Monument as a Form of Collective Memory and Public Knowledge

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Summary

Monument is a term that occurs in Western cultures as a product of different social processes, and therefore it is not enough to research and document only its materiality, but also its function, which changes depending on the society itself. Likewise, public knowledge depends on the society in which it exists - it is constantly dynamic in terms of its structure and organization. Furthermore, the way the corpus of public knowledge is being formed is changing, just like the public space of contemporary Western societies in which the cultural monuments exist. This is so because public space is shaped by this corpus of public knowledge. The phenomenon that clearly defines the relation between the monument and the public knowledge is collective memory. The feelings of belonging and forming an identity are influenced by collective memory and at the same time, these are some of the main characteristics of both, monuments and public knowledge.
Social reality is created by public knowledge, but it is also mirrored in monuments. It is therefore necessary to analyse the relation between monuments and public knowledge, so that on the one hand we can better understand the logic of forming and organizing the corpus of public knowledge in public space, and on the other, clearly explain the active social role of monuments.

Keywords: monument, collective memory, public knowledge

Introduction

At the beginning of this article, it is important to explain the usage of certain terms, since as in many other fields, including the field of cultural monuments and collective memory, terminology is often translated from other languages,

and usage may vary. For that reason we shall try to eliminate some of possible doubts in this introduction, so that the following text is more comprehensible.

In this paper we do not wish to discuss the distinction between the terms "monument" and "historic monument", as it is in this case irrelevant. We shall use the term cultural monument[1] in the way that it is defined by I. Maroević, which includes both terms. Throughout this article, the term "cultural monument" is frequently replaced by the shorter term, "monument". These two terms may be considered as synonyms. It is similar with the terms social and collective memory. In many articles in Croatian, the term "collective memory" has been translated as "collective memory" *(kolektivno pamćenje),* and we shall use it as such in this paper. However, in Croatian, the term "social memory" *(društveno pamćenje* lately occurs with increasing frequency as more appropriate, and it seems closer to the meaning of cultural monument itself.

This paper is an attempt to clarify the source and relation between cultural monument and public knowledge in contemporary society. The phenomenon of collective memory provides the fitting theoretical framework for such discussion. It is a phenomenon that is being established through communication, it proves belonging to the group participating in identity construction and tends to crystallize itself in space and time through past reconstruction being a part of present and future[2].

However, in the paper we shall show only the basic relations between those two notions. Thus. issues of communication patterns and cultural memory patterns shall be left out. Recognizing such patterns in forms of public message such as cultural monuments, is a subject for further research.

Let us consider an assertion that cultural monuments are forms of collective memory and well organised sets of messages that format public knowledge in public space.[3] The verification is even indicated in original meaning of the word monument as any artefact erected by community of individuals to commemorate or to remind future generations of individuals, events, sacrifices, practices or beliefs, and therefore the monument has a direct influence on memory function[4]. F. Choay claims that the past that is invoked and called forth is not just any past: it is localized and selected to a critical end, to the degree that it is capable of directly contributing to the maintenance and preservation of the identity of an ethnic, religious, national, tribal, or familial community. The very es-

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[1] Maroević, I. Uvod u muzeologiju. Zagreb: Zavod za informacijske studije, 1993; p. 139.

[2] Halbwachs M. On Collective Memory. / Lewis A. Coser. (ed). Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1992; pp. 41-120.

[3] Tuđman, M. Informacijsko ratište i informacijska znanosti, Zagreb, 2008., p. 93

[4] Choay, F. The invention of historic monument. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; p. 6.

sence of the monument lies in its relationship between the present and the memory, in other words, in its anthropological function.[5]

Notes on the etymology and history of monuments

The bond between cultural monuments and collective memory is easily perceivable if we analise one of the first interpretations of the meaning of monuments. In the time when this term appeared in Western Europe, famous French writer on architecture and esthetics, Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), defined a monument as a sign that evokes events, objects and individuals, and the word itself is applicable to many works of art, from smallest medals to largest edifices[6]. According to Quincy, the term "monument" expresses luxury and brilliance that is particularly suitable for public edifices which are designated primarily to serve peoples needs. He recognises instinctive compatibility between an edifice and its purpose, and for him art is just an outside attribute of monument that indicates its validity and purpose.[7] His reflection on monuments and their role in societies and cities probably came out of his earlier studies of ancient architecture. Quincy's other works include a comparative study of Egyptian and Greek architecture.[8]

In ancient Egypt, the main form of collective memory consists precisely of monuments - temples around which collective memory was organised and materialized. More about this is written by contemporary egyptologist J. Assman who, analyses, within his studies about cultural memory, analises how societies of ancient civilizations like Egypt, Israel and Greece relate to monuments, from written texts to great temples. Assmann believes that Egyptian temple presents builded memory and also a medium for state to manifest itself and the eternal order. For that reason, in Egypt, unlike in other ancient cultures, *monumental discourse* was established. The state disposes with temples and at the same time with media that make collective identity visible and at the same time ensures continued duration in collective memory, even after death. For an individual in Egyptian society the *monumental discourse* was the way for salvation that secures the place in eternity. Assmann states that *monumental discourse* is discourse of *merit* (k word *ma'at* that also means justice, truth and order), *eternity* and *political affiliation*.[9]

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[5] Ibid. p. 7.

[6] Quatremère de Quincy, A. Restauriranje, Restaurirati, Restituiranje, Ruina, Ruine, Spomenik. // Anatomija povijesnog spomenika / Špikić, Marko. (ed.). Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2006; p. 86.

[7] Ibid. p. 87.

[8] Špikić, M. Uvod. Kontemplacije i invektive. // Anatomija povijesnog spomenika / Špikić, Marko. (ed.). Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2006; p. 15.

[9] Assman, J. Kulturno pamćenje. Zenica: Vrijeme, 2005; p. 198.

Egypt is one of few cultures that placed the accent on visual media as a main bearer of collective memory. Architecture and art, same as hieroglyphic writing like a form of art in ancient Egypt, served to shape sacred public space that ensured durability, attachment, truth and justice. In this text we shall not give forms of collective memory in Israel, Greece or elsewhere because there collective memory was primary organised around ancient texts and oral tradition. Still, example of Egypt is important for us to understand that form of materialised collective memory is not arbitrary, but together with written texts and oral traditions unexceptionally constructs collective memory as a phenomenon we recognize today. That becomes even more important in contemporary culture where visual media are becoming leading devices for communication of different kind of messages. Although, multimedia starts to be even more represented and this includes different forms of expression including audio, textual, tactile, dancing, preforming etc. Medium is any form with which we can transmit a message. This was apparently understandable for old Egyptians who built their temples to be sacred places where works of art will be made, hieroglyphic text written, where festivals and rituals will take place that will, together with temples itself, send over explicit messages of Egyptian culture and civilization through space and time, present, past and future.

English writer J.Ruskin (1819.-1900.) who is responsible for initiation and development of the conservation idea, in his famous book *The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* stresses memory as the sixth pillar of architecture, since according to him, that is the purpose of making buildings to be more lasting, more monumental and worth of memory, and therefore decoration on them are more vivid, metaphoric or imbued with historical meaning.[10] Ruskin believes that there are only two strong conquerors of human forgetting: Poetry and Architecture.[11] However, architecture includes poetry and it is more powerful in the process of memory, because "we have learned much more about Greece from the ruins of its sculptures than from its sweet poetry or military historians."[12]

Monument as a form of communication object

Let us return to the present and consider a recent assumption that modern memory is, above all, archival, and according to P. Nora it relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. Our age has become obsessed with the archive, and it exists only through exte-

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[10] Ruskin, J. Luč pamćenja. // Anatomija povijesnog spomenika / Špikić, Marko. (ed.). Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2006; p. 292.

[11] Ruskin was studying ancient architecture and was fascinated by Babylon architects.

[12] Ruskin, J. Ibid. p. 291.

rior scaffolding and outward signs.[13] From the point of view of information science, we could say that our age has become obsessed with INDOC objects that resist entropy and forgetting, since their function is to memorise, that is, to endure and transmit and save given content or potencial message through time.[14] Therefore it is understandable that in contemporary age, cultural monument is defined as a document, which makes the monument the medium and the message at the same time.[15]

German and Comparative Literature professor A.Huyssen believes that in our days we can not discuss personal, generational, or public memory separately from the enormous influence of the new media as carriers of all forms of memory.[16] Huyssen notes that we are going through transformation of temporality, processes of time-space compression, brought on by complex intersection of technological change, mass media, and new patterns of consumption, work, and global mobility. Space and time are fundamental categories of human experience and perception, and our society, because of the informational and perceptional overload combined with a cultural acceleration, attempts to secure some continuity within time, to provide some extension of lived space within which we can breathe and move. According to Huyssen, cultural needs in a globalizing world can be reduced to slowing down rather then speeding up, expending the nature of public debate, trying to heal the wounds inflicted in the past, nurturing and expanding liveable space rather than destroying it for the sake of some future promise, securing "quality time".

Local memories are intimately linked to articulation of those needs, nevertheless they express the growing need to, as Huyssen calls it, spatial and temporal anchoring in a world of increasing flux.[17] And although Huyssen believes that monuments, like any other media, are a socially changeable category[18], we could assume that for a while cultural monuments (at least the existing ones) will still be perceived as that kind of anchor, just because they are fixed in space

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[13] Nora, Pierre. Između Pamćenja i Historije. Problematika mjesta. // Kultura pamćenja i historija / Brkljačić, Maja; Prlender, Sandra. (ed.). Zagreb: Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, 2006; str. 30.

[14] Tuđman, M. Struktura kulturne informacije. Zavod za kulturu Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1983; p. 57.

[15] Ibid; p. 140.

[16] Huyssen, A. Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsets and the Politics of Memory. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003; p. 18.

[17] Ibid. p. 21-27.

[18] Huyssens postulate is that only if we historicize the category of monumentality itself can we step out of the double shadow of a kitsch monumentalism of the nineteenth century and the bellicose antimonumentalism of modernism and postmodernism alike. Only then can we ask the question about monumentality in potentially new ways, about which this paper is not about. Ibid. p. 40.

and time. We could say that monuments are references for spacial and temporal interpretation, because on the one hand they are lasting and they transmit messages through space, but also they are themself a message in the space, and on the other hand they evoke memory and remembering sending off messages through time taking over completely the role of media in which communication with users is actualized.

As we have mentioned before, transmission and memorizing messages through time is a task of any INDOC object - in this case a monument - which we define as communication object within a structure of communication process. There are different kinds of communication objects[19], but we classify monuments as spacious and plastic, that is, ambiental objects[20] which are according to their characteristics of communicational form lasting, unreplicative and analog. Communication objects within communication process are defined as messages,[21] so cultural monuments are in fact lasting, unreplicative and analog ambiental messages, or more precisely, forms of collective memory.[22] Memory lives and it is maintained in communication, since we only remember what we communicate and what, according to Halbwach, we can locate within the social frameworks of memory[23]. Seen that way, cultural monuments are not just admirable virtuous works of art and architecture, but they have an active social role in creating and communicating messages of public space and collective memory as well.

Public knowledge and cultural monuments

Let us be reminded that knowledge is symbolic product which is defined by four functions: cognition, communication, information and memory. Different types of knowledge are historical categories that often disappear, change, or die together with the societies and circumstances in which they appear.[24] In the present time we distinguish open access knowledge and controlled knowledge, but in this paper we shall focus on the first category, the open access knowledge, which can be divided in two different types of knowledge: social and public. Social knowledge is defined as knowledge that includes tradition, historical and cultural heritage of all nations, but also civilisation inheritance that society col-

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[19] More about communication objects see Tuđman, Ibid. pp. 56-68.

[20] Ibid. p. 58.

[21] Ibid. p. 57.

[22] Tuđman, M. Informacijsko ratište i informacijska znanosti, Zagreb, 2008; p. 94.

[23] Assman, J. Ibid. p. 43.

[24] Tuđman, M. Svijet znanja i sudbina knjige // Aleksandru Stipčeviću s poštovanjem. Zagreb: Zavod za informacijske studije, 2008; p. 181.

lects, stores and exchanges with other cultures and communities.[25] On the other hand, public knowledge is dominant knowledge in public information space, and it represents the dominant form of knowledge in Western cultures.

Public knowledge is a type of knowledge that has not existed at all times, but was institutionalised through history, mainly coinciding with the expansion of printing, but also appearance of books and their role. It is based on new attitude towards knowledge as a result of knowledge valorisation through communication process, after which the knowledge is accepted by scientific and social community by consensus[26]. It is important to note that in contemporary Western societies dominant knowledge is determined by public knowledge in public space. Space that is prevailed by public and mass media, and their primary function is to control and supervise public knowledge.[27] The person controling the public space also controls total outflow of knowledge, and is able to ensure the dominance of messages with which he interprets and reaches his personal goals.[28]

According to the type of knowledge, cultural monuments could be classified as a part of social knowledge, taking into consideration just its physical features and the time of monument duration and development, in other words, its structural and functional identity[29]. However, a monument cannot be separated from its public life[30]. Since monuments exist, that is to say, "live" in public space, we have to take into account their context that indicates spatial and social components which are both present in their chronological and social time.[31] Thus, cultural monuments are components of the public space organisation and therefore their coded messages, and thus the coded collective memory, are an integral part of public knowledge. Moreover, since there is a consensus concerning public knowledge, or to be more precise, majority approval for dominant messages of governing elite, coded collective memory in monuments is an integral part of social order.[32] As we have have mentioned before, the same object situation was present in ancient Egypt with *monumental discourse* that was not only a com-

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[25] Ibid., p. 182.

[26] Tuđman, M. Obavijest i znanje. Zagreb: Zavod za informacijske studije, 1990; p. 108.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid. p. 187.

[29] See Maroević, I. Ibid. pp. 134-135.

[30] Young, James: Tekstura sjećanja. // Kultura pamćenja i historija / Brkljačić, Maja; Prlender, Sandra. (ed.). Zagreb: Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, 2006; p. 213.

[31] Maroević, I. Ibid. p. 135.

[32] Tuđman, M. Informacijsko ratište i informacijska znanosti, Zagreb, 2008; p. 95.

munication medium, but medium in which the state manifestes itself and the eternal order[33].

Therefore we can say that in the present age, the fate of monuments as well as the fate of collective memory is in a way determined by dominant knowledge in public space, i.e. the public knowledge that is being controlled by public and mass media.

Conclusion

The meaning and the social role of cultural monuments change depending on the context that is in our time defined by public and mass media. Nevertheless, monuments are not passive observers although they are fixed in space and time, but because of their ability to be communication objects, they are actually active participants in social events. Cultural monuments as communication objects are not a replica of the reality, but they constitute that reality[34], and not just any kind of reality.

Since monuments are a form of collective memory, they reconstruct the past in such a way that they are taking part in the present and the future. And just because of such features, it is very hard to imagine near future without cultural monuments. Even Ruskin himself believed that the value of monuments is in their ability to continuously testify about people, about the passage of time, with the purpose of linking together forgotten and future periods, and they almost build the identity of entire nations by adding their affections[35].

In the globalization society, the concept of cultural monument once again confirms its essence as its function to construct and maintain identity. What is more, the difference in the relationship that certain monuments have with the past, the memory and the knowledge condition the way they are protected and preserved[36].

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[33] Assman, J.Ibid. p.198.

[34] Tuđman, M. Struktura kulturne informacije, Zavod za kulturu Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1983; p. 77.

[35] Ruskin, J. Luč pamćenja. // Anatomija povijesnog spomenika / Špikić, Marko. (ed.). Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2006; p. 302.

[36] Choay, F. Ibid. p. 13.

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