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As a Wall Came Down... New Boundaries, New Narratives

(Yugoslavism and the Yugoslav Artistic Space, Discontinuity
and Fragmentation in the Core Narrative of Cultural Institutions
in Transition-Period Serbia)

People are born into stories; their social and historical contexts constantly invite them to tell and remember the stories of certain events and to leave others unstoried.

Freedman and Combs (2009)

Narratives do not necessarily tell the truth, they give meaning to a succession of events, facts (real or otherwise). That does not necessarily imply that narratives involve patent dishonesty although they may. It does though mean that when narrative is presented based on the art and science of narrative it does not allow the audience to derive their own meaning. The narrator (s) control this.

Paul Cobaugh (2018)

The wall fell somewhere else – the destruction of the Berlin Wall in the night between 9 and 10 November 1989 symbolically represented the end

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of ‘real socialism’ as a political system and the ‘socialist camp’ in the form of a disciplined group of states with the USSR as a leader. Unfortunately, for most Yugoslav citizens that was an event of, so to speak, peripheral significance: all attention was focused on the political crisis in the Federation itself and the dangerous signs of national conflicts. During the multi-party elections, held the next year for the very first time, an obsession with national emancipation was taking over, leaving questions of democracy and human rights in the shadow.¹

Vojin Dimitrijević (2009)

Abstract

The main aim of this overview is to trace the presence and importance of Yugoslav narrative (dedicated to a common cultural and artistic space before, during and after Yugoslavia) as important for (re)creating and maintaining continuity and coherence in the core narrative as an internal structure of cultural institutions in Serbia, especially in the transition period (2000 – 2018). The emergence of the South Slavic unity idea in the territory of the Balkans, as we argue in the paper, can be traced to a time long before the state of Yugoslavia was created as a concept. The fact that a common field (common ground) in the sense of cultural space existed long before the creation of Yugoslavia contains the assumption that a common cultural ground and art space exist in the post-Yugoslav period as well. The concept of the common cultural space is also known as the Yugoslav Artistic Space. The main goal of the paper is to form the conclusion that the Yugoslav Artistic Space, considering its tradition, still exists despite the political changes after 1989, particularly during the 1990s and the transition process, if not in another sense then as a core narrative of institutions (such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, for example). The paper also offers the thesis that marginalization of the Yugoslav legacy leads to discontinuity, fragmentation, and a status quo position in the transition process of Serbian cultural institutions.

Keywords: Yugoslavism, transition, transformation, cultural institution, narrative, Yugoslav Artistic Space, discontinuity, crisis, cultural space.

¹ “*Zid je pao negde drugde* – Rušenje Berlinskog zida u noći između 9. i 10. novembra 1989. simbolički je značilo početak kraja “realnog socijalizma” kao političkog sistema i “socijalističkog lagersa” u vidu disciplinovane grupe država predvođene SSSR-om. Na žalost, za većinu stanovnika Jugoslavije, bio je to tako reći periferan događaj: pažnju su zaokupljali velika politička kriza u federaciji i opasni predznaci međunacionalnih sukoba. Prvi višestranački izbori održani su tek naredne godine i na njima je obuzetost nacionalnom emancipacijom zasenila pitanje demokratije i ljudskih prava.” (V. Dimitrijević, 2009, p. 107)

Common Cultural Space and its Legacy

Our socio-psychological reality is structured by narratives. Humans are intentional, so they are narrative by nature and all of those narratives are, naturally, a structure in themselves, whether consciously or not. Some of them are constructions, planned and used for some particular function, some of them are myths, fairy tales or novels, with a concealed deeper meaning and artistic value, and some, meanwhile, are all that, in sum or in part.

The beginning of the narrative of South Slavic unity goes far back – conquering tribes moved from Asia to Europe in the 4th century and initiated the Great Migration. The old Slavs migrated from their territory in the Carpathian Mountains area to the east, west and south. Most of the facts, or rather assumptions and hypotheses about the previous life of the Slavs (before the 5th and 6th centuries) are found in the early works of Byzantine or Roman historians, in which Slavic people are described through their customs and looks. The migration of Croats and Serbs from the southern Czech and Polish lands to the Balkans is believed to have been part of a rising against the Avar yoke (Skowronek, Tanty, & Wasilewski, 2005). In the 20th century all the South Slavic countries inhabiting the territory of the Balkan Peninsula (except Bulgaria) were united in one single state, the state of Yugoslavia (lit. “South Slavia”). The concept of Yugoslavia emerged in the late 17th century and gained prominence throughout the 19th century with the phenomenon of the Illyrian movement (a variant or interpretation of the Pan-Slavism idea in the South Slavic context). The union known as the First Yugoslavia was founded under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and proclaimed on 1 December 1918, and renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929 (Ćorović, 1997). The notion of Yugoslavism is inspired “by the concept of *Kulturnation*, the model of thinking about nationhood in terms of philological-literary concepts (e.g. “national rebirth”), it is unavoidable in any attempt to understand the process of the national integration of the majority of (south) Slavic nations” (Roksandić, 2017). *Kulturnation* is a concept developed by Johan Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803), entailing a language-based cultural nation, and at its core is Herder’s idea of the connection between thought and language as the basis for the 19th-century Romantic concept of a nation. Herder also valued the future of Slavdom, the cultural unity of South Slavic people (Milojković-Djurić, 1994). The coexistence of various cultures was the main characteristic of the Balkan region between two great empires – the Western (the Roman Empire) and

the Eastern (“New Rome” or the Eastern Roman Empire, predominantly Hellenized). All Slavic countries in the region had their own paths to the European modernization process of the 19th and 20th centuries, through a struggle for independence, with a strong influence of the dominant world empire and different waves of migration during the centuries. Also, each country had at least one period in the Middle Ages considered a “golden age” and a deep source of identity concepts and cultural heritage.

At the same time, there were no strict boundaries besides the state boundaries. The states gained their sovereignty along with the complex realities of their societies and cultures, and there is no South Slavic state with a cultural and historical map and notion that doesn’t collide with nationalist plans and programs. Yugoslavism was the first endeavour to give a proper name and status to this cultural and historical mixture of South Slavic nations in the Balkan Peninsula. It was a political plan for creating a new notion, a state, an identity, in an attempt to create more possibilities for South Slavic national independence from the imperial states. That would have also secured more opportunities for developing the nation and escaping the status of the “internal periphery”. The additional identity, the space of the union in every sense and the common ground of the new country, were meant to protect the peoples and the territory of the South Slavic nations from the Western and Eastern empires. But the constitution of that new entity wasn’t that simple, and would be even more complex in the future. It was based on similar cultures but under different influences, a common language belonging to Slavic tribes, but also on a history of conflicts. The idea of Yugoslavism and the attempt to materialize it perfectly were always a matter of enthusiasm – the dynamic of changes within Europe and among the nations of the South Slavic union was sometimes hard to predict and even harder to control. Yugoslavism emerged from the fact that the huge empires that existed on the borders of the South Slavic territory disintegrated because World War I changed the relations between European entities.

The first South Slavic union was proclaimed on 1 December 1918 – as the union of the Slovenes and Croats with the Kingdom of Serbia (which already included the Kingdom of Montenegro). The new state was established as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. At the time, every nation held its position among others in Europe, already known as old European peoples constituted as modern nations before Yugoslavia’s establishment (Roksandić, 2017). It is important to note that unity had a solid core narrative based on the idea of Slavdom and on the ideology of the Illyric movement, but, despite that, not a single constitutive nation had experienced the concept of unity, so one couldn’t be in their horizon

of expectations. It was something completely new. And the danger of past experiences that presented an integral element of the new horizon lay in the fact that almost every nation had had a war conflict with all or some of the other participants.² The constitution of the common state and emergence of the Yugoslavism concept created a new task for the South Slavs' states – the formation of a new identity in order to strengthen the concept and its realization.³ Accordingly, the new entity needed a new narrative as a response to new questions – namely, what is the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and even more, what is the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, what is Yugoslavia itself and who are the people of Yugoslavia? Part of it was governed and influenced by the Habsburg monarchy and was marked by a strong and severe attempt at cultural assimilation by the imperial regime, and the other part was under the Ottoman Empire for five centuries, nursing the image of a wild periphery. Still, economic connections and cultural influences were very strong even during the constitution of the common state and Yugoslavian identity, which could define the polarization of the territory and the orientation of the new state – the nations of the Kingdom were used to having cultural centres elsewhere – not in their core.⁴ However, the outcome of World War I was such that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes became a problem the moment it was established, within its borders but also outside of them (Roksandić, 2017). It was the only confederation among other countries with no sense of multi-nationality, with no experience of a new establishment, and with no liberal democracy at its core. World War II was already on the doorstep, so to speak, and Yugoslavia was a paradox, a confusing and blurry spot on the historical and political line. Yugoslavia disappeared from 1941 to 1945,

² A self-fulfilling prophecy, a false prediction that causes itself to be true due to the cognitive connection between beliefs and behaviour (Merton, 1948), as a result of past experience (conflict) could emerge from the horizon and appear in reality, and that was the danger of the union experiment, and probably the main problem of early Yugoslavism, the state of Yugoslavia (and probably one of many issues that caused its breakup).

³ The 19th century (and the 20th as well) was a period of modernization and a huge transformation process in all of Europe, a period of constituting new identities and huge fluctuations, so Yugoslavism had all these dynamics – it had been changing its narrative(s) along with all the historical changes during the 19th century. In part, it was an idealistic and noble idea of unifying nations with similar cultures and the same language (*Kulturnation*), while on the other hand it was a good political option for the creation of a common ground for prosperity and for maintaining sovereignty and independence.

⁴ Despite expectations, Yugoslavism as a topic is more about describing culture (and art), scientific, philosophical and sociological concepts, than about describing a political notion, circumstances and programme. The idea of South Slav unity is closely connected with the idea of a common culture and art base, as mentioned earlier, the Yugoslav *Kulturnation*, the idea of cultural closeness among the South Slavic peoples, was the core narrative of South Slavic unification.

and was re-established with different concepts at its fundamentals, although radical ones, based on the guidelines of the victorious communist ideology, with strong points and coordinates, and a paradox within its core narrative. Yugoslav communists had been excluded from the governing structures in 1920/21 because of their revolution-oriented ideas, which was also expected to occur during World War II. The motto of the Communist Party was “never return to the old”, so the new state, also known as the second Yugoslavia, was obliged to offer a new narrative – with “brotherhood” and “unity” as key words (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*). Actually, the key meanings, which could explain the subsequent conflicts, were concealed in the fact that the Communist Party won a domestic war which had its bright and its dark side, reflected in resentment, a radical change of structures, misunderstandings and buried memories.

The attitude of devaluing the Yugoslav legacy during the 1990s, and even during the 2000s, led from discontinuity as a marked category of Serbian history to something even more dangerous: fragmentation of the core narrative. It ignored one of the most important notions for understanding and describing Yugoslav culture and art: the notion of a common ground and specific art tendencies, which Ješa Denegri’s theoretical work represents. The notion and narrative of the Yugoslav Artistic Space as the focus of his research and practice determined the theoretical and practical forms of the art space in Yugoslavia from 1900 to 1999. Denegri points out that taking the notion of the Yugoslav Artistic Space to underline continuity and encourage new tendencies at a time when Yugoslavia as a federation doesn’t exist anymore cannot be a political construct, or acting out of Yugo-nostalgic feelings. During the entire 20th century, artists from the republics of ex-Yugoslavia and their work were part of one common ground (Yugoslav), part of the same projects, festivals, organizations, exhibitions, with strong personal connections, living and working in the same creative and cultural atmosphere. The most concrete and institutional representation is the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, dedicated to Yugoslav art from the very beginning. The existence of the supreme category of the Yugoslav Artistic Space doesn’t mean that each republic of the Yugoslav federation didn’t and doesn’t have its own cultural space and art agenda, its own narrative, included in a larger one called the Yugoslav Artistic Space. According to Denegri, all those notions of the different countries’ arts and culture were part of the Yugoslav Artistic Space, which was something different from a sum of its parts, unique, having its own expression and following an immanent art model. The notion of the Yugoslav Artistic Space implies a geographical, political and cultural common ground, with the equality of polycentrism and togetherness as a

dominant characteristic. Every country, every member of the federation has its own cultural agenda, an authentic and independent cultural scene. Those scene(s) were at the same time part of the larger art world, appreciated as Yugoslav art. That artistic world and the world of Yugoslav art and culture had a lively dynamics, with numerous events, projects, exhibitions and contributions to European and world art happenings. The Yugoslav Art Space and its first concrete emanations in the form of visual art exhibitions (Yugoslav art exhibitions) in 1904 (Belgrade), 1906 (Sofia), 1908 (Zagreb), 1912 (Belgrade) had one more role – it anticipated the constitution of Yugoslavia. In the first decade of the 20th century, before World War I, supporting the arts, cultural events and promoting the art of the South Slavic common artistic ground was part of a particular policy and part of clearing the field for the constitution of the state. Artists from all around the South Slavic area of the Balkans were acting together on the world scene, developing more and more contacts and creating an authentic model of art. Great support for those intentions came from the fact that the majority of Yugoslav artists were studying together in the European capitals, which brought them even closer together (Denegri, 2011):

Meštrović was also entrusted with the design of the Art Pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbia at the International Exhibition in Rome in 1911. At the invitation of the Serbian government, a group of Croatian artists led by Meštrović exhibited their works in the Serbian pavilion. Meštrović, Ljubo Babić, Mirko Rački, Vladimir Becić and other Croatian artists exhibited works inspired by the Kosovo Cycle, the central theme of the pavilion. This was a clear sign of their Yugoslav commitment and a strong political message to the international public. At the same time, Paja Jovanović, celebrated as a great Serbian painter, exhibited his works in the Austrian pavilion (Makuljević, 2017).

In the 1930s, Belgrade was becoming an artistic centre, so the capital of Serbia was the place for Yugoslav artists from all countries to gather (Tartalja, Miše, Šumanović, Rosandić, Dobrović, Meštrović, Dolinar, Martinovski, Ličenovski, Palavčini, Aralica, Konjović, Junek, Plančić, Milosavljević, Gvozdrenović, Poljanski, Pavlović-Barili, Uzlac, Sokič, Čelebonović – some of them formed a “Yugoslav art colony” in Paris during the 1930s). The second half of the 20th century, according to Denegri, was the period of the Yugoslav Artistic Space becoming one strong system, one organism, supported and organized “top-down” by the governing state structures. One of its emanations was the creation of institutions such as the Union of Yugoslav Artists (1947). That was also the period of socialist realism, a very brief one in Yugoslavia in comparison with other communist European states (the crucial moment for abandoning

that model was the conflict between Tito and Stalin, which began in 1948 and was known as the Informbiro affair, the moment when the Yugoslav art scene became less oriented towards the USSR and more open to other influences such as the United States). That period is often described as “sitting on the border between East and West”. In comparison with other European states under a communist regime, it was a period of freedom, exploration of creative possibilities, and creating new forms of expression encompassed by the unique notion of Yugoslav modernism. The liberal working environment was due to the Yugoslav “soft” communist regime, and despite there never being complete freedom from state supervision, that control was never repressive after 1952. In the following years, during the second half of the 20th century, the Yugoslav Artistic Space already had its own artistic language, model and system, authentic and recognizable in the art world, and institutions at which young artists could study those unique expressions of Yugoslav art (Protić, 1965). But the political process of disintegration was already visible in the 1960s and 1970s, despite the fact that those years were at the same time the most productive period and the period when institutions were set up for promoting Yugoslav art – the new building for the Modern Gallery was erected in 1965, and then the Modern Gallery became the Museum of Contemporary Art, dedicated to Yugoslav art, among other institutions such as the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Modern Gallery in Ljubljana, the City Gallery/Contemporary Art Museum in Zagreb and the Contemporary Art Museum in Skopje. The policy of the state (its members gravitated more and more towards institutions) was to form a national space and to start investing more in a national art base than in a common Yugoslav one. Still, on the world scene, Yugoslav art appeared as one and whole art system, representing so-called socialist modernism as the Yugoslav art model, supported by the federation in every area of its development – events, institutions, education and financial support for artists (education, materials, ateliers). Yugoslav art was living and blossoming thanks to official support and via official institutions, having its alternative wave in the form of so-called abstract art.

In the 1970s the influence of new European art and trends became obvious among students’ organizations and cultural institutions (cultural centres for students in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana), so some new currents were finally entering and trying to contribute to the art scene, coexisting with the dominant and official artistic expression (body art, conceptual art, art of the new media...). However, the productive and creative field of the Yugoslav Artistic Space, with a beneficial narrative developed over nearly a century, was contaminated and influenced by

nationalist tendencies during the 1980s, and especially during the 1990s, augmented by the breakup of the federation and a civil war whose cause and consequences were inexplicable.

Ignoring Yugoslavia – Creating Discontinuity

When a particular state emerges or disappears we witness a political process *par excellence*. Every state is always connected with power as a core notion of politics and all of its political creations use force...⁵ (Bakić, 2011, p. 13)

During the political transformation after 1989, countries in Central and Eastern Europe responded to the task of that process in different ways. Yugoslavia was in a deep political and economic crisis, and the federation's breakup was near at hand. Despite the specific conditions in the 1980s (in comparison with other communist countries in Europe) which seemed to promise a successful transition process, Yugoslavia responded with a major crisis, and at the beginning of the 1990s with a civil war and secession. The unstable political situation and economic crisis caused the first transition period (1991 – 2000), a traumatic experience for Serbia, but after dramatic political changes in 2000, institutional progress was accomplished (with economic growth of average annual GDP reaching almost 5%). A negative perspective on Yugoslavia resulted in a discontinuity in the cultural and historical narrative, and also in the discourse of elites in Serbia, governing structures, and in the core narratives as an internal structure of various institutions. It had a dramatic and non-beneficial influence causing discontinuity and fragmentation, including confusion, and the whole spectrum of an identity crisis. The social identities of Serbs, Slovenes, Bosnians, Croatians, Macedonians and Montenegrins split apart after a long period of oneness and a common Yugoslav identity, and the construction of the specific national identity began (Erdei, 2009).

Strong animosity towards the Yugoslav legacy and the presence of highly emotional anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist narratives were typical for the nationalist discourse in the early 1990s in the successor states. Especially after 1991, nationalist discourse was omnipresent in governing structures and politics, with an obligatory position of hatred towards the West, America, Germany, “communists” and Yugoslavism. In the monograph titled *Yugoslavia: Devastation, and Its Interpreters*, author Jovo Bakić

⁵ „Kada se stvara ili nestaje neka država, onda je posredi politički proces *par excellence*. Svaka država je uvek povezana sa moći kao središnjim pojmom politike, a „sve političke tvorevine“ upotrebljavaju silu...“.

describes victim discourse as a fundamental point of nationalist narratives. The nationalist narrative actively escalated into the demonization of the Other, giving Them the characteristics of the mythological evil being. The Others where all the nations of the former Yugoslavia, Western Europe and America, and of course the domestic “communists”. The period from 1992 to 1996 was a time of an extremely negative perspective on Yugoslav heritage, communism and communists (Bakić, 2011), and probably the breaking point in the process of the fragmentation and dissolution of Yugoslav culture and history. After the so-called blocked transition period from 1991 to 2000, Serbia entered the second period, often referred to as “culture in transformation”, in the field of culture, education and art, according to the authors of the official profile of Serbia in the project *Compendium, Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*, marked by a process of shaping and making early changes and new strategies. From a cultural policy perspective, at the beginning of the 21st century and later on, the major crisis of cultural institutions in Serbia was due to the lack of a strategy, funding and a core narrative as the representation of cultural identity in the internal structure. Hence the lack of internal structure is a consequence of the non-existent linear and strong core narrative as an adequate symbolic representation of identity as a supreme, flexible and complex category, required in the transition period as a central support.

The core narrative or central main narrative is a linear narrative which defines the space and place (in time) of a cultural institution and culture itself. At first glance, it could appear anachronous and unnecessary in the (post)modern days of “overcoming” linearity, but this is a case of a transition process which is a crisis in itself, made greater by the environment of a posttraumatic society, if not a society in a state of permanent trauma. So, the existence of a structured main narrative as an identity core is essential, and, by creating security and a field of stability, could offer a possibility for solving the crisis in a beneficial way and creating new narratives. Important values describing the core narrative as a representation of cultural identity in the internal structure of cultural institutions are continuity and coherence. In the case of Serbian formal institutions, for example the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade as an institution (and metaphor) of (Serbian) national importance, the negative attitude to the Yugoslav past and Yugoslav heritage caused fragmentation and discontinuity in the core narrative by ignoring the period of nearly a hundred years of a common artistic (Yugoslav) base. For a culture and society in transition, every cultural structure with a beneficial and stable narrative has vital importance, and could maintain continuity and linearity. In the case of a prolonged transition (B. Dimitrijević, 2017),

if a consistent structure of narratives is missing or lacking, this can be fatal and could help maintain the *status quo* and a destructive *either – or* position (Kierkegaard). In an overview dedicated to the MoCAiB (*Prilozi za istorizaciju Muzeja savremene umetnosti* u Beogradu, 2016) the authors (B. Dimitrijević, 2016; Sretenović, 2016) have pointed out that the need for a critical museum (Piotrowski, 2011) was crucial in the time of social and political change (even though the idea of a museum forum, discussed among the museum management in the early 2000s, was an anticipation of Piotr Piotrowski’s critical museum). The central point of the new museum concept emerging among employees and artists at the Museum during the 2000, was the Museum as a hub, as a place for discussing alternatives, a creative space in the broadest sense (B. Dimitrijević, 2016), marked by the need for a “forum” institution. The management of the Museum saw renewing and transforming potential in creating a platform for discussion and exchange (Sretenović, 2016). Changes in the state governing structure, its narratives, interpretations in connection with past narratives, influenced a change of the Museum management, so that a completely different managing structure was established, with other visions and a different understanding of the institution’s role and the importance of the Yugoslav identity heritage. This was yet more proof of discontinuity on an external level and in an external structure, coming from the top, from the official and governing state structures. The *either – or* position is a non-action state, a symptom of depression and an identity crisis, polarizing the old, which doesn’t exist anymore or is forbidden, and the new, which is unknown, unacceptable or both. That condition keeps the subject in the status quo position, a position without real movement, with ambivalence and no alternative.

The *either – or* state, which is often a dilemma between old and new, with the bonus paradox that neither of those exist, has its representation in the “Yugoslav or Serbian Artistic Space” dilemma, and obviously leads to the *status quo* phenomenon present in post-Yugoslav and transitional Serbian society. Also, nationalist narrative introduces a high level of polarization which instantly creates a black-and-white image, or the good and the bad story of the acceptable and the unacceptable. With the lack of structure, strategy and cultural policy, this leads to more splitting and complex fragmentation, a permanent crisis and of course – a prolonged transition. To summarize: the official and unofficial cultural policy of state institutions, actually its materialization, appears in the slogan “get rid of the Yugoslav legacy” (B. Dimitrijević, 2017) – a rough concretization of the Serbian government’s attitude towards cultural legacy and identity. The Yugoslav period is the main plot of the core narratives and cultural

institutions and it can't be bypassed. The attempt to create a narrative ignoring the Yugoslav legacy ended in the closing of some institutions for more than ten years. The creation of new boundaries and new hierarchies originating from a political perspective left institutions of culture "lost in transition" (B. Dimitrijević, 2017). Having disavowed the Yugoslav background and the position of successor, cultural institutions in Serbia were forced to reconstruct their core narrative, paradoxically deconstructing it. Without the story of Yugoslavia, which became unpopular because of its identification with communism (also unpopular), and the monarchy period before Yugoslavia, which from the present vantage point was also unacceptable to reconnect with, efforts to create historical continuity led straight to medieval culture. Historical continuity or context, without skipping and ignoring century-long periods for political reasons, remains crucial for linear narratives, which are the best choice in a period of crisis – a transition period is by definition a period of crisis, when one needs the security of continuity.⁶ After ten years of being closed to the public, the restored building of the Museum was opened on 20 October 2017 at 10 a.m. with the exhibition *Sequences. Art of Yugoslavia and Serbia from the Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art*. So, the *Sequences* opening exhibition encompasses the period from the beginning of the 20th century to the present, displaying works of art created in Yugoslavia and present-day Serbia. It includes contemporary art, in a historical perspective, "with the primary aim of reaffirming MoCAB's collection and offering a new framework" (official catalogue and programme of the exhibition, by the author of the exhibition concept Dejan Sretenović and exhibition curators Mišela Blanuša, Zoran Erić and Dejan Sretenović):

The exhibition establishes a possible trajectory of movement through the archipelago of 20th century art, bringing new input into the corpus of extant knowledge and writing one version of the history of modern and contemporary art. In keeping with existing epistemological coordinates and analytical matrices, the exhibition brings forth a remapping, correction and reevaluation of the 20th century art history, while reinventing some of the neglected and marginalised phenomena [my underlining: T.V.].

The exhibition is structured as a series of 18 sequences, grouped around a chronological axis describing surprising changes in the art of Yugoslavia and Serbia over a period of more than a century. The "sequence" is a film term, meaning a series of scenes, "connected by the unity of time or location, forming a distinct narrative unit" and borrowed to represent

⁶ Society in transformation in Serbia knows one type of retaining continuity: the so-called continuum of depression – "working a lot, gaining a little".

artistic currents and movements in the 20th century in the territories of Yugoslavia and Serbia:

Sequences are spatial-temporal units, based on a dialectical relationship between museum representation as a material practice of arranging objects in space, and art historical narration as a practice of writing which arranges these objects in historical time. ("Sequences", 2017)

After ten years of absence, with the first narrated showcase of its collection in the 21st century, the Museum of Contemporary Art presents its own "story", shaping the importance of the leading place it holds among institutions of modern and contemporary art. *Sequences* is a concept which at its core contains the narrativization of the Museum as having the leading role in bringing out Yugoslav heritage and Serbian contemporary art. It is an attempt to forge new connections, new spaces and reference spots, a specific kind of continuity in space and time, through an artistic lens. It was an act of saving the Yugoslav Artistic Space from falling apart and dissolving into pieces, lost in the past and in the "non-places" of today, in the boundaries and hierarchies of governing political structures, and, at the same time – it is a hymn to discontinuity and fragmentation, and their opposites – gathering and togetherness.

As a wall fell down... Somewhere Else

The struggle for a national / cultural identity and for accepting the new political subject in Europe really began exactly in 1989. The time of the democratic renewal of the old-new European states at the same time is a period for the symbolical construction of the national state⁷ (Paić, 2009, p. 209).

After 1989, the main socio-political and socio-psychological narratives in Europe had been changed forever. Their meaning and function were reinterpreted and that fact changed the hierarchies and boundaries of the old and created new stories, realities and identities in European societies. Revolutionary events in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, and in the whole of Europe during the 1990s, the end of the Cold War and a polarized world, have changed the map of the world, creating new narratives of freedom, independence, democracy, human rights. It was time to develop new

⁷ „Borba za nacionalnim / kulturnim identitetom jest borba za priznanjem novoga političkog subjekta u Europi koja realno otpočinje upravo 1989. Doba obnove demokracije u stare – nove države Europe istodobno je bilo doba simboličke konstrukcije nacionalne države”.

(national) identities and create new maps, with new shapes. Evidently, new structures have also emerged, with their own hierarchy and boundaries.⁸

War in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s represents the universal war model in the era of ending history. When the bloody revolutions are over and capitalism and liberal democracy represent the entire world order, then the ideological conflict between subjects of postmodern politics moves into the only remaining field, the battlefield for acceptance of one's own identity. That place looks, at first glance, solemn and pure. And precisely therefore – it is the most monstrous. The empty place of the world's identity is the modern way of understanding the notion of culture. It is the Holy Grail of the nation – of the state, the person, the social group, the religion. Culture in times of a turn towards the complexity of multiple meanings becomes a tool/goal of identity policy⁹ (Luketić, 2009).

According to Daniel P. Ritter in his article *Nationalism and Transitions: Mobilizing for Democracy in Yugoslavia* (2012), Yugoslavia's transition to democracy stands out as particularly complicated despite the best circumstances for a successful transition to democracy if we consider the federation to have “enjoyed the most favourable initial conditions of any country in the region: the regime was relatively liberal, there was an indigenous, vibrant civil society in place, an economic crisis had put politicians on the defensive, and the country was not overly tied to either Western or Eastern influence” (Ritter, 2012, p. 5). Since these structural

⁸ The events of the 20th-century revolution in Europe first began in Poland in 1989, and continued in Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania (the only Eastern Bloc country whose citizens overthrew its communist regime violently). The Solidarity Trade Union won the (partially) free elections in Poland in June 1989, when Hungary started pulling up its part of the Iron Curtain, letting East Germans emigrate to the West, causing destabilization and leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the reunification of West and East Germany in 1990, after which the Soviet Union fell apart in December 1991, and 15 (new) countries declared their independence. Yugoslavia dissolved into five states, in 1991 and 1992 – Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was later renamed Serbia and Montenegro in 2003, and eventually split into two states, after the referendum in Montenegro (2006). Communism became an active narrative of the past in Albania also, during 1992. In just 20 years, approximately, the whole European continent has changed, its reshaping having a huge impact on the rest of the world. The interplay of the old and new in post-communist transition started its dynamic creation of new narratives.

⁹ “Rat na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije 90-ih. godina XX stoljeća univerzalan je model ratova u doba kraja povijesti. Kada više nema krvavih revolucija i kada je kapitalizam i liberalna demokracija poredak totaliteta svijeta, tada se ideologijski sukob između subjekata / aktera postmoderne politike premješta u jedino preostalo područje borbe za priznanjem vlastita identiteta. To je mjesto naizgled uzvišeno i čisto. Ali upravo stoga jest najčudovišnije. Prazno mjesto identiteta svijeta jest suvremeno razumijevanje pojma kulture. Ona je Sveti Gral nacije – države, ali i pojedinca, društvene skupine, religije. Kultura u doba zaokreta spram složenosti višestrukih značenja postaje sredstvom / svrhom politike identiteta.”

conditions are not the overall conditions, Yugoslavia with rising nationalism in all its republics couldn't solve the transition and its temptations without conflict. As suggested in Ritter's article, the cause of the prolonged and difficult democratic transition process can be linked to the fact that "democracy was considered to be less of a problem here than elsewhere" (in contrast to the Soviet satellite states):

Yugoslavia's advantageous starting point, seen from a democratization perspective, turned out to be a great disadvantage when republican political leaders sought to save their positions of power by exploiting nationalist concerned rhetoric (Ritter, 2012, p. 9).

Actually, the biggest problem with the transformation and transition process in Serbia is the fact that it was never completed. Some research papers suggest the notion of a "semi-successful" transition to illustrate the Serbian experience in transition (Carothers, 2002), while the notion of a prolonged or delayed transition may be a more adequate term (Bieber, 2003). The consequences of a prolonged transition which turns into a crisis are the most prominent in the field of culture and its institutions. Culture, education and art were considered a "luxury" space from the perspective of the governing structures. And, as we shall note further on, confusion and the lack of a strategy of change and transformation stem from the discontinuity in the narrative, connected with the marginalization of the Yugoslav past and identity by official institutions and governing politics: "it matters little if a country can boast a vibrant civil society if politicians and aggrieved groups can turn the population's attention away from 'luxury concerns' such as democracy, human rights, and basic freedoms to more primordial issues like nationalism and basic survival" (Ritter, 2012, p. 38). Even more than gaining functional institutions of basic democracy and human rights in Serbia, after the civil war and the 1990s crisis, achieving a successful transition in the space of cultural and art institutions was devalued and interpreted by the governing structures as a matter of "luxury". The discourse of the main institutions in charge, especially those entitled to create a cultural policy, strategy and programme, was humbling, explanatory, denoting culture as a secondary concern at best. As regards the institutions, both formal and alternative ones, it was obvious to their employees and artists that behind those explanations there was a chronic lack of strategy, cultural policy and support (Dragičević Šešić & Tomka, 2010). Without the possibility to maintain the core narrative with authenticity and continuity, and with constant interference from the governing political structures, institutions of culture started to slow down in their productive work on transformation and transition. One

major example is the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade which was closed for restoration for a decade (2007 – 2017).

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade was dedicated to 20th-century Yugoslav art from the very beginning of its history, and represents an illustrative case study for the devastating effect of narrative discontinuity¹⁰, especially since it appears, from the fragmented and manipulated narrative of the state governing structure, as a consequence of the fact that the idea and concept of Yugoslavism were so unpopular and almost forbidden in the late 1990s (Bakić, 2011). After the breakup of Yugoslavia, a negative approach to Yugoslav heritage was predominant in all the successor states. Almost all of them had a constructed narrative, or a narrative under construction, based on nationalist discourse disregarding the new and old relation to Yugoslavia. These narratives were mainly based on the notion of independence or liberation. The prolonged process of transition, with the freezing of the core narratives in fragmentation, led to identity confusion, ending in a crisis of almost every manifestation of Serbian culture, starting from formal institutions, which were closed for renovation or forever, through NGOs and independent cultural centres as guardians of modern and contemporary art as well as the spirit of culture in Serbia, to mass production and the devastating policy of mass media (Koković & Lazar, 2004). Considering investment and support for culture and art in Serbia to be a question of luxury in a time of a great political and economic crisis, the governing formal institutions of the Republic of Serbia showed a lack of awareness and understanding of cultural institutions' important role in creating a new narrative based on the old one and in helping an authentic identity emerge from the crises as a solution in itself. The specific change which emerged during the transition process in the narratives of Serbian culture and society, especially in institutions of culture and art, led to the phenomenon of a “prolonged transition”, or actually to maintaining the status quo. The lack of any dynamic movement towards successful socio-political transformation and transition in the direction of

¹⁰ The National Museum of Serbia was founded in 1844 and is housed in a building dating from 1903 on Belgrade's central Republic Square. Due to the building's deterioration and lack of funding for renovation (restoration included an interior redesign and restoration of the building's façade), the museum's permanent collection was not accessible to visitors from 2003 until the reopening (28 June 2018). During this period, temporary themed exhibitions were held at other locations around the city. The opening was delayed by bureaucratic and financial problems and complications from the time the building closed. Politicians had originally pledged to reopen the building in 2015, setting a countdown clock on the museum in the centre of the capital and then resetting it quietly.

The example of the National Museum of Serbia is used as an illustration of the main argument in the article, while its case study, particularly the period 2000 – 2018, belongs to another paper.

achieving beneficial narratives as a core structure of formal and informal institutions was caused by the predominance of nationalist narrative during the transformation years, mainly ignoring the Yugoslav legacy and suggesting its devaluation.

In social, political and economic science in the Yugoslav successor states over the last decade, interest has increased in the breakup of Yugoslavia, the reasons behind it and its consequences, the period after 1989 and the transition period, and results have appeared in a new form. The collective memory has emerged as one of the most interesting phenomena and themes – a field for researchers, and not just historians. An interdisciplinary approach to memory studies maps and illustrates new (and old) narratives as a representation of the collective memory, but does not explain wherein their importance lies from a sociological and psychological perspective. Why is it important to have a beneficial narrative as a representation of the collective memory, and what is that narrative's structure? A beneficial narrative is a matter of construction as well as a spontaneous act. The construction should involve creating a productive and creative space for making natural and living boundaries, where an authentic narrative can emerge spontaneously – in the field of culture and art.

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Чим је Зид пао... Нове границе, нови наративи.
(Југословенство и југословенски уметнички простор,
дисконтинуитет и фрагментираност средишњег наратива
институција културе у Србији,
у периоду транзиције)

Чланак представља осврт на присуство и важност југословенства и југословенског наратива, као и феномена југословенског уметничког простора (и после Југославије), у поновном успостављању и одржавању континуитета и јединства средишњег наратива као носећег, када је реч о унутрашњој структури институција културе у Србији, у периоду транзиције (2000 – 2018).

Стварање јужнословенског јединства на територији Балкана, како ћемо навести у тексту, има своје почетке много пре прве концептуализације југословенске државе. Чињеница да је заједнички простор, у смислу културолошког и културног заједничког поља, постојао и пре стварања Југославије, наговештава могућност постојања јединственог културног и уметничког простора и у пост- југословенском периоду, познатим и дефинисаним управо термином југословенски уметнички простор, Јеше Денегија (2011). У тексту се истиче да југословенски уметнички простор, узимајући у обзир његову традицију, опстаје упркос политичким променама 1989, нарочито '90тих година, све до данас – на конкретнији начин, или у средишњем наративу институција културе (Музеја савремене уметности у Београду, на пример). Такође, истакнута је тврдња да маргинализација идеје југословенства и традиције југословенства, води у дисконтинуитет, фрагментацију, и status quo позицију у транзитивном процесу институција културе у Србији.

Кључне речи: југословенство, транзиција, трансформација, институција културе, наратив, југословенски уметнички простор, дисконтинуитет, криза, простори културе.

Kiedy mur upadł...Nowe granice, nowe narracje.
 (Jugosławizm i jugosłowiańska przestrzeń artystyczna,
 dyskontynuacja i fragmentaryzacja w głównym
 nurcie narracji instytucji kultury w Serbii
 w czasie przemiany)

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja obecności i znaczenia jugosławizmu i jugosłowiańskiej narracji, jak też fenomenu jugosłowiańskiej przestrzeni artystycznej (także po upadku Jugosławii), jako czynnika podtrzymującego kontynuację i jedność głównego nurtu narracji dotyczącego struktury instytucji kultury w Serbii w okresie przemiany (2000 – 2018).

Kreacja jedności jugosłowiańskiej (południowosłowiańskiej) na terenie Bałkanów, jak będzie o tym [mowa] w tekście, ma swoje początki wiele lat przed powstaniem państwa jugosłowiańskiego. Fakt istnienia wspólnego pola w sensie kulturowym i kulturologicznym przed powstaniem Jugosławii, daje nadzieję możliwości istnienia jednej kulturowej i artystycznej przestrzeni także w okresie postjugosłowiańskim, za sprawą znanego i niedawno zdefiniowanego terminu „jugosłowiańska przestrzeń artystyczna” (Denegri 2011). W artykule jest położony akcent na jugosłowiańską przestrzeń artystyczną, wraz z jej tradycją, która, pomimo zmian politycznych 1989 roku, a szczególnie lat 90-tych, trwa nadal w bardzo konkretny sposób, w głównym nurcie narracji instytucji kultury (czego przykładem jest Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej w Belgradzie). [Autorka] eksponuje także twierdzenie [obecne w głównym nurcie narracji], że marginalizacja idei i tradycji jusławizmu prowadzi do zerwania kontynuacji i fragmentaryzacji, do przyjmowania pozycji status quo w procesie przemiany instytucji kultury w Serbii.

Słowa kluczowe: jugosławizm, przemiana, transformacja, instytucja kultury, narracja o instytucjach kultury w Serbii, jugosłowiańska przestrzeń artystyczna, dyskontynuacja, kryzys, przestrzenie kultury.

Przekład z języka serbskiego
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