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**Memory in Action – Performative Practices  
in a Dispute about the Past: Serbia and Croatia  
at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Century**

The interest in action and agency that has been observed in the field of humanities since the 1980s resulted in a paradigmatic shift – commonly called the performative turn – which, in a way, stands in contrast to studies on discourse and is a response to the insufficient tools and methodologies offered by postmodern trends (Domańska, 2007, pp. 48–49, 53). In metalinguistic rhetoric, this turn is figuratively expressed by a metaphor (displacing perception of the world as a text) in which the world is seen as a spectacle (Domańska, 2007;

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Leociak, 2014). This article is an attempt to combine elements of both these directions of critical thinking: discursive and performative.

The starting point of our discussion is the assumption that each space, and therefore also the territory of a city, can be treated as a text. This assumption stems from beliefs characteristic of pre-performative times. It means that, within a specific space, both static artefacts and activities communicate a certain message and can be read as signs or symbols referring to something beyond them. Therefore, they are a transmitter (medium) of information. Moreover, the message they express is not fixed but can – and often does – undergo significant modifications to fit the current needs of people in power. Individual places in a given space are open and dynamic, so they are a kind of process; instead of »they are«, »they are becoming« (Lewicka, 2014, p. 228) and are therefore accompanied by various connotations and interpretations. So a space (also a city or town) can be seen as a “symbolic training ground where the requirements of cultural and symbolic adaptation are carried out in accordance with the political and/or national imaginarium” (Radović, 2013, p. 11)<sup>1</sup>. The ability to read a place – for example a city – from a slightly different perspective is related to the palimpsest nature of each space as it stores elements from the past that are often invisible as a result of natural processes or are intentionally hidden and covered by what is currently popular. Formulating a specific, superior story about a space, a story which consists in exposing certain elements of the said space and marginalizing others, will probably always be met with objections from a part of society. The scale of such protest can be different<sup>2</sup>, and the manners of contesting the current narrative can vary.

Our deliberations focus on practices (usually of the grass-roots type, limited to a relatively small group of participants) in which the performative potential is strongly revealed and which can be interpreted as a sort of protest against the existing reality and the current memory policies. These actions/activities are understood here as symbolic and cultural practices and aim to introduce changes on several levels: to change the historical consciousness of community members (due to the limited audience, most frequently at the local level); to

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<sup>1</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all translations into English are by the translator (Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak).

<sup>2</sup> At this point, it is worth recalling the controversy related to attempts to rename the Square for the Victims of Fascism in Zagreb, which were unsuccessful due to the opposition of residents. This topic, the space (e.g. Zagreb) and the “concretization of history in it” are interestingly described by Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2000) and Vjeron Pavlaković (Pavlaković, 2011).

affect the nuances and expansion of national memory (in this case Serbian or Croatian); to modify the nature of memory. We are most interested in interventions undertaken by persons or groups located on the outskirts of the system of power because commemoration – originally connected with institutional, political, and ideological activities – today is becoming a common cultural practice and is subject to individualization (Burszta, 2016, p. 17); moreover, it can “adopt a material form, as well as express itself in specific actions” (Napiórkowski, 2014a, p. 509). Therefore, such practices will be undertaken by small groups of intellectuals, activists, enthusiasts (e.g. of history), non-governmental organizations or associations that defy one version of the past or do not agree to omit those elements that undermine the current narrative, or, finally, demand the inclusion of those fragments of the past that (for different reasons) have been put on the sidelines and thus become unremembered<sup>3</sup>. The aim of these actions is therefore to revise the past; to point to hierarchies that often have been imprinted on the viewers’ minds yet remain consciously unrecognized; to question these hierarchies; and finally to make shifts in a particular culture of memory. Such practices include organized walks/strolls around places which are generally perceived as neutral, invisible/unseen, insignificant (however, objectively they are not), as well as trips to places affected by suffering, but not exposed enough under the current policy of remembrance, and thus functioning on the fringes of popular consciousness, or to places unambiguously associated with death (memorial sites), where – according to people who undertake such journeys – the story about the past is presented in a tendentious, incomplete, and sometimes even manipulated manner. Most often these are locations that are related to events associated with genocide, suffering or fighting (usually against fascism). Therefore, in our selection we take into consideration various types of activities (artistic practices, city or town walks/trips as well as directly related publishing activity), but due to the text limit and the multiplicity of such practices undertaken in Serbia and Croatia, we made an arbitrary choice and described only a few of them which, in our opinion, are representative of the analyzed issues. The key criterion in the selection is the work on reorienting the citizens’ memory that is undertaken as part of these activities and most frequently declared *expressis verbis* by the creators and originators of a project.

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<sup>3</sup> In the meaning that Roma Sendyka ascribes to “oblivion”, distinguishing “non-remembering” from “forgetting” (Sendyka, 2016).

## Discursive versus performative

The introduction to this article emphasizes the textual character of the city or town (or more broadly the space). It is not our intention to sharply juxtapose discursiveness and performativity; we acknowledge that often both levels must exist so that the recipient can understand the intentions of the sender. This is the case, for example, during “meetings” with monuments that are based on standard figurative images and that represent the official (for a given time) version of history – and which have been subjected to critical artistic activities. What seems to be equally important in their intellectual and emotional reception is the level of decoding of the meanings immanently attributed to a monument, as well as the meanings that are added as a result of artistic action. Then the performative potential is closely linked to the discursive level. It is similar in the case of journeys to places that have been marked by the Holocaust yet do not overtly function in the common consciousness in such a context. In the case of monuments, agency consists in placing a certain additional meaning in the message connoted by it (usually imperceptible today). It is only in the interaction between these layers that the announcement of critical potential is born, thus provoking changes in the world, for instance by pointing to the absence of women in messages concerning World War II or the problem of ignoring the fault of one’s own nation (Vervae, 2018, p. 143). The agency of artistic practice can also be based on the fact that, as a result of it, a monument will lose its neutrality (especially at the level of the message it connotes) and will exist in the consciousness of residents and passers-by. This is particularly important when a monument is only a distinctive spatial object (we can hazard a guess that this is relatively frequent in the case of monuments related to World War II). This occurs when the form of commemoration becomes unintelligible for the viewer or when a monument regarded as an outstanding object is remembered but does not evoke memories of who or what it commemorates (Krzyżanowska, 2015, p. 231). An example is the artistic action in public space entitled *Eye to Eye with Freedom* by Luiza Margan, carried out on 17 and 18 May 2014 in Rijeka. The object of the artist’s activities was a 22-metre-high Liberation monument, a symbol of the participation of Rijeka’s inhabitants in the anti-fascist movement. The artistic activity allowed the audience to reach the height of the central figure (a figure of a woman – a guerrilla fighter, an allegory of victory) using a fire ladder and to “stand face to face with it”. This simple strategy was to confront the tallest monument in the city, whose meaning (commemorating the events of World War II), however, has been commonly overlooked by the residents. Through distinguishing

the female figure in action, the entire campaign can also be interpreted as a gesture of recalling the participation of women in the struggle for freedom and their still insufficient cultural presence in historiography<sup>4</sup>.

Artists actively take part in such practices; at the base of their works they often place an object that is unambiguously ideologically saturated with fixed meanings. The moment of experiencing it becomes an event and the reception requires “a different kind of involvement than (only) the competences activated in the contact with the finished products (works) of cultural practices” (Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2007, p. 43). Artists who bear subversive potential create monuments that are a kind of palimpsest<sup>5</sup>: their artistic interventions activate the original meanings while placing them in a new context so that the monuments become something like anti-monuments or counter-monuments. Certainly, these artists are motivated by a similar goal: “The impulse for the creation of (anti)monuments is often the protest/ disagreement of artists, on the one hand, against the invisibility of their realization in the urban space [...], and, on the other hand, against everything which is socially forgotten/omitted/left unsaid, and concerns some aspects of the community’s past, places, events or fates of previous inhabitants” (Krzyżanowska, 2015, p. 234).

Summing up this part of deliberations, we would like to stress that the idea of activating performative memory which is realized through actions directed at a specific goal – in this case, at changing awareness (Napiórkowski, 2014b, p. 324) – is more important to us than contrasting discursiveness with direct experience.

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<sup>4</sup> For more on Margan’s action, see Taczyńska, 2017, pp. 4–6.

<sup>5</sup> An extremely expressive example of a palimpsest character of urban space (in this case Zagreb) is the history of metamorphoses to which the Meštrović Pavilion has been subjected since its foundation (in 1933). Originally, it symbolized the unity of the Yugoslavian state under the Karadorđević dynasty. During the existence of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska) it was renamed the Croatian House of Fine Arts (Hrvatski dom likovnih umjetnosti) and then used as a mosque (three minarets were added to the pavilion at that time). After the communist victory, the minarets were pulled down and the Museum of the Communist Revolution (Muzej komunističke revolucije) was established in the pavilion, which in 1960 changed its name to the Museum of the Revolution of the Croatian Nation (Muzej revolucije naroda Hrvatske). The 1990s brought further changes: the museum was closed and the building renamed; this time it was the Pantheon of Croatian Heroes (Panteon hrvatskih velikana). Finally, in 1993, the building became the seat of the Croatian Association of Artists (Dom Hrvatskog društva likovnih umjetnika) and this name is still in use (Pavlaković, 2011). Photographs showing the metamorphoses of the pavilion are available on the website: <http://www.hdlu.hr/eng/home-hdlu/building-history/>

## Practice of community

It is difficult to unequivocally assess whether performative practices aimed at transforming the memory of a given culture have become popular in Serbia and Croatia in the last two decades, although considerable activity has certainly been seen in this field for some time. These activities focus on attempts to break with the dominant, politically sanctioned memory of a given place or event. Most of these projects are set up within structures independent of power centers, although it is worth remembering that the process of creating a common memory reflects social discussions on the (re)interpretation of the past (Paletschek & Schraut, 2008, p. 9). In this context, we should mention the activity of the REX Cultural Centre in Belgrade (Kulturni centar REX<sup>6</sup>), whose activity focuses on the promotion of engaged art and intercultural dialogue, or the activity of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination (Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju<sup>7</sup>). The REX Cultural Centre prepared several types of activities as part of a larger educational undertaking concerning the Sajmište concentration camp<sup>8</sup> (*Visit to the Old Sajmište/Poseta starom Sajmištu*<sup>9</sup>). It organized studio trips to places where camps or execution sites were located, as well as educational walks around Belgrade focusing on places related to fighting that occurred during World War II. Authors' meetings and workshops were held and other educational activities were undertaken. For instance, in November 2014, a full-day trip to places associated with the fate of Jews from Šabac (Zasavica, Jarak, Klenak)<sup>10</sup> and a trip to the execution site in Jabuka (near Pančevo)<sup>11</sup> were organized.

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<sup>6</sup> See the website of REX Kulturni Centar (n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> See the website of Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju (n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> Magdalena Bogusławska wrote about the marginalization of the memory of the Holocaust in Serbia in the context of the Sajmište camp and about contemporary attempts to restore it. In the text she recalls, among others, the educational project mentioned here, but she translated its name slightly differently than we do here, namely as *Walk in the Old Sajmište* (Bogusławska, 2016, pp. 468–486).

<sup>9</sup> See the website of Istorija u pokretu: Redle [Rädle], R. (n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Studijska poseta: Kladovski transport u Šabcu 1941. Godine. (n.d.). These toponyms are associated with the fate of prisoners of the camps in Šabac, including Jewish inhabitants of Šabac, Jewish refugees from Central Europe (who were detained on the Bulgarian-Serbian-Romanian borderland during their escape to Palestine), and participants of fights with supporters of Germany or communists. The prisoners were executed on 12 and 13 October 1941 at the place of execution in Zasavica.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth remembering that Serbia has been a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance since 2011, the primary objective of which is to educate, develop and promote research on the Holocaust and to care for the remembrance of the Shoah. More on this topic: Vervaet, 2018, pp. 141–144. As a result of the membership of the IHRA, over the last

Through involvement in such events (e.g. a walk or a trip), the people take part in the cultural memory of a particular community, and at the same time they become active, involved subjects. When a group forms, their common experiences begin to form as well: experiences based on participation-related efforts as well as on uncovering previously hidden knowledge. This experience consists in a collective evocation of the past and at the same time recollecting/commemorating it together (Young, 2004, p. 275). Activity understood in this manner is clearly a type of action of performative potential in which there is a “shift of the center of gravity from »contemplation to change«: reflection on the world is replaced by »protest against the existing reality« and the aspiration to change it” (Leociak, 2014, p. 233). It is a sort of engaged participation during which “memory in action” is activated. Participation in such grass-roots educational and commemorative initiatives is also an interactive activity. James E. Young accurately points out that collective memory and its meaning depend not only on the forms and figures of the monument but also on how viewers react to it, what political and religious roles are attributed to it in a particular community, who looks at it and in what circumstances (Young, 2004, p. 288).

Activating the audience – as people are required to gather at a specific time, travel together, listen to a guide as a group and visit together places affected by death – should be also considered as a form of “event” which assumes an activity that differs from static reception (Leociak, 2014, pp. 233–234). Such events can also be analyzed as an integrating experience in which emotional (co-)feeling is equally important (or perhaps even more important) as acquired knowledge because “to experience” means “to undergo” something, “to be touched by something”, “to be affected by something” (Skarga, 2005, p. 119). It seems that it is difficult to find more emotionally charged places than insufficiently remembered locations connected with suffering and repression.

## **Activating the viewers**

This kind of work on awareness is also undertaken in the form of publishing. The activity of intellectuals cooperating with the REX Cultural Centre resulted in an extraordinary guidebook/walking guidebook which was published in Belgrade in 2016. The artist Rena Rädle and the historian Milovan Pisarri prepared

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few years a considerable increase in various activities related to promoting knowledge and preserving the memory of the Holocaust in these areas can be observed in Serbia.

a richly illustrated volume *Places of Suffering and Anti-fascist Struggle in Belgrade 1941–44: A Handbook for reading the city (Mesta stradanja i antifašističke borbe u Beogradu 1941–44. Priručnik za čitanje grada)*, in which they acquaint the reader with spaces (often anonymous and transparent because they do not attract the attention of passers-by [Sendyka, 2013, p. 327]) that during World War II were important locations for anti-fascist activities. The current specificity of these places is determined by the fact that the memory-forming potential becomes active in them only thanks to relatively few interested persons. In this case, agency, which is a fundamental feature of all performative practices (Domańska, 2007, p. 52), is formed by pulling a given place (e.g. a building) out of the sphere of invisibility, forcing the audience to focus their usually distracted attention on it and, consequently, making it a symbol of a marginalized story – at least for a small group of interested people.

The uniqueness of the described publication is proved by the fact that the second page of the book contains a note that its extended use is permitted (and even recommended), i.e. distribution and use for non-commercial purposes. In addition, the foreword is a kind of manifesto in which the editors recapitulate the objectives that motivated them during their work. We read there that the publication is a response to the semantic manipulations to which the term “anti-fascism” is now subjected and, moreover, it will become a weapon in the hands of those who are actively involved in the fight against oblivion. Its intention is also to go beyond today’s practices of memory (the dimension of commemorative activities) so that they become important also for the young generation (Rädle & Pisarri, 2016, pp. 6–8). Generally, educating the young is one of the most popular reasons given for this type of activity.

The Croatian researcher Sanja Horvatinčić partly links the lack of interest in history with contradictory messages emerging from the multiple revisions of the past that have been done in post-Yugoslav countries in recent decades. On the one hand, the war heritage was questioned and the policy of remembrance cultivated after World War II was rejected. On the other hand, the new memory constructs decreed in the 1990s were soon subjected to another wave of critical reflection. The result of this specific confusion, i.e. the radical negation of post-war memory policies combined with the parallel creation of nationalist and ethnocentric political narratives, is the fact that young generations are unable to identify themselves with the social memory of World War II (Horvatinčić, 2015, p. 36). As can be inferred from the article on the commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Zagreb, the concern



for young generations is justified: On 8 May 2010, the Croatian organization Documenta. Centre for Dealing with the Past (Documenta. Centar za suočavanje s prošlošću<sup>12</sup>) organized a walk in forgotten places affected by the suffering of World War II. The text describing this event expresses disappointment that a very small group of people (journalists, former partisans and their descendants, scientists) participated in the event. Contrary to the expectations of activists, according to whom such initiatives should become the foundation of an active and critical public sphere, the smallest group among the walkers were students although the action was organized primarily for them (Zorić, 2010).

It should be added here that the walking guidebook that was edited by Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri became one of the inspirations of the documentary play *Invisible Monuments (Nevidljivi spomenici)*, which had its premiere on 27 March 2015 at the Bitef Theatre. It was staged as a result of research work and, at the same time, it was an educational and artistic project in which students of Belgrade Secondary School No. 3 took part. It was they who were at the same time 1) the performers of the spectacle in which they spoke on their own behalf (presenting family stories of World War II), 2) those who showed facts (extracts from historical documents, the walking guidebook, but also letters or certificates) and 3) those who presented their own emotions (despair, fear and fury) that emerged while they were working on the project<sup>13</sup>. In actions like this, the boundaries between the originator/creator and the performers are shifted. Participating in culture becomes more important than contemplating it, creating it is more important than the finished work, the context has more significance than the text (Matysek-Imielińska, 2016, p. 88). Moreover, thanks to this type of participation in an artistic act, we return to the original (narrow) sense of the term *performance*<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> See: Documenta. Centar za suočavanje s prošlošću (n.d.).

<sup>13</sup> See: *Nevidljivi spomenici. Priručnik za čitanje grada* (n.d.). The Bogavac sisters committed themselves to the creation of the performance and they were responsible for its concept, dramatization, and direction. Jelena and Milena Bogavac, both of whom are representatives of the new generation of Serbian artists connected with theatre, are associated with engaged creativity and projects that cross the boundaries of arts and genres (Abrasowicz, 2016, p. 118–121).

<sup>14</sup> The term *performance* in the Polish language corresponds to such units as “wykonanie” (performance, execution), “przedstawienie” (performance, show), “odegranie roli” (playing/acting a role), all of which connote activities related to artistic practices (combining art and theatre) (Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2007, pp. 35–36). Ewa Domańska also links the original meaning of *performance* with an action that has the character of a theatre act which is performed in the presence of the public (Domańska, 2007, p. 49).

The objectives similar to those established by Rädle are defined in another interesting book which is the result of a larger-scale project concerning the Serbian capital city. It is entitled *Sećanje grada (Memory of the City)*, and one of its publishers was the Belgrade Centre for Cultural Decontamination. This small booklet contains texts illuminating three types of activities undertaken as part of the project: an exhibition, a conference (*Memory of the City. Policies and Practices of the Memory Preservation and Integration in the City's Development* [*Sećanje grada. Politike i prakse očuvanja i uključivanja sećanja u razvoj grada*], September 2011) and workshops. This activity was a response to the lack of a consistent concept regarding the Belgrade authorities' policy of remembrance and the conviction that the citizens of the capital city remain passive on this subject. Therefore, the tasks set by the organizers of the project involved, among others, emphasizing the role of memory in constructing the identity of the city, revitalizing urban spaces, as well as activating the residents (Dražić, Radišić & Simu, 2012, pp. 6–7). The aforementioned objectives, which are mentioned *expressis verbis* in the foreword to the publication, stress the need to work on transforming people involved in the project (or reading the book) into active participants in the surrounding reality. There is a clear appeal for action and agency in a world in which doing something should replace talking about something (Libera, 2005, p. 41). Similar assumptions motivated the actions undertaken as part of the aforementioned project *Visit to the Old Sajmište*, which were formulated in a small brochure accompanying the project. We read there that “the aim of action is to develop an emancipatory practice of teaching history and remembrance, which has an educational, dialogical, and process character” (Redle, 2012).

It should be emphasized that researchers conducting such projects clearly depart from practicing science in the privacy of their offices; on the contrary, they contemplate their ideas in such a manner that their research provokes changes in social and cultural reality (Domańska, 2007, pp. 55, 57). For them, it is extremely important to lean towards the future, and this happens through discovering the past not so much for the past itself, but for the purpose of designing a more just (and therefore ethically popular) vision of reality. This fact, combined with a flair for creating manifesto programs – as can be seen in the forewords to the books – makes it possible to include the activities presented in them in the current of left-wing activities (Domańska, 2007, p. 56), in which the involvement in the socio-political sphere is gaining significance.

The interventions that we are interested in can be counted among the practices which indirectly criticize traditional history and the way it is practiced (invented in the privacy of offices, claiming to be objective, focused on great events and great figures). Through combining documentary work in which non-professional researchers are often involved (as in the case of the projects entitled *Visit to the Old Sajmište* and *Against Oblivion* [*Protiv zaborava*<sup>15</sup>]) with educational activities, the practices described above result in increased awareness. In this case, involving representatives of the local community in scientific activities is tantamount to the conviction that a coalition of professionals and non-professionals plays a causative role in creating reality. The need to wield influence on the environment (the “agency” emphasized frequently in performance studies) causes a situation in which great importance is attached to digitizing sources, building an internet archive and publishing research results. It should be stressed that the *Against Oblivion* project, which functions only in virtual space and focuses on cultivating the memory of camps in Belgrade during World War II, emphasizes the need to involve the representatives of various social groups (both emotionally and personally), in particular by getting them to join in discussions on commemorating places where concentration camps were located in the past. The authors of the project assume that so far it has been the expert groups that have been deciding whether the spaces affected by death in Belgrade should be developed or not. This time it will be different.

Moreover, various types of activities questioning the current official (or perhaps just more audible) historical narrative put a particular person at the center. According to Ewa Domańska, the return of a strong subject is one of the signs of the performative turn (although it should be explained that the researcher means rather a “hybrid subject” than a “humanistic subject” [Domańska, 2007, pp. 55–56]). Such a subject should operate in a specific environment and is to be the driving force of changes (replacing in this role an impersonal, superior force). In this context, it is worth mentioning the notes (often with photographs) about specific people who fought the occupation during World War II, as well as the letters and fragments of documents accompanying the main story which were included in the walking guidebook prepared by Rena Rädle and Milovan Pisarri.

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<sup>15</sup> See: *Protiv zaborava* (n.d.).

## Summary

Today's perspective of studies on memory includes not only the content of what is remembered, how it is remembered and the social functions of remembrance, but also "group ways of immersing oneself in the past and the social organization of commemorative practices" (Szpociński, 2012, p. 63). Traditional forms of commemoration are accompanied by new trends that focus on exceeding the existing constrictions and redirecting us to discovering forgotten and unwanted places. The projects described in this article generally concern minorities marginalized in the official history or space and are associated with groups that did not win an appropriate place in the official message about World War II or the period immediately after it. Therefore, they may be Jews or Romani people, but also Germans from Vojvodina, whose story about the post-war repressions they experienced had been suppressed for decades<sup>16</sup>. Their narratives represent an alternative to the post-war historical politics. Practices aimed at changing this state of affairs both offer knowledge (and thus – as Jacek Leociak wrote about modern Holocaust exhibitions – they are leading to an intellectual change) and negotiate meanings, so they influence the transformation of attitudes, approaches, and revision of stereotypes (i.e. mental and emotional changes) (Leociak, 2014, p. 236).

The narrative about the past which is presented within the grass-roots activities described here is usually located on the fringes of institutional memory and can therefore be called a kind of counter-memory. Its presence in written sources is rather small; it can even be said that it functions in unofficial circulation (often in oral messages which reach recipients during field studies)<sup>17</sup>. Such an observation, in turn, indirectly leads to the juxtaposition of two ways of conveying remembrance: through writing and through speech. If we acknowledge that non-institutional activity bears the hallmarks of a ritual (liberated today from the connection with the sphere of myth), then in this context Paul Connerton's diagnosis will be accurate because he – pointing to the performativity of the ritual – clearly opposes the recognition of the pre-eminence of writing in memory (Connerton, 2012).

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<sup>16</sup> We mean, for instance, the brochure prepared by Helena Rill and Marijana Stojčić, which spreads knowledge about the post-war fate of Germans from Vojvodina (Rill & Stojčić, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> In terms of the research methods used in such projects, the activities undertaken as part of the projects entitled *Visit to the Old Sajmište* and *Against Oblivion* are symptomatic as these activities covered interviews, field studies, and the archiving of opinions that were to be used as a basis for the elaboration of more detailed expert opinions, etc.

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## **Pamięć w działaniu – praktyki performatywne w sporze o przeszłość. Serbia i Chorwacja na przełomie XX i XXI wieku**

Artykuł stanowi próbę połączenia we wspólnej refleksji elementów dwóch kierunków myślenia krytycznego: dyskursywnego i performatywnego. Punktem wyjścia rozważań jest wywodzące się z przekonań patronujących czasom przedperformatywnym założenie, że każdą przestrzeń (w tym terytorium miasta) można traktować jako tekst. Oznacza to, że zarówno statyczne artefakty, jak i odbywające się w przestrzeni aktywne działania komunikują pewien przekaz i można je rozpatrywać jako znaki bądź symbole odsyłające do czegoś, co jest poza nimi. Nasza refleksja koncentruje się na praktykach, w których z całą mocą ujawnia się potencjał performatywny i które można odczytywać jako rodzaj buntu wobec zastanej rzeczywistości i obowiązujących polityk pamięci. Analizowane działania rozumiane są tutaj jako praktyki symboliczno-kulturowe, które stawiają sobie za cel wprowadzenie przekształceń na kilku poziomach: zmianę świadomości historycznej członków społeczności; wpłynięcie na zniuansowanie i poszerzenie pamięci narodowej (w tym wypadku serbskiej czy chorwackiej); modyfikację charakteru pamięci. Interesują nas interwencje podejmowane zwykle przez osoby bądź grupy sytuujące się na obrzeżach systemu władzy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Serbia, Chorwacja, pamięć, dyskurs, praktyki performatywne

## **Memory in action – Performative practices in a dispute about the past: Serbia and Croatia at the turn of the 20th and 21st century**

The article is an attempt to combine in one reflection the elements of two directions of critical thinking: discursive and performative. The starting point of the analysis is the assumption (derived from beliefs common in pre-performative times) that every space (including a city's territory) can be treated as a text. This means that both static artifacts and activities in a given space communicate a certain message and can be seen as signs or symbols that refer to something outside of them. Our reflection focuses on practices in which the performative potential is fully revealed and which can be interpreted as a kind of rebellion against the present reality and official policies of memory. The analyzed activities are understood here as symbolic

and cultural practices and aim to introduce changes on several levels: to change the historical consciousness of community members; to affect the nuances and expansion of national memory (in this case Serbian or Croatian); to modify the nature of memory. We are interested in interventions that are usually undertaken by persons or groups located on the outskirts of the system of power.

**Keywords:** Serbia, Croatia, memory, discourse, performative practices

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