanic examines both Serbian

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4 Republic Serb Krajina (RSK) was a self-proclaimed Serb entity within Croatia. Established in 1991 by Croatian Serb rebels who refused to recognize the independence of Croatia and existed until 1995 when Erdut Agreement was brought and all the territories were reintegrated back to Croatia.
and Croatian perception of cultural heritage through ethnic space and ritual landscape dimension. His main argument is that Vukovar’s cultural heritage presents ethnic identity of both Serbs and Croats and as such, Vukovar is divided between Eastern European and Central European civilizations. Hajdinjak’s approach to the topic includes the importance of collective memory and the way it is managed in keeping a society under the control of authoritarian regimes. He examines both communities in whole Croatia and in both period of “Brotherhood and Unity” and in Independent Croatia. All three of those authors provide general information on ideologies by the ruling regimes in specific periods and ethnic division that reflects on cultural heritage. Baillie’s view on the topic is different in that way the she follows the reconstruction of an Orthodox and Catholic church as symbols of both religious and ethnic identities. Her PhD thesis provides complete insight on divided heritage as a symbol of divided identities. Choosing Vukovar as one of the case studies and having these approaches as a guide, my point is to go further in this thesis by showing whether mixed and divided memories and identities meet in heritage reconstruction and management as a means for reconciliation and coexistence of two communities or is the divided settlement the only possible way for Serbs and Croats to coexist in Vukovar?

2. The case of Knin- “Croatia royal town”

The cultural heritage of Knin did not suffer much damage during the conflict, thus it did not occupy special attention of scholars. On the other hand, Knin is the place where the first turmoil begun and later on became the capital of self-proclaimed entity Republic of Serbian Krajina. As this thesis examines the role of cultural heritage, Knin will be used as a case study in aspect that shows its historical importance for
Croatia and thus, has its role in creation of ethnic identity. In that sense, not many contemporary scholars have analyzed Knin. The article that I use as a base of my analysis is “The Curse of King Zvonimir and Political discourse in Embattled Croatia” by Ivo Zanic (1994). This article gives an anthropologic insight in the perception of nation and nationhood thought 20th century in Croatia. It shows a variety of aspects through different historic periods in which Croatia was a part of other states/kingdoms and ending in the 1990s, it emphasizes Croatia’s need for independence. In nowadays political narratives, Knin is depicted as “Croatia royal town”. In order to present this narrative and due to the lack of scientific papers, I use articles from the newspapers. The aim in this case study is to examine the (re)creation of Croatian national identity based on the towns’ rich medieval past. The town has taken a new label after the conflict- “Croatia royal town”, while the cultural traces of Serbs that once lived there are neglected. This case study will answer the question: Does the revival of “the spirit of the place” bring about reconciliation or is it the symbol of Croatian nationalism?

3. The case of Gospic

The town of Gospic will examine a different kind of heritage from the ones above mentioned. It will focus on intangible heritage- through the role of Nikola Tesla and his birth place- Gospic. Tesla will be used in this case as a historical personality of non political significance for either Croats or Serbs but of great importance for whole

5 Ogle Albert, The threats to the spirit of place “Returning to places of wounded memory” The Role of World Heritage Sites in Reconciliation, P.2
humanity. As the museum of Nikola Tesla has been opened just recently (2006), this case study is based only on information collected from newspapers articles. This case study will present common heritage as a bridge in the process of reconciliation.

**Cultural heritage and reconciliation**

The notion of cultural heritage has been defined differently by group of authors (Ashworth and Graham 2005; Ashworth G J 2007; Litter and Naidoo 2004). Still, there is a common key characteristic of cultural heritage mentioned in academic circles and it points to its significance to the societies. One of many definitions that suit the context of this thesis is given by Halbwachs: “Heritage is often used as a form of collective memory, a social construct shaped by the political, economic and social concerns of the present”. Cultural heritage is both a vehicle and a very powerful means in defining and creating national/ethnic identities.

As such, it is managed differently in different kind of societies (multiethnic societies, one-nation states, Western societies and others), but in all societies, cultural heritage functions as a reflection of the societal changes and thus, it serves as a means of social expression within the society and among societies.

Since the aim of this thesis is to show if and how cultural heritage can contribute to the process of reconciliation, it is necessary to introduce here the ways in which cultural heritage is affected during the war/conflict and in its aftermath:

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1. Heritage during the conflict/war

Since heritage presents the identity of parties in conflict, it is very often one of the targets for destruction. The perfect example in this case would be the old Mostar Bridge, completely destroyed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Croat side. Nowadays, two decades after the event, Clancy, Novakovic (2009) Tepic (2012) all argue that this act was not only an attempt to destroy a symbol of the town that presented multiethnic society and therefore the old Mostar Bridge had this literal meaning of a bridge between the Croats and the Muslims, but Clancy argues that its destruction was also an attempt to destroy town’s infrastructure and cause economic loss to the other party in conflict. Another example which Clancy uses to show how heritage can be a target in order to cause damage to tourism hence, to economy, would be the destruction of the old town of Dubrovnik by JNA.

2. Heritage after the conflict

Again, the key word in this section is “identity”. Either is it about the reconstruction of war-damaged heritage or about historical re-evaluation of heritage, the aim is the same- the (re)creation of national identities according to new political climate. Kuljic (2006) puts it this way: “The present influences the past, but the reconstruction of the past always depends on present-day identities and contexts.” If we use

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8 Ibid, P 43
9 Kuljic Todor, “The new (changed) past as value factor of development”, 2006, p.3
once again the Mostar Bridge as an example, its reconstruction is perceived as a symbol of common heritage and shared identity in multi ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina.10

3. Heritage in the process of reconciliation and peace building

One of many definitions on reconciliation states that “Its primary goal and key contribution is to seek innovative ways to create a time and place, within various levels of the affected population, to address, integrate, and embrace the painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with the present.”11 Franovic (2008) suggests that transformation of identity is necessary for reconciliation.12 It is generally accepted that culture can play an important role in fostering coexistence in multicultural and pluralist societies.13 But not every post-conflict society remains the same as it was before in terms of its ethnic structure. In than respect, Franovic (2008) point that the division to “self” and “other” (where this “other” is perceived as “enemy”) remains still strong and cultural diversity is not easy to accept in the aftermath of the conflict. The problem in this stage of changes in heritage is that it can very easily bring about new conflict rather than to bring about reconciliation as a first and basic step to peace building. It is important to highlight here that social as well as personal “catharsis” is usually the more important step for each and every party in conflict and hence, the process of heeling begins with building of memorial centers and

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10 see Novakovic (2009), Tepic (2012), Clancy (unpublished)
11 John Paul Lederach, (Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies, 2nd ed. (Washington: United States Institute for Peace, 1998), 35) quoted in Franovic I, Dealing with the past in the context of Ethnonationalism, The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia
12 Franovic I. (2008), Dealing with the past in the context of Ethnonationalism, The case of Bosni-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, Bergof occasional Paper n. 29
13 Kuljic 2006, p.5
commemorations, reconstruction of war damaged heritage and “revival” of that part of national heritage which is tightly connected with nations’ history and identity. It is however very sensitive and emotionally charged process since it has to do with dealing with the past and can bring about everything but reconciliation (the denial/erasing of the existence of the other parties making the coexistence in multicultural societies almost impossible.). The main argument here is that unless cultural heritage aims to satisfy the needs of all communities in the aftermath of conflict (i.e. the process of healing, the restoration of a pre-conflict environment etc.) reconciliation is not likely to be brought about.

This theoretical approach derived from combined case studies and researches on cultural heritage and its role in post-conflict societies. Although the topic is very well presented in variety of academic papers as well as in the European commission reports, ICOMOS and UNESCO reports, the case of heritage management in former Republic Serb Krajina has been somehow neglected in comparison with the heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and other former Yugoslav republics. Kuljic (2006), Franovic (2008), Novakovic (2009), Tepic (2012) and Clancy, they all examined cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, but their case studies involved cooperation of the EU and UNESCO on the reconstruction of cultural heritage and thus, the process of reconciliation is evident since those reconstructions have been a part of the EU project on reconciliation and cultural dialogue among the above mentioned states. Academic Alexandra Brit Baillie has given a lot of attention to heritage in her PhD thesis “The Wounded Church: War, Destruction and Reconstruction of
Vukovar’s Religious Heritage”. Her aspect and approach is through archeological lens and it passes complete information on how heritage is being used on reconstructing of entirely destroyed city of Vukovar and reconciliation between its’ citizens. On the other hand, Baillie has written other papers on memorializing and reconciliation\textsuperscript{14} in divided/contested cities. Another academic with more socio-political approach and criticism on heritage and its role in Croatia is Vjeran Pavlakovic. Pavlakovic gives more emphasis to the memorials that depict post World War II period in Croatia as he supports the opinion that if there is ever going to be any reconciliation, Croatian society has to reconcile first within the society it self and afterwards with its neighbors and Serbs that still live in Croatia.\textsuperscript{15} This thesis is influenced by both Baillie’s and Pavlakovic’s critical opinion, but I will try to present my case studies in a light that shows cultural heritage as another victim of post-conflict failures and heritage exploitations of the parties involved.

The main argument in this thesis is that cultural heritage is the link between the past and the present, link that bonds society with its tradition, memory and identity. In post-conflict societies, tradition, memory and identity needs to be rebuild so that the process of healing could be completed and reconciliation as well. But if reconstruction of cultural heritage is according to nationalistic aspirations that exclude the “other” and remind community of suffering that the “other” caused to it, is there a place for reconciliation?


\textsuperscript{15} See: Vjeran Pavlakovic, “Flirting with Fascism: The Ustaša Legacy and Croatian Politics in the 1990s”
Methodology

This thesis explains the post-conflict relations between Serbia and Croatia as once parts of Yugoslavia and after the Yugoslav wars they became two sovereign neighboring countries. The process of reconciliation is examined here through cultural heritage and cultural policies in contemporary Croatia (from the end of the Homeland war to the present days) as a part of nation building and neighboring relations between the two countries. Thus, after presenting theories of reconciliation and cultural heritage, three case studies will explain how reconstruction of cultural heritage plays its role in identity formation, dealing with the past and reconciliation. All three case studies are presented through political decisions brought by the state organs and the influence that those decisions have on the process of reconciliation between Croatia and Serbia.

The material was collected mainly from the internet cites that provide access to scientific articles, European Commission reports, Croatian Ministry of Culture reports and newspaper articles. Some material was provided by Professors Ioannis Armakolas, Alexandra Britt Baillie and Vjeran Pavlakovic.
Cultural policies

In order to approach the main topic of this thesis from the political standpoint, it is necessary to open here a new chapter that explains cultural heritage management and cultural policies in Croatia from the period after the end of the Homeland war (1995-).

Several factors that influenced changes in cultural policies should be presented before I pass on to cultural heritage in periods of the Homeland war and in its aftermath. National and economic tension first struck Yugoslav republics in the early 1970’s. The consequences of the increased autonomy within the republics became most obvious at the Tenth Congress of the Croatian League of Communists in January 1970.16 But the most important change was in the Croatian party’s official position on the national question. Under Tito, public expressions of national feelings, displaying national symbols was forbidden and severely punished in the past. As Batovic notes, the Tenth Congress made a stance that the problem in Yugoslavia was not nationalism but centralism and unitarism.17 The leading role in the raise of nationalism in this period was played by Matica Hrvatska- the leading and most popular cultural institution in Croatia. By the end of the 1960’s, this institution was determined in its attempts to push the question of representation of the Croatian, the culture and language in Yugoslavia. This goal was presented through a document published in 1967 under name “Declaration on the Name and Position of the Croatian Literary Language”.18 This declaration set the foundation for the Croatian Spring, political movement that called for rights of Croatia as well as democratic and economic

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17 Ibid
reforms. In 1971 the language question was raised once again, this time Matica Hrvatska publicly renounced the existence of Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serb language and demanded the recognition of Serbian and Croatian language respectively.

Under the pressure coming from the Soviet Union, Tito had no other solution but to suppress the movement that was gradually spreading to all other republics, although some changes were introduced in 1971 Constitution that stripped federation of most of its remaining powers.\(^{19}\) However, Croatia was not satisfied since the demand on foreign currency system reform did not take place in Constitutional changes. The end of Tito’s patience came when mass student demonstrations took place on November 23 1971 at all Croatian universities.\(^{20}\) All students leaders of the strike were put to prison, among whom was Franjo Tudjman, sentenced for 3 years in prison.\(^{21}\) However, Croatian spring had a major influence on introduction of a new Constitution in 1974 whose task was further decentralizing political and economical power of the Federal government and giving local governments on all levels (to the states, provinces, and cities) more self-control.

The end of the Cold War and the fall of Communism in Central Europe severely influenced the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Economic crises and the rise of nationalism first in Kosovo and after in all republics preceded the dismantling of Yugoslavia as Slovenia and Croatia were the first republics to proclaim their independence.

\(^{19}\) Batovic A, 2003, The Balkans in Turmoil- Croatian spring and Yugoslav position between the Cold War Blocks 1965-1971, Cold War Studies Programme

\(^{20}\) Ibid

\(^{21}\) Vukic I 2011
The following chapter will examine cultural policies and cultural heritage management during the Homeland War and in the period of its aftermath. Since Tudjman was the key player in defining the policies in the first period, the chapter is thus examined through two main periods – cultural management under Tudman and cultural heritage after Tudman with sub-periods that defined cultural policies.

**Heritage management under Tudjman**

With a loosening of Communist control, the first multiparty elections were held in Croatia and resulted with a win of Croatian Democratic Union (in further text HDZ) and Franjo Tudjman as its leader. Under Franjo Tudjman (1990-1999), Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. Since HDZ and Tudjman were lead by nationalistic course, culture became a tool for “reinventing the past”. Since during this period Croatia had experienced proclamation of independence, war, reunification in the aftermath of the war, this period could be divided into following sub-periods in defining cultural policies:

1. during the Homeland War 1991-1995, cultural policies aimed to wake up national consciousness by returning to medieval past and
2. The aftermath of the war focus was on the national interest, cultural policies were focused on reconstructing destroyed cultural heritage and on creating memorials to fallen defenders of the Homeland war. Although in this period, the point was to portray Croatian side as a victim and to celebrate independence. On the other hand, from the peaceful reintegration onwards,

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cultural policies were designed in order to meet with expectation of the EU conditions.

Cultural policies during the Homeland war

During this period, the past was used in order to determine national identity and nation building. Turning to the past had two main tasks:

1. To brake all connections with common socialist past. Wachtel argues that “dismantling of Yugoslavia was primarily done in the cultural arena”\(^{23}\), and I would like to add that even nowadays the denial of the common Yugoslav heritage is present.

2. To remind Croats of their roots and nationhood. Clearly, ethnicization of cultural heritage, purification of language and turning back to medieval history were the ways to accomplish this. Landry describes the Croatian cultural policy of this period as “inwardly focused and nationalistic”\(^{24}\).

Cultural policies in the aftermath of the Homeland war

Another priority of the independent Croatia regarding foreign affairs was to develop a strategy to integrate itself into the European Union. The culture was one of the main keys Croatia used in order to achieve this goal. Stressing the fact that Croatia has always been geographically, historically, culturally and religiously a part of

\(^{23}\) Wachtel quoted in Brit Baillie 2012:206
\(^{24}\) Landry 1998, p. 20
Central Europe rather than a part of Southeastern Europe25 or the Balkans, the new cultural policy aimed to bring this idea closer both to the citizens of Croatia and to the West.

The change in cultural policy came in 1996 with the document “Basic Program and Activities of the Ministry of Culture”26. The documents presented the shift from nationalistic use of culture (culture as a tool for achieving national interest) to a more suitable and therefore, more open cultural policy in order to meet with the expectations of the EU conditions.

As for the reconstruction of the war-damaged heritage, the Ministry of Culture began registering all the damage on the areas in which Croatian forces retook control. Britt Baillie notes that “the war-damage commission’s findings laid the foundations for Croatia’s reconstruction and redevelopment plans”, and the World Heritage Site of Dubrovnik was on the top of the Croatian reconstruction agenda.27 It is not surprising that Dubrovnik was the priority when it comes to reconstruction since it presented and still presents the most valuable part of Croatian cultural heritage and part of UNESCO’s World Heritage list. Thus, both Croatia’s and international attention was focused on Dubrovnik. In this period, cultural policy making and defining its strategies was criticized for being less systematic and more ad hoc, addressing only national interests. As Landry criticized the post-war period “(…) multi-cultural relations remained obviously delicate with respect to the new “minorities” and

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26 Landry 1998, p16
27 Brit Baillie 2012:212
international cooperation remained old fashioned with poor connections with Mediterranean area; and finally, there was no interaction with the government and the alternative activities of civil society organizations.”

Since the independence, shifting values of cultural heritage began and so did the reassessment of listed cultural heritage. The focus passed to construction and reconstruction of Catholic religious heritage as the state had returned to Catholic Church and Catholic Church became, as Perica puts it, “the largest constructing investor in post-communist Croatia.” According to the same author, Croatian Catholic Church had became one of the main pillars of Croatian Catholic identity, Tudjman’s right hand in creation of patriotic ideology and unifying factor between Croatia and the West. In the same period, one of the reasons for such a shift in priorities was the fact that the reconstruction of such cultural heritage meant direct betterment to the tourism sector which furthermore meant economic benefits, and naturally, this was highly supported by the EU.

On the other hand, Orthodox churches and monasteries (as a part of Serbian cultural heritage) in Serb-controlled areas, or so-called RSK got no attention from the Ministry of Culture once RSK came under the control of Croatia. Their reconstruction

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28 Landry 1988, p. 17
29 Karac quoted in Brit Baillie 2012:215
was financed and aided by humanitarian organisations, Serbian Orthodox Church and Greek Orthodox Church.  

A part of the cultural policy of the 90’s was erecting of new monuments dedicated to the Homeland War and to its veterans (in further text “defenders”). While the names of streets and squares were changing from the names of the heroes who were celebrated during socialist regime into the names of heroes from the Homeland War, the process of erasing of the common communist and socialist past was one of the ways to wake the spirits of the past, create new heroes and connect them with the newly formed independent Croatia. Pavlakovic argues that “President Tudjman was obsessed with constructing new political rituals which connected the modern state with certain aspects of Croatia’s past, particularly those emphasizing the continuity of Croatian statehood and sovereignty.” War commemorations and war memorials were the main agents of Tudjman’s ideology but as much as he used them in order to project himself as the founder of independent Croatian state which emerged as such as a result of the Homeland War. It came only naturally that this kind of extreme use of culture and cultural symbols in order to portray Croatian side as a victim and put all the burden of collective guilt on the Serbian side, came as a big obstacle in the process of reconciliation.

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32 This information was provided in personal correspondence with Kovacevic Z., formal employee of Serbian Consulate to Thessaloniki, who took part in humanitarian activities in Croatia and Herzegovina after the war.

33 This is a term used by those who fought for the formation of a Croatian state in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s to describe themselves.

34 Pavlakovic V. 2007, “Eye of the Storm: The ICTY, Commemorations and Contested Histories of Croatia’s Homeland War”

35 I would like to note here that the naming of the war as a “Homeland War” (“Domovinski rat”) is used as such in all Croatian and foreign literature while operations “Lightning” (“Bljesak”) and “Storm” (“Oluja”) are the official naming of the operations and are used as such in Serbian literature.
As a part of cultural strategy, a project initiated by the Ministry of Culture that would change a perception of post-conflict Croatia abroad was a project that would be directly linked to the process of reconciliation of Croats with Serbs. Such goal was to be achieved by opening The Museum of Reconciliation and Peace in Konavlje in the former UN barracks. Placed on the borders between Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, this was supposed to become a symbol of reconciliation, changing the “barracks into bridges”. The project was a part of “Cultural Crossroads” special “theme” aiming to promote intercultural understanding through: breaking down the barriers between communities, races, religions and geographic area, changing cultural policy from inward-focused to a more open one. Similar ideas emerged in the same time such as: Educational centre which might be suitable located in Vukovar and an international post-war trauma centre built on the particular Croatian skills of using arts therapy.  

**Heritage management after Tudjman**

With Tudjman’s death, the fourth parliamentary elections were won by SDP, leaving HDZ in the opposition. Thus political pluralism, social equality and religious and minority rights entered political stage instead of nationalism and conservatism.

The only period that the Ministry of Culture was not under the control of ministers from the HDZ was the period from 2000 until 2003, when Anton Vujic of the SDP was Minister of Culture. In this period heritage management policy underwent a major change considering strategy and cultural development which were based on the plans that would cast a new light in respect to the heritage management. In the same

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37 Britt Baillie 2012:225
time, the negotiations for Croatia’s membership in the EU took place. According to the EU conditionality, new cultural policies and heritage management were created in a way so that they could fulfil the basic expectations of the EU:

1. broader implementation of cultural policy with a particular stress on pluralist cultural orientations;
2. a more balanced approach to tradition and a new evaluation of the national and the multicultural components
3. Taking steps towards further decentralisation and direct co-operation with NGOs.38

The most important change in this period was the introduction of the NGO sector in cultural policies. This decision came as a part of another change which had to do with decentralisation of responsibility for culture. The right to appoint and approve directors and to found a public institution has been transferred from the state to the counties, towns and municipalities.39

According to the “Croatia in the 21st century”, a strategy and cultural development document brought by Ministry of Culture, Croatia was to change from Tudjman’s nationalistic, inward-focused, one-nation state into a new Croatia that respect national minorities, belongs to West Europe, Central Europe as well as to Mediterranean space, and Croatia that cooperates on all levels (state, regional, non-governmental, non-institutional etc.) with other European and non-European countries.40

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As for the cultural heritage management, it sought to reconstruct cultural heritage within the framework of cooperation with religious communities. The same document provided the following as its priorities:

• developing, along with the renewal of cultural heritage within the framework of cooperation with religious communities, other forms of activities in relation to minorities;

• encouraging greater diversity of cultural activities of minority communities, in addition to those relating to language and their own cultural heritage and collective memory;”\(^{41}\)

These decisions though, existed only on the paper since as soon as the document was published the more conservative HDZ won the majority of votes in the elections and formed government in coalition with Independed Democratic Serb Party and Croatian Party of Pensioners.\(^{42}\) With Ivo Sanader as Prime Minister, HDZ sought to establish better relations with minority parties and to promote minority rights.

In 2005, another turn of negotiations with the EU were Croatia’s top priority and so, the same year the reconstruction of 25 Orthodox churches damaged in the war was underway and this time, the Croatian Government was the initiator and financier.\(^{43}\)

Such promotion of minority rights (imposed by the EU conditionality) was carried on within the following years since it fitted the European Commission’s concept of culture and cultural heritage whose main argument is: “There is no congruence

\(^{41}\) Ibid, p.178-179
\(^{42}\) Britt Baillie 2012:227
\(^{43}\) Ibid, p. 230
between concepts such as culture and the state, state and nation or nation and culture. The diversity of and differences between cultural environments, languages, religions, histories and heritage constitute Europe’s – and the world’s – cultural richness."\(^{44}\)

The year 2006 will surely be remembered by the 150\(^{th}\) anniversary of the American inventor Nikola Tesla, who was a Croatian-born Serb.\(^{45}\) The participation of Sanader and Mesic along with the representatives from Serbia opened a new chapter in both managing cultural heritage and cultural cooperation on states level. As Perica puts it, “the both sides argued how much the two neighbouring Slav peoples have in common.”\(^{46}\)

This period aimed to correct all the mistakes from the policies back in the 90’s. It coincided with the extradition of Ante Gotovina (2005) and others to ICTY. A special attention was brought back to the memorials to the victims of The World War II. Partisan heritage was being restored as streets named after heroes from the WWII were re-established, even Jasenovac memorial was reopened (2006).\(^{47}\)

Today, all the attention is focused on the monuments to the Homeland war. As Croatia struggles to fulfil every condition imposed by the EU, it still tries to calm its society (or at least its majority) by keeping the memory of Croatian suffering and victims that gave their lives in order to keep the territories of RSK within the borders of Independent Croatia. It could be said that cultural heritage stands in the middle of Croatia’s struggle between its past and its future. Still, the historic event that took part

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\(^{44}\) The Role of Culture and Cultural Heritage In Conflict Prevention, Transformation, Resolution And Postconflict Action: The Council Of Europe Approach, Document prepared by the Secretariat of the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage – Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, 18 January 2011, p.2

\(^{45}\) Perica 2006:338

\(^{46}\) Ibid

\(^{47}\) See Britt Baillie 2012:233-235
on November 4th 2010 opened a new page in the reconciliation chapter. Namely, it was the date when Boris Tadic, formal President of Republic of Serbia, visited Vukovar. It should be emphasised here that Tadic was the first Serbia’s President to visit Vukovar since 1991. He visited the Ovcara memorial site, which commemorates more than 200 people killed by the Serbian forces and buried in a mass grave. On that occasion he stated: "I am here to once again offer words of apology, to express regret and create a possibility for Serbs and Croats, Serbia and Croatia, to turn a new page of history."\textsuperscript{48} Josipovic did the same by laying wreath at the monument erected to ethnic Serbian victims of the war in near by Paulin Dvor. On that occasion, Josipovic stated: "We have come to pay respects to the victims, express our condolences, but also to promise that no crime will go unpunished."\textsuperscript{49}

It is clear that when it comes to heritage management, heritage policies are quite compatible with the neighbouring relations and democratic values. As analyzed in the previous section, both countries changed their political course from authoritarian to democratic regime in same time (Croatia in 1999, Serbian in 2000) and ever since, their neighbouring relations are changing to better. The fact that this change has occurred nearly 20 years from the beginning of the conflict says that both countries are following slow pace of democratization and thus, slow pace of reconciliation. The role of the EU as an agent of reconciliation has been quite influential on the process of bringing strategies for managing cultural heritage in Croatia so far.

\textsuperscript{48} B92, November 4.2010. \url{http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2010&mm=11&dd=04&nav_id=70684}
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid
The case of Vukovar

The first case in this thesis is the city of Vukovar. Since the city has been almost completely destroyed during the siege that lasted 78 days, the reconstruction of its cultural heritage would be perfect example on how two communities- Serbs and Croats living in Vukovar, deal with their past and how this divided past influences their coexistence in Vukovar. However, I will address the topic by examining two examples- the Orthodox church of St. Nickolas as a part of religious cultural heritage and memorials and commemorations to the fallen defenders of Vukovar.

The role of Vukovar during the war and in its aftermath has been and continues to be a multiple one. The city’s population back in 1991 numbered the total of 44 639 inhabitants, out of which 47, 2 percent were Croats, 32, 3 percent were Serbs and 9, 8 percent were Yugoslavs. Placed on the right bank of the Danube River, and on the very borders with Serbia, Vukovar was one of the most developed industrial and cultural centers in Eastern Slavonia. For centuries, Croats and Serbs lived together in this city leaving cultural traces of existence and coexistence behind. In the eve of the war and with the escalations of tensions caused by the raise of nationalism in both Zagreb and Belgrade, this multiethnic city suffered the most. The siege of Vukovar by the JNA started in August 1991 and for 78 days the city struggled to defend itself until 19th November when it fall. It was during this period that the city was labeled as a “martyr city” by those who felt that the city was deliberately “sacrificed” to the enemy in order to gain the media attention and international recognition of the

51 Martin Bell in “Hart and Soul, Return to Vukovar” BBC 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p00k2myf/Heart_And_Soul_Return_to_Vukovar/
Independent Republic of Croatia.\textsuperscript{52} In the immediate aftermath of the siege, the control over the city fell into the hands of the JNA and a month after, Republic Serb Krajna officially proclaimed it self as Serb control para-state. These events left Vukovar with changed demographic picture since many Vukovarians (mainly Croats) had left the city during the siege and when the city fell, the majority of Croats became displaced. From that moment on, Vukovar has been functioning as an ethnically divided city (it has two educational systems, two political systems, two economic systems). The situation reversed in 1995 after the operation “Storm”, Dayton Agreement and finally the Erdut Agreement after which the Republic Srbi Krajna ceased to exist and United Nations Transitional Authority for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNITAES) peacekeeping mission oversaw a peaceful reintegration of this territory into Croatia (finished in 1998). It is estimated that during the period of the siege and until the end of the war (1991-1995), the city has been almost completely ruined and of 118 historical monuments, 21 were completely destroyed, 48 were partially destroyed, and 25 have serious structural damage.\textsuperscript{53} Since Vukovar’s cultural heritage has been both target of destruction (Baillie argues that the two nations have committed “culturocide” against their heritage in Vukovar\textsuperscript{54}) and object of reconstruction, this city presents the best example of how heritage reconstruction and management plays a role in reinventing national identities. Also, the reasons, meanings, symbols and narratives of the Vukovar’s heritage and its reconstruction have been different in the two periods (under RSK control and after the reintegration) and in that respect, the following chapter will examine the heritage management in both periods. Since it is impossible to avoid the dichotomy that this

\textsuperscript{52} Kardov K 2007:64
\textsuperscript{54} Britt Baillie 2012:1
city carries in its past through all its aspects, the fallowing chapters will focus on reconstruction of Orthodox church of St. Nicholas and Memorials in Vukovar.

**Orthodox church of Saint Nicholas**

The church of St. Nicholas is located in Vukovar, in the European Union Str. 7 (formerly Zmajeva Str. 13). It is built on a place where the old church made of wood once was (the old one was build in 1960). Today’s church was built of solid material between the 1733 and 1737. During The World War II, the church was closed in 1941 and church’s archive and treasure were stolen in 1942. During the siege of Vukovar (1991), the church was mined and thus suffered great damage.\(^5\)

55 Generalni konzulat Republike Srbije, Kulturno istorijski spomenici [http://www.gk-srbije-vukovar.hr/spomenici.html](http://www.gk-srbije-vukovar.hr/spomenici.html)
As soon as the city was “liberated” by JNA, the reconstruction of St. Nicholas church became the top priority on RSK authority’s agenda. The reconstruction of St. Nicholas church was a part of a broader agenda that aimed to reconstruct devastated city in such a way that not only city’s infrastructure would be remade but also “Serbian national being” would be “reconstructed” and would find its central place in the “liberated” city. The Fund for reconstruction of Vukovar was formed with clear goal to create a new Vukovar that would present itself as a city with rich Serbian cultural heritage. But, since no payment was ever made on Fund’s account, the plans were postponed. In the following period, the emphasis was given on a need for the reconstruction of the church as an article from Serb Vukovarske Novine (1992) writes: “St Nicholas is an undeniable expression of spiritual needs of the Serbs in Vukovar, historical and material evidence of our high culture, evidence of the continuity of the Serbian people in this region and a priceless monument from the Baroque epoch.” Zanic argues that “the priority that was given to the reconstruction of St. Nicholas (and the negligence of the devastated non-orthodox sacral objects) was not only an attempt to justify the occupation of this area by Serbs, but also to create an image of a state in which they (Serbs) would never be able to live peacefully unless they are majority if not absolute citizens since it is the only way to defend their “holly land”. It is not by chance that church was the first to be reconstructed since the church was the most powerful symbol of Serbian national identity on one hand and

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56 Source: [http://www.stnicholascenter.org/galleries/gazetteer/2119/2/](http://www.stnicholascenter.org/galleries/gazetteer/2119/2/)
57 Britt Baillie 2012:460
59 Zanic:2008, p. 36
60 Vukovarske novine 1992 quoted in Britt Baillie 2012:463
61 Zanic M, 2008:38
religious identity as well. Namely, it is argued by Hajdinjak that the “resurrection” of religion after Tito’s death and the role of Orthodox Church have played an important role in re-creating national identity and consciousness among Serbs. Recalling the medieval Serbia with Nemanjic dynasty and recreating the Kosovo Battle myth were the ways to create an even stronger myth of Serbs as “heavenly people” and this was propaganda served from the very top state authority through Orthodox Church. Hajdinjak explains this manipulation by stating that “In a time of complete personal humiliation and powerlessness, the myth about “Heavenly People” liberating again the enslaved and terrorized brethren, gave many Serbs the only thing that kept them going through the hardship – collective dignity. Having nothing else to hold on to anymore, many Serbs held on to a lie.”

Another attempt to reconstruct the church of St. Nicholas began in October 1994. This time, initiative was taken by the Emergency Headquarters of the RSK, the RSK Ministry of Culture, and the RSK Institute for the Preservation of Monuments of Culture. A brochure from 1995 wrote that “the reconstruction of the church which is one of the first baroque buildings that Serbs have across the Sava river has a “dramatic and symbolic meaning” for the faith of Serbian people since the temple of St. Nicholas has been the pivot of the Serbdom and the pillar of its Orthodox spirituality.” Finally, on 14th October 1996, plastering of the façade, the construction of a new roof and the stabilization of the bell tower ended and the church was consecrated. Although the interior of the church was not reconstructed yet, the

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63 Ibid, p.13-17
64 Hajdinjak M. 2008:17
66 Brochure quoted in Zanic:2008, p. 37
67 Ibid
authorities had chosen to put a gold cross adorned with four C’s on the top of the bell tower. This act was supposed to confirm that the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity” was no longer valid and the old nationalistic slogan used by Cetnik movement “Only Unity Saves the Serbs” (in Serbian “Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava”, the four C’s stand for the four Cyrillic C’s) was just another part of nationalistic perception of national belonging and as Baillie puts it “a social symbol of solidarity as well as a counter-hegemonic symbol which offers an alternative schema of power.” 68 This was also the last reconstruction carried out by the RSK authorities since the political structure had changed once UNITAES mission begun. Otten notes that “since 1996, St. Nicholas has become a “ghost building”- a half-reconstructed structure where the completion of the reconstruction has been abandoned due to its unwantedness.” 69

68 Britt Baillie 2012:469
69 Otten 2007 quoted in Britt Baillie 2012:468
p.2. Cross with the four ‘C’s. This cross was erected in 1996 when the church of St Nicholas underwent structural and external reconstruction works. In April 2009 it was removed by the Croatian authorities. This large cross caused offence because of its association with the Cetnik movement. When the Croats returned in 1998, the Orthodox church with this new cross was the most visible monument in the city, and the only one which had received any considerable reconstruction attention.\footnote{Baillie 2007 in Baillie 2012:466}

Naturally, reconstructed Orthodox church with such a cross was a reason for the Croats to react negatively once they came back to their home town. The strategy on reconstruction of cultural heritage and under the patronage of UNESCO was
created in 1995 and it came into force on 15th January 1998. Under this new heritage management, the demand for returning of all the artifacts that were taken from Vukovar during the RSK period was imposed towards Serbian government and it included the returning of the inventory of St Nicholas. While some of the artifacts were returned by 2001, Serbian Orthodox Church refused to return the relics from churches and monasteries since it found that “these relics and artifacts can be returned only to churches and only if the episcopes of these churches ask for them”. Another important question was raised by Serbian Orthodox church saying “Why would Croatia need Serbian Orthodox heritage if it does not need Serb refugees?” The answer came from the General Secretary of the Union of Serbs in Croatia, Milojko Budimir, saying that Croatia wants to make museums in tourism centers such as Zadar and Sibenik and the icons from the destructed churches would be exposed there. However, Croatia’s main condition for carrying out with reconstruction was the removal of the cross adorned with four C’s. The official decision was made according to the professional opinion which stated that the Church should be reconstructed in order to regain its pre-war look. The decision was followed by Jasen Mesic’s (the Croatian Deputy Minister of Culture) statement saying that: “The restoration and conservation of churches and monasteries (Krupa Monastery, Episcopal in Bucraz or St. Demetrio’s church in Dalj) is high on priority list and should find its permit. Such project would restore and return this valuable Croatian cultural heritage of Serbian

\[74\] Slobodna Dalmacija, Sa crkve u Vukovaru uklonjena četiri “C”, http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Hrvatska/tabid/66/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/52862/Default.aspx
minority of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia.” Clearly, Mesic’s statement addressed the St. Nicholas church as a part of Croatia’s multi-ethnic heritage. This shift in managing cultural heritage of “others” came in right moment for Croatia to show to the EU that multiculturalism and respect for cultural and religious diversity are being implemented into the official cultural policies of the state. Finally, the cross was removed in April 2009 by the Croat authorities. It was a joint effort of Ivo Sanader of HDZ and Vojislav Stanimirovic of SDSS (Serbian party, coalition partners) that made both the removal of the cross and reconstruction possible.  

Memorials in Vukovar

This chapter aims to show Vukovar in the period after reintegration. Managed and controled by Croats, cultural heritage from this period and onwards gained a new meaning. As previous case study shows, cultural heritage that now became “heritage of minorities” was neglected while cultural heritage that had ethnically Croatian label became priority in reconstruction. In that respect, and according to the policy of

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75 Mesic quoted in Britt Baillie 2012:480
76 Simic, Vecernje novosti, “Zapelo kod cetiri ocila”,
<http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.293.html:268191-Zapelo-kod-cetiri-ocila>
77 Ibid
reconstruction in order to recreate a pre-war Vukovar, the first reconstructions were those of Eltz castle, town’s city hall, the Franciscan monastery of St. Philip and Jacob etc. However, the “martyr city” was regarded as a “heroic city” and thus, memorials to the fallen defenders became a new priority. Since Vukovar became a cradle of the independent Croatia, its sacrifice became a symbol of Croatian national identity and by erecting monuments to the fallen defenders collective memory was to be sealed.

Just shortly after the reintegration Franjo Tudjman stated in Vukovar: “Our arrival in Vukovar- the symbol of Croatian suffering, Croatian resistance, Croatian aspirations for freedom, Croatian desire to return to its eastern borders on the Danube, on which the Croatian national anthem sings- is a sign of our determination to really achieve peace and reconciliation.”

The need to remember the sacrifice for entire nation personified in Vukovar was achieved in erecting memorials. In this “massive memorialization campaign”, one of the most important memorials created is certainly the Ovcara memorial center.

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78 HRT archive quoted in Kardov K 2007:67
79 Britt Baillie 2012:317
The Ovcara Memorial Center is a memorial dedicated to the numerous Croats who lost their lives during the episode of the Vukovar massacre. Having lost their lives at the hand of the Serbs during the War of Independence, these unfortunate souls included not just prisoners of war but civilians as well. The memorial center houses a flame kept inside a circular stone frame and bullets that were used for the massacre are around it.\(^{80}\)

It was opened on November 20\(^{th}\) 2006, on a farm where fifteen years to the day 261 Croats (men, woman, children and some hospital patients) were executed in 1991. The memorial center is placed in the restored building where soldiers were taken from Vukovar hospital and shot and buried in a mass grave nearby.\(^{81}\) Baillie argues that Ovcara mass grave is “not a space hinting merely of crimes of the past, but rather a place of explosive emotions and intense attachments which are of the present.”\(^{82}\)


\(^{81}\) Karen Tormen Olson, “Frommer’s Croatia”, 2010, Willy Publishing Inc. Hoboken NJ

\(^{82}\) Britt Baillie 2012:99
A third part of the remembrance of the same event is the War-Time Hospital Museum, placed in the basement of Vukovar hospital. Since all three memorials are tribute to those who were killed while defending Vukovar, they play leading role in commemoration. Hajdinjak argues that nation-building is impossible without commemorations.\(^{83}\) They serve to remind a community of its identity and explain its past as a “collective autobiography”. They are more than just distributors and preservers of collective memory. In order to be truly effective, they must become a way of life, that is, the members of community need to become habituated to them.\(^{84}\)

Connerton’s definition of commemorative ceremonies fits the “Remembrance Day of Sacrifice of Vukovar in 1991” which is celebrated from 1999 when the Croatian Parliament adopted a decision proclaiming November 18\(^{th}\) the Vukovar Memorial Day.\(^{85}\) Vukovar is the only place whose victims are commemorated at the national level by the decision by the Croatian Parliament.\(^{86}\) The commemorative ceremonies are organized by city authorities and they last for four days. The central part of ceremonies takes place on 18\(^{th}\) November and it begins at the City Hospital and ends at Croatian Memorial Cemetery of Homeland Victims. This event is called the Procession of Memory.\(^{87}\)

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\(^{83}\) Hajdinjak 2008:7  
\(^{84}\) Connerton quoted in Hajdinjak 2008:7  
\(^{86}\) Narodne novine quoted in Kardov 2007:66  
\(^{87}\) Kardov 2007:79
p.5. Croatian Memorial Cemetery of Homeland Victims. On picture 938 white crosses, each symbolizing a victim exhumed here. Buried here are several generations of people, including youths from Vukovar and other parts of Croatia.88

Croatian citizens from Vukovar and other parts of Croatia attend this commemoration every year in huge number. It would be too modest to say that Vukovar is mourning in such moments since the way that this commemoration is organized is creating a “déjà-vu” for those who lived the authentic 15th November 1991. This could be called “forced remembering” since forgetting is not an option when the whole state is showing respect and thanksgiving to the victims. And while the Croats of Vukovar are captured in everlasting memory of the victims, the burden of collective guilt is being cast on the Serbs of Vukovar. As Kardov notes, “During this day, they (Serbs) leave the city or stay indoors (…) the Serbian political and religious leaders organize their

88 Source: Turisticka zajednica grada Vukovara
http://www.turizamvukovar.hr/index.php?lang=en&article_id=101
commemoration at the memorial cemetery for Serbian military victims the day before, on 17th November.\textsuperscript{89} If Vukovar is a place of memory hermetically closed in the past, than the past functions as a constant reminder if not even every-day life of the locals.

The Remembrance Day is annually attended by the top Croatian state officials. However, with the beginning of negotiations with Croatia for accession to the EU (2005), the fifteenth anniversary of Vukovar tragedy (2006) was attended by the representatives of Serbian NGO “Women in Black”.\textsuperscript{90} Allowing representatives from Serbia to attend to such a “pan Croatian” event seemed like a step forward in the process of reconciliation between Croatia and Serbia. Even bigger step was made in year 2010 when President Tadic came to Vukovar. Prior to Tadic’s arrival, the right-wing Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) held a protest in Vukovar to send a message that Serbian President is not welcome in Vukovar.\textsuperscript{91} HSP party had support from war veterans from Vukovar to Dubrovnik. Even though President Josipovic (SDP) declared that Tadic’s visit shall not be stopped by no one since the visit could “mark the final breakup of current Serbian policy with its past policies”\textsuperscript{92}, the members of HSP saw it as an insult since they consider Vukovar a “sacred soil and those unwilling to admit that fact are not welcome in Croatia.”\textsuperscript{93}. Furthermore, Tadic was accused of denying the guilt of Serbs for the past events in Croatia and thus accusing the Croat side for war crimes. Still, Tadic visited Vukovar as a first Serbian president to do so since 1991. It was not during the Remembrance Day but two weeks prior to it, on 4th November 2010. Accompanied by Croatian President Ivo Josipovic, Tadic

\begin{itemize}
  \item [89] Ibid
  \item [90] Bunjevac, 19th November 2006, \url{http://www.balkanium.com/forum/showthread.php/2013-Vukovar-marks-Remembrance-Day}
  \item [92] Ivo Sanader quoted in B92
  \item [93] Kekic Z. in B92, “Tadic not welcome in Vukovar”
\end{itemize}
visited Ovcara memorial site where he apologized for atrocities committed by Serbs in Croatia in the 1990s. On that occasion, Tadic stated: "Our children must not be burdened by policies of the 1990s. Serbia wants good neighbourly relations and cooperation." Similar message was the one delivered in the statement of President Josipovic: “It is time to complete the process of reconciliation, (...) Croatia and Serbia should be two friendly countries, two neighbors.” As it is the case in Croatia, the timing was predestined by Serbia’s applying for Serbia’s EU membership that took place in December 2009. Thus, with Croatia pending on becoming the next EU member-state and Serbia hoping to receive a full candidate status (which it finally received on March 1st 2012), both countries showed the will to end with ethnic rivalries of the 1990s and start with regional cooperation.

On the other hand, in the eve of this year’s commemoration, Vukovar is experiencing new turmoil. Namely, the end of October was marked with the news that Milorad Pupovac (vice-president of the independent Democratic Serb Party- SDSS and president of Serb National Council) along with other Serb politicians in Croatia would attend the commemoration on 28th November 2012. The minister of Croatian defenders (war veterans), Ivo Kovacic, stated that Pupovac and other representatives of Serbs in Croatia should have come earlier to pay their respect but that it so not too late to come now. He also stated that it would be good for the whole community of

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96 Sekularac
Vukovar since such gesture shows that “some kind of reconciliation or at least coexistence is possible in Vukovar”.\textsuperscript{98} This move made by Pupovac can not be regarded with out considering the fact that year 2012 was marked by presidential and parliamentary elections held on May 6. With Tomislav Nikolic (Serbian Progressive Party, SNS, right-wing political party) winning the elections, the political climate regarding neighboring relations seems to be changing. Soon after the elections, Nikolic stated “that the Greater Serbia project was his unrealised dream and that today he respected Croatia's internationally recognised borders, but that Croats had no business returning to Vukovar because it had been a Serb town.”\textsuperscript{99} Pupovac expressed his concerns at such Nikolic’s recent statements which do not contribute to the further promotion of bilateral relations between Belgrade and Zagreb.\textsuperscript{100} Clearly, Serbia’s new government with SNS has a different foreign policy and it is threatening to jeopardize the achievements on reconciliation that Serbia and Croatia have made in recent years with DS lead government.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{98} Bradaric
\textsuperscript{99} Dailyportal.hr, “Pupovac says Nikolic’s statements harmful and intolerable”
\url{http://daily.tportal.hr/197869/Pupovac-says-Nikolic-s-statements-harmful-and-intolerable.html}
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid
\end{flushleft}
The case of Knin

Unlike Vukovar, Knin did not suffer much destruction during the conflict. Majority of Knin’s citizens prior to war were Serbs\(^\text{101}\) and with the raise of HDZ and Tudjman ahead of it, Serbs from Knin supported by Milosevic, were the first to raise their voices against what they saw as a nationalistic wave that was threatening to repeat the faith of Serbs in Croatia during The Second World War. As the rebirth of Kosovo myth had much influence to the Serbs of Knin, the first gathering in order to show support to the Serbs in Kosovo, took place in Knin on February 27\(^\text{th}\) 1989, and soon after that, another gathering was organized in neighboring village of Kosovo.\(^\text{102}\) In the aftermath of electoral victory of HDZ, and with the proclamation of Croatia’s independence, Krajina Serbs proclaimed autonomy of their region and used force against Croatian police in the attempts to retake the control. Krajna became the “capital” of self-proclaimed Republic of Serb Krajina until the Croatian authorities retook control in the aftermath of operation “Storm” in 1995. Its importance for Croatian ethnic identity will be explained in the following chapters.

In a speech delivered to the Croatian Parliament when the new constitution was promulgated on December 22, 1990, President Tudjman stated that Croats had been developing their national identity and statehood since their first independent medieval kingdom and that the Croatian state never ceased to exist until 1918.\(^\text{103}\)

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\(^{101}\) Nowadays, the population of Knin consist of 16 000 citizens of which the majority are ethnic Croats who inhabited the city from every (Croat) part of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

\(^{102}\) Zanic M. 2009:33

\(^{103}\) Hajdinjak M. 2006, “From Organized Oblivion to Forced Remembering: Memory and Identity among Serbs and Croats” p. 17
symbols of independence, statehood and national identity were the key points that Tudjman used in electoral campaign united in even stronger narrative “of a centuries-old dream”. As Bellamy explains, “This is the claim that Croatia was formed as a nation by centuries of continuous statehood”. 104 Clearly, such speeches were, as Bellamy argues, “the way to mobilize the community around a particular political programme” 105, and to raise national consciousness that was “sleeping” while Croatia was a part of Yugoslavia.

Since Croatia declared independence in June 1991, the international recognition came no sooner then February 15th 1992, right after Vukovar fall. The reaction in Croatian public was marked with headlines such as “1992: a year without Zvonimir’s curse”. 106 Since such headline was just a symbol, and symbols are often used in politics as expressions, Kertzer argues that it is necessary to comprehend “how the symbolic enters into politics, how political actors consciously and unconsciously manipulate symbols, and how this symbolic dimension relates to material bases of political power.” 107 Namely, king Zvonimir ruled from 1075 to 1089 and has stayed remembered as the last Croatian powerful king after whose death Croatia saw the end of golden age of national history. 108 Another important detail about King Zvonimir, as Zanic argues, is the fact that “Zvonimir was crowned by Pope Gregory VII what constitutionally gave continuity to the Croatian kingdom, on which an essential part of national history is built, and upon which were based demands for independence during the course of life within Austro-Hungary first and

105 Ibid
108 Zanic 1994:92
then Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{109} After his death, the legend was created about his violent murder. The legend says that King Zvonimir was murdered by Croats after he called for a parliament in order to gather Croats to help Pope Gregory in a crusade. Before he died, Zvonimir cursed Croats with the oath that “they would never have a lord of their own language, but would always be subordinate to foreign languages.”\textsuperscript{110} Though only a legend, Zanic argues that it had much influence on historical consciousness of Croat people with some changes in its interpretations depending on the political forces and social aspirations.\textsuperscript{111} In the aftermath of Croatia gaining independence, not only that the curse saw its permanent annulment, but also the cause of the curse- disunity saw its end. Zanic adds that such legend entered as a political symbol in the 1990s and was (re)promoted by Croatian Catholic Church as a respond to the Great Serb ideology.\textsuperscript{112} Once Croats retook control over Knin, the city has been known as a “Croatian Royal city of Knin”.

Knin was liberated on the second day of operation “Storm”, on August 5\textsuperscript{th} 1995. The four-day operation started after peaceful negotiations that failed to reintegrate the territory. The fall of Knin signalled the fall of entire Republic Serbian Krajina, causing 220 000 Serbs to flee from Krajina while 2000 lost their lives.\textsuperscript{113} The very next day, as Tanner puts it, “since the whole of northern Dalmatia was in Croat hands, Tudjman rushed to Knin castle to kiss the chequerboard flag flying from the
battlements.”

Tanner also adds: “For Tudjman, the sight of the Croat flag over Knin castle was a moment to savour, the apex of a career that had seen spectacular peaks and troughs. The 'thousand-year-old dream' of which he had spoken so often was a reality at last.” On that occasion, president Tudjman stated: "The liberation of Knin means more than just winning the Croatian land and Croatian areas of the city. It means the creation of the conditions for the stability of the Croatian state for centuries ahead.”

Another statement Tudjman made addressing the troops in Knin was: “we have returned Zvonimir’s Croatian town of Knin to the fold of its motherland, Croatia, as pure as it was in King Zvonimir’s time”.

Following year, 1996, the day when Knin was liberated was proclaimed Day of Victory and Homeland thanksgiving. Moreover, as Pavlakovic writes, “in 1997, Tudjman chose August 5 as the day for his inauguration in front of St. Mark’s cathedral in Zagreb, seeking to cement his personal legacy with that of victorious Homeland War.”

From 2000, these commemorations take place in Knin, more precisely on the Knin fortress. Until the year 2005, the abovementioned commemorations in Knin were just another tool for Croatian Government in “control over the past”, that is, to pass the message about Croatian recent history and praise those who made it possible since the outcome of those historical events from the operation “Storm” liberated almost 1/3 of Croatia and secured its independence. But

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115 Ibid


118 Pavlakovic, 2007, Eye of the Storm: The ICTY, Commemorations and Contested Histories of Croatia’s Homeland War
since the year 2005 was marked in Croatia by arrestment of General Ante Gotovina (who among others indicated by the ICTY stood by Tudjman in Knin 1995.), Croatia’s past or at least the way it is presented in the country, was put into question. On the other hand, such commemorations were condemned by Belgrade, since, as Pavlakovic puts it, “President Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica once again issued declarations calling Operation Storm the greatest act of ethnic cleansing since World War Two and a planned criminal operation.”119 It should be noted here that the central role in commemoration of “Storm” operation is celebration of independence rather than reviving memories of war. Thus, while Croatian Government was manipulating collective memory by using Knin fortress and Knin itself as a place of memory in order to inscribe the date, the place and their meaning in collective consciousness, the victims and exodus of Croatian Serbs remained somewhere on the margins of history.

On the other hand, a new chapter on cultural heritage and memorials as a part of it was opened last year at the 16th Anniversary of Operation Storm in Knin. The commemoration itself did not change, but the place gained a new memorial. Namely, on 4th August 2011, at the Ante Starcevic Square, sixteen children of killed Croatian defenders officially unveiled monument to Croatian Victory Storm ‘95.120 The monument lists all units that participated in the Storm Operation, and significant operations carried out by the Croatian army in the Homeland war. It was built in honour of all Croatian defenders and is a unique blend of art, architecture and Croatian history.121 President Josipovic on this occasion said that the marking of

119 Ibid
121 Ibid
Storm Operation and unveiling of the monument was one of the most important moments in the Croatian history, adding: "The monuments are part of our memories and our obligation is to future generations remember our glorious history." Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor with special respect welcomed Croatian defenders and families of killed soldiers and particularly noted: "To be able to respect others, we must first respect ourselves and our heroes" saying that she would not allow anyone to review Croatian history and touch Croatian sacred things. She expressed her wish that this memorial would become a national symbol of a sovereign and democratic Croatia, a place of pride from where we send a message that we knew how to defend peace and the future of generations to come. According to the statements coming from Croatia’s top authorities, not much has changed in the attitude towards the perception of the Homeland war and its significance for the country.

p.6. On August 4th 2011, at the Ante Starcevic Square sixteen children of killed Croatian defenders officially unveiled monument to Croatian Victory Storm '95.

123 Ibid
A surprising change came in 2012 when it was announced that Veljko Dzakula, the President of the NGO Serb Democratic Forum (SDF) would attend Croatia's celebrations of Victory Day and the 17th anniversary of Operation Storm in Knin. As a first Serb to do so, Dzakula’s arrival in Knin stirred "a big political storm" in Croatia and also among Serbs in Croatia and among Serbs who left Croatia for Serbia. Pupovac, president of Serb National Council, saw this as, as he says, “a strange deal between Josipovic and Dzakula: Josipovic will recognize Serbian victims if Serbs recognize the victory of Croats”. In the meanwhile, the leading party in Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party, supported Pupovac decision not to attend the anniversary of operation Storm until establishing a different attitude toward the war and the war suffering.

As the case of Knin shows, collective memory has been inscribed in this town through centuries. It follows the legend of medieval king Zvonimir, the liberation of Knin in 1995 and monument “Oluja 95” with commemorations held to the fallen defenders and all this show exclusive memories of Croatian nationhood, identity and national pride. While Croatia is celebrating 4th August as a Day of Victory and Homeland thanksgiving, Serb refugees that fled to Serbia remember this day as a day of their exodus from their homes in Croatia. The two ways of dealing with the past are opposed in so many ways that reconciliation between Serbs and Croats is very far away.

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124 dailyportal.hr, Victory day, Dzakula says he came in Knin because of Josipovic’s invitation, http://daily.sportal.hr/208178/Dzakula-says-he-came-in-Knin-because-of-Josipovic-s-invitation.html
125 Ibid
126 Blic, Jedan od razloga sto me napada Josipovic je taj sto necu da slavim “Oluju” http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/339319/Pupovac-Jedan-od-razloga-sto-me-napada-Josipovic-je-taj-sto-necu-da-slavim-Oluju
127 Ibid
Nikola Tesla as shared heritage

“If your hate could be turned into electricity, it would light up the whole world.”\(^{128}\)

Tesla was born in a small village Smiljane near Gospic in Croatia. As many like to say about him, “he was born as a Serb in Croatia and died as American in New York”.\(^{130}\) Tesla, on the other hand, saw himself as “equally proud of his Serbian (ethnic) origin as of his homeland, Croatia”.\(^{131}\) He’s name is remembered and respected in the whole world for his inventions, but when it comes to Serbs and Croats, his significance and his role have been shifting according to political climate.

\(^{128}\) Tesla quoted in Slobodna Dalmacija, [http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Spektar/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/129763/Default.aspx](http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Spektar/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/129763/Default.aspx)

\(^{129}\) Ibid

\(^{130}\) Idrizovic Nagorka, Covjek svetlosti, in Oslobodjenje 16.05.2010. , p. 32

\(^{131}\) Tesla’s telegram to Vlatko Macek quoted in Slobodna Dalmacija, [http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Spektar/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/129763/Default.aspx](http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Spektar/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/129763/Default.aspx)
Hedl argues that Tesla (as a scientist) was marginalized by Croatian nationalistic authorities due to his ethnic origin. He also adds that marginalization of achievements of ethnic Serbs in Croatia was a part of a broader politics in the aftermath of the war.\(^{132}\) Even during the war, cultural heritage that had to do with Tesla was destroyed. Tesla’s monument in Gospic, work of famous Croatian sculptor Fran Krisinic that was placed in Nikola Tesla’s street (now called Stjepan Radic str. Named after Croatian politician who was opposed to Croatian unity with Serbs during first Yugoslavia) was destroyed in 1991 by Croat forces. Its reconstruction was initiated in 2006 by Croatian Ministry of Culture together with a project of reconstruction of Tesla’s house in his birthplace Smiljane at the 150\(^{th}\) anniversary of Tesla’s birth. Croatian parliament brought a decision that the year 2006 would be marked as a year of Nikola Tesla and that would initiate project of reconstruction of Tesla’s house. The same year, Belgrade brought the decision that the city’s airport would be named after this Serbian scientist and Zagreb decided to place Tesla’s monument in Croatia’s capital.\(^{133}\) It seemed like Nikola Tesla became the common thing in Croatia’s a Serbia’s past that could bridge the disputes and open a new chapter in reconciliation of the two countries.

At the 150\(^{th}\) anniversary of Tesla’s birth on July 10\(^{th}\) 2006, a memorial centre was formally opened. It was built under the sponsorship of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The same day, a statue of Tesla was unveiled which was created by sculptor Mile Blažević and it was announced that university with Tesla’s name would be opened in Gospic. Also, as a part of the same memorial complex,


reconstruction of Orthodox church of St. Peter and Paul was done.\textsuperscript{134} Since the anniversary was attended by President Tadic, President Mesic and Premier Sanader, every one of them used this opportunity to send a message of reconciliation and to remind each other of all the achievements that have been accomplished in mutual cooperation in the years after the war. President Mesic went even a step further by stating that “Croatia wanted to erase Tesla, a Serb, from its memory (…) but this Serb was proud of his homeland and Croatia ignored that. Today we owe to say that out loud because it is the truth”.\textsuperscript{135} As a former member of HDZ, and war time general, Mesic was somewhat more hostile towards Srbs than his successor Josipovic. But it was during Mesic’s two mandates in a row (2000-2010) that all the bases for intercultural cooperation were made thus Josipovic only continued the same road Mesic had already paved.

The monument that was devastated in 1992 in Gospic was supposed to be replaced with the new one, made as replica to the one in Belgrade. This was also a part of the whole project initiated and financed by the Ministry of Culture. When asked why the monument was not unveiled, the city Major, Milan Kolic, stated that the city of Gospic never initiated such a thing and that the problem was in finding the right place where to put the Monument since the monument would not be put on the place where the old one was, that is on Stepan Radic square.\textsuperscript{136} Provoked even more by the pressure coming from SDP, Kolic stated that on the place where old Tesla’s monument stood until 1991, he plans to build a monument to the first President of independent Croatia, Franjo Tudjman.\textsuperscript{137}  

\textsuperscript{134} Nezavisne novine, 11.7.2006 p.3  
\textsuperscript{135} Hedl 2012  
\textsuperscript{136} Radio Slobodna Evropa, 29.06.2010.  
http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/spomenik_nikoli_tesli_u_gospicu/2086208.html  
\textsuperscript{137} Slobodna Dalmacija, 23.09.2010.
Tesla as shared heritage of both Serbs and Croats in this case shows the political will from both sides to bridge the disputes by using the image of Nikola Tesla as a non-political personality. But as the case shows, such reconciliation is quite superficial, since it was short-termed without any significant result in terms of reconciliation. Promotion of cultural co-operation in this case saw more success outside the two countries since the 150th anniversary of Tesla’s birth was celebrated all over the world since this anniversary was proclaimed also by UNESCO. Still, Mesic’s words had symbolically shown his stance on where Serbia and Croatia both belong by saying:

"I am happy that we are here today to celebrate Tesla, a Serb, a son of Croatia and a citizen of the world."138

Conclusion

When a society experiences rapid and devastating transformation caused by war and/or ethnic conflict, cultural heritage reconstruction plays an important role in creating identities, re-establishing the bonds between communities and bringing them to bilateral dialogue. Cultural heritage, as presented in this thesis from identity related, religious related, ethnic related, to shared heritage, did bring about (re)creation of identities, re-establishing the bonds but rather within each community respectively. This is partly because the time frame examined in each case study is pretty short for reconciliation to be brought about and mainly because heritage management and policies in Croatia were created during turbulent periods which included the end of Communism in Central Europe, secession from Yugoslavia, proclamation of independence, Homeland war, and period of democratization. From another point of view, Croatian society had another difficult task and it was to reconcile from within and throw the burden of nationalistic legacy and replace it with democratic values. This process took place simultaneously with the process of reconciliation with Serbia and thus, positive results were not an outcome.

On the other hand, recreation of Croatian national identity imposed by cultural policies that were brought under Tudjman, pushed the process of reconciliation aside since these policies aimed to show Croats as victims and put the burden of collective guilt upon Serbs. Although Tudman’s successors turned to democratic values and towards European Union, their efforts in creating cultural policies that would benefit to the national minorities (in this case Serbs) was stimulated by the wish to join the EU as soon as possible, and thus, the results on reconciliation were superficial. This
was also the case in Serbian neighbouring policies and cultural policies. Instead, cultural policies in Croatia have supported “monument policies” which uses monuments erected in public space in order to pass the message to community. Thus, as Dragicevic implies, monuments in this case “enable political promotion, they give “face” to new values, they demonstrate power, they give an illusion of creating something for eternity, they facilitate representation, provoke the “other”, control the other and so forth.” Furthermore, Croatian national identity was reformed during the Homeland War and in its aftermath, thus, it is formed so as to show that Croatia was always part of Central European and Mediterranean civilization rather than East European civilization.

The fact that all this process of reconciliation between Serbia and Croatia through cultural heritage was top-down process should also be considered when bringing conclusions. Civil society has not played an important role in any of the case studies here presented (except for the war veterans in Vukovar and Knin). The notion of the term “reconciliation” is thus present only due to the fact that it is a precondition for becoming an EU member-state. Thus, the question is: how democratic are Croatia and Serbia, respectively and is it too early to speak about real reconciliation between Serbs and Croats?

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139 Dragicevic Sesic M, 2011, Cultural policies, identities and monument building in Southeastern Europe in Cultural transition in Southeastern Europe, Cultural Identity Politics in the (Post-) Transitional Societies, Aldo Milohnic, Nada Svoj-Djokic, Culturelink, p. 32

140 Ibid

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