Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

TOWARDS **ANEW** CULTURAL POLICY AGAINASINA AGAINASINA



TOWARDS A NEW CULTURAL POLICY AGAINST DOGMATISM

Belgrade, 2023.

TOWARDS A NEW CULTURAL POLICY: AGAINST DOGMATISM

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Cultural policy should encourage a critical attitude towards reality, expose the mechanisms of entrapment and strengthen the belief that change is possible and that it depends on us.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia initiated the development of guidelines for a new cultural policy in response to the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020–2029. The Helsinki Committee started this process together with a group of artists, sociologists, culturologists, philosophers, political scientists, and representatives of civil society organizations, whose works are included in this publication.

At the beginning, we put forward the Helsinki Committee's recommendations for a new cultural policy, based on the texts outlined within this publication, as well as presentations of the participants of round tables organized in Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Novi Pazar and Belgrade. Over a two-year process, more than 60 intellectuals and activists were engaged and gathered around the idea of forming a new cultural policy.

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Apart from the Government Strategy, a nationalist dogmatic pattern is also the basis of other state documents, e.g. the Law on the Use of the Serbian Language in Public Life and the Protection and Preservation of the Cyrillic Alphabet and the Charter on the Serbian Cultural Space, which was also the subject of research in this publication. The authors examined not only the current Cultural Development Strategy and its accompanying regulations, but also the current situation in specific areas of artistic production, namely literature, theater, film, fine contemporary visual arts, and music. While two subsystems in Serbia have been devastated – the economy has been wrecked, and the political subsystem is a generator of disintegration – the cultural subsystem, fueled by the strong, heavy and painful pressure of pseudo-traditionalism and ideological conservatism, remains in full swing. (Jovanović). The projected model of cultural development is centralized, conservative, nationally oriented, restrictive, and outdated, which makes it impossible to create an authentic cultural policy. (Đurić Bosnić) Almost the entire cultural infrastructure, particularly literature, its production, (re)valorization, placement, and interpretation, serve to uphold the ideas from the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts from 1986, which is considered a strategic document of Serbian war policy (Ilić).

Constant and orchestrated attacks on contemporary artists and aggressive nationalist, misogynistic, homophobic, and other dominant discourses in the media and on social networks have been intensifying, especially since 2019. This was most often the case with projects whose contents were unacceptable for a monocultural and nationalist understanding of culture, writes Branislav Dimitrijević, referring to projects that tackle the topic of war crimes during the wars of the nineties, or projects that advocate LGBT and other human rights. The festival "Mirëdita, Dobar dan", which takes place almost every year and serves to connect the artistic productions of Serbia and Kosovo, is exposed to constant attacks. A paradigmatic example of the relationship of institutions towards independent artists and themes that strike at the core of Serbian nationalism is the case involving Zlatko Paković's play "Srebrenica. When We Who Were Killed Rise Up", produced by the Helsinki Committee (2020). Regardless of the commercial possibilities, not a single publicly funded theater in Belgrade would host this play, which testifies to the historical and political responsibility of the Serbian intellectual and church elite for the

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war and genocide in Srebrenica. There is no freedom of expression for artists who deal with the most important social issues.

While visiting various places in Serbia during its work on the development of guidelines for a new cultural policy, the Helsinki Committee made a catalog of issues faced by cultural workers. Local cultural institutions have been ruined and emptied of cultural content, and they mostly don't have their own production. In smaller towns, culture is reduced to folk dancing and ceremonial performances, spectacles, and academies. Nevertheless, citizens care about fresh ideas in art and culture. Small alternative spaces are fighting for survival in extremely difficult financial and political conditions. Local institutions that understand culture and art in a modern way often encounter resistance from central authorities, primarily the Ministry of Culture, which prevents the realization of contemporary projects and ideas.

Independent artistic production has little chance of coming to light and reaching a broader audience. Books are sitting in warehouses because there are no open channels or means of distribution. Under the pressures of the market and politics, literary, musical, art, theater, and film criticism has practically disappeared from the media, which further complicates the audience's access to works of art. Thus, a large part of cultural and artistic production remains hidden from the public. Cultural institutions, even at the local level, very rarely enter into cooperation with civil society organizations.

Interculturalism has been erased from both majority and minority educational and cultural programs. Cultural workers and activists are under pressure from the clergy, especially in smaller communities, and religious institutions interfere in educational and cultural programs. National councils of national communities strive to dominate the overall cultural scene in a given ethnos, preventing self-criticism. The culture and art of national communities are reduced to events, mainly serving the needs of the party that holds the majority on the national council. The Cyrillic alphabet is fetishized and authors are forced to publish their works in it, even when they are contracted for the promotion of publications in the region.

The culture being nurtured is one where by the narrative of the great historical mission and the sacrifice made by the Serbian people takes center stage. A large number of texts in this publication deal with the culture of remembrance (Biserko, Jovanović, Belić...). The language used by the media, in Parliament, and in simulated political debates is chauvinistic, xenophobic, misogynistic, banal, and vulgar. Despite the modest and formal steps taken by institutions financed from the public budget in cooperation with artists from the region, this cooperation is neither sincere nor comprehensive. It serves the purpose of simulating a positive image of Serbia because the government has been constantly demonizing its neighboring countries and inciting citizens against each other. Cultural traditions and creativity from the West are exposed to conservative anti-globalist campaigns.

According to Slezović, the concept of globalization implies the idea of multiculturalism and, consequently, interculturality as a process of mutual permeation, mixing, and influence. In this way, as Slezović stipulates, the global enters a kind of dialogue with the local, resulting in the so-called glocal, which is characterized by the local contents of national peculiarities and the international language in which they are expressed.

Among the most powerful opponents of the emancipation of society and human rights in Serbia is the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It has penetrated deep into state institutions and is interfering with the education system and other spheres of society that should be connected exclusively to secular institutions. It is attempting to influence biology textbooks, making lists of unfit school principals, and the like. It is an opponent of the civil state and is reinforcing ethnic and confessional patterns in the creation of identity, all with the aim of homogenizing the Serbian people exclusively under an ethno-national framework.

The decline in support for European integration is a direct result of the dominant cultural model and cultural production. A Demostat survey from June 2022 shows that only 34 percent of citizens are in favor of joining the European Union, while 51 percent are against it. This is the lowest level of support for European integration in the last 20 years.

A new cultural policy in Serbia is a prerequisite for European integration to gain broader support in society. Without this, it is not possible to build new relations in the region. We are aware of all the difficulties related to the readiness to adopt a new cultural strategy. The alternative, however, must be articulated in order to be the basis for stimulating change. This publication also attests to that necessity.

Izabela Kisić

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights has approached the writing of the guidelines for a new cultural policy with deep conviction that cultural policy must be based on the emancipatory potential of culture and its subversive power to undermine the projects confining it to the role of a loyal follower of authoritarianism and turning it into an accomplice in the suppression of freedom.

The guidelines are intended for the parts of the ruling nomenclature, actors of cultural subsystems, social movements, civil society, media, nonapologetic critical intellectuals, cultural audiences and citizens or, in other words, for all those who want change, who strive for humanized modernization, who are not afraid of globalization and do not retreat before national-populism and ethnic narrow-mindedness, who do not consider the state as a privileged creator of cultural policy and an authentic interpreter of culture, who insist on the freedom of expression, choice and creation, who advocate pluralism and who oppose the hierarhization of culture.

The Helsinki Committee believes that in conceiving a cultural policy one should start from the following:

- Cultural policy should be open, decentralized and innovative.
- Cultural boundaries are changeable and porous, while cultures are open, dynamic and heterogeneous strctures composed of

intercultural influences, collaborations and connections, as well as borrowings from other cultures. Being autonomous, innovative and transformative, cultures are open systems and have no boundaries; boundaries are drawn by the ideologies of ethnos, nation, religion... referring to "their indigenous cultures".

- There are no pure cultures in any key (national, religious, class...). The theses that express doubt about the penetration of cultures are profoundly anticultural and destructive. They are also unscientific and antiscientific, and should be publicly explained as such.
- Confning culture to the role of a servant of national identity is unacceptable. Just like tradition, national identity is not a static, complete and unchanging entity; rather it is a dynamic concept, susceptible to influences, open to cultural exchange and capable of taking over the content of other cultures for its own modernization.
- Each generation has the right to reinterpret, reevalue, reshape, choose and rely on its different parts. Each generation and each generational group also have the right and freedom to forget tradition and, finally, create a new culture that will become a tradition in the future. Just like each tradition that was a new culture at the time of its creation.
- Make a move away from the model of segregative multiculturalism towards interculturalism, which places the focus of public attention and practical policies on the individual who freely searches for a position in narrower and wider communities, as well as in the order. In this way, the individual is enabled to purposefully shape interests, needs, rights, experiences and preferences. Free communication makes ethno-cultural borders porous and meaningless, and frees an

individual from having to reveal himself to be a nationalist. All the more so because every individual has many identities and passes through various identity fields.

- Cultural exchange and cultural cooperation with all of Serbia's neighbours are necessary. One should insist on cooperation and exchange because a direct war experience and bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, burdened with nationalism, chauvinism and racism in the structure of hegemonic nationalist ideologies, brought great misfortune and trouble to everyone. That is a vital prerequisite for peace. Such a big task cannot be carried out by political parties due to their ideological and particular limitations and interests. The only active and possible universal is culture.
- Encourage cross-border cooperation among cultural workers. Conflicting relations are the product of politics, not innate hatred, civilizational differences or incompatible cultures. Cultures are communicative and open to others, while borders that divide peoples are not cultural ones. Any attempt to assign culture the contested role of drawing borders must be met with opposition, resistance and condemnation.
- There are cultural workers whose moral integrity and autonomy, both creative and human, are not disintegrated and who resist a "new cultural order", which is constructed by authority figures from a position of power, influence, ideology... We should expect them to give us the answers to the questions about how an antihuman war policy in the 1990s could gain massive support, to demystify the role of intellectuals in the legitimization of such a policy, as well as to reveal the ideological mechanisms for incapacitating individuals to critically assess that policy.

- Insist on a critical thematization of the past and resistance to its falsification. In the culture of remembrance it i is necessary to point to the dark and hidden pages of one's own history, because this contributes to a more complete and objective view of the past, destabilizies the nationalist narrative about "our" group as an "eternal" victim, and "theirs" as primordially violent, aggressive and criminal. This would impartially present both one's own and other one's images, because the articulation and acceptance of one's own responsibility and concrete guilt would lead to acknowledging the demonized other as a victim.
- As an essential part of the cultural subsystem, education must be radically changed – in accordance with the principles of modern education in those parts of the world where good education is one of the most important factors of a rational social system and political order. Only such an educational system will enable the necessary radical change of education for social activities and artistic creativity.
- Society must be freed from nepotism, nationalism, racism, ideologically instrumentalized conservatism and centralism, because they hinder pluralization, distribute monocultural patterns, hinder the development of a modern understanding of culture and artistic opinion and appoint suitable people to key positions instead of responsible and competent ones.
- It is necessary to change the system of literary infrastructure in Serbia and the relevant conditions are to abandon the ruling literary canon, take an analytical and critical attitude towards the war past (including both the earlier periods and the immediate past) and implement fundamental reforms that will delegitimize the nationalist, territorial and linguistic concepts and introduce a plural, intercultural, non-canonical strategy of reading, interpreting and revaluating literature.

Like art in general, literature is not possible if it is not free. In the opposite, it has a utilitarian, ideological, programmatic and propaganda character and thus destroys itself as art.

- Similar expectations apply when it comes to theatre art. The political nature of the theatre comes to the fore in the moments when it exposes the deceptions and mechanisms of violence on which any anti-human regime is based and critically speaks about crucial social problems. Theatre workers are public figures and their role in the affirmation of the audience's condemnation and moral resistance to pernicious policies cannot be ignored.
- The reluctance and conscious refusal to speak critically about the profound moral failure of Serbian society are also present in cinematography. The cultural strategy should create the conditions for the critical poetics of Serbian cinematography and film production that will speak clearly about the problems of society up to the point of disclosing social sociopathology and, in particular, about the misdeeds and irresponsibility of the centres of power (political, financial...),that is, about everything being suppressed, relativized, instrumentalized and dedramatized in various ways in the current cultural order.
- The ethnicization of identity leads to the divisions that never stop at the identity level, but extend to other areas and lead to conflicts.
- The division into institutional and noninstitutional actors in the field of culture faces the latter with numerous financial, existential and other problems. The intolerance and mistrust, created by these divisions, produce negative consequences and impoverish the entire cultural sector. Such unproductive divisions should be neutralized with a new cultural strategy, while public resources should be made available to all actors.

- The change of the current authoritarian political culture is possible and necessary. However, it is very complex and takes time. It is necessary to strongly support the contents of political culture which concern individual and collective freedoms and choices, human rights, responsibility, equality, rule of law, nonviolence, solidarity, openness towards oneself and the world, tolerance, intercultural communication, as well as a number of other values by means of which a community is humanized, civilized and modernized.
- Support the requests that the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets be treated in the Constitution as the two equal scripts of the Serbian language. The current insistence on the Cyrillic script as the "parent", "historical"and "first" script of the Serbian people is incorrect.
- As an open, dynamic and productive system, culture must also be oriented towards minority communities, feminist actors, queer creativity, left leaning literutre, genre and gender pluralism. In other words, towards pluralism in general.
- The media space must be receptive to critical tones as well as individuals who question dominant cultural patterns and offer alternative political scenarios. If they wish to be treated as a cultural asset, the media must be open, critical, responsible and committed to professional ethics and the promotion of contemporary social and cultural values.
- The regulatory body for electronic media should be subject to the periodic monitoring and quantitative and qualitative evaluation of cultural contents in electronic media; such an evaluation should be made accessible, that is, become the subject of public debate.
- Bearing in mind that Serbian society is multiethnic, it is necessary to establish the mechanisms that will stimulate multilingual contents and media.

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- Cultural institutions (institutes, museums, education, etc.) should be open to contemporary artistic creativity and culture in the languages of the national communities, and actively work on their promotion, affirmation and inclusion in the translation system.
- The educational authorities should introduce multilingualism (native, foreign and the language/languages of the social environment) into the educational system, while in the environments where it is necessary, the learning of Serbian as an official and non-native language should be facilitated. Relaxed and freed from nationalist pressure, the communication across ethnic borders would contribute to reducing ethnic distance, confidence building, productive and easier communication and integration.
- It is necessary to insist on the introduction of a gender-sensitive language despite strong resistance. Language is not only a symbol of national identity, but also of other forms of our identity (professional, gender, etc.)
- The decentralization of Serbia is of vital importance for a cultural, economic and social progress in general. Cultural actors should be expected to support the demands for decentralization and demetropolization and actively participate in them.
- In the process of decentralization political, cultural, financial – one should also rely on the experience and role of the part of the civil sector which, being autonomous and independent, insists on human rights and freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, public, pluralism, nonviolence, etc.
- It is necessary to increase the budget for culture (to 3 percent of the total budget). The societies wanting to get out of

a crisis must invest in culture and education. Financing culture is investment in progress and not consumption.

- If one wants to stop the erosion of cultural institutions, the management of these institutions must be taken over by individuals whose authority is based on knowledge, abilities and competence, and never on party and political suitability.
- The appointment, composition and work of all commissions of the Ministry of Culture must be completely transparent and subject to public criticism. The commissions of the Ministry should consist of exceptional experts in the relevant field of decision making.
- State institutions should support and intensify international exchange and cooperation.
- Culture cannot be left to the market or state voluntarism. In resolving the status of cultural creativity and people involved in culture, the initiative must be taken by those who are creatively and existentially affected by this issue.
- Establish professional, systemic and administrative mechanisms in order to more efficiently protect the artists' economic, social and labour rights, and ensure the financial security and continuity of the work of non-profit cultural organizations.
- Affirm urbanity and contemporary creativity. At the same time, traditional (but not pseudo-traditional and ideologically instrumentalized) culture should be given full attention and affirmative moral, financial, media and other support. The same applies to amateurism, which is often the birthplace of an authentic cultural expression.

- Pay attention to public speech. The current invasion of intolerant, misogynist, homophobic and hate rhetoric (consequently, anti-cultural rhetoric) into public spaces and speech is unacceptable, because it primitivizes and brutalizes the community, resistance to hatred and violence weakens, while the community is deprived of a much-needed rational and reasoned debate. Point to the harmful effects of extremist speech, condemn – both politically and morally – political and other actors on the public stage who spread nationalism, fascist ideas and hatred towards others. .
- The class nature of society, sharp social polarization, pauperization and precarization suppress the right to culture (the right to participate in cultural creativity and the right to enjoy the gifts of culture). The impoverished classes are massively offered trash (in which the so-called "reality shows" stand out), ideologically toxic (objectively fatal) contents, primitivism, kitsch, intrigues, bombshells, scandals, pornography, insight into other people's privacy, etc. Consequently, the contents do not affirm a creative and critical relationship or create the desire for emancipation and change. Rather, they create an impression of the desirability and immutability of the existing, imposed lifestyle (and thus the way of life) and the lack of alternative to neoliberal capitalism. Cultural policy should encourage a critical attitude towards reality, expose the mechanisms of entrapment and strengthen the belief that change is possible and that it depends on us.

CULTURE AS A PATH TO CATHARSIS

Sonja Biserko

Every society has experienced defeats in its own way. Profound and massive disappointment and frustration due to the lost wars in the age of nationalism is usual, as is the transfer of responsibility for the defeat to the person who has "lost" the wars or to a third party – the neighbours or external forces – which prevent the realization of a dream; in the case of Serbia this is a dream about unification. However, within a defeated society there is also a wide range of responses – psychological, cultural and political.

Serbia has not accepted its defeat in the wars of the 1990s. However, it does not mean that this policy has disappeared. Culture is an area in which, in essence, the policy of the 1990s is being reanimated. After being modified, it is still in the scene and, being redefined, it reads that all Serbs, as one nation, have the right to live in a common cultural area, have one President (Vučić, as the President of all Serbs) and one script (Cyrillic, as the authentic, native and first script) and one goal – to transform its common cultural area into a state when the historical circumstances so allow. Catharsis is possible only by unravelling those aspirations.

After the ousting of Slobodan Milošević, the euphoria of being freed from guilt lasted for a short time, only to be very soon replaced by the old dream about unification by other means, that is, the return of the previous status quo.

With the coming of the Serbian Progressive Party to power (2012), the propaganda part of the culture of the 1980s reappeared in public and media spaces and reasserted itself as mainstream. The fact that it has become an official strategy is evidenced by numerous documents such as the Strategy of Preserving and Strengthening Relations Between the Mother Country and the Diaspora and Between the Mother Country and Serbs in the Region (2011), Charter on the Serbian Cutural Space, signed by the Ministers of Education of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, Law on the Cyrillic Alphabet (2021) and, in particular, Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020–2029. This is also accompanied by the new production of television programmes - documentary and feature films (series), which cement the narrative, for example, about the liberation war of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (that is, the war against fundamentalists), relativization of crimes and presentation of Serbs as the only victims. The glorification of war criminals as national heroes promotes impunity and makes the legacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague meaningless.

Serbian nationalists and cultural workers like Milo Lompar lament the fact that "there is an ongoing process causing everything that is Serb to be transformed into Serbian, so that whatever is not Serbian seizes to be considered as Serb over time". He advocates the "Serb stance" which implies an integralist cultural policy about the the whole of the Serbian people.

Exactly this attitude permeates the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020–2029. It envisages a set of measures that complete Belgrade's policy when it comes to the Serbian cultural space, namely the "Serbian world". The "Serbian world" project has the support of all elites, including a significant part of the civil sector. This became especially evident with respect to Kosovo when, during the so-called internal dialogue, the majority took the position that Kosovo should be kept as a frozen conflict in anticipation of a suitable moment for its division. The current government is working on the project on all fronts.

A significant role in supporting the "Serbian stance" is also played by national historians who have returned the discourse to the obscure periods in the past through the "politics of history" by manipulating the key events in order to defend Belgrade's "justified" demands for the creation of the "Serbian world". Like in the eighties, culture is the main areaa of social mobilizastion for certain goals.

According to Ivan Čolović, it is about understanding culture exclusively as something national, which remains within the borders of one nation, since it is both "an expression of the emancipation of the people" and "a context in which each free individual realizes himself", but not within the borders of one state. Namely, "the borders of the cultural space cannot be reduced to the borders of one political, that is, state space". As he points out, this also means that the cultural policy of the Serbs living outside their parent country does not need to be harmonized with the cultural policy of the country in which they live, but only with the policy of their parent country. As it is written in the Charter, Serbs in their entire cultural space should implement a "mutually harmonized cultural and educational policy".

For years, the European Union has tolerated Serbia's behaviour in the region, allowing its aspirations to become reality. The Republic of Srpska is perceived as the only war booty which Belgrade will not give up without much pressure. For years, the narrative of Serb nationalists, both in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, has been confined to the view that Bosnia and Herzegovina is unsustainable, that its disintegration is imminent, that the Muslims have destroyed Yugoslavia (a thesis that is increasingly used in Belgrade), that Bosnia and Herzegovina is regressive, that the Republic of Srpska has been crreated to prevent genocide (Ana Brnabić), that the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs are not responsible for the outbteak of the war in 1992 (Željka Cvijanović), that it is a mistake that Belgrade has failed to recognize the Republic of Srpska (Milorad Dodik) and that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a war of liberation for Serbs (Dobrica Ćosić, a generally accepted thesis). There is a similar attitude towards Montenegro, which is solely viewed as a territory that should be returned to Serbia. At the same time, the nations such as Bosniaks, Montenegrins, Croats... are not recognized.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has also raised the questions about the future of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans. Although it is surrounded by the member states of the European Union and North Atlantic Alliance, the region has only partly been integrated into the Euro-Atlantic political and security structures. The European Union's undefined policy during the last decade has contributed to the regression of the region and its turning to other partners.

Serbia is the only European country that has shown solidarity with Russia. Therefore, it is under enormous pressure or, as President Vučić says, "in a much more difficult situation than it seems". It is also required to reach an agreement with Pristina under which it de facto recognizes Kosovo, then to "discipline" the Republic of Srpska and to renunciate Russia or, more precisely, to impose sanctions against it. In an interview for Politika, the US Ambassador to Serbia, Christopher Hill, has stated that there is a wrong way and a right way, which means that Serbia must make a choice. He suggests that "there is only one path, that is the West and the European Union".

As journalist Boško Jakšić points out that the current constellation in Europe as well as in Serbia itself provides a unique opportunity for Serbia "to avoid that its relations with Russia determine irs strategic future". At the same time, as pointed out by German historian Reinhart Koselleck, this implies that "being defeated seems to be an inexhaustible source of intellectual progress". That is a short step from understanding defeat as an act of catharsis, humility and sacrifice – a kind of healing – to claiming a new role for the nation in the international community.

In order to embark on the path to overcoming the past – in addition to condemning Milošević's policy, accepting the legacy of the Hague Tribunal and the International Court of Justice, as well as the national courts in the region – Serbia should pay more attention to the perception of justice in the Serbian society within the scope of serious research. Cultural values and attitudes should certainly be taken into account in order to bring the concept of justice as close as possible to the society's perception.

A legitimate question arises as to whether the society is ready to face it. On the basis of the past experience it can be stated that some societies have not been, or are not yet ready to face it. Even after more than two decades since the end of the last war, Serbia did not make any significant progress in this regard due to the limitations inherent in its society.

Culture is certainly an importat area that can mobilize the society, especially the young generations which do not bear the burden of war, but facing it is imposed as a transgenerational inevitability. In the sphere of culture there are still individuals whose moral integrity and autonomy, both creative and human, are not disintegrated and who resist the new cultural order. They should be expected to give productive answers to the questions: What led to the genocide? What are the policies, ideologies and apparatuses? How was it possible for a nation that experienced genocide in the Second World War to give massive support to the eliminationist policy that resulted in a cardinal crime? They should be expected to unravel the ideological mechanisms that have entraped and incapacitated individuals to critically judge the policy that had been conducted in their name, thus restoring themselves as moral subjects and regaining their violated or lost moral autonomy. After all, we should also expect them to answer the question as to what has been the role of intellectuals in the production of an "inherently chauvinistic image of the nation as an innocent victim surrounded by enemies", as pointed out by Professor Nenad Dimitrijević.

TOWARDS AN OPEN CULTURAL MODEL: CONTRIBUTIONS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE CULTURAL STRATEGY

Aleksandra Đurić Bosnić

Geert Hofstede's well-known definition indicates that culture can also be seen as a conglomerate of mental programs that pose challenges and shape the responses of individuals to their environment. Such a formulation also implies establishing a distinction between different levels of shaping a worldview. While the deepest level is determined by human nature and based on general biological reactions, and the most visible level by unique personal genetic experiences and constitutions, the middle level refers to the field of culture and is based on common experiences, values and attitudes that we share with a larger or smaller group.

The shaping of a worldview implied by culture is therefore very powerful and, in one sense or another, inevitable, since culture, as an organized system of values, attitudes, beliefs and meanings, is immanently systematic. Precisely because of the potential of determining the mind and assigning coordinates that one's own culture can impose on the cultures of others, aversion is often felt against them, or they are perceived as foreign, strange and unfathomable. And, when it comes to culture, the coordinates take many forms – from spontaneous, daily, cultural actions of various actors, to the creation, adoption and implementation of political documents, cultural development strategies that define long-term roadmaps and ways of implementing cultural policies, that is, they determine the strategic priorities of cultural development at the national level. And although culture itself can hardly be completely framed in such planning projections, the importance of such documents in the process of formation and cultivation of basic cultural values, but also of certain ideological and political models, should not be underestimated.

In this sense, the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020–2029 is a document of exceptional importance. It is a document that testifies to both the state and current perception of the role of culture within the political-institutional sphere, as well as to the pathways in the development of cultural activities that will have the unequivocal support of political decisionmaking centers, which will ultimately have a decisive influence in shaping the cultural identity of Serbia in the next ten or so years.

After analyzing the Culture Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020–2029, it can be concluded that the projected development profile offers an undoubtedly conservative, nationally oriented, closed off and outdated cultural model.

We will argue this position with the following assertions:

1. The conservative and nationally oriented model is already evident in the enumeration of the principles on which the Strategy is based, where the primary emphasis is on "commitment to the protection and nurturing of national culture" (p. 3), i.e. "The Strategy is, given that the Republic of Serbia represents the home state of the Serbian people living in the region and in different parts of the world, determined to preserve and connect the Serbian cultural space, i.e. the protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural creativity of all bearers of the Serbian cultural identity, regardless of where they live" (p. 2). The protection of cultural heritage has been repeatedly mentioned as a "priority area" (p. 4). One of the segments of the special goal 1 is the measure: "Nurturing the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet and connecting the Serbian cultural space, which is of great importance for the preservation of the cultural identity of the Republic of Serbia and the Serbian people, and which is dedicated to achieving the priority of encouraging the role of culture in the development of society, especially considering the key role of culture in creating, shaping and transmitting social and cultural values and the importance of preserving, presenting and interpreting cultural identity" (p. 6). The document also mentions the "protection of cultural rights of national minorities" (p. 3), but this is also layered with defensive ghetto-culturalism, without encouraging any intercultural exchange.

- 2. Centralization: "Cultural policy of the Republic of Serbia, in accordance with the Constitution and laws, is created at the national level, and implemented at the republic, provincial and local self-government levels" (p. 31). The undoubted centralization of culture, which deprives all other levels of society of the opportunity and right to create authentic cultural policies, is only, of course, a reflection of the entire social and state structure. The striking absence of subsidiarity (a key principle in the EU states) additionally testifies to an outdated model that is not in accordance with the basic organizational principles of the modern world.
- 3. Closed-mindedness: When it comes to international cooperation, it is primarily perceived as an activity aimed at "gathering all those who care about Serbian cultural values (...) also, it is

necessary to improve the research of Serbian culture abroad" (p. 74). Particularly indicative is the focus on the one-sided culture of remembrance, "which implies the remembrance of the community, including the remembrance of important historical events and common sufferings. In this regard, the strategy particularly encourages research and the cultivation of a culture of remembrance of the victims of the genocide against the Serbian people in the 20th century (...), as well as research aimed at overcoming historical and cultural revisionism" (p. 6). In addition, it is prescribed: "Television stations with a national frequency have an obligation to use the Cyrillic alphabet when subtitling content. (...) Expansion of curricula with contents and activities aimed at fostering the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet and the introduction of optional programs that affirm the Serbian language and language culture" (p. 75). It is quite obvious that a culture conceived in such a way makes it impossible to deal with the past or to communicate with others, primarily in the region, and inevitably leads to the cultural isolation of our society.

4. Existential insecurity of artists: Although the Strategy states that "the current moment is characterized, first of all, by an insufficiently stimulating environment for artistic creativity", and that "the position of artists, especially independent ones, as well as cultural workers, has been weakened by the social insecurity of artists and the loss of social affirmations, which greatly influences the potential choice of young people and their decision to pursue a profession in the field of art and culture" (p. 19), no new model or instrument is proposed to improve this situation. The extent to which existential insecurity and dependence on state institutions affect the freedom of creativity of artists and other cultural workers needn't be pointed out in greater detail. Therefore, even this short analysis of the Strategy speaks volumes about the current situation and the aspirations and projections of the development of culture in Serbia in the next decade. Despite the proclaimed and declarative cultural and political pluralism, the one-sided dominance of the conservative, centralist, closed, normative, formal-institutional dimension of understanding culture is still present in the social reality of Serbia.

On the other hand, we are faced with a "runaway world", as Anthony Giddens metaphorically explains globalization - a complex, unstoppable series of processes that involve economy and politics, as well as technology and culture, and which are essentially paradoxical and conditioned by the unpredictable planetary ecstasy of electronic communications. The runaway world, as a world in constant evasion, is simultaneously marked by the weakening of the old nation-states (because, according to Giddens' insight, states face risks and dangers, not enemies) and the impossibility of ideological and cultural control (because it cannot survive in the era of global media). Before us, and with us, a new order is being established: since it is an order that arises in a rather "anarchic", "chaotic" and unpredictable way, Giddens calls it a global cosmopolitan society, while Claudio Magris, despite the threatening conceptual "emptiness", most impressively defines it as an exciting process, as a process of creating a new and "worldauthentic universality", as "an expression of the civilization of the entire world, not only of the West and the East", which "for the first time in history is being born or can be born, despite and in the midst of thousands of dangers and terrible perversions".

Hence, the need to harmonize cultural policy in society with the processes taking place in the European and global environment is more than obvious. Undoubtedly, the world we live in eludes final and complete definitions. In these and future times, we face an open question: who are "we" and who are "they"? And can our interests be that different, and under what conditions? Recognizing trends on a global level and adopting adequate strategies is a pre-condition for successful functioning in the modern world.

For this reason, it is extremely important that a new, alternative, culture development strategy in the Republic of Serbia projects a culture that will be modern, decentralized, open and in constant communication with rapid changes at the global level.

This, above all, implies:

- 1. A dominant role of contemporary art: Encouraging contemporary artistic creativity does not mean neglecting the importance of cultural heritage, but opening space for innovative and fresh ideas in art and culture as a whole.
- 2. The application of the principle of subsidiarity in the creation of cultural policies: As in other segments of society, it is also necessary in culture to respect the diversity of environments and enable the creation of authentic cultural policies at the local and regional levels. This would certainly increase the level of cultural and social complexity and, therefore, make society more flexible.
- 3. The application of the principle of an open cultural model and intercultural communication: Instead of nationally oriented cultural models and multiculturalism as a facade, it is necessary to develop intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication, as an opposition to uniformity, being closed off, xenophobia and stigmatization, ideological obstinacy and ideological violence. The application of intercultural communication as a model of contemporary sociality would also mean a practical confirmation of the new global humanism. Therefore, the task of the cultural strategy, which should strengthen the process of intercultural communication, is to focus on the citizen, the subject, the individual, instead of the formal, institutional dimension of minority life

– what used to be a story of declarative rights, institutions, boards and commissions, should be a story about a human, a human's real experiences, vulnerability, view of life in Serbia from the point of view of a member of a minority community. At the same time, this means that we should abandon the violent "Cyrillization" and declare the formal equality of the two alphabets, which is, after all, the reality in everyday life.

- 4. Strengthening the autonomy of individual cultural actors and the non-governmental sector in culture: Improving the existential conditions in which artists live is of great importance for maintaining the vitality of the cultural scene. The work of professional associations that gather artists and professionals in culture should be freed from formal and informal state paternalism and left to the artists themselves.
- 5. Strengthening the process of international cultural exchange: Encouraging the mobility of artists is one of the most important instruments for strengthening international cultural exchange. In this way, the aforementioned principles are actually included and implemented, i.e. the open cultural model is rounded off.

It is obvious that cultural determination is directly related to adopted or potentially desired cultural values, as a "mental template" that determines guidelines and gives "true" or "false" images. It manifests itself within the cultural system with the aim of achieving a set of symbolic, social, political and economic powers. That is why the question of cultural strategies is a question that does not only refer to culture, but at the same time permeates the entire social structure, pushing a society in one direction or another. It is precisely this social effectiveness of culture that obliges both consci(enti)ousness and timely reaction and deconstruction of risky cultural and ideological concepts.

FOR A MORE CULTIVATED CULTURE¹

Đokica Jovanović

I'm afraid my common sense will be used up too quickly and I won't have any left by the time the war is over. —Аппе Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl

Dedicated to the memory of Milosav Jukić, my best friend

Walter Lippmann noted in his book *Public Opinion* (published in 1922) that culture is not a system established by reason, although culture shapes social life in many ways. Lippmann writes that generally when we write about culture, tradition, and the group mind, we are thinking of these systems perfected by men of genius. But the historian of people, the politician, and the publicity man cannot stop there. For what operates in history is not the systematic idea as a genius formulated it, but shifting imitations, replicas, counterfeits, analogies, and distortions in individual minds. "Thus Marxism is not necessarily what Karl Marx wrote in *Das Kapital*,

¹ A paraphrase of the "cultural culture" phrase coined by *Edgar Morin*. Morin defines this culture as "strongly influenced by contestation and subversiveness, in which the intelligentsia tends more and more to be critical." Edgar Moren, *L'esprit du temps*, II, translated from French by Ivanka Pavlović, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1979, p. 11.

but whatever it is that all the warring sects believe, who claim to be the faithful. From the gospels you cannot deduce the history of Christianity, nor from the Constitution the political history of America."²

Let's look at an even more obvious example. In 1936, the Soviet Union adopted its Second Constitution, labelled ""the most democratic constitution" - Stalin's constitution from 1936. Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin "asked" Nikolai Bukharin, a revolutionary and high official of the party ("party favorite") and the state, who had previously "revised" his views (following Stalin's "criticism"), to follow and supervise the work on the new constitution. In that constitution, in Article 125, it is written: "In conformity with the interests of the toilers, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed by law: a) Freedom of speech; b) Freedom of the Press; c) Freedom of assembly and of holding mass meetings; g) Freedom of street processions and demonstrations".³ However, it is very well known that any citizen who would dare to do anything freely in accordance with this constitutional provision would end his life in Lubyanka,⁴ or in some camp in the GULAG system.⁵ Bukharin was shot in 1938. Regardless of Stalin's oprichnina,⁶ there was a firm belief that

² Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London, 1998, p. 105.

³ Конституция (Основной закон) Союза Советских Социалистических Республик, Партиздат ЦК ВКП(б), Москва, 1936.

⁴ Lubyanka, the colloquial name for the headquarters of the secret police (Cheka, KGB, now FSB). Lubyanka was a remand prison where numerous executions of persons deemed "undesirable" or "suspicious" were carried out.

⁵ Главное управление исправительно-трудовых лагерей и колоний (Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps).

⁶ *Опричнина*. During the absolutist rule of Ivan IV Vasilevich, known as Ivan the Terrible, a system of oppression called *oprichnina* was introduced in Russia (from 1565 to 1572). It was a period of terror and persecution of the Tsar's

Soviet socialism was a gateway to communism. "The ideological justification of the greatest crimes against socialism and socialists is a leitmotif of all of Stalin's actions."7 Stalinist orthodoxy, from Russia to Serbia, has now been moved to the right-wing. This does not apply to former Eastern European countries, members of the Warsaw Pact. In their case, Stalinism was instilled with bayonets – i.e., by force. The case of Yugoslavia is different. The war against Nazi-fascism and domestic quislings was waged by Yugoslav Partisans. Yugoslavia rejected Stalin's command in 1948 and introduced (admittedly imposed by the party) self-management, which had many non-Bolshevik aspects, as well as somewhat anarchistic influences; the influence of ideas about self-government from the Constitution of the United States(which was largely written under the influence of J. Locke and C. Montesquieu and, of course, under the influence of the young Marx, as well as the late Marx from Das Capital. In this new doctrine, there was no room for Leninism, Stalinism or Trotskyism. Maoism arrived later and influenced the ideology and politics of Albania at the time.

There is another example from our recent history. The constitutions from 1903 and 1921, and the Law on the Press (1904) proclaimed that "the press is free". But how exactly? In the 1903 constitution, it is stated (Article 22) that "newspapers and other printed matter can be banned (confiscated) only if they contain: an insult to the King and the Royal House, or an insult to foreign rulers and their homes, or a call to citizens to take up arms". The wording is similar in the 1921 constitution (Article 13): "The distribution and selling of newspapers or printed documents containing insults of the Ruler or members of the Royal House, foreign

7 Leo Mates, On the margins of socialism, Globus, Zagreb, 1986, p. 44.

opponents and suppression of all forms of local self-government. Russian historians still disagree on what the *oprichnina* actually was – a cruel necessity dictated by circumstances, or a consequence of the deterioration of the monarch's state of mind.

heads of state, the National Assembly, directly calling on citizens to forcefully change the Constitution or the laws of the land, or a serious violation of public morals, is prohibited". The Law on the Press regulates the "freedom of the press" even more precisely (Article 7): "The printer is obliged to give one copy of each issue of the newspaper... to the state's local political authority". In the 1931 constitution, the press is not mentioned at all. This constitution is also known as the "Imposed constitution", with which the king "brought an end" to the validity of the 6 January Dictatorship and, with the constitution, legalized the dictatorship of the monarchy. There is no answer to the important question: who determines and evaluates the quality and intentions of the press? The police, judges and court clerks and other clerical staff. In monarchical times of the "free press", this "freedom" was practiced in the following way. The editors of the labor, social democratic and communist press were arrested and persecuted. Reshuffles were carried out in newsrooms. The censorship-sanctioned press was confiscated. Readers were harassed and workers' apartments were searched. Packages with newspapers were held back, or deliberately sent to wrong addresses.⁸ At the same time, and especially since the beginning of the 1930s, Nazi-chauvinist, pro-fascist and pro-Nazi press was published quite freely, with the blessing of the authorities.⁹

Reality is shaped by state and government authority, so they falsify reality through culture, politics, and propaganda. We have provided only a few illustrations. Yet those illustrations introduce us

⁸ See also: Milan Vesović, *The Revolutionary Press in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. 1918–1929*, Institute for Contemporary History and Narodna knjiga, Belgrade.

⁹ See also: Olivera Milosavljević, Contemporaries of Fascism I: Perception of fascism in Belgrade public 1933–1941, and Contemporaries of Fascism II: Yugoslavia and its encirclement 1933–1941, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade, 2010.

to the structure, mechanisms and ways of using and (re)constructing the understanding of society. The strongest tool in this plan is ideology, bearing in mind the viewpoint of K. Marx and F. Engels that ideology is a false consciousness in which reality is upsidedown as in a camera obscura: "If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura".¹⁰ This claim becomes more convincing when one takes into account that it was not until 1932 that Marx's highly important economic and philosophical manuscripts were rediscovered, as emphasized by P. Berger and T. Luckmann. And after World War Two, these writings gained an even deeper meaning. "Be this as it may, the sociology of knowledge inherited from Marx not only the sharpest formulation of its central problem but also some of its key concepts, among which should be mentioned particularly the concepts of 'ideology' (ideas serving as weapons for social interests) and 'false consciousness' (thought that is alienated from the real social being of the thinker)."11

Therefore, documents are important, but they are nowhere near enough to understand the concrete situation of a society. Or, these few examples show that reality is greatly shaped and formed through cultural creations (laws, the press, etc.). With the above examples, we want to show that supposedly rational thinking is harnessed to, more or less, the hidden interests of those individuals and groups that have the power to shape collective "values". This is possible because people feel the need to follow a leader.

¹⁰ Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in: MED, 6, translated by Olga Kostrešević, Prosveta and the Institute for the Study of the Labor Movement, Belgrade, 1974, p. 23.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Penguin Books, London, 1991, p. 18.
 Here, one should, of course, take into account the highly significant study by Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1978.

And therefore, the ideal of democracy is, too often, just an empty slogan. Even in the "most democratic" of societies.

There is a now outdated belief of the everyday mind, but also of theorists of the "people's soul", and practitioners of ideologies, whom we also call demagogues, according to which every culture has its own autochthonousness, comprehensible only from its irrational, spiritual core – from the "soul of the people", a "collective feeling " of a specific nation. Ideology does not give way to free thinking, nor to free action. It instrumentalizes culture by trivializing it, making it "easy to understand for common folk." An ideology without subjection to and active service under acceptable cultural sectors could not achieve this. Now, even in public transport, an anti-ideological stance is considered morally problematic. A person with no ideology is a suspicious one. The suspicion is banal "smartness". Ideology paralyzes and anxiously rejects modern culture and art, because they are heteronomous and not susceptible to the influence of ideological guidelines. It is always trying to breathe life into "tradition", something it can manage and promise it a future – a controlled future, but a future nonetheless. As T. Adorno put it: "The hatred for radical modern art, in which restorative conservativism and fascism constantly chime together blissfully, rests on this, that they are reminders of that which was missed... Reified consciousness... Incapable of the experience of anything not already contained in the repertory of monotony, it coins immutability into the idea of something eternal, that of transcendence."12 With conservatism and fascism, a deeply ideologized culture - while defending "traditional moral values" - destroys morality as such. Ideological conservatism, as can be seen in our experience, destroys solidarity due to its deceptive positioning in the sphere of directed and controlled comfort.

¹² Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by Nadežda Čačinović Puhovski and Žarko Puhovski, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1979, p. 96.

It does this by "advocating" for solidarity in the form of a "spiritual community". On the other hand, in a dictatorship, an autocracy, free thinking is considered treasonous, so its denouncer in that case is a "patriot", and the government offers handsome rewards this "patriotism". Adorno's thoughts were confirmed by Milan Nedić, the Prime Minister of the puppet government in occupied Serbia. In his public speeches, he glorified the rural and tradition, claiming that life in the city is unhealthy and "sinful" compared to family life in rural areas .

Here is what Nedić said:

"What we experienced and what we remember is a great punishment from God. Hand on heart and let's admit it, we deserved it. We spat on our beautiful past – a tradition that empowers, strengthens, heals, defends its own, which is the foundation of being Serbian, which was the cradle of our national soul, our glory, and our greatness".¹³

"We need only show all our good will and readiness to restore order and work on our restoration. I am convinced that then the great German Reich will not deny us the opportunity to contribute to the new European order. Germany was never our enemy. It is not our enemy even today, and it will not be our enemy tomorrow if we so decide".¹⁴

"A farmer who leaves his village and moves to the city for a job and a salary has committed an unforgivable sin against the Serbian people as well as against his family."¹⁵

At the same time, many "national" intellectuals did not hesitate when it came to incriminating other intellectuals to the occupying authorities. As for the so-called left-wing intelligentsia,

¹³ Milan Nedić's wartime speeches to the Serbian people, ed. Miroslav Kostić, Grafopublik, Belgrade, [1991?], p. 55.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 91.

incriminating them meant pleasing God. However, intellectuals who considered themselves democrats, who were resolutely anticommunist, but also "imbued with patriotism" were also incriminated. "Even proven democratic intellectuals at that time were ideologically strongly opposed to new ideas, because, in their opinion, they were, as Vasa Stajić said, "ideas eradicated from the nation." However, now, during the occupation, even those democratically-oriented intellectuals experienced the same fate and dangerous incriminatory attacks from radical right-wingers, the majority of whom put themselves at the service of the occupiers and Nedić's government".¹⁶ H. Fallada provided us with a significant and potent paragraph about incrimination in Nazi Germany. Adorno makes an intriguing note about him (in Minima moralia): Fallada was a controversial figure, but he spoke more truth during Nazism than impeccable figures of greatness, who managed to preserve their reputation. Fallada's books were very popular during the Weimar Republic. He continued to publish novels even under the Nazi regime, even though his books were anti-Nazi. So, this is what Fallada's hero Otto Quangel thinks about while in prison, awaiting his execution for being an active opponent of the regime: "What an incomprehensible people, who cannot at least remain silent out of consideration, but must immediately incriminate dissenters! What fear of everyone, really everyone, reflected in excessively hasty incrimination! A nation of traitors, brought up to listen to their leader – the creator of a country on the wrong path, where whistleblowers are respected and promoted, where a father is not safe from his son informing on him, and a sister never sure that her brother will not incriminate her!"¹⁷

¹⁶ Bojan Đorđević, *The meaning of intellectual engagement in war and occupation*, in: *Intellectuals and war 1939–1947*, collection of works from the Desnica Meetings 2012, part 1, Faculty of Philosophy, Center for Comparative-Historical and Intercultural Studies and FF-press, Zagreb, 2013, p. 110.

¹⁷ Hans Fallada, Every Man Dies Alone, Laguna, Belgrade, 2012, p. 616.

Thus, we come to the ideology of the national idea - the essential core of a nation. And, important levers in the formation of the Idea are tradition and a deep sense of belonging to the national community. In fact, it is mainly about stereotypes and prejudices about "one's own" as well as about "other" peoples. This does not dispute the fact that human communities, even nations, have their own culture, customs, values... But, we dispute the position that cultures, customs... are set in stone that always and forever determine the thoughts and the will of every member of the community. Which would mean that freedom of thought and choice does not exist at all. This is especially so when there is an insistence on strict adherence to and practicing of tradition. It is an ideologically inspired re-traditionalization. But the past cannot be brought to life in the here-and-now. No matter how much tradition is a treasury of heritage and values of what the world used to be, every generation interprets and understands the world anew. Every group and every individual does this. In it, one can see various facts, events evaluated and described in one way or another – some facts or interpretations are brought to the light of day, others are hidden in the shadows. Well, under the changed conditions, the hidden "reveals" itself, and what was respected until a moment ago is hidden from the public eye. Oftentimes, things that never happened are included in tradition, while things that did happen are discarded from it. Both what happened and what didn't happen are subject to permanent re-evaluation and reshaping. Different meanings can be attributed to a single tradition, depending on the time. Every generation and every group in any generation is free to choose the parts of their own tradition. They are also free to forget about tradition. They are free, finally, to confidently create a new tradition... In this sense, tradition is always alive and highly active. It is not history, but it is the past that (in various forms) still lives today. It is also the future that happened. It lives because it appears in an unlimited number of forms, characters, meanings... in accordance with various needs, interests... - in each specific case based on the given order of social relations. It is as if it is forgotten that the tradition was once something "new", something that pushed out the previous tradition. The reconstruction of tradition and the call for a "return" to it is, on the one hand, a matter of political and ideological intent. The use of tradition (especially ideological – and this is where the trouble lies) is not so much based on lies as on (once again) (re)constructed heritage. Heritage is (re)constructed so that it is in agreement with current ideological, or (more simply) interest representations. In this way, it is demonstrated that there is an "unbroken thread, a spiritual vertical" between past and present. On the other hand, the "spiritual vertical" is constituted, not as a connection, or even a causal sequence in culture, but the constructed past is taken as an inexorable and unquestionable norm. The present is predestined, i.e. it is only possible as an image of an ancient archetype. "Fascist leaders have established control over the mental aspects of leisure time. They were particularly skilled at manipulating people through mass psychology. Their feelings were influenced by the incitement of ultra-nationalist feelings, the revival of tradition and nationalism."18 Similar to the manipulation of public opinion in Serbia? This is exactly how the existing thread in the historical cultural fabric is torn (rejected, not acknowledged). Finally, such ideologized "traditionalists", "in the name of tradition", dismiss, reject and do not recognize tradition itself. Constructing a "tradition" suitable for themselves,

¹⁸ Fascism in Action: A Documented Study and Analysis of Fascism in Europe, Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, Washington, p. 185.

"traditionalists" replace real, active discontinuities with constructed (imagined) continuity.¹⁹

Reference to "traditional values" is always placed in a broader field – so-called national interest, whereby the nation is understood as organic, biological, i.e. ethnic, kinship substrate. Thus, the nation "is defending itself" (from whom?) with nationalism ("a more tolerant" term is "good nationalism"). Since nationalism is an exclusivist ideology, it necessarily implies the rule of *excluding the other*. Because that other one doesn't belong. Also, nationalism is afraid of expressing individuality, because it is impossible to make it uniform. J. Habermas wrote: "[*a nation of citizens*] does not derive its identity from some common ethnic or cultural assets, but from the praxis of citizenship that actively exercises its civil rights." ²⁰ Milan Kangrga demonstrates that nationalism is a form of compensation. "When you cannot – literally speaking

19 Cf.:

- Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1983. Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2002.
- Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, Routledge, London, New York, 1998.
- Saša Nedeljković, *Honor, blood and tears. Essays in Anthropology, Ethnicity and Nationalism,* Zlatni zmaj and the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade, 2007.
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso Editions, London, 1983.

Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 2002.

Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

Snježana Kordić, Language and nationalism, Durieux, Zagreb, 2010.

Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Cenzura, Novi Sad, 2007.

20 Jürgen Habermas, *Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe*, in: Omar Dahbour and Misheline R. Ishay (ur.), *The Nationalism*, Humanity Books, New York, 1995, p. 334.

– *make a man* out of yourself... then all that remains is for you to refer to the *only possible generality*, as opposed to *universality*..., that is, to being *Croat*... you approach or lean on (so as not to fall into nothingness) others similar to you, who have also remained that empty human nothingness... So then, at least, you are something' – a *Croat*! So then you can even be "proud" of it, because you have nothing else left. So, when you didn't have enough strength in yourself to *become* a man..., reaching oneself as a man is the only true task, then you will remained an *absolute nothing*".²¹ Česlav Miloš feels similarly: "I treated the nationalists with disgust; I considered them to be harmful fools who, by shouting and inciting mutual hatred between various national groups, relieve themselves of their duty to think".²²

A more serious look at this problem will immediately show that the relationship between culture (more precisely, its creators) and social and political orders in the entire human history does not allow the possibility of thinking about culture as a virginally innocent and pure creation. We are faced with two of its antinomian forms. In historical periods in which human freedom was suppressed, culture was often the cause and accomplice of a lack of freedom. Likewise, culture, precisely in such circumstances, was both the creator and defender of freedom.

Here we are interested in culture as an accomplice in the political actions of taking away freedom. Advocates of aesthetic and moralistic puritanism in culture (particularly in art) seem to deliberately ignore the truth that the colossal edifice of cultural creations is often created under the guise of various forms of government protection and orders; they ignore the fact that many works were created in honor of rulers, often with dubious human and

²¹ Milan Kangrga, Smugglers of their own life, Republika, Belgrade, 2001, p. 186.

²² Czesław Miłosz, The Captive Mind, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1985, p. 143.

statesmanship qualities,²³ but also that culture is the creator of profoundly inhumane pseudo-theories (from nationalism to racism; from praising all kinds of despotism to justifying orders of lack of freedom and violence...). Only a small step is needed to get from there to the agreement of public culture stakeholders (expressed openly, or by "neutral" silence) with the evil organized by the state. At one time, J. Habermas showed "that assuming responsibility for the Nazi past means seeing national history, not as a disturbed temporal continuity and possibly unsullied tradition, but as a fundamentally compromised German 'lifeworld' in which individual subjectivities and collective identities were created and in which they further arise. He says: "(...) the simple fact remains that even those born later grew up in a form of existence in which such things were possible. Our own life is at its core linked (...) to that context of life in which Auschwitz is a possibility".²⁴ The exact picture of our Yugoslav wars is represented by the words of Pascal Bruckner: "Crime arrives on the wings of epic poetry and the worst predator is capable of singing you a little song full of anger and hatred, in between two slaughters."²⁵

In order to better clarify the concept of culture as a faithful companion of authoritarianism and dictatorship, we cite T. Mann and O. Spengler. Mann welcomed Germany's entry into World War One, because it was a war between German culture and European (French and English) civilization. The battle, on the German side, was *artistic*, as art and intellect collided. Therefore, (culture) art

²³ The strict (both poetically and morally) poet Osip Mandelstam wrote an ode to Joseph Dzhugashvili Stalin, his executioner, in an attempt to save his bare life. He did not save life. Branko Miljković, one of the greatest Yugoslav and Serbian poets, also wrote a poem dedicated to Josip Broz Tito.

²⁴ Nancy Wood, *Remembrance and civil society,* in: *Repressed civil society,* edited by: Vukašin Pavlović, Eko centar, Belgrade, 1995, p. 173–174.

²⁵ Pascal Bruckner, Ethnic theology – identifying with the victim in Serbian propaganda, Republika, 115/1995, p. 17.

and (defense of culture) war are close in nature: "Aren't war and art connected by the fact that there is a complete analogy between them? At least it always seemed to me that the worst artist is not the one who recognizes himself in the image of a soldier".²⁶ For him, that war was the end of a hideous world. "Terrible is that world which is no more – that is, the world that will be no more when the great storm passes! Was it not teeming with spiritual vermin? Wasn't the decay of civilization stirring and reeking in it?"27 German art (culture) floats disembodied in contrast to a decaying civilization. "Poetry and art, romantic poetry at least, German art - they are, are they not, after all a dream, naivety, feeling, or even better, 'spirituality'; they have something with the 'intellect' of the devil, an intellect which, just like the republic, should be completely despised as a matter of crafty young Jews, and condemned for patriotic reasons".²⁸ For this reason, Germany will always find salvation in itself, even in a hopeless situation. "When things get really serious, it is possible to find a path that leads back to the sacred notions of our people's legacy."29 One of Thomas Mann's most intriguing statements in: "We are too spiritual a people to be able to live in opposition between state form and belief. Germany was not 'democratized' by introducing a republican form of government. Any conservatism, any desire to keep the inherited German cultural idea intact, will necessarily reject the republicdemocratic form of the state in the political sphere as alien to this country and this people, as untrue and contrary to the its soul's

²⁶ Thomas Mann, *The German Republic: political writings and speeches in Germany*, translated from German by Aleksandra Kostić, Albatros plus and Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2012, p. 6.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 111.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 146.

realism, and they will fight against it".³⁰ In 1924, however, Mann decided to support the Weimar Republic. Although his political choice was of a rational nature, Mann as a writer remained faithful to the romantic calling. Romanticism, he believed, was inseparably associated with Germany. Therefore, from the point of view based on the "aristocracy of the spirit" which originates from the depths of a strong mythical, poetic and musical past, Adolf Hitler was not a special German for Mann, he did not belong to the circle of the German spiritual aristocracy. He was just a tiny, "foreign, Austrian, vagabond".

It seems that the anxiety that tormented Thomas Mann was best expressed by another well-known German, also an admirer of the strength of German culture. For Spengler, the Weimar Republic represented the collapse of everything that seemed valuable to him in imperial Germany. Anarchy ensued. He personally experienced the unpleasant nature of the Munich Soviet Republic in 1919. The main source of history, writes Spengler in The Decline of the West, is "life", irrational and instinctive. The last stage of any dying culture is "civilization". "Because every culture has its own civilization", which "organically" follows culture. "Civilization is the inevitable *destiny* of a culture. This is where the climax was reached, from which the last and most difficult questions of historical morphology become solvable. Civilizations are the ultimate and most artificial states of which a superior species of people is capable".³¹ That is why the West, ruled by money and materialism, is doomed. An age will come, Spengler announced, in which the Caesars will wage war against each other for world supremacy, while humanity will watch helplessly. That age will eliminate people of a "large" format. "When a man looks at (...)

³⁰ Ibid. p. 209.

³¹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, I, Književne novine, Belgrade, 1989, p. 70–71.

today's philosophers, he must be overcome with shame. What tiny personalities! What commonplace political and practical points of view!"³² He writes that Western man should come to terms with the painful fact that he will never create a great work of art again. The only hope remains in that, "if, under the influence of this book, people from new generations turn to technology instead of poetry, seafaring instead of painting, politics instead of the theory of knowledge, then they do what I want; and I can wish nothing better for them".³³ The essence of Spengler's political ideas is contained in a letter from 1918. Germany must be punished for the humiliation inflicted on the monarchy and for the defeat in the war, "until finally... The horror aggravates the situation to such a degree of excitement and despair that a dictatorship, similar to that of Napoleon, is perceived as salvation ... But then blood must flow, and the more blood, the better... First force, then renewal, not through the dilettantism of political majorities, but through the superior tactics of a selected few who were born and destined for politics (italics – Đ.J.)".³⁴

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Therefore, the words of a dictator who had the direct, or at least indirect support of the German scientific and artistic intelligentsia, are not surprising. What Mann and Spengler wrote about (although the former severely criticized the latter, almost despising him, while the latter, in a state of deep misanthropy, ignored all criticism, including Mann's) was most profoundly expressed in art by Richard Wagner. And those dictator's words read: "Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know

³² Ibid. p. 85.

³³ Ibid, p. 82.

Alaster Hamilton, *he appeal of fascism: A study of intellectuals and fascism – 1919–1945*, translated by Aleksandar Spasić, Vuk Karadžić, Belgrade, 1978, p. 149.

Wagner," Hitler said.³⁵ Although Wagner harbored a hatred of Jews much like Hitler, although he despised parliamentarism, democracy and materialism, it is not his political writings, but rather his operatic work in which he evokes the world of mystical and pagan ancient Germanic lore, with its heroic myths, blood feuds and tribal laws, a sense of destiny, of the nobility of death, that inspired myths in modern Germany and gave Germany a Germanic *Weltanschaung*, which Hitler and the Nazis adopted and made their own.

We cannot resist but give word to Maxim Gorky as well. But to the Gorky who was an artist and a revolutionary, until he himself fell at his oppressor's feet. Nevertheless, the cause of his death (1936) has not yet been clarified in Russia, just as, after all, no ray of light has ever fallen on real Russian politics. In addition, Stalinists and Trotskyists mutually blamed each other for the death of the writer. With the recollection that his son M.A. Peshkov also died two years before his father at the age of 36, also under unclear circumstances, one can at least guess what kind of death took Gorky from this world.

But let's see how Gorky, bitterly and for no reason, in opposition to Mann and Spengler, represented creators of culture:

"It is strange to me to see that the proletariat, in the face of its thinking and active organ, the 'Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies', is so indifferent and uninterested in sending to the front, to slaughter, the soldiers, musicians, artists, drama artists and other people that soul requires. After all, by sending its talents to slaughter, the country is crushing its own heart, the best and most precious things the people have are being torn away. And for what? Maybe just so that a gifted Russian kills a gifted German.

^{35 &}lt;sup>)</sup> William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, I, translated from English by Mignon Mihaljević, Znanje, Zagreb, 1977, p. 165.

Imagine how absurd this is, what a terrible disgrace of the people! Think about how much energy people spend to create a talented representative of their feelings, the thoughts of their soul. Will this cursed slaughter turn people dear to us away from art into murderers and corpses?"³⁶

National (cultural) megalomania and expansionism can indirectly lead to the reduction of national wealth of every kind, which is clear from an example related to the geographical reduction of Germany as a consequence of the wars it started and led during the 20th century. Before World War One, the German Reich spread across about 542,000km2. After that war, the Weimar Republic spread across 472,000km2. The area of the present, united Germany is 357,000km2.³⁷ When looking at the current situation in Serbian culture and politics, one can see an unusually large similarity with the German reality, in the production of which a large part of the German intelligentsia participated. We will also see a similarity in the disintegration of territorial integrity, for the preservation (and increase) of which the political and cultural authorities "bravely and relentlessly fought".

Of course, on the other hand, the artist is also an opponent of political abuse of culture. In this sense, he will defend the human right to creation, as a basic right to humanity and freedom. "As soon as a poet wants to act politically, he has to choose a party; and as soon as he does he is lost as a poet; he must say goodbye to his free spirit, to his impartial views, and in return to pull over his ears the cap of limitation and blind hatred. A poet, as a man and a citizen, will love his homeland, but the homeland of his poetic powers and his poetic work is that which is good, noble

³⁶ Maxim Gorky, From an article in the *Новая Жизнь* magazine, № 2, 20 April (3 May) 1917. In: Maxim Gorky, *Untimely Thoughts. Notes 1917–1918*, Editions de la Seine Paris, 1971, p. 23.

^{37 &}lt;sup>1</sup>Vojin Dimitrijević, Serbs and Germans: true and false parallels, Republika, 116/1995, p. 8.

and beautiful, which is not tied to any particular province or any particular country (...). In this, he is similar to an eagle that flies over countries with an unobstructed view, and it doesn't matter to him whether a rabbit (...) is running in Prussia or in Saxony".³⁸

* * *

This text was written with the intention of reminding our people of culture about the threatening and perplexing state in our society. Although people of culture know all too well what we are saying here, let this text also be another small outpost, from which one can see from afar the possible onset of some kind of even uglier trouble than the one we have been enduring for almost half a century.

Perhaps we can give a glimmer of hope for culture after all. In Serbia, two subsystems have been devastated – the economy has been wrecked, and the political subsystem is a generator of disintegration. The cultural subsystem, fueled by the strong, heavy and painful pressure of pseudo-traditionalism and ideological conservatism, remains in full swing.

³⁸ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, Kultura, Belgrade, 1970, p. 371–372.

CULTURAL WASTELANDS

Goran Kaluđerović

We start from the fact that the modern concept of culture has many sources. However, in order to be able to underline the main problems faced by strategies in culture, we believe that we also must define ourselves in accordance with the phenomenon. In doing so, we consider it necessary to understand the social conditioning of culture, and throughout the text we will emphasize the predominant role of neoliberal capitalism, as a prima facie transformation of the entire nature of culture. Culture has become an industry in itself with liberal capitalism. In a perverted way, it became the activity of the majority, having lost its puritanical character, and this is considered the biggest "change in the entire history of cultural production" (Raymond Williams, according to Terry Eagleton, 2017:111), where, therefore, culture became a profitable part of modern capitalist production. Terry Eagleton believes that culture is "the second or third most complex word in the English language", but nevertheless assigns it four meanings: "(1) a series of artistic and intellectual works; (2) a process of spiritual and intellectual development; (3) the values, customs, beliefs, and symbolic practices by which men and women live; or (4) the whole way of life" (2017:11). It already follows from the mentioned concept of culture that it does not have the elitist character insisted on by the bearers of culture who see in such a concept of culture the exclusion of others who are not part of the elite identity. According to our understanding as well, culture has the broadest meaning, expressed by a person's desire to acquire new knowledge and participate in it. Truth be told, an elitist understanding of the concept of culture might be hidden there. This problem was recognized even by the United Nations (UN), which adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights during the Third General Assembly on 10 December 1948, which included the "right to education", as well as the "right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community". The child's right to education was recognized 11 years later, as was the right to "an education which will promote his general culture" (principle 7, included in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child). The Vienna Conventions, which were also passed by the UN, on Diplomatic Relations (1961) and on Consular Relations (1963) explicitly mention "cultural exchange", but this concerns the collective rights of states, not individual rights. UNESCO constantly discussed the problems of the right to culture and cultural exchange, which resulted in numerous resolutions. As far as we know, many conferences of experts organized so far have failed to give a clear definition of the term *culture*, and they failed to define the concept of cultural identity. We can only add, guided by the concept mentioned above, that "culture is nothing, or is only its own caricature, unless it represents a real participation in a superior life, which cannot be concretely evoked without referring to the great creators in which this life was embodied" (Gabriel Marcel according to Louis Dollot 2000:81).

Based on the above, the question arises whether two concepts of culture are in collision, the one that gives culture the meaning of "the entire way of life" and the one that refers to "great creators in whom that life is embodied". We are of the opinion that these two concepts of culture are not in disagreement. The first concept of culture produced what the modern categorizing apparatus calls multiculturalism. We essentially interpret "the entire way

of life" as a negation of hierarchy among values where no one culture claims superiority over another. We can refer to the philosopher Edmund Burke on the one hand, or to the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder on the other, but that would go beyond the scope of our work. What is paradoxical is that both philosophers, for example, were conservative, and that the latter, Herder, was hailed as the father of modern nationalism and he introduced the idea of culture as the entire way of life into European thought. If we want to look for continuity in such an understanding of the phenomenon of culture, then we look at multiculturalism as one of the modern variations of the Renaissance idea of equal treatment of all individuals. Hidden underneath such a view of culture is the struggle for dignity and the need for equal evaluation of every culture, where the aforementioned Herder insisted on the position that every man has a measure within himself. The point is that the insistence that people are different is not new. It is above all an idea that says each of us is called upon to make a difference. And therein lies the danger that by preventing others from openly expressing their own feelings, which may be mediated by tradition, we actually prevent them from being human in the true sense of the word. Such an understanding of culture is at the forefront of social and political relations, because it opposes the violence that some cultures and languages have imposed on others, in the form of standards by which other cultures and languages were stifled. It is quite clear that such an interpretation of culture is in the service of an identity pattern as a reaction to possible assimilation from a "stronger culture". Therefore, multiculturalism draws its ideas from the enthroned romanticized understanding of the importance of culture and language. What is more, we can even define multiculturalism as an affirmation of neo-romantic tendencies. For a more complete understanding of culture, it is considered that there must be certain prerequisites, such as knowledge, cognition, education and training. According to Louis Dollot "when we talk about knowledge, it means the acquisition of knowledge, but also experience, both of which can be limited to a single discipline of thought" (2000:53). For elitists, education is a symbol of refinement by which they are supposed to distinguish themselves from the "commoners". So, here the emphasis is more on culture as a part of a group that would be different from culture as an entire way of life. We can also understand that distinction as a culture that is jointly shared in the way of life, while for the elitists it would mean a culture that is jointly created. If the ultimate meaning and goal of multiculturalism was integration, challenges to that goal went in the direction of accusations that it was a regressive process or insidious manipulation. What is more, we start from the assumption that, if the scope of multiculturalism towards integration is limited, that limitation has been made up for by liberal capitalism. The argument we are putting forward is that civilization has found itself in conflict with culture. Acculturation is a process that is territorially bounded, because cultural influences are given and received in mutual diversity. Criticisms of the acculturation process boil down to what left-wing-leaning critics consider to be neoliberal fraud, according to which global capital should profit from real differences. We referred to it as a war of civilizations with culture. Thus, the division of labor, the increase of knowledge based on experience, the organization of the state and the great differences between classes have divided individual culture itself. Neoliberal capitalism itself has triggered rivalry and greed, breaking the traditional bonds that exist between individuals who, as could be expected, have closed themselves off in a solitary space. Culture is now reduced to what Jane Austen defines as a matter of individual cultivation (Eagleton, 2017: 93). The aforementioned declarative conflict between

civilization and culture is a feature of postmodern societies. Zygmunt Bauman coined an original phrase – fluidity, which expresses the speed of changes in the modern world that do not lead to better solutions for civilizational or, in our interpretation, postmodern problems. He offers a new explanation for postmodern culture, which he defines as a culture of "disengagement and oblivion", which is fertile ground for the emergence of the realm of unculturedness, since the fundamental premise and meaning of the existence of culture as a "critical reflection on the status quo" is extinguished. Postmodern societies are, therefore, those where belonging is understood as a non-negotiable and indisputable duty. Someone might sarcastically note that such an understanding of postmodern societies is not inconsistent with the idea and name of "culture", simply because it was coined as a term in the third quarter of the 18th century, with the meaning of managing human thought and behavior and, in its foundations, it does not differ from postmodern understanding of culture as a duty. Therefore, the idea that culture creates people, cultivates them, or raises them to become cultured, went a step further towards understanding the postmodern phenomenon of culture as the management of events according to the plan and will of those who control those events, which often borders on manipulation of possibilities. The power of the market is what dominates the postmodern society, where culture is also instrumental in satisfying its needs, that is, the needs of the market. We are talking about a homogenizing social pressure where the critical impulse in relation to the existing *status quo* is practically excluded, and even if it exists, it does not in any way disrupt the existing established structure. Therefore, in postmodern society, culture is at the service of those who govern a society, who, among other things, with the help of culture, make cosmetic changes, or, what is even more paradoxical, culture is their effective resistance to

changes that are not in the interest of those who govern. What is more, in order for culture to survive, cultural institutions adapt to established market relations and base their survival, at least in the financial sense, on new forms of collecting the necessary funds, essential for functioning, called *fundraising*. It is interesting that, in the impossibility of any disruption of the established social structure, culture ties its own survival to "the skill of kindly persuading people to experience the joy of giving" (Hank Rosso, according to Barbara Crole and Christiane Fine, 2005:12). In postmodern societies, fundraising becomes an occupation like any other, whereby the socio-psychological qualities of the fundraiser are not as important – because it is obvious that it is a question of so-called "soft qualifications" – as the fact that in established market relations, culture simply depends on the success of obtaining financial resources for its overall functioning. In the present, we believe that the old concept of culture, which was based on general criticism, has been degraded so much on a general level that it can no longer be repaired. With the ambition of showing that this is a "by-product" of destroyed organic pre-industrial societies, the modern concept of culture rests on the motive of profit. Mass culture in conjunction with the dominant motive of profit has acquired a completely new meaning in relation to the one that this ideal type pattern had in the age that we can call "romanticism". Therefore, mass culture has evolved in two phases. "First, it extended its influence into almost every crevice of society, and then it began to integrate with the rest of social existence so that the distinction between culture and society became increasingly precarious. Politics increasingly became a matter of image, icon, style and spectacle. Trade and manufacturing relied more and more on packaging, design, branding, advertising and public relations. Personal relationships were mediated by technological texts and images. The era of postmodernism has settled comfortably" (Eagleton, 2017:115). The noble ideal of culture has lost its chastity. It no longer opposes power, it is in symbiosis with it. Profit is also a motive in culture that makes it spread around the globe. It serves to maintain the existing neoliberal capitalist structure and colonizes our feelings just as capitalism colonized the markets it needed. The matrix on which they rest is the same. Capitalism includes culture for material purposes, and discards as unnecessary the primordial things that make up culture, such as its selffulfilling and aesthetic function, or is functional if motivated by profit. Simply, creativity is drawn into the "service of acquisition and exploitation" (2017:119). Everything that was the opposite of capitalism was drawn into its system. Cultural institutions become pseudo-capitalist enterprises under the influence of managerial ideology. Hence the fundraising. Whether the death of the humanities and the concept of culture based on the critique of power is on the horizon, and whether there is a strategy for preserving the traditional properties of culture – these are questions for future cultural strategists of a community. Culture is not in the position of deconstructing the functioning of capitalism, but rather serves its apologetics or the determination of its dysfunctionality that needs to be fixed. However, living in a society of obvious and unreasonable inequalities, compromised public services and "gargantuan scams", culture has not emerged with an undertone of moral apostles, who will point out the aforementioned perversions. It has become their accomplice. Let us add that the original concept of culture – diversity, has lost its importance and, befitting the capitalist structure, it tends toward uniformity, where the model is Western civilization. Such a culture cancels out differences rather than promoting alternative possibilities. As criticism, it is eroding more and more, because each identity politics knows nothing about the spirit of self-criticism, and therefore, the unconditional acceptance of neoliberal capitalism necessarily excluded the critical spirit of culture. Public opinion has identified with the neoliberal social structure. What is more, a certain disdain has developed towards alternative social forms of behavior, which are esoteric in character rather than being soberly situated within society.

From our experience so far, we can sense a concrete problem that is of a principled nature and refers to the need to regulate culture in the sense of managing culture within the framework of rationality that is in the imagination of the one who manages, that is, the state, region or locality, on the one hand, and on the other, it is a reason for *casus belli*, because it is against the freedom of culture, and culture is unthinkable without freedom. The bearers of culture, or, if you prefer, its creators, live with that paradox. The managers, therefore, aim to "improve the world", or maintain imagined relations in a community in accordance with the standards they have created themselves, while the creators of culture are forced to seek "modus co vivendi with those managers or sink into irrelevance". Anyway, that's how the a home is shared, or the need to show people a different kind of behavior "and thereby make the world different from what it is at a given moment and from what it would probably turn into if left to itself" (Zygmunt Bauman, 2009:67–85). I have no doubt that the Government's proposed strategy is burdened with a narrowminded spirit based on the rejection of the unknown. "It is one of its basic marks, which distinguishes its history, its culture, its mental world" (Konstantinović). An open culture does not rely on repetitive behavior, it requires the exploration of more hidden possibilities that exist in a community. According to Hannah Arendt, culture is directed towards beauty and is an elusive goal that defies "rational causal explanations", a goal that has no purpose or use, which is why an object belongs to culture once it outlives any useful purpose. We are not sure, but we assume that the realization of these managers' dreams lies in the need to resist change. The thing is that such a view is in complete opposition to the trend towards the dismantling of the state framework in which things of the greatest importance in life and movements under the authority of the consumer market used to take place (Bauman).

We now see the conflict on another level, where state managers, who need to understand culture as a restraint on people's behavior, find themselves in conflict with new directors and screenwriters of cultural drama who see people or cultural consumers as recycled into consumers. Simply put, the line that separates a successful from a failed cultural product is measured by sales and box office earnings. The consumer syndrome has exalted transience and dethroned permanence. The permeation of cultures can be at the level of enriching the entire community on the basis of diversity, but cultural products can also be experienced at the level of transcending any community, which deal with fundamental issues of human survival and, in general, of this world. We want to say that constant changes are a feature of contemporary culture and a product of modernity, where every cultural product carries within itself the seed of ruin, because constant changes are a feature of a culture conceived in such a way. Let us illustrate it through our own understanding, for example, of a performance as a cultural product that only has a "from-to" use value, and most often only while it lasts.

Culture situated in the prevailing and alternative neoliberal concept is now at its service and not its criticism. Truth be told, all the tragic consequences produced by neoliberal capitalism certainly have their cultural aspects, "but culture is not their essence" (Eagleton, 2017:125). If it is any consolation, cultural strategists can do a lot to situate a culture that would make a community more meaningful and sustainable.

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CULTURE IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL TRANSITIONS

Mehmed Slezović

We are living in an era of great changes that are confusing and that, despite our efforts to keep up with them and understand them, remain elusive. The world is definitely exposed to great changes. How to understand and approach them are difficult questions, not only for the regular person, but also for intellectuals of all profiles, and for cultural workers in any sphere. How do we comprehend the current reality that evades interpretation, how do we label it as postmodernism, post-postmodernism, posthumanism, the posttruth era, the end of history, globalization, the global transition, the neoliberal world order, the new world order, the post-informational order, or the informational order, the technological era and posttechnological age, a dystopian era, an era of smart technologies, an era of universal control, a post-democracy, meta-modernism, or some other term of the variety that is currently in circulation? All these terms coexist and confuse our troubled consciousness more than they evoke some precise guidelines and firm landmarks of understanding. In essence, the world is at the end of the international order established after World War Two and before the establishment of a new world order with unclear outlines, which is found in the process of noticeable changes in the political, economic and cultural sphere. It is not "the end of history", but an interregnum before a new beginning. The end of the Cold War and the fall of communism, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union, opened the door to neoliberal capitalism and the idea of a new world order. Meanwhile, China is becoming a leading economic power in the world, and Russia is reviving its imperial sentiments through an advantage in supersonic weapons. The planet is becoming a constricted space for the ambitions of globalized neoliberal capitalism. Many countries are entering the race for global power. There is this idea that the goal of society as a whole is the struggle for power, while culture is the struggle for meaning.

Where do we begin? Perhaps from the fact that a new global economic order has been established in which the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle class has disappeared, or is rapidly disappearing on a global level. We are already living in a reality where 1 percent of the planet's population owns 90 percent of the total wealth; this formula is transferred globally to countries where 3 to 5 percent of the population owns 90 percent of the national wealth, and to that figure, a certain number up to, for example 10 percent, of mostly the political elite is added, while around 50 percent of the poor that make up 90 percent of the population live in absolute poverty. Then there is also climate change, environmental issues and pollution, population growth, migration, technological revolutions, economic crises, precarious work, wars that threaten to destroy the world, problems with collapsing democracies and the emergence of autocracies and totalitarian ideologies, as well as autocratic and dictatorial regimes, the revival of fundamentalism in its many forms, terrorism, pandemics, etc. This is already a dystopian view of reality which, with rapid population growth, causes numerous side effects, from wars to global migrations, and consequently cultural changes. Controlling the planet's resources is becoming increasingly important due to their limited nature. "War is peace", "freedom is slavery", "ignorance is strength" – Orwell's maxims from "1984" are seemingly

becoming a reality. But what about culture? If we were to apply the same formula, the slogan would read: "unculturedness is power". Of course, war is not peace, freedom is not slavery, ignorance is not strength, and by extension, unculturedness is not power, although barbarians destroyed civilizations throughout history, only to end up accepting their cultures. Does this not confirm that both knowledge and culture are forms of power? Obviously, it does. Does this mean that both knowledge and culture are in some kind of confrontation with ignorance and unculturedness as instruments of power? The answer is clearly yes, but it is not that simple, because the global collapse of their values and capacities affects them as well. The number of universities that do not provide the best knowledge is increasing, while only a small number cultivates an elitist status intended only for a chosen few, and cultural issues are becoming increasingly complex. This is, in part, due to the fact that culture has a very wide range of meanings.

At present, culture is understood on the one hand as a society's way of life, the harmony of behavior and governance, and thus we acknowledge the culture of food, sports, entertainment, as well as heritage, which is continuously nourished; it follows that there are no societies without culture, while on the other hand, culture usually implies science, art and philosophy. Education, religion, morality and the like could also be added to the mix. The fact is that global transitions affect culture in all its domains. The world has never been exposed to such a degree of globalization, although similar efforts have existed before. The Roman Empire, the Hanseatic League, the Catholic Church, Islamic conquests - these are just earlier forms of globalization, which the West developed as its supreme concept through the idea of art. The words that can be heard as a general stance sound convincing: "The world changed less from Plato's time to when I started school, than from when I started school to when I grew old."

TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF GLOBALIZATION

The first concept could be labeled as Atlanticism and as the project of Western domination. It also includes culture as a function of soft power, through which a value system is imposed as a global project. Within it, culture is primarily based on other forms of power, such as economic, financial, political and even military power. With huge investments in cultural institutions and artistic creations, appropriate cultural models, ideology and art are promoted and they propagate the global influence and power of the West on the national cultures of other peoples, who accept these models as desirable forms of behavior and values. In this sense, a whole network of cultural institutions has been established – from museums and art fairs to various biennial or triennial exhibitions through which influence and supremacy are ensured.

The second concept implies the idea of multiculturalism and, consequently, interculturality as a process of mutual permeation, mixing and influence. Various parts of the world with their particular cultures and sensibilities engage in different forms of mutual dialogue and synergy. In this way, the global enters a kind of dialogue with the local, resulting in the so-called **glocal**, which is characterized by the local contents of national peculiarities and the international language in which they are expressed.

The third pole remains outside these two currents, as regionalism, local national discourse against the global concept of culture. As a rule, it is based on national identity, and often ends up in the nationalist concept of cultural policies. In this way, a kind of radical polarization occurs – between mondialism and nationalism in culture.

Artistic globalization in the first half of the 20th century in Europe took place through the historical avant-garde. In the second half of the century, it changed more quickly and spread internationally, so the center shifted from Paris to New York, and to

other parts of the world through American global power. That's how pop art became a global American art product export. A regular consumer item was given classical form, and even value. In a consumer society, manipulation is the name of the game. The choice of what to wear, what to drive, and what to eat is a substitute for political choice. Sports and television are the two leading and longest-standing creators of popular culture. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to understand life without popular culture, because it consists of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, customs, and tastes that define the members of a society. It allows large, heterogeneous masses of people to recognize and identify themselves as a collective and a community. Since it is extremely commercial, it has been penetrating everywhere for a long time. In a way, it has become universal. The whole hype surrounding postmodernism in this century was also due to the fact that popular culture could steal everything it wanted from "high culture" unhindered, but also under a "highly theoretical" cover. In this way, the division between high culture as the search for human perfection that civilizes, and popular culture created by "ignoramuses" i.e. "garbage that needs to be eradicated" was bridged. Meanwhile, pop culture has advanced so much that "if something is not popular, it's not a culture". This question may seem frightening: A hundred years from now, what will be studied as high and what as popular culture, or will these categories no longer matter to anyone in the future?

North America is the starting point of the globalization strategy that maintains international synergy through the Museum of Modern Art. Outside of this global information network, artists are cruelly threatened by regionalization. Thus, a monopoly was established in the formation of social taste at the international level. Current practice is systematically oriented towards technological aids and analytical behavior, as an expression of the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon culture. At biennial and quadrennial exhibitions, as a result of the globalization of criticism, the same names appear, through which the collective taste is confirmed.

Nevertheless, a certain gap is noticeable between American and European art and culture, as a unique Western cultural corpus. The strong historical foundation of European cultural identity is also challenged by trends launched from New York. Artistic research in Europe maintains a connection with a calmer and more measured rhythm and pace of life, while in America these studies are unfettered. European culture is prone to self-examination, striving for a certain system and its place in the social context. As a result, European culture is oriented towards history and the history of art, ideological engagement, while American culture is freed from historicity, and so, starting from the present, it is directed towards the experimental. The American artist accepts the authority of the market as a criterion for the recognition of their work. For a European artist, turning a work of art into a commodity is a political issue. Thus, the American market conquers the entire world with its artistic goods through aggressive economic means, attributing to it a higher quality compared to the average product of European culture. In this way, capitalist relations in culture give a strong impulse to its globalization.

There is a cause-and-effect relationship between globalization and capitalism. The underlying fact is that capitalism must grow in order to survive as a system. Its mission is to grow and develop. If its growth must destroy cultural differences, capitalism will have no problem doing just that. Along with the central axes of capitalism, modernity and the concept of progress, globalization is interpreted as a totalizing vision of reality, where there are tendencies towards the global development of society within the framework of social and cultural relations, so globalization can be understood as the commercial dependence between

countries closely related due to the convenience of integrating their economies. Cultural globalization appears as a phenomenon from which no society can escape, because mass media is omnipresent; however, this universal exchange can have both negative and positive consequences. On the one hand, globalization in culture can be reduced to the banalization of content for the masses and profound content for a narrow circle of experts and the elite. Thanks to high technology, globalization as a process transcends various limitations of regional and national borders and affects lives in every corner of the planet, turning into a state of constant exchange. Globalization raises the issue of problematizing the importance of national and beyond-national identity. At the same time, the cultural diversity of the world is being smoothed out while relations between peoples are becoming more tense. Some are of the opinion that the absence of a strong national identity can be a good thing. Globalization is also bridging, the idea of a bridge where a person who encountered an obstacle did not stop, but, guided by the hope on the other side, faced the challenge head-on.

Despite the fact that the Western concept imposed itself as universal, no common denominator has emerged. The world of art is characterized by a multitude of ideas, multi-layered activities, diverse works, which all together reflect the richness of the world and its diversity, as well as conflicting ideas and forms of expression. Regions which until recently played a secondary role now hold important positions on the international scene. Economic growth, the establishment of democratic regimes, the development of the Internet and means of communication contributed to this. Artists are better connected and informed than ever about global events and they are distrustful of any form of closure. Networks of exchange and cooperation are increasing, favoring the dialogue of cultures. *Mondiality* implies a peaceful coexistence of

different cultures, people and value systems. Despite nationalistic tendencies and identity politics, it creates an image of a multifaceted and complex world, in which "I can change, in exchange with the Other, without losing myself, or my nature".

However, despite these optimistic views, it seems that culture and art also touch on the other nihilistic side of questionable reality. On the one hand, art is increasingly alienating its audience (the so-called death of the audience), while it abandons the postulates on which it previously rested (for example, the aesthetic dimension), heading towards the horizons of meaning in complex social contextualizations that it examines, occupying the space of sociology and critical philosophical thought, which no longer exists as such in philosophy itself. By blending in these dimensions, the sensory is replaced with intellectual, philosophical thought, and that is why it is justified to talk about the death of art, which is also a precursor to the death of culture. Of course, all these terms and phenomena should be taken with a grain of salt. In essence, it is a question of a change in the value paradigm, where the previous critical valuation models are no longer valid, while art and culture seek new forms of expression in a radically changed configuration of social and creative consciousness. "The global neurotic and superficial lifestyle, which imposes itself as the only possible and only acceptable option, turns the ancient and Enlightenment vision of a complete human into a one-dimensional being, and the human community into biomass, suitable for rapid mental processing", according to a number of leading international artists and intellectuals.

General indifference erases the previous metaphysical meaning of art and translates it into the triviality of existence, which no longer needs art and high culture. The divine attributes of the interpretation of great narratives have been removed from it, art no longer provides answers to important questions about human existence, which opened art up to causal spaces of play and entertainment created by the world's "entertainment and anti-culture industry". Fast food is accompanied by the emergence of fast art. But this by no means indicates that there is no room for serious art. Works executed with integrity, knowledge and love will always have a place for being both on display and parts of collections with great value in the art market.

We can also accept the idea that globalization can be a way of getting to know humans in their totality. Aristotle said that "we have to know the human being, and art is one means of knowing". He invites us "to get to know man with all his weaknesses, defects, so that we can learn to love him truly". It is this feeling about the necessity of the existence of art as a means of knowledge and love towards man that is at the root of culture, which is why culture is so important for the preservation of the human species. It is synonymous with existence, survival, human reality, our modernity, the timeless in our temporality, it is value awareness. A word of warning: without being aware of it, we can disappear. Forever and without a trace. Therefore, we must not view it exclusively as a commodity on the market, as the Anglo-Saxon concept does, or as a class-dependent privilege of the upper classes. Culture must contribute to the multidimensionality of the world, by contributing to the awareness of individuals and fostering wonder about the world and reality, but also one's own responsibility before the world's fate.

What's more, faced with the current circumstances of changes on the geopolitical scene, some pose the question – after America, who will be the leader in a political, commercial, cultural and every other sense? Will a new concept of global culture appear with these changes? Can small, national cultures survive, and in general, what will all these changes look like? Is the world heading towards the formation of a "world government" and a global village, or is it perhaps returning to the fragmentation of national sovereignty and particular national identities in culture? Or, will it turn into the world described in Orwell's famous book "1984"? - a world divided into Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia? Is dystopia becoming a reality? We are faced with these questions due to the war in Ukraine and the threat of a nuclear disaster, and the changes in the world caused by the war, which raise a number of serious questions that are fundamentally of a cultural nature – about identity, national culture, or political culture. We can recognize numerous mistakes made in regards to these issues, which led a political leader to an act of war. Unfortunately, instead of the soft power of culture, of the great and vast Russian culture, he preferred the hard power of the war machine. Today, Russia nurtures the discourse of Eurasianism and it is a real shame that it did not offer the world a different socio-economic alternative. Its response to globalism, democracy and political freedoms is isolationism and war, an unprecedented tragedy into which it has pushed the Ukrainian people, as well as its own people. In short, we have to think about culture very seriously so that things like this don't happen again and become the basis for the state of the world, as described by George Orwell in the previously mentioned book. We in the Balkans needn't go that far, drawing on our recent and even current experiences.

The recent cry of the German youth in the midst of the pandemic in 2021 – "we don't want money – we want a future" is paradigmatic. This slogan is a call to reconsider the meaning of the culture of the postmodern era and the proclaimed position on the end of history. An end that increasingly imposed the position that "the hitherto universal and guaranteed rights of the individual become privileges, directly conditioned by demonstrated obedience". There are clear manifestations of the unwelcome order of ultra-nationalism, the supremacy of the military, the suppression of labor organizations and labor rights in general, the protection of corporations and their power, and very noticeably, the devaluation of intellectuals and art. It seems that the foundations of democracy are under threat all over the world. The struggle to reach new, humanistic meaning within a culture which has yet to be created and which oscillates between modernism and postmodernism, i.e. between hope and exhilaration and irony and relativism, is becoming increasingly apparent on the horizon.

I believe it is important to mention that wealth "is not measured by one's bank account, but by one's knowledge of culture, the right to enjoy life and express opinions and feelings, the right not to be under the authority of others". "Art for humanity" is now defined as "what is created to inspire all humanity to freedom of expression and encourage it to strive for exceptional achievements, pride, dignity and respect for individual rights, opinions and different heritages". How we deal with the electronic galaxy is a matter of personal choice and the necessary balance between the benefits and dangers it simultaneously provides, because there is a justified fear that by expanding transnational networks, we are also expanding the capabilities of "Big Brother" peering over our shoulder. The world is changing rapidly and will not stop changing, thus becoming a highly threatened habitat.

LITERATURE: SCENE, PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, RECEPTION, REFORM

Saša Ilić

Literature in Serbia has been in captivity since 1986, when the widespread adoption of the Memorandum ideas led to the deep instrumentalization of the entire cultural infrastructure, particularly literature, its production, (re)valorization, distribution and interpretation. Independent media have written about this many times, and books were published in small and independent publishing houses, whose reach was limited and reduced to groups of like-minded people, gathered around formal and informal alternative points, mainly in Belgrade and Novi Sad. This process from the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s permanently changed literature in Serbia. One of the most serious transformations from that time was certainly the one that took place within the Association of Writers of Serbia (UKS), when this guild association became an affiliated wing of the then ruling Socialist Party of Serbia. This led to the delegation of the most influential members of the association for the political affairs of mobilization (Momo Kapor), propaganda (Matija Bećković), and even arming and organizing rebellions of the minority Serbian population in the neighboring republics (Brana Crnčević). The most influential was Dobrica Ćosić, whose political ideas gave a lasting outline for cultural policy in Serbia, one that remains strong to this today. What was the basis of such a policy at the time (the defence of endangered language and literature, i.e. of the national identity) has remained to this day, it has only been further improved by the programmatic texts of Ćosić himself, but also historians such as Milorad Ekmečić and a whole series of younger academicians, who dealt with the topic of national identity, "Serbian cultural space", and the history of the Republika Srpska, or tracking just how endangered national cultural heritage was outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia. Mapping the territory in such a way, which was mostly determined by the war, strongly influenced the development of literature and the education of its canon in institutions responsible for work on national remembrance, primarily through controlled reading, awards and interpretation of the national body of literature.

INSTITUTIONS

This primarily concerns philological studies, institutional programs and projects, keeping close track of the editorial policy of literary magazines and newspapers, which have during the last several decades lost their literary properties and became a platform for recreating nationalist (literary) politics. The most obvious example can be found in the appropriation of the once important literary magazines *Književna reč* and *Književne novine* during the 1980s. Misuse of magazines was also noticeable in many literary magazines with ties to some other institutions, libraries, newly formed guild associations or events. Over the decades, there has also been a hyperinflation of literary awards, but also a creation of critic and literary interest groups, which joined forces and continued to implement nationalist politics through a system of rewarding and promoting ideas and values associated with the works of authors such as Rajko Petrov Nogo, Miro Vuksanović, Milovan Danojlić, Dragan Hamović and many others. The best example of this is the structure of the "Meša Selimović" award, which is awarded by *Večernje Novosti*, and the jury consists of about fifty critics from all over the country, among whom there is always a *caucus group*, which, by adding up their votes, must prevail in the final vote count. In the winter of 2020, at the time of attacks on the jury of the NIN award, the editors of *Večernje Novosti* highlighted this method of awarding as an example of freedom and literary democracy. However, the collection of awardwinning books over the past decades would reveal something entirely different.

On the other hand, there is an academic fusion that has been in the making for years with the aim of covering with literature the territories of the "Serbian cultural space", which is how new academic branches were opened, both in Serbia and in the Republika Srpska, or cultural institutions that were relocated from Kosovo were attached to that "system". Such a concept of joint action – connecting, for example, the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade with the Institute of Literature in Andrićgrad (Višegrad), or the Institute of Literature and Art with the Institute of Serbian Culture in Leposavić – has led to the establishment of a monopoly over interpretation and (re)valorization of the literary past and present, which will permanently affect the future of literary production in Serbia. All this is connected with the network of libraries, as well as the republic's purchase of books, which takes place under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture that delegates members of the committee for selecting from the overall production. Certainly, the appointments are always covered "bureaucratically", i.e. university professors are chosen, but are always connected to the structure that advocates and promotes the ruling nationalist cultural model. This could be proven if the results of all the republic's purchases from the previous few decades were investigated. This means that only those books that have passed several levels of triage can reach readers. Many important books – unless they were purchased by the libraries themselves, i.e. responsible individuals among the librarians in charge of procurement – never made it into the library collections, which built a deep and lasting defence of this cultural model against any critical or corrective voices. Furthermore, quality literature, which is published mostly in small and independent publishing houses, has thus remained out of focus, and its reception was reduced to circles revolving around a few bookstores in Belgrade, or a few independent literary portals with a low reach.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE

Coordination of the work of all cultural institutions in Serbia begins and ends with the Ministry of Culture, which has yet to be reformed since the fall of Slobodan Milošević's regime. If all other disciplines are excluded, one could say that literature is being treated in absolute accordance with the cultural model described above. The Ministry supports literature through several lines of funding, namely: contemporary creativity, awards and events, translation into foreign languages. Finally, there are the republic's purchases, which is actually a form of support for publishers and libraries. All segments of literary infrastructure management in Serbia are based on the premises of regressive cultural policy, published in the official National Cultural Heritage Strategy 2017–2027, available to all, and recently adopted by the Parliament of Serbia. The Ministry of Culture discriminated against one official alphabet – the Latin alphabet – having prescribed a privileged status for publishers and media that publish in Cyrillic, and gave a privileged position to those narratives that rely on tradition, medieval literature, the church and anachronistic genres. Contemporary literature does not exist as a category in the Ministry of Culture, but rather it is treated indirectly through awards, events or translations, which always comes down to sporadic funding, mostly insufficient or very controlled. The work of this institution has been devalued even further during the last eight years, since under the leadership of Minister Vladan Vukosavljević, retrograde program texts were articulated and adopted, and will serve as guidelines for the future development of culture in Serbia. Unfortunately, this happened without the public intervention of a large part of the cultural and literary scene, which silently accepted such long-term planning, based on guidelines from the late eighties and early nineties of the last century. Without the active and united action of actors from literary life and the literary scene, the work program of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia cannot be reformed.

LITERARY CANON

The operational cultural model that regulates the work of commissions, juries, faculty programs and projects, purchases, everything related to literature in the Republic of Serbia refers primarily to the construction and control of the creation of a literary canon, understood as a privileged zone of *Serbian national identity*. Therefore, multi-level control systems were built for texts that are allowed into the zone of public reading, study, and permanent storage in libraries, or introduction into Serbian literature programs at universities. This system strives to control the translation of works of contemporary Serbian literature into foreign languages through commission decision-making on support for translators and foreign publishers. The literary canon built and guarded in this way is secured by individual professors of Serbian literature, who, through their public activities, act as guardians

of the *true* literary tradition. That is why the system of literary awards is extremely important, because through it, the canon is renewed, and it indirectly affects the control of literary narratives that are produced and published. This is additionally connected with the neoliberal concept of the market, which is actually completely controlled by the big publishing houses, which are also the owners of the biggest bookstore chains. This year alone, there were several examples of "unsuitable" books being thrown out of bookstores, or their "hiding" inside bookstores. The canon regulates the entire scene, be it production, criticism or sales. Through the regime's media, the overall performance of this communicating-vessels principle is marketed as the qualitative peak of literary production in Serbia and is offered to readers through the bookstore and library network. On the other hand, the canon does not recognize books of minority communities, books that thematize the war past, feminist production, left-wing literature, the Latin alphabet, and in terms of genre gender pluralism and queer literature. In addition, the defence of the nationalist canon affects the revision of the past and the huge production of lexicographic material, where the "correction" of the literary past and its adaptation to the contemporary demands of ethnocentric culture takes place. A striking example is the work on the revision of the biography of Ivo Andrić, the only Yugoslav Nobel laureate, who underwent an unimaginable revision in the editorial office of Serbian philologists, and even got a fortification in Višegrad, where the Institute of Literature was founded, a local book fair launched, and a new award named after him established (in addition to the official award); all this was done to defend the national literary canon, composed according to the model prescribed by Dobrica Ćosić and Milorad Ekmečić. This was done with the approval of the Ivo Andrić Foundation in Belgrade, which, by the author's will, is responsible for taking care of his legacy, books and name. Something like this was made possible by members of the Board of Directors, who come from the ranks of academicians, professors, writers and critics, active members or followers of the literary *mainstream*, which delegates decision-making power (Miro Vuksanović, Sreto Tanasić, Goran Petrović, and others). This is just one example of how important literary institutions in Serbia "think".

REFORM

How to change the system of literary infrastructure in Serbia? First of all, it is necessary to carry out the process of deep de-Milosevićisation of culture, including the segment that concerns literature. This would be possible if some future government of the Republic of Serbia took a clear critical stance towards the war past (first of all, towards the genocide in Srebrenica) and opted for a truly reformist path. Through the Ministry of Culture, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, a fundamental reform should be implemented which would delegitimize nationalist, territorial, language concepts and introduce a plural, intercultural, non-canonical strategy of reading, interpretation and revaluation of literature. Such an approach is known by some literary systems in Europe, especially those that managed to overcome their authoritarian and militaristic past, establish a critical distance from it and open up to a wide field of literary narratives which, in the case of literature written in Serbia, have long existed in the underground, on the margins of the official cultural model. Without such systematic work, all changes are reduced to individual and short-term incidents, which are necessarily followed by the public lynching of individuals and groups who tried to carry out some kind of reformist intervention.

SERBIAN THEATRE AND ITS VIOLENCE

Zlatko Paković

Two recent events without precedent in the history of Serbian theater reveal, seemingly paradoxically, the hidden structure on which it has been perpetually based during the past 40 years.

One concerns the court charges for rape and other forms of sexual abuse which the former students – today well-known young actresses – of the elite Belgrade private acting school for youth brought against the school's owner and principal teacher of acting. The second event is the induction of Dejan Mijač, the most esteemed stage director in Serbia and for the past two decades the leading professor of theater directing at the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts, into membership of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts³⁹.

When Belgrade actresses spoke out about rape and other forms of sexual harassment at the well-known youth drama studio "Matter of the Heart", perpetrated against them, as minors, by the influential (quack) acting teacher Miroslav Mika Aleksić, this triggered, like an exploding latent volcano, the souls of many Serbian actresses of all generations, and the names of esteemed teachers, directors and theater managers, both living and dead, began to bubble up like hot magma through public opinion as if they referred to the

³⁹ Dejan Mijač was elected a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) in November 2021. He died in April 2022.

most vile peacetime criminals. (It is worth noting here that Miroslav Mika Aleksić has been a long-term admirer and supporter of the character and deeds of Željko Ražnatović Arkan – the notorious crime figure, leader of Serbian paramilitary units during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and, at the same time, a ranking associate of the Serbian State Security Service.) Namely, this whole affair forcefully demonstrated that rape and other forms of sexual abuse in Serbian theater institutions were by no means merely incidental.

The unanimous eruption of speech about the abuse suffered during schooling at different levels of training – from youth drama groups to university studies – does this not also say something about the very treatment of acting and training for acting as a form of abuse of body and soul?

Now on record as a frequent phenomenon, the sexual harassment of actresses testifies to something crucial about the very structure of relations in educational drama institutions and theater houses. Structural violence reveals itself here in the form of sexual harassment and misogyny, but its source is in the ideology of training, interpersonal relations and the way of working in drama schools and theaters. Namely, the acting profession in Serbia is by and large understood as a form of 'training' (as in 'animal training') and as a call to submission.

It is popular opinion that an actor on stage is someone who does not say what he really thinks, not even on his own behalf; that, ultimately, he only does what the director tells him to do, executing only "what is written" and that the scope of his responsibility ends with this kind of obedience. From our perspective, these are completely erroneous views about a magnificent artistic vocation characterized by an heightened sense of responsibility for the spoken public word. It is a brutal form of castrating public action and a reduction of the acting profession to a craft without responsibility. An actor is generally not the author of the dramatic piece from which he plays the role, but he is always the author of the living words he utters on stage. Namely, even when an actor says something contrary to morality, when he/she exposes some irresponsible, unscrupulous, villainous action (when presenting it as an actor), he/she presents it with the clear intention to cause moral outrage and critical condemnation in the audience, rather than to make such an action merely plausible. Simultaneously, the actor evokes admiration (from the audience) for the ability to embody a criminal, unscrupulous character with veracity.

There are, unfortunately, no schools or universities that at the very outset first explain to its drama students that actors and actresses on stage – an eminently public domain by definition – are by vocation public figures *par excellence*; that theater in ancient Greece was created to be to this very day the (last) public refuge of politically proscribed words, because dramatic art is the art of the polis and thus the only openly proclaimed political art.

If this was how their education began, based on the principle that at every moment on stage they are public intellectuals, actors and actresses could not fail to know that their task is to publicly expose the hidden mechanism of violence on which a given regime rests, rather than to participate in that very mechanism as its gears.

I have seen numerous times in contemporary theater performances, as well as in television series, how Serbian actors and actresses mindlessly play out, as if on an assembly line, one and the same role, participating in a masochistic ceremony of deifying criminals. In these plays and series, the skills of scriptwriting, directing and acting are exhausted in the excessively charismatic and witty presentations of soulless characters. Scenes of rape and other abuse of women are shown quite pornographically – to evoke the perverse enjoyment of the male viewers, not their disgust. To act in these plays and series is to participate in lying about the very nature of violence.

This too is rape, and mass rape at that – the rape of entire audiences. It may not be as brutal and as unequivocally recognizable as when an acting teacher rapes his female students, but it is no less consequential.

The voices of our raped actresses should be a siren's call to expose the entire theatrical (television and film) system of playing mockery with the souls of audiences. That whole system is being manipulated by numerous professors of theater skills, directors, theater managers, festival programmers, media culture editors and theater critics, who are capable of keeping silent about the rarest of plays that speak of the ultimate, spiritual source of the most abhorrent violence that this society produces. These are the 'nice' and 'civil' dead critics, both male and female.

An example of violence suffered by the public from the stage, with the aim of gagging it, depriving it of its voice, and in a manner that it will even accept this with euphoria, is the pedagogical and theatre directing activity of Dejan Mijač, the first ever theatre director to be coopted by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU) into its membership. His induction into the Academy is, in a certain sense, a return to the scene of the crime.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts took the lead in triggering nationalist sentiments and militant state-building demands through its cultural policy. With the ill-famed Memorandum, it incited war-mongering public opinion and militarized political discourse. Dejan Mijač lent support to this kind of nationalist program with his plays of the time. This was intellectual and ideological violence against the public. It produced and justified the violence of war.

The task of dramatic art – its performative nature being simultaneously aesthetic and social – is to turn an audience into a (critically thinking) public, in other words, theater must talk critically about the key problems of society rather than being ideologically opportune. In 1982, with the play "Golubnjača", Mijač laid the foundation for a cowardly and sycophantic theatre, with the objective of eliminating the critical public.

The play "Golubnjača" speaks of the suffering of the Serbian population during the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a World War II Quisling creation terrorized by the Nazi-like regime of the Ustasha. The mass suffering of Serbian people, especially in the Dalmatian Zagora region (*central Dalmatian hinterland, roughly above Split – transl.*), which the play, inspired by the text of writer Jovan Radulović, portrays, is well documented and known. Mijač's play, therefore, tells the story of this suffering – but to whom is this story addressed and what does it trigger in the audience?

In order to understand this question, one must first understand the role of theater as a critical art, as a critical social and political act. Namely, theater has the task of presenting to an audience in question content for which that audience bears some responsibility. More precisely, the issues or problems for which the cultural, political and economic elite of that country bears responsibility.

What kind of responsibility does an audience in Serbia of the 1980s bear for crimes committed against Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia by the Ustasha forty years earlier?

There is no responsibility here. Rather, the members of the audience are encouraged to commiserate with the victims, with whom they identify solely along ethnic lines, and are spurred to outrage and anger towards the perpetrators, whom they perceive as Croats in general. Therefore, a feeling of hatred for the perpetrators of these heinous crimes is generated as if at issue were villains who were never held accountable for their crimes, despite the fact that the Ustasha – in the historical, political and legal

sense – experienced defeat, punishment and clear public condemnation. Instead of the audience reviewing content for which they have heightened responsibility, they are here induced to feel revenge. And this then becomes the cultural prologue for the razing of Vukovar, the shelling of Dubrovnik, the siege of Sarajevo, the massacre in Zvornik and the genocide in Srebrenica.

The play "Valjevo Hospital", staged by Mijač in 1989 in the Yugoslav Drama Theater (JDP), based on the novel "Time of Death" by Dobrica Ćosić, the high priest of modern Serbian nationalism, speaks of the heroism of Serbian soldiers in World War I, and generates in the audience a feeling of patriotic pride that needs to be mobilized anew for the liberation of the country. But the Socialist Republic of Serbia of the time was a free republic, not an occupied kingdom from 1914.

As a tenured professor at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (FDU), Mijač did something that deserves every possible public condemnation. And yet, not the slightest bit of information about this incident has so far been leaked to the public. In the summer of 1992, he failed the entire class of students of theater directing, who, thus, had to re-enroll in the same, second year of study, but this time in a different professor's class. After two years of working with these three students, having decisively influenced their admission to the FDU in the first place, choosing them from among fifty candidates, Professor Mijač demonstrated not that his students did not deserve to graduate to a higher class, but that he himself had failed, during two years of training, in preparing them for that transition. This is pedagogical irresponsibility and unscrupulousness of the highest order. In fact, it is a form of rape, but without its literal sexual form.

The method of Mijač's working with actors as a professor and director is perhaps best testified to by the very individual he himself hand-picked to speak laudably of him in public. I am quoting Mijač's colleague from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, then professor of dramaturgy, Nenad Prokić. He uttered these words in the Radio Television Serbia (RTS) program called "Self-Portrait" (October 2016), as a select guest of the very one to whom the program was dedicated:

"... and you don't allow actors to even open their mouths, that's all that's needed for a great theater performance. He (Mijač) is famous for interrupting an actor when he said: 'I think...' and Mijač said: 'It is your job to think only when I say left or right – whether that is left in relation to me, or in relation to you'!"

Professor Prokić, recently retired under regular procedure, and just after the "Mika Aleksić" case became public, himself came into the limelight as five of his female students accused him of sexual harassment. Their testimony, for fear of reprisals, remained anonymous, and could thus not end up in court. Violence in Serbian theater thus completes a full circle – it is violence against both participants on stage and the audience, during schooling and during professional work.

The choice of topics for plays and theatre performances remains predominantly such that it diverts attention away from key social problems and issues for which the government of Serbia, as well as its citizens, bear high responsibility. Theater reviews and critics by and large remain silent about these key problems. The most obvious examples of this silence concern the topic of genocide in Srebrenica⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ I will not speak here of the death threats, the public calls for lynching, the resounding silence of Serbian theater critics and other forms of institutional and extra-institutional violence ritually perpetrated against my play "Srebrenica. When We the Murdered Rise" (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2020). I spoke of this in numerous interviews, while Branislav Jakovljević, Viktor Ivančić, Snježana Banović, Mile Stojić, Damir Pilić, Dragan Markovina and Saša Ilić wrote about the play. It is all accessible on the Internet.

At the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF) in 2021, a play by the famous German theater company Rimini Protokoll, "Conference of Absentees", was performed entirely in Serbian. The play speaks of the 'genocide in Rwanda', but, at the same time, the 'massacre in Srebrenica'. In other words, the BITEF management and its artistic director and programmer Ivan Medenica, tenured professor at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts and someone who, at least rhetorically, publicly champions tolerance and the values of liberalism, dares not, at the most prestigious international theater festival in Serbia, call the genocide in Srebrenica by its true name. Not to call things by their true name is a form of lying. Theater in Serbia is in the service of such deception.

Another example. In February 2022, the play "Amsterdam", written by Maya Arad Yasur, the Israeli playwright, and directed by Iva Milošević, premiered at the Belgrade Atelier 212 theatre. This is a play focusing on the Holocaust against the Jews, but from the perspective of the Netherlands during World War II and the responsibility of its citizens.

Whenever the word genocide is uttered in the play – at the insistence of both author and main protagonist – one must turn silent. And the characters and their actors do so on stage: when someone says the word genocide, everyone falls silent; but always briefly – too briefly.

This kind of overly brief silence after the spoken word that signifies the most tragic and immoral experience of European culture – Nazism and its genocide against Jews and Roma – in effect becomes a kind of stage social game, which, with ironic deflection, is wittily repeated over and over, inducing laughter in the audience. Thus, from the word itself (genocide) and its meaning is blown away, as if it was just layers of old dust, the entire force of responsibility: the responsibility of the work of art and of the artist. They told the story well, but at the moment when they should have dared to own up and manifest the essence of the play itself, the actors and director lacked the courage to do so. And this in a state that does not acknowledge the genocide committed by one of its recent regimes; and in a society in which, with their public presentations, that genocide was inspired by its most eminent academicians and high priests: the genocide in Srebrenica.

The content performed on theater stages in Serbia is mostly trivial and reduced to intrigues that do not tackle key social issues; and even when a topic that is of key social relevance does get chosen, the way it is staged deprives it of its critical edge and reduces it to intrigue. There are numerous examples of this trivialization of a problem inherent in a play, of the castration of its responsibility. One of the foremost comes from the Yugoslav Drama Theater (JDP), in which, under the direction of Aleksandar Popovski, Shakespeare's "Hamlet" was staged. In it, Hamlet is devoid of any dilemmas, and therefore the key political decision of the play – to carry out the just murder of the one who usurped the state by murder – is perceived as the whim of a not entirely balanced young man.

How the responsibility of theatrical art and the acting profession is cunningly and lucratively perverted is most tragically demonstrated by the Belgrade Drama Theater (BDP) and its manager, theatre director Jug Radivojević, who secured his position based on political party connections and open public support for Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić. It has since become an agile theatre house, with the greatest number of premieres, attracting star actors and directors of Serbian, but also Croatian and Slovenian theater. A profusion of bellowing and howling, tons of money, with lurid brilliance of the spectacle and the shrill of pomp – all much ado about nothing, yet fully premeditated! Here's an example, directed by Ivica Buljan, head of drama at the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb. In question is a play based on the novel of the same name by Vladimir Tabašević, "Silently Flows the Mississippi". This is a shoreless, off-key and "dispersed" dramatic construct, begotten on the "ruins of a novel." It is fueled by collage art from the era of pop-art and this provides for stylistic unity to the overall dramatic image, within which the characters move and speak. But every attempt here to establish a clear meaning, a transparent affiliation between (dramatic) expression and political context (the context is always inevitably political), is futile.

What kind of strategy is this? What is the meaning of, for example: "Swimming pool cleaners of the world, unite!" Is it a cry of rebellion by a witty generation, or the cynicism of a young generational elite, frolicking around the pool, content that it doesn't have to work in order to have, because (already) having it is not forced to work and is thus mocking the precariat of its generation? What kind of strategy is it in which the director of a play cannot be discerned as a defined political being?

The meaning of this kind of theatre must be sought beyond the sign and the signified, in the signifier. In the performances of the Belgrade Drama Theater, regardless of who is the director, the Signifier (officialdom – the establishment) manipulates the strings on the stage. Theater thus becomes its own antinomian hypostasis: in it, consequently, the establishment finds itself in modified form, in disguise (not in otherness!), in order to consolidate its power and influence in a sphere where it is otherwise incoherent!

What is the Belgrade Drama Theater today? It is a theatrical, conceptual "Belgrade Waterfront" (*the swanky, nouveau riche district of Belgrade – transl.*): the glossiest showcase of the Serbian Progressive Party and the 'art' of Aleksandar Vučić. A way to feign

the "European face of Belgrade" by way of theater – harnessing to its idle work established actors and theatre directors, from Rade Šerbedžija, Milena Zupančič, Mirjana Karanović, Branka Katić, Sebastijan Horvat, Ozren Grabarić, Ivica Buljan, Haris Pašović to Frank Castorf, without them ever even questioning why they have acquiesced to put their careers on the line in order to wash the bloody laundry of this regime. This is the strategy of post-truth and it is absolutely immoral.

Today's post-truth strategy in Serbian theater is identical to the strategy of the Chetnik movement during World War II. Ostensibly an anti-occupation movement, the Chetniks professed to be waiting for international circumstances to change in order to start the struggle against the occupation forces, but until such time, and in reality, they cooperated with them while really waging war against the true opponents of the occupiers and the collaborationist regime – the anti-fascists.

SERBIAN FILM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Zlatko Paković

The disparaging neglect of fading memories of the National Liberation War era, the anti-fascist struggle, the socialist revolution and of Yugoslavia itself; the counterfeit elevation of the Chetnik collaborationist movement to the rank of a patriotic, anti-fascist resistance force; the ignoring of the subject matter of war crimes from the time of the Milošević regime and, simultaneously, the glorification of war criminals from the same period; and all this concurrent with a plethora of movies and television series in which the main characters are vicious criminals, whose relentless pursuit of private gain and the opulent lifestyle has metamorphosed into a social ideal cancelling out even the slightest thought of aspiration to what was once called the common good – all of these are the ideas that guide and inform screenwriters and film directors in present day Serbia, who in turn guide and inform their audiences towards the same ideals.

Nevertheless, a short, but all-too-brief burst of filmmaking with a critical attitude and a progressive political stance did exist in Serbia. This ephemeral filmmaking turnaround without a sequel occurred in the period from 2009 to 2011. It all began with "The Life and Death of a Porn Gang", by screenwriter and director Mladen Đorđević. This is a *road movie*, whose plot develops during a trip through the towns and villages of Serbia. In reality, it is about a journey into the very core of vicious hatred and dire poverty, which the heroes of the film initially ran up against in the capital city of post-1990s-war Serbia.

A group of young men and women from the margins of society form a traveling pornographic theater. It has all the trappings of underground culture. Lascivious and promiscuous acts in it belong to the world of performance, and are not an invitation to prostitution. This artistic form of carnal play is not profitable. The audience, however, is not interested in an artful stage scene of fornication, but comes to the performance with lustful consumer intentions. Not being able to distinguish the world of pornography from the world of prostitution, the audience rapes the cast.

Hungry, members of the "porn troupe" accept an offer to shoot illegal *snuff movies*, to kill on camera. The candidates for sacrifice are voluntary – either seriously ill or elderly people, who in this way expect to provide some little money for their impoverished families. An infernal world of destitution and hopelessness in Serbia opens up before us.

What else can a person do when in a society there is no regular way to take care of one's family? This gruesome question burns incessantly as we watch obviously honorable people prepared to be brutally murdered in front of cameras for a pittance. Archaic barbaric rituals live on in modern times dictated by Serbian politics. They were initially practiced in the wars of the 1990s on other ethnic material, but now they have come home to roost, to maim, rape and kill members of their own ethnic group.

What began with "Porno Gang", continued in the same year, with tectonic effect, in "Serbian Film", written by Aleksandar

Radivojević and directed by Srđan Spasojević. This is an unparalleled work of art that has triggered the animosity not only of Serbian nationalists and their extreme right-wing acolytes, but equally so of the flaccid civic left with its cultured taste and refined manners.

It is not strange, therefore, that the above-mentioned pair of film artists, after such a mature and strong debut, remain without their second film for over a decade, as is the case with Mladen Đorđević, Nikola Ležaić and Maja Miloš, all of whose films make up an extraordinary cartel of exceptional works, excluded like stepchildren from the mainstream of Serbian filmmaking. Thus, after a brief counter-cultural assault, there followed counter-revolutionary revenge by the Serbian cultural elite, which dispenses money for production and chooses ideas to invest in. "Serbian Film" is teeming (gushing!) with images of violence, which are usually said to be "explicitly shown". It is a panopticon of extreme cases of multiple paraphilia - an exemplary encyclopedia of sadism, and at that a modernized version of the works of its cinematic progenitor, Pier Paolo Pasolini. Taking our cue from "Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom", we would have to rename "Serbian Film" into "Serbia, or the Days of Sodom". And just as Pasolini dissected the sociopathic structure of Italian fascism, "Serbian Film" dissects the sociopathic structure of Serbian clerical-nationalism, which wreaked both wartime and peacetime destruction - both Srebrenica and unbridled privatization, the legalization of genocide and the looting of the state.

Strictly according to genre, "Serbian Film" would be defined as *body-horror*, but like no other film before or after it, "Serbian Film" showcases the sociopathic structure of political life in Serbia spanning some three decades and as something that has already become accepted as the norm. In contrast to popular television series and other films before and after it, which are in the very service of the mundane normalization of sociopathic forms of Serbian political and economic life, "Serbian Film" reveals the alleged normality of abnormality as notorious abnormality, and as the most extreme form of violence practiced against citizens – a violence they of necessity regularly become accustomed to.

"Omne animal post coitum triste" is a widely known and broadly instructive Latin proverb meaning "every living creature is sad after intercourse", to which the facetious appendage is often affixed, sarcastically changing its genre and meaning: "nisi mulier gallusque" - "except for woman and the rooster". Applied to screenwriter and director Maja Miloš's debut film "Clip", which was released in 2011, two years after "The Life and Death of a Porn Gang" and "Serbian Film", and which is also replete with explicit and detailed scenes of sexual intercourse, masturbation, fellatio, anal and all kinds of other sexual acts on non-genital bodily parts performed by high school youth, this ancient Roman saying should read as follows: 'every viewer is sad after the screening of "Clip" – to which the sequel can be added - 'and especially women', as this is a film made from a female perspective in the mundane environment dominated by an anti-feminist and misogynistic view of things, words and people.

The life of high school kids, somewhere in the suburbs of Belgrade, as depicted in this feature film – and there are indeed actual real-life correlations to this depiction – imposes on us an uneasy mood of distress and angst. The way these young people – no longer children, but not as yet adults – spend their time, what they think and what they dream about, is the prototype of a constricted, hollow life which, being without depth of aspiration or yearning, must profusely be exploited by way of repetitious (auto)destructive action. Every evening, listening to turbo folk music, with special piety for the songs of Svetlana Ceca Ražnatović (widow of notorious crime figure and paramilitary warlord Željko Ražnatović Arkan – transl.), along with gallons of alcohol and ounces of powdered opiates, these girls and boys, aged fifteen to eighteen, seek to get "stoned out of their minds".

In the film, there are only two or three wide shots, most are close-ups or extreme close-up frames that show us, mainly, bodily parts that can be the object of sexual exploitation. A scarce number of wide shots and too many close-ups and details, tell us, by the innate psychology of film language, that we are dealing with a world devoid of the big picture, of the view of the whole, but rather with one that is exhausted in particulars.

Filmed by the mobile phone camera of the main character – the minor Jasna – the subjective shots that take up a good part of the film represent her desired projections, which, however, cannot reach beyond the simple reproduction of that very same undesirable reality she is trying to escape. Jasna shoots almost everything, but mostly what she considers to be the high points of her life – her masturbations and blow-jobs.

Maja Miloš succeeded in veristically portraying a world devoid of allure and charm, a world of mere reproduction and muddled feelings, of violence and the desire for domination – the desolate world of young beings in their prime living in a lifeless society. However, one year before "Clip", another debut film, "Tilva Roš", made by screenwriter, director and editor Nikola Ležaić, brought unprecedented refreshment and, quite originally, a new sensibility, not only to Serbian and Yugoslav but, perhaps, also to European filmmaking.

The sources for this feature film were found in documentary film material, which are in themselves ludic and socially rebellious, while its characters are actors in their own life roles. Therefore, in relation to "Clip", the perspective is completely inverted. Here, the partial self-destructiveness of the characters are forms of youthful temptation of freedom in a devastated society. In the film, young people are under the pressure of existential restrictions, and are not the victims of direct violence, which was always the case in previous Serbian films dealing with social issues. Ležaić's film is not disturbing or nauseous, but cheerful, because it portrays adolescents who think for themselves and are free of the compulsions of consumerist mentality.

The difference between "Clip" and "Tilva Roš" is the difference between a juvenile generation that inherits the legacy of war crimes in peacetime and adolescents who radically break with that legacy.

The film is based on an autobiographical amateur film made by two teenagers from Bor (*a polluted mining town in impoverished eastern Serbia – transl.*), members of the skateboard team "Colossus" – a one-hour digital record that, in a series of jackass clips, shows them whipping each other on the back with a belt or a stick; rolling naked in poison ivy shrubbery; jumping from a dangerous height onto concrete; holding on to the roof of a speeding car; piercing their cheeks or noses with needles; hitting a bucket while it's on the head of the other, etc. – and then including these clips in the film as archival material, Ležaić manages to reconstruct the chronicle of a youth that, if it doesn't know how to resist Serbia's poisonous nationalist legacy, at least it knows how not to acquiesce to it.

Injuring and self-harming, tattooing, piercing and other forms of personally – but not socially – risky behavior of the main characters are, granted, manifestations of aggression; however, they are not hooligans, but rather thoughtful, emotional and above all interesting young individuals who, in an environment in which all ideas about what a dignified person should be have collapsed, attempt, without having role models, to build their own identities precisely as dignified contenders to personhood. What they do to (on) their bodies is a symptom of their resistance to the environment, their struggle with the social vacuum, the social void that tends to destroy everything around it.

Their self-portraits are not of their faces, but thumbnails of wounds and tattoos they have registered with cameras on their cell phones; therefore, they are not what they inherited, but what they did to themselves, and not without some courage and selfsacrifice at that. They alter and reconstruct their own bodies just as the society they find themselves in should be reconstructed. For the time being, they are not attempting to change it, but they despise it bitterly. And that is as it should be, because they are only sixteen, seventeen years of age.

After these four films, a radical breakaway occured from critical poetics in Serbian filmmaking. This break was in line with the political shift and change at the helm of the Serbian government in 2012. A coalition of the Serbian Progressive Party (*SNS* – *a party established as an allegedly "pro-European" offshoot of the otherwise rabid, hardline nationalist Serbian Radical Party, SRS*) and the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) enters the political stage and takes power. This coalition is in reality a 'joint criminal enterprise' made up of old, proven nationalist cadres from the time of Milošević's regime, his direct associates and cronies and their political youth branch.

The previous Serbian government from 2008 to 2012 – a period which also overlaps with the high point of Serbian filmmaking in the first 20 years of this century (because of the four exceptionally critical films mentioned above made during this brief period of time) – was a government of cohabitation between the Democratic Party (DS) and the Socialist of Party of Serbia (SPS). In essence, this was a government, to say the least, very restrained and over-cautious in resolving the main political issues facing the country, and this in turn led to indecisiveness, hesitation, cowardice and political immaturity, ultimately paving the way for the political regression that followed after 2012. This is perhaps best illustrated by two films that were also made during this period. These two films point out the lack of moral capacity by the former Democratic Party (of which only faint traces remained) to, on the one hand, defend the ideals of anti-fascism and the WW II Partizan liberation movement, and on the other, to face-up to and acknowledge the genocide in Srebrenica as a crime committed by the Milošević regime and thus remove the burden of diffused responsibility from the citizens of Serbia, pointing the finger resolutely at the real, not only perpetrators and executioners of the Srebrenica genocide and other mass crimes, but also at the instigators and inspirers who are at the core of the cultural elite that still determines cultural policy in Serbia, just as it did during the 1980s and 1990s.

Practically a forgotten film, "Ordinary People", directed by Vladimir Perišić, was produced in 2009. Almost without dialogue, in simple, mostly static, longer shots, in an even editing rhythm, exclusively made up of cuts, and at a slow pace – in other words, in an emphatically non-narrative and non-dramatic way, the film "Ordinary People" depicts one tragic day in the Yugoslav wars.

After breakfast in the barracks, a group of seven soldiers and their commander are given the order to quickly take up arms and get ready to move out. After an hour, hour and a half bus ride, they arrive at a place they haven't been before. The place is either some abandoned barracks, or the warehouse of a former company. The soldiers unload their ammunition and, not knowing why they were brought there, just walk around, cooling off at the fountain (it's summer heat), while the main character falls asleep on the grass under a tree. A truck arrives and – we see in full frame – people in civilian clothes getting out of its trailer. The commander gathers the seven-soldier group and, after quickly demonstrating which spot on a person they should aim for, leads them to a field where civilians are already waiting. The soldiers execute them. They shoot, the civilians fall, the soldiers turn and leave. We know that, just a few minutes ago, the soldiers didn't even know why they were there at all, and now they were executing some people who they were told were their enemies.

The same task – execution – is repeated several times during the day. At one point, several boys no more than 14 or 15 years old were also shot. In the meantime, the commander got hold of seven bottles of brandy and distributed them to his soldiers. A truck arrives. Civilians line up. The soldiers take them to the execution site, shoot them and then return to the courtyard, where they sit and drink in silence. In a close-up shot we see their sweaty, sullen, strained faces. The truck comes again...

No doubt, the crime portrayed here in large part resembles the crime committed by Serbian forces against Bosniaks (*Bosnian Muslims – transl.*) in Srebrenica. But the filmmaker conceals the identity of the army to which the group of soldiers belong. The uniforms have no insignia, the toponyms are made up, and one or two of the personal names mentioned in the film – as nicknames – can be Serbian, Croatian or Bosniak. In other words, strict care was taken to generalize the presentation of the crime, to uproot it from its specific context. With just one bold screenwriting and directing move – one single move – "Ordinary People" could have been *the* Serbian film about genocide in Srebrenica, and thus could have marked a pivotal turnaround in its cultural policy.

Following this film comes the heaviest revisionist blow ever delivered to Serbian filmmaking and the broader Serbian culture in contemporary, anti-modernist Serbia. The film by Miloš Radivojević, "How the Germans Kidnapped Me", premiered on October 19, 2011, exactly on the 70th anniversary of the day when the German Nazi occupation forces began killing civilians in the Kragujevac villages of Maršić, Ilićevo and Grošnica, to continue the next day in Kragujevac itself. The serial atrocity culminates on October 21, 1941 in nearby Šumarice, with even greater numbers of mass shootings of Serbian adults and children. According to the latest research, 2,831 people in all were killed in the span of a few days, including some 40 children between the ages of 11 and 15, as well as 261 boys, some of them high school students (students of the First and Second Gymnasium or various other trade schools), others workers and farmers, aged 15 to 18 years.

In the home of a high school teacher on the outskirts of a Serbian town that very well could be Kragujevac, following a decision of the German occupation command, ground forces officer Werner Kraus, the hero of Radivojević's film, occupies two rooms. In that home, along with the grandmother, mother, older sister and older brother (the grandfather is in German captivity), lives Aleksandar, an out of wedlock child. In Aleksandar's memory, when we meet him as the fifty-year-old narrator in the film, the German occupation officer Kraus continues to be the most beloved character as it was he that gave Aleksandar more love than anyone else during his childhood.

Therefore, equally in 1991 as in 1995, Aleksandar adores the German officer. He does not distinguish his former personal childhood experience, which is sincere and nice, from the knowledge of the objective role that man played as a Nazi officer in an occupied country, which is both true and repulsive. The director himself ignores this difference – and that ignoring infantilizes the audience.

There is, of course, a line of distinction between the innocence of a child's impression and the responsibility of an adult regarding the context of that infantile impression. This borderline is called maturity or personhood. The bliss of ignorance is possible only in children, and they deserve it. In adults, such ignorance becomes ideology. While it is true that even an occupation officer can be deserving of the most sincere adoration in the consciousness of a boy, it is extremely irresponsible to forget, beyond that infantile experience itself, that the officer in question was in the service of the most monstrous regime of the 20th century, a regime that, in Serbia too, was both apprentice and master of death while seemingly just a "handyman from Germany". A boy cannot know that. An adult must not *not know* it. A filmmaker has to keep it in mind.

Nothing would be detracted from the bright memory of a three-, four – or five-year-old boy of the sincere joy of companionship with a man who gave him love, if it turned out that this man, who to the boy was as good as the best of fathers, outside of the time he spends with the boy and beyond the space in which he stays with him, is guilty of terrible crimes that he and his associates perpetrated against the boy's fellow citizens and compatriots. Only then all the banality of evil, which is talked about so much when discussing Nazi crimes and its commanders or perpetrators, would finally be revealed. Privately a wonderful man, he is simply in the function of evil outside his private sphere.

Finally, we cannot overlook the fact that Werner Kraus spends the least amount of his daily time with Alexander's family. Where is he all day and what is he actually doing in the occupied city, that is most likely Kragujevac? The film doesn't say anything about that. It glosses over it.

Depriving the film's viewers of insight into the work and time spent as an officer of the occupying Nazi army outside the home and family where he lives, and where he is not at his job – which is his wartime assignment and the reason why he is in Serbia and in uniform in the first place – Radivojević totally reduces his character to a particular role strictly in the domain of privacy. Completely uprooting him from the context of Nazism and occupation, freeing him from responsibility for everything that the occupation forces do against Serbian resistance fighters and civilians, the filmmaker creates the impression that the Nazi officer is good not only to the boy and his mother, with whom he fell in love and with whom, after all, he shares a bed, and is polite, ever so polite towards the other members of the household too, but that he is like that also outside this small family circle, namely, that his role in occupied Serbia is polite and good, that occupation is a desirable state, and that the German occupation forces and German Nazism as a whole are a civilizing movement in the hilly, unruly Balkans.

The filmmaker reinforces this nefarious position at the end of the film by depicting the liberation forces, the anti-fascist Partizans, as the worst possible murderers of innocent civilians, who go from shop to shop at the market place and systematically slaughter merchants and craftsmen. Just before that, we see the German Nazi officer reading Goethe, listening to records of Beethoven's music on the gramophone and studying butterflies. It's important we didn't see him ordering mass executions of communists, Jews and Roma, civilians and high-school kids. As far as this film is concerned, these monstrous crimes never even happened.

After this film by Miša Radivojević, all things heinous, mindless, false and illiterate became a possibility in Serbian filmmaking and Serbian culture. And so it came to be. The television series "Ravna Gora" glorifies Chetnik leader Draža Mihailović. The series "My Cousin from the Village" extols an unnamed war criminal from the wars of the 1990s. Another series, "Alexander of Yugoslavia", exalts the dictatorship of King Alexander Karađorđević. The series "South Wind", "The Clan" and dozens of others glorify criminals of all stripes, murderers and conmen and, last but not least, misogynistic behavior. Series based on the works of Dobrica Ćosić, "Roots" and "Time of Evil", pay homage to the literature of the most influential Serbian nationalist, the ideologue of "humane resettlement of populations of other ethnicities and religions", in other words, ethnic cleansing and the creation of Serbia as an ethnically pure state, which would also include the territories of other, neighboring states.

We thus come to the final act, the crowning seal of this obscure filmmaking enterprise of contemporary Serbian cultural policy – the five-part revisionist TV series "The Family", written and directed by Bojan Vuletić. It attracted enormous attention and, by concealing the facts in a very manipulative and cunning manner, garnered the enthusiasm of a large audience, and especially of the Serbian cultural elite.

"The Family" focuses on the last 48 hours, or 72 hours, doesn't really matter, before and during the arrest of Slobodan Milošević. There are two places of action. The Villa Mir ('*Peace*'), where the said Milošević family lives, and the building of the Serbian Government at the time of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić.

The very name of the series – "The Family" – points to the drastic restriction of any real content in the subject matter it deals with. It was not the Milošević family that destroyed people and ravaged the state – as one might say of a mafia clan that has special ties with renegade parts of a parliamentary state – but rather that under Milosevic's regime the state itself was murderous.

Namely, a regime is not just one isolated, pathological family, but consists of institutions, services and people in responsible positions, who can be the perpetrators of the worst possible crimes, from fraud intended to rob its population, to the production of wars, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The name "The Family" ever so delicately transports the public figures from the past from a circle of cut-throats and robbers into a corps of solid people who still decide today's politics, economics and culture.

Reviews of "The Family" reveal that critical thought in Serbia is so exhausted that it cannot even discern the difference between the ruse of this kind of 'chic' depiction of Milošević's regime and the TV series' very mild, dietary-bland and evening arm-chair critique of the same, from the reality of the most bloodthirsty of all Serbian regimes.

Let us try to explain the phenomenon of this TV series by utilizing the tools of film and television criticism.

The depiction of the course of events in both places of action is linear and synchronous.

At no moment does this moving-picture medium make use of its basic tool – the editor's cut – to return in a flashback to the past and reveal the events that spurred the characters to decide on their misdeeds, the consequences of which led to this moment, now being dragged out before us in five episodes.

Therefore, there are no flashbacks, no juxtapositions of temporally distant sequences involving the same characters. In other words, in this series the medium has renounced its own language and trapped itself in the fallacy of live television coverage.

By depriving itself of its own inherent tools, the series "The Family" has visually separated and alienated Slobodan Milošević from the inalienable (images of) crimes – crimes committed by his regime which he personally authorized. And as has already been said, having at the outset cemented him within his family circle, the series has isolated and alienated Milošević from his wider regime.

The purpose of a television series about historical events is to, in visually continuous form, confront temporally distant but causally linked sequences from the lives of its protagonists. "The Family" ignores precisely this. This means that, *de facto*, it covered up the key fact that a caring parent and husband – as it portrayed Milošević in the series – who is not only an arrogant but also a courageous negotiator about his last days of freedom, is the same person who verbally, secretly issued gruesome orders for the brutal murders of his opponents and shaped the fate of a country and an entire region, shrouding them in black.

Put in another way, this series has managed to silence its own language – the language that breaks down the barriers between two events distant in time but connected by the storyline of the protagonists' actions. Moreover, by self-mutilating its own language, this series has created an opaque barrier between the criminal perpetrators and their grandiose crimes.

Serbia is a society in which filmmakers and television producers wouldn't even dream of making, for example, a biopic feature film about Dada Vujasinović (*an independent journalist – transl.*), the Serbian Antigone, or about (*impartial and honorable*) judge Nebojša Simeunović, about Slavko Ćuruvija (*independent journalist*) and other heroes of democracy, whom Milošević's regime murdered in the most brutal manner and in plain sight of a disempowered public.

The institutions of Serbian film and television production are incapable of creating content that would, even after 20 years, speak clearly, articulately and validly of the crimes of Milošević's regime in a manner commensurate to those crimes. Therefore, there is not a single branch of independent institutional power in Serbia – all vessels are connected, from the judicial and economic to media, theater and film.

It turns out that Milošević's regime is a kind of institutional virus that has produced its own horrific mutations during these past 20 years of the Serbian social epidemic. During the past two centuries of political history in Serbia, no corpse has ever managed to stay alive for as long as Slobodan Milošević. Today, practically without any opposition, he governs even more successfully than during his lifetime. In the guise of his latest and most vicious mutation, he has understood that for the achievement of the same objectives peace is more profitable than war. Almost

without exception, contemporary Serbian filmmaking too is in the service of these objectives.

POST SCRIPTUM

For years, young Serbian film director Ognjen Glavonić had been trying to find a producer and financial means to make a feature film about Serbian state crimes committed in the late 1990s in Kosovo, then a part of its own territory – in other words, to make a film about the crimes of the Serbian state against its own citizens of Albanian ethnicity. The film was to tell the story of the clandestine operation of transporting, in freezer trucks, the corpses of executed civilians, including women, children and the elderly, from Kosovo to Batajnica, a Belgrade suburb, in order to be secretly buried there.

Year after year, national cultural institutions doggedly refused to support this film project.

In the meantime, Glavonić made the documentary film "Dubina 2" ("The Deep 2"), about the same topic – Serbian state sponsored crimes in Kosovo in 1999. The documentary premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival 'Berlinale' in 2016 and in Belgrade at the 'Beldocs' Documentary Film Festival.

Let's begin with the name! It is taken from the code name – 'Dubina 2' – of the Serbian State Security Service's clandestine operation from April 1999 in Kosovo. The order for the operation is signed "The President" – and that signature is presented in the documentary. In the order there is also the following sentence: "No corpses – no crime".

The film begins with the case of the refrigerated truck resurfacing and floating on the Danube near Tekija (*vicinity of Kladovo, eastern Serbia – transl.*). There was an inscription on the freezer-truck: "PIK Progress, Export Slaughterhouse Prizren". When they pulled it out of the Danube and discovered that it was full of human bodies, the local policemen were ordered to transfer the corpses to another truck, in the utmost secrecy. Those who were to transport them further on had orders to take the "cargo" to Batajnica. There, on the grounds of a police special units training-camp, others were waiting to bury the corpses in unmarked mass-graves. Serbian State Security agents who, as part of their official assignment, were doing "field work" told others involved in the "Dubina 2" clean-up operation: "Darkness will swallow you up if you so much as let out a whimper about this" and "You could lose your head if you even open your mouth about this…."

Taking us on a picture tour of all the places relevant for the crime, that is, its 'extended crime scene' - from Suva Reka and Pristina in Kosovo to Kladovo and Tekija, and then on to Batajnica - Glavonić tells the story exclusively through the voices of ten witnesses, participants and victims. There is the voice of the person who ordered the freezer-truck to be retrieved from the Danube, without ever suspecting its contents; the voice of the driver of the truck from Tekija to Batajnica; the voice of the person who participated in the police massacre in Kosovo; the voice of the original driver who drove the freezer-truck that ended up in the Danube; the voice of the person who exhumed the corpses, and finally, intermingled with these voices, the voice of the Albanian woman who survived the massacre. She survived the massacre in the pizzeria in Suva Reka where Serbian policemen first threw one hand-grenade, then a second one, and then indiscriminately fired machine gun bursts at everything that moved – the women, children and elderly who survived the first two explosions. This woman further survived the moment when they discovered that she was still alive and then shot her several times: she also survived the death of her son who was lying next to her and then shot when the policemen discovered that he was still alive; she survived the death of her two daughters, and the death of her husband; she survived and jumped out of the truck driven by the man who also gives his testimony in the documentary; she survived, coming back from the dead to testify and bear witness to the truth!

That testimony to truth is the essence of Ognjen Glavonic's documentary film – a requiem of sorts for the 705 Albanian victims of Serbian police terror. The full names of all the voices/speakers – not counting the protected witnesses who have code-names – are written in plain sight in the final credits for the documentary.

"We counted the number of corpses by the number of heads, but whether all bodies were complete hasn't been determined yet." Those are the words of Bole, who ordered that the freezer-truck be pulled out of the Danube. They counted that it contained 53 whole bodies and three heads! In it was also the backpack of a girl, probably seven years old, and in it a UNICEF notebook and a box of crayons... in the notebook there was a drawing – a house and a flower.

Marko, who performed the autopsies and DNA analysis of the corpses in 2001 and 2002 – during the government of Zoran Đinđić – so that this information and the remains could be sent back to the relatives in Kosovo, ascertained that the total number of those killed was 705. Among the grown men there were many women, children and the elderly. All of them were from Kosovo and all were ethnic Albanians, Muslim or Orthodox Christian.

Ten different voices speak but they all have the words victim, minister and general in common! The participants of the operation note they were repeatedly told they were working "strictly in the interest of the state". As one of the voices say, to this day the massacre remains without criminal charges, protected by a vow of silence.

Two years after this documentary masterpiece, made counter to and in spite of official Serbian cultural policy; furthermore, counter to and in spite of the national policy of denial of the blatant crimes of the Milošević regime – a policy supported both by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Serbian Orthodox Church – director Glavonić succeeded, thanks to the support of European and Middle Eastern film funds, to make a very good feature film about the same topic called "Teret" ("The Burden"). That film, however, did not manage to achieve the tragic depth of the documentary film.

Glavonić's documentary "Dubina 2" ends with a post-film exhibition of things that belonged to the victims, complete with the mentioned children's drawing, little children's shoes... just as director Andrei Tarkovsky ended his film fresco of the painter Rublev with an exhibition of his works. These are, therefore, the Serbian Dark Ages at the end of the 20th century. Will we live to see a new era?

FINE/VISUAL/ CONTEMPORARY ART IN SERBIA: AN OVERVIEW

Branislav Dimitrijević

SOME THEORETICAL REMARKS ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART

The very title of this text suggests a controversy in defining the field of cultural practice and cultural production that will be discussed here. Up until the 1960s, that is, until the end of the modern historical paradigm, this type of cultural activity included artistic media inherited from the previous, classical paradigm: painting, sculpture, and to some extent, classical graphic techniques as well. The label "fine art" therefore described the practice and production within those artistic techniques. The term "visual art", on the other hand, began to be used with the awareness that artistic practice since the 1960s began to include a much wider spectrum of artistic media, as well as their hybridization, and thus horizontalization in the hierarchy of artistic media. What is recognized as the only common denominator of this heterogeneous media practice is that it primarily addresses the sense of sight (through photography, film, video, ambient or lumino-kinetic installations, etc.). And finally, unlike the first two terms mentioned in the title, the term "contemporary art" is much more complex, because its origin stems from a completely different way of thinking about art, in what theorist Thierry de Duve called "generic art", unlike "media-based" art that was a characteristic of modernism. The origin of this paradigm can be found in the historical avant-garde movements, in Duchamp's turn from the question "is this a beautiful/good painting or sculpture" to the question "is this that I see art or is it not art?", i.e. in the historical and theoretical separation of the terms "aesthetic" and "artistic".

While modern art was revolutionary primarily in the aesthetic sense, contemporary art – inspired by the avant-garde and neoavant-garde heritage – also postulates revolution in the very thinking of the language and system of art. Contemporary art does not abolish classical media, but it does abolish their privilege and uses various procedures, strategies, tactics and intersections of media, with which it acts in different ways – from activist, critical and dematerialized art that takes place in the public and media sphere, to contemporary art, which is directed towards the art market and which becomes part of the so-called "cultural industries" and the heterogeneity of "postmodern" culture in general.

These introductory remarks are necessary in order to show that, unlike other socially codified activities in culture, contemporary art does not have a fully defined, nor a fully accepted/ understood field of action. Also, unlike other activities in culture that are related to established processes and practices of production – for example, a film, a theatrical play, or a musical concert, regardless of whether it is "classical", "modern", or "contemporary", it has basic production principles based on the production principles of its very medium of expression – contemporary art is characterized by a constant reevaluation of these conventions and assumptions, even to the point of overcoming them. Contemporary art constantly relies on other media-based cultural activities, both linguistic and literary, as well as performing arts. Contemporary art enables this media hybridization, precisely because of its "generic" character, and such a character necessarily implies a direct connection between the visual and the textual. This textual side of the language of contemporary art is most often disputed in public discourse, because it abolishes the modernist doctrine of "self-presence" of a work of art, and the doctrine of a work of art that "speaks for itself", and it shows that one of the main characteristics of contemporary practices lies precisely in the complex relationship between the pictorial and the textual. In addition, this is not only a characteristic of contemporary practices, but it can also be found throughout art history, which testifies to the overlapping of the pictorial and textual, that is, to art that is always both – regardless of whether it is a picture that encourages speech, and is complemented by speech, or if, for example, it is a literary text that stimulates the visual imagination which complements its linguistic character.

The term "contemporary art", as a label for a practice whose origin lies in the neo-avant-garde and new artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s, refers above all to the characteristics of the practice which historically appeared in the early 1990s and which implies the following:

- The relational character of art, that is, the emphasis placed on the production of social relations through the artistic process, and not only on the production of works of art, or some conceptual proposition.
- The political and socially engaged character of art, i.e. the development of art in the direction of the politicization of artistic work, as a departure from the aestheticization of politics, as a characteristic of postmodern culture and increasingly right-wing ideological circumstances in the world.
- The collective character of the artistic process, as a departure from the romanticized figure of the artist as a particularly gifted individual, that is, a step away from the figure of the

artist as a "creator", as a pseudo-spiritual category, towards the figure of the artist as a researcher.

- The gender character of art, i.e. the departure from the masculine, phallocentric ideal of the gifted and free individual towards problematizing, not only the exclusion of women from art history, but also the inclusion of gender-based issues in the center of artistic practice.
- The foundational and project-based character of art financing as an attempt to move away from both state-subsidized and market-oriented art.
- The simultaneity of the process of the internationalization and localization of art, that is, the connection of local specificities of the art scene with global networks of such localities that are no longer mediated by some established "center" for art.
- The reliance of artistic practice on theoretical considerations, but also on the heteronomy of social, cultural and scientific phenomena.
- A step away from the issue of "the autonomy of art" as a central concept of the modernist paradigm and towards the issue of "the heteronomy of art", i.e. its connection with other forms, both cognitive and affective, as well as with social and political activism.

CONTEMPORARY ART IN SERBIA – NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE TERM

The term "contemporary art" appeared a long time ago on the Serbian and Yugoslav cultural horizon. Between the two World Wars, this term was adopted in small cultural circles from the French language, where it had been used from the end of the 19th century as an expression for "the latest modern art" – so, not as a term that is ontologically or epistemologically distinguished from the term modern art. However, after World War Two, from the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere, this term was introduced differently, in order to establish the difference between modern art and the art that also appears as an immanent critique of modernist myths about the presence and originality of a work and the authorship of that work. The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London was one of the first institutions to adopt this term at the end of the 1940s, but several more decades had to pass until the term "contemporary art" was fully institutionalized. In this sense, it is interesting that one of the first museums of contemporary art (MCA) was established in Belgrade in 1965, although it remains debatable what that term actually meant to the founders of the museum at the time. Recent research insists that the establishment of the MCA was an act of forgetting a previous institution that bore the same name – the Museum of Contemporary Art, which had been founded by Pavle Karadordević and Milan Kašanin as early as 1928, although that particular museum gave up its original name and was renamed in 1935 to the Prince Paul Museum (Muzej kneza Pavla). It can be said that, like Kašanin in the 1930s, MCA founder Miodrag Protić in the 1960s also saw contemporary art as the normalization and standardization of modern art. On the other hand, however, the Belgrade museum, upon its foundation, focused on the re-articulation of this concept and in 1967 it hosted the first exhibition in which it introduced Yugoslav historical art into the canon of modern art history, while in 1971 the first exhibition of "conceptual art" was organized in the MCA Salon, from which the further development of contemporary art actually stems. New artistic practices (conceptual art, performance art, land art, arte povera, etc.) marked the beginning of the "contemporary canon" and, if we can say that the concept of "contemporary art" was fully adopted in the nineties, there is no doubt that artistic practices from the sixties and seventies served as the basis of the current understanding contemporary art as a "post-conceptual" practice (as defined by theorist Peter Osborne).

In the Yugoslav cultural space, the appearance of contemporary art was mainly related to youth and student cultural centers (Student Cultural Center and Belgrade Youth Center, Cultural Center of Novi Sad, etc.) and from the 1980s to events that established contemporary art as a relevant and recognized practice. During the SFRY's final decade, these were, for example, the Sarajevo Documents in 1987 and 1989, but, as in everything else, the war interrupted this development. While contemporary art experienced its greatest boom precisely in the nineties at an international level (as evidenced by the proliferation of institutions and events, especially the so-called "biennialization"), the development of contemporary art in Serbia was marked by war, the economic crisis and the severance of international cultural ties. And yet, even in such circumstances, organizations and events appeared and articulated contemporary art, helping its production and distribution to some extent. The Rex Cultural Center and the Center for Contemporary Art in Belgrade, the kuda.org organization in Novi Sad, and others are some examples of this. Some events such as the Youth Biennial in Vršac or the Cetinje Biennial were particularly significant, which proved to be the main springboard for this practice. With the political changes of 2000, the policy of state institutions (which during the nineties either ignored or rejected contemporary art) changed, so the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art became the center of this practice, as did some other galleries - Remont Gallery, KCB Gallery, the Student Cultural Center, as well as some private galleries that were launched at the time. Outside of Belgrade and Novi Sad, there was the Youth Biennale in Vršac as well as the Nadežda Petrović Memorial in Čačak, and contemporary scenes appeared in some other cities as well.

Since the beginning of the nineties, the development of contemporary art in Serbia, like other cultural practices that have an international rather than a national basis, has been defined by geopolitical language, both in the wider and professional public sphere. This geopolitical angle appears within the general public in the form of a conspiracy theory, according to which "contemporary art" is actually an aspect of the cultural war waged against national culture and national identity, where special emphasis is placed on the role of the Soros foundation, as one of the most significant contributors to the development of this practice in Serbia, in the absence of state support and other sources of financing. Within the professional realm, this is reflected in the introduction of the term "Soros-realism", by which a prominent art theorist designates contemporary practices in post-socialist European countries, and thus contemporary art is defined as a cultural import, and not as an authentic cultural expression. Such interpretations still affect the denigration of contemporary art within an idealized corpus of Serbian culture, but the resistance to contemporary art is multi-layered and has its own expressions, both in the general public and among artists and artistic and educational institutions themselves. With the economic crisis that started in 2009 and the crisis of democracy in Serbia that started in 2013, the situation is perhaps even more complicated than it was in the nineties.

The reasons stem primarily from the value connection of the two main political and economic aspects that characterize Serbia, but also by which Serbia (in contrast to the nineties when it was an isolated and relatively lone example of an autocratic state) is also part of the political and economic processes characteristic of this stage of capitalism. In modern-day capitalism (both liberal and authoritarian, and mostly in the current synthesis of the economic theory of the former and the political theory of the latter), two conceptions of culture are dominant. On the one hand, culture is a matter of national identity and national tradition, and on the other, it is defined as an economic resource and as such it is treated as economically self-sustaining. Even though these two views are seemingly opposed (because the first sees culture as being under the protection of the state, and the second sees it as an aspect of the free market), in Serbia, the process in which these two conceptions are synthesized is highlighted, resulting in a combination of state and private interest that alienates cultural creators from social reality and imposes petrified values that prevent cultural development. Cultural creators are thus placed in an extremely precarious position, and only a narrow range of art evaluation criteria is offered, which considers success as either an economic category or a category of compliance with predetermined ideological categories. These two conceptions render meaningless and ritualize the role of culture in overall social development and do not contribute to a more balanced or diverse cultural production.

ART SYSTEM IN SERBIA

Until recently, the art system in Serbia was mainly based on the system that was established in the SFRY in the 1960s and which is now damaged, and certainly obsolete, but no other system was established in its stead. That system could be represented by concentric circles, where academic art education would be located in the widest ring, art associations and the institutions (mainly galleries running on city funds) that presented current artistic works in the narrower ring, and state institutions, like museums – more precisely, museums of modern and contemporary art – would be located in the narrowest ring. As with other established cultural

models within the developed cultural policy of socialist Yugoslavia, this system was also undermined during the 1990s, and only shells remained of it, which still have their role, because nothing systemically new was established. Two main factors influenced the breakdown of this system that was established in socialism: on the one hand, it was nationalism that clearly expected culture to be a confirmation of national culture and monocultural identity, and on the other hand, market liberalism that dreamed of a culture that would be regulated by market relations, not public and social needs.

The example of the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art reveals that during the nineties, an attempt was made to transform the policy of this institution, that is, to move away from the two central identities that this institution has been developing since its foundation. The first is the identity of Yugoslavia, that is, the concept of the "Yugoslav art space", which was developed by the policy of this museum and on which its collection rests. The second identity is the modern, contemporary and innovative identity of artistic practice, which was successfully articulated through the exhibition policy of the museum. Things changed at that institution during the first decade of the 21st century, when the MCA opened itself up to the international scene, implemented a "contemporary canon" and influenced the education of audiences towards contemporary art. This process was interrupted, leaving the MCA in the biggest crisis since its foundation. The crisis of the MCA can be taken as an example of the crisis of cultural policy in Serbia during the last ten years, i.e. as a loss of both value and political framework for the development of cultural production and communication.

In the current conditions, culture is created on the basis of support from the state budget, private investments, and foundation policies and foundation programs. That's why cultural organizations are either state-owned, private, or belong to the non-governmental sector, i.e. they are self-organized associations of citizens. The state supported culture mainly within cultural institutions, which in recent years have been systematically collapsing, or turning into passive participants in cultural life. Institutions are systematically deprived of their autonomy, funds for program development are reduced, and ideological influence is exercised over them. Although many of them perform their role in a dignified way, these institutions have become "examples" of what the neoliberal rhetoric declares to be a "relic of socialism" and, therefore, something superfluous and, above all, unproductive. This ideological mantra serves the purpose of the neoliberal state to "remove the burden" of these institutions from the state.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT CRISIS OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN SERBIA

UNRESOLVED STATUS AND FURTHER

IMPOVERISHMENT OF FREELANCE ARTISTS

The burning issue in regards to contemporary art in Serbia is primarily the unclear status of its producers. There is an unbridgeable gap between the concept according to which art should be developed through the mechanisms of state cultural policy and the one according to which art should be left to market valorization, and it is quite certain that both models are reductive and that artists have fallen into the crack between those two extremes. Practically no one in Serbia has dealt with the status of artists since the beginning of the nineties, and only during the last few years, when the crisis gained such momentum that some actors, realizing that the state will not solve this problem on its own initiative, self-organized and formulated demands and proposals in the interest of artists and the development of the art scene. This process was initiated, above all, within the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia, and in 2020, after changes in its leadership, the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia raised this issue for the first time in a serious manner.

CRISIS OF INSTITUTIONS

When it comes to the crisis of art institutions in Serbia, we are primarily talking about the crisis of the central institution in this field, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. While the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, despite a lot of turbulence and tension, still manages to establish continuity in its program, and while other institutions, with more or less success, assume some responsibilities in the field of contemporary art (Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade City Museum), the integrity and the professional credibility of the MCA has been damaged. The building's reconstruction lasted almost 10 years, for which the government in Serbia until 2012 was the most responsible as it turned its back on this institution and left it without support for the completion of the works. However, the crisis in the full sense of the word came in 2013, since when, to this day, no expert authority has been established to manage this institution or start a new phase of its development. As a result, from 2013 to 2020, the MCA changed as many as four directors, three out of four of which were acting directors. The main characteristic of the relationship towards institutions lies in the attempt to have complete political control over them, and because of this, the "acting director status" is perpetuated, because in this way institutions are more effectively controlled politically and their autonomy is abolished.

CRISIS OF ART EDUCATION AND CRISIS OF THE "PROFESSION"

Art education in Serbia is very slowly developing and freeing itself from conservative, nepotistic and often strongly nationalist perspectives, which are trying to be reproduced in new socioeconomic conditions. In addition, education most often does not correspond to the character of contemporary art and does not prepare young people who have artistic ambitions for the existing situation. In addition, what is still centralism – a monopoly, even – prevents the pluralization and development of contemporary artistic thinking in art education, resulting in art directed from one type of understanding of education which then constantly creates monocultural patterns. In the same way, expertise in this field is being devalued, voices coming from the profession are not listened to, or they are very consciously marginalized by bringing non-expert and politically desirable personnel to decision-making positions in this field.

CONSTANT AND ORCHESTRATED ATTACKS ON CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND AGGRESSIVE NATIONALIST, MISOGYNISTIC, HOMOPHOBIC AND OTHER DOMINANT DISCOURSES IN THE MEDIA AND ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

This phenomenon has especially intensified during the past year. In the past, there were many cases where artists were attacked from such positions and individual exhibitions and projects were destroyed. This was most often the case with projects whose contents were unacceptable for a monocultural and nationalist understanding of culture, that is, projects that dealt with war crimes during the wars of the nineties, or projects that advocated for LGBT rights and other human rights. During 2020, the situation escalated in the form of attacks on several exhibitions and their participants, with not only silent, but also open support from state authorities (as evidenced by the Ministry of Culture's justification of such violent acts). Contemporary artists are the target of constant threats on social media, as is everyone in Serbia's social life who does not agree with the dominant cultural and social patterns.

NON-EXISTENT OR CORRUPT ART MARKET

The question of turning contemporary art towards the market is one of the central ideological mantras of the current cultural policy. The Prime Minister of Serbia (Ana Brnabić) also established a personal Creative Industries Council which, among other things, should initiate these processes and stimulate private investments in culture and the market valuation of art. The effects of this Council have so far only been in the domain of political "ornamentalization", the formation of a parallel para-institution which, although informal, takes over some responsibilities from the Ministry of Culture, and in general, the contamination of the dialogue on the social role of art and culture. Even though private art galleries, some of which are really oriented towards contemporary art, are suddenly opening up, especially in Belgrade, they operate to a very small extent on the market, and they also depend on a connection with the state-bureaucratic apparatus.

WEAK AND INADEQUATE PRESENCE OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN THE MEDIA

Print media in Serbia no longer regularly keep track of artistic events or engage in artistic criticism. The electronic media approach these topics exclusively in a sensationalistic manner and do not delve more seriously into these issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of culture, including contemporary art in Serbia depends mostly on the strengthening of the social sector, that is, in the culture that develops through various forms of social self-organization, from the bottom up. The main prerequisite for this form of cultural development is the decentralization of culture, that is, intensive work in local communities and with cultural creators who operate within those communities. In order to strengthen the development of culture from the *bottom up*, it is necessary to support those initiatives that make culture not only more accessible to wider social strata, but also a part of their everyday life through directly participating in cultural production. Above all, production initiatives and associations of artists whose goal is inclusiveness and participation at the local level should be the focus and basis of cultural policy. We should initiate the establishment of a new fund for the cultural development of Serbia and establish the basic civilizational legacy, where the cultural budget is no longer a statistical error, but an expression of awareness of the importance of culture for overall social development, social emancipation and liberation from the constraints of a normative, elitist and traditional culture. The Republic of Serbia budget for culture is less than 0.7 percent of the total budget, which is the lowest allocation for culture in any European country.

Culture is not a fixed "value in itself", but a field of social questioning and negotiation; the values that should be advocated by the cultural policy are the key general social values (equality, solidarity, secularity, internationalism, etc.), as well as artistic experimentalism and innovation, speculation and creative autonomy. In order for the field of culture to be formed as a field of social freedom and emancipation, the cultural sector should be more closely connected with the education sector. Above all, by improving the quality of education when it comes to art and culture, from the very beginning and during primary schooling, but also by reforming the role of cultural and media institutions (primarily, the public TV service), not only when it comes to mere reporting on cultural events, but also in initiating an open and critical discussion, as a basis for the development of a culture that is not based on ceremonial repetition of values and forms, but one that makes social flows dynamic and considers culture as a form of raising awareness among citizens about class, gender and other social issues.

Existing cultural institutions should be strengthened and given autonomy, cultural projects that are inclusive and oriented towards citizens should be supported, while cultural projects whose only goal is the ceremonialization of state rituals should be reduced. The role of cultural institutions (depending on the cultural activity within which they operate) should not merely be one of "display", but also one of "production"; that is, cultural institutions should be conceived as places of cultural production and development of new artistic propositions. The existing "central" institutions should retain their current importance, while enabling the completion of already initiated reconstruction projects; however, cultural institutions should primarily be developed at the local level in order to become a significant factor in local cultural development in accordance with the policies of decentralizing and demetropolitanizing culture.

In the competitive and soulless nature of capitalism, it is the emancipatory concept of culture that can influence the spiritual side of human development, which is not limited by the combination of capital and unconscious cultural habits, but resists capital and conservative cultural habits with free and autonomous artistic propositions that help raise the awareness of each individual within complex social processes.

MUSIC IN SERBIA – WHERE ARE WE AND WHAT ARE WE?

Ksenija Stevanović

Making music in the Republic of Serbia in recent years has been precisely and sharply divided into making commercial music, and music which is non-commercial and based on enthusiasm, weak institutional support and making do.

Ever since the 1990s, there has been a rise in commercial music in Serbia, which has been masked by the cultural conflict between turbo-folk and other musical genres. Turbo-folk imposed a unique way of managing the music business in Serbia, embodied in the combination of music producers – media companies and market competition. In fact, this model, which has survived with minor changes until now, has almost "erased" all other ways of leading a life in the music industry, leaving musical culture at the mercy of numerous factors of liberal and transitional capitalism.

Above all, it should be understood that certain types of musical creativity do not actually exist anywhere without external support – whether it be direct intervention by the state through the Ministry of Culture, or through numerous funds or foundations for contemporary creativity, i.e. through the actions of private foundations and patrons. The purely economic aspect of music creation in the digital era is related to the operations of large record labels, streaming services, and less and less to the power, influence and ability of even the biggest stars or authors to earn money through copyright. This situation became very apparent in the world during 2020, when concert activity was suspended due to the pandemic. It was concerts that provided the necessary economic security to authors/performers, since the income from recordings is usually meager compared to the percentage given to "intermediaries" – be it labels or services like Spotify. For this reason, there was a massive sale of rights to royalties, i.e. "catalogues" of songs, which are seen as a new "gold mine" for investors.

In Serbia, of course, this level of music commercialization has not been reached, primarily due to insufficiently developed streaming services and the poor state of music publishing. In principle, as we mentioned, the model derived from turbo-folk is the only one that works in our country and it consists of the singers themselves financing the making of albums, buying hit songs, and in return they receive media time, exposure and numerous engagements. Pink with its media empire has been leading the way in all of this in recent years. The shortcomings of this model, of course, also became clear in 2020. Performers without the protection of the state, a trade union or their own association, in the absence of concerts, also felt the direct economic consequences of not having "gigs".

As for other genres in Serbia, it was the collapse of the publishing system, as well as the state support that accompanied noncommercial creativity during the SFRY, that led to the complete stagnation of contemporary creativity on the front of contemporary, classical, jazz and alternative rock music. Small oases have survived, there has been lots of self-reliance, and reliance on festivals as a format where it is possible to get more money and media exposure, although this is also highly questionable considering that many festivals are held in narrow economic frameworks and, in fact, do not pay much.

In recent years, the only thing that has been functioning is SOKOJ - the Organization of Music Authors of Serbia, which after years of complex internal conflicts managed to organize itself and meet the needs of its members to a greater extent. This organization is currently a monopolist in the field of copyright in our country and has completed a major transformation from a guild association to an author's agency in a narrower sense. In that process, a large part of the activities of the former SOKOJ, which was related to the influence on the cultural policy and musical life of the SFRY, was lost. What remains is the Fund for Cultural Purposes, which once a year, depending on the quality and financial capabilities of SOKOJ, awards financial support to a large number of projects (as many as 200 were awarded in one round), of which 40–50 percent come from the genre of art music, about 20 percent from jazz, about 25 percent belong to pop and rock genres, and 5–7 percent to creativity in the field of folk music. The most important music festivals in the country, monographic editions, as well as discography and original projects are among the beneficiaries of these funds. It is safe to say that without this Fund, producing new contemporary art music in Serbia and putting out the music of young jazz musicians and other non-commercial authors would not be possible.

Why is that?

Parallel to the described trends in the way of leading a musical life, there was also a gradual withdrawal of state institutions from supporting non-commercial musical forms, leaving this area to be regulated by the market and popular taste. This was done primarily by the City Assembly of Belgrade which until 2011 was very diligent in financing various productions from the independent cultural scene. On several occasions, the Ministry of Culture

also provided limited support to projects that do not belong to the most popular festivals such as Exit, the Belgrade Jazz Festival, or to some extent, Bemus. In 2020, the situation was somewhat different – numerous projects and initiatives were supported, which in the true sense of the word kept contemporary musical creativity alive in recent years, which is perhaps also a result of the work of the commission that discussed the projects that applied. But there is also a noticeable paradox – the Ring Ring festival, one of the longest-lasting and most uncompromising independent platforms for promoting "new and different music", which in the true sense of the word promoted the idea of "world music" in Serbia, was not supported. In this context, it should be noted that most projects from the domain of non-commercial music take place according to the "niche" principle – enthusiastic performers and improvisation, with the participation of a relatively small audience, at concerts that charge next to nothing. Recently, as an example of the influence of a private foundation, the activity of the Saša Marčeta Foundation is noticeable, which in the space of the ruined Balkan cinema finances concerts that truly belong to the domain of contemporary artistic musical creativity – such as the premiere of new works by local composers in the interpretation of the string ensemble Metamorfozis, to the performances of leaders in the experimental and electronic scene. Making music that is not mainstream or commercial has fallen on the backs of individuals and their efforts, and it is almost impossible to make a living from music anymore. If we compare this situation with the cries of composers who founded SOKOJ in the fifties of the last century in order to get more time to practice their art freely, we can note that now the status of "free artist" is the most endangered of all in the field of music and that many musicians want to replace this once sought-after status with a regular salary and position.

Mainstream – in the value/poetic sense – within the framework of commercial genres, as those promoted by Pink and the production/TV company IDJtv aimed at younger generations, dominant topics revolve around money, sex and drugs, i.e. they contain materialistic messaging about how it is important to live and survive and have a good time, and that everything else is irrelevant. Of course, this kind of music, which is made in a formulaic way – the use of autotune, the same rhythmic matrices and a small vocal ambitus – in fact reveals a lot about the society we live in, which is similarly empty in terms of form and ideology, focused on the accumulation of material wealth, and lacking critical opinions and true creativity. Increased subjugation of the female body is also noticeable in this type of music: female pop artists are forced to "reveal" themselves, be objectified and expose themselves to views and judgment, not only by the idealized male viewer, but also by the whole society whom they seduce with their perfect bodies in a kind of pornographic and voyeuristic affair involving the figure of the "female singer".

The crisis of institutions at the state level has been clearly echoed in the field of music institutions, whose numbers continue to decrease. Among those with state support, such as the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, a certain type of ostracization, an almost autistic and authoritarian avoidance of critical thinking and aggressive use of promotion and self-promotion has also been noticeable. In other words, through the collapse of and disrespect for music criticism, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, i.e. its management, reached the status of an "untouchable" signifier of elite art, which cannot be tested in relation to any other (international) reference, because such references are stifled and not acknowledged. On the other hand, the RTS Symphony Orchestra (SO RTS) finds itself in permanent tension between its prescribed role of a cultural heritage guardian and exponent of contemporary creativity, and an orchestra that tries to be "palatable" to a wide audience. In this regard, the RTS Symphony Orchestra has collaborated with Aleksandar Milić Mili, and performed a strange amalgam of a Russian, Serbian and international music at its New Year's concerts. During the past few years, however, only SO RTS recorded new works by contemporary authors for the symphony orchestra, which were selected through competitions, while the few premieres commissioned by the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra remained unrecorded and were lost as historical documents.

Despite all its issues, the public broadcaster RTS offers the largest, if not the only, platform for non-commercial music genres – above all on the RTS 3 channel, as well as on the programs of Radio Belgrade, primarily stations Radio Belgrade 2 and Radio Belgrade 3. The important role of Radio 202 in promoting rock music, as well as the role of Radio Belgrade 1 in preserving folk music with artistic ambitions, should also not be ignored. There is also the STUDIO 6 show, which is jointly realized by RTS 3 and Radio Belgrade 3 and primarily dedicated to the artistic and non-commercial, as well as traditional creativity of domestic and foreign authors. The public broadcaster itself, in addition to the Symphony Orchestra, also has a mixed choir as well as the Children's and Kolibri choirs, the Big Band, and two folk orchestras, while the public broadcaster of Vojvodina also has a *tamburica* orchestra.

In addition, we should mention the activity of non-commercial internet radio stations – such as Radio Aparat and Popscotch Radio, which also promote different, alternative and non-commercial popular music.

A special segment of Serbia's musical life is indeed the club scene – where the commercial treatment of music meets artistic ambitions, within the specific night life environment, primarily in Belgrade. New initiatives, such as Dim, focused on more experimental practices as well, are emerging from this domain.

Music that has a connection with tradition develops within the framework of either "world music", which even though at one point was very prominent, is now becoming quieter, or within the domain of the still-present traditional music jobs, competitions and ways of making music. The general public is not too familiar with this, and such music often remains in the special niche of rural and regional culture.

Of all these genres, the state itself prefers large and spectacular projects, without too much artistic reach – various types of popular crossovers between genres, New Year's concerts, moderate ethnic music in which, in the opinion of the rulers, our specificity and broad applicability are combined. Recently, the creation of new patriotic songs with the theme of Kosovo has been noticeable, where a combination of soft rock, inevitably irregular rhythm and macho aesthetics is made in order to evoke emotions, with the help of active kitsch aesthetics.

Briefly put, the topics for consideration and possible improvement regarding musical art include the following:

INSTITUTIONS

Apart from the state of the two symphony orchestras, as well as festivals such as Bemus, which has been on "life support" for many years, the announced closure of the Kolarac Endowment, which has for decades been a central venue for classical, contemporary and jazz concerts, poses the question – who is responsible for fostering non-commercial genres in Serbia? On this occasion, I did not mention the problem of the Belgrade Opera, which has been in a severe artistic crisis for many years due to the rule of old staff and general lack of ideas. The quality of this opera house has declined so much, that the questions about who needs

opera in Serbia and why it is needed inevitably arise. However, we know from European and global experience that operas reflect the state's cultural policy in the domain of music and that despite all the crises and problems, there is an effort to maintain the repertory house. In Serbia, this is probably less a matter of state policy and more a matter of inertia, although young opera singers are exploited to perform, for example, at the opening of a new city market, at the invitation of the then deputy mayor of Belgrade, Goran Vesić. The private Madlenianum opera also operates in Belgrade, while the Serbian National Theater in Novi Sad finds itself in a somewhat better, though not ideal, situation. Serbian higher education institutions dedicated to music "produce" a large number of excellent singers, who are most often forced to seek their fortune abroad, and some of them even attain international careers. It should be noted that the baritone Željko Lučić, who performed at the opening of the Metropolitan Opera and Milan's La Scala as Rigoletto, and as Germont in La Traviata, is a true global star of the opera scene, about whom little or nothing is known in Serbia. The general impression is that musicians, especially highly educated ones, are left to their own devices and are forced to find their livelihood elsewhere.

EDUCATION

In Serbia, there are several higher education institutions that offer music education, from classical to jazz music (Jazz department at the Faculty of Music). When you look at the cramped stage where these musicians create and perform, the question arises: for whom are these professionals being trained? Of course, the situation has worsened in the institutions themselves, but it must be noted that, unlike some other arts, in the case of our composers, there is interest and educational support, which enables young composers to be educated and trained in accordance with global trends. This is shown by the case of Jug K. Marković, a composer who is building an international career from Belgrade, as well as numerous examples of other composers who have received esteemed international awards. However, except for a few examples, most of our successful composers do not live in Serbia and this is a trend started in the nineties. In spite of that, the scene is quite lively. The composition department, from students to lecturers, is mostly comprised of women, which is also a rare case in the world. What is missing are technological means the latest software, computers, sound laboratories, concert halls with high acoustic standards, as well as the possibility for this music to be heard more and promoted outside of closed circles and specialized festivals, such as the student event Koma or the International Review of Composers. In this respect, the world of contemporary music is very closed off and a great unknown not only to the general public, but also to the general artistic public.

It is also worth mentioning traditional music education, where there is a noticeable tendency for women to try their hand at playing instruments, such as fiddles and flutes, which were until now considered to be "taboo". This will be an interesting field for development in the future, because the coupling between patriarchal and ethnocentric factors and the need to conquer a new field of freedom is extremely dynamic and unpredictable. Also, traditional creativity in Serbia is multifaceted and multicultural – from the specific practices of the Hungarian population in Vojvodina, through the extremely significant field of Roma culture, to the very specific heritage of the Vlachs of Eastern Serbia, to name just a few.

On the other hand, in the field of instrumental music education, conservatism is noticeable, remaining in the tradition and aesthetics of the 19th century. There is a lack of younger artists, instrumentalists, who want to engage in contemporary creativity. Some ensembles related to the field of contemporary music are composed of exceptional soloists who are building their careers, both in the country and around the world, but without real institutional support or social visibility, as exemplified by the Studio6 ensemble.

Because of all this, the need for an umbrella institution, or any institution that would deal with music creation, is quite noticeable; any designated foundations – state or private – that would deal with this issue and that would support the creativity of young authors, in all genres, from classical to rock music. Perhaps the existence of a center for contemporary music creation, a concert hall that would lead an independent cultural policy and provide support for music creation would be a partial solution to these problems.

I would like to mention, however, that the general musical education of our nation is at an unenviable level and that it is a field in which great progress can be made. In this regard, it could be possible to get acquainted with traditional patterns, as well as the domains of elite, classical music. Participation in music creation should be a fundamental human right and a signifier of a free society.

CONCERT HALLS AND SPACES

As I already mentioned, "Kolarac" is shutting down and the lack of space for musical creativity is increasingly felt. There are no more famous clubs like the Academy. There is less and less room for rock music, and jazz exists within the commercialized space of "gigs" and accompanying "dinners". There is also a lack of adequate pianos in the halls, necessary for concerts – this seems like a trivial issue, but is in fact significant, and as a result, the capital of Serbia is lagging far behind other European cities. The Cultural Centre Rex and its closure was also a big blow for the alternative and experimental music scene in Belgrade, while in Novi Sad, despite all the difficulties, the CK13 Youth Center still fills that role, as one of the last bastions of alternative culture in this city, which happens to be the current capital of culture. An institution like the "Miloš Crnjanski" Cultural Center of Vojvodina does a great job in this field, as does the Cultural Center in Kragujevac. However, all this is not enough to be able to talk about a higher frequency of the musical life in Serbia.

MEDIA

Apart from the public broadcaster RTS, all other media outlets pay little attention to non-commercial music creation. Music is played on YouTube, on social media, at gigs in clubs, at individual concerts. The public broadcaster should receive greater financial support to help enable the strengthening of musical life, and other television stations should change their editorial policy. The problem of Pink is special, because the authors supported by this television, due to the number and frequency of broadcasts, have the greatest importance in terms of royalties, and here we can talk about a special connection and an attempt to suck out all the "air" from music creation, where there would be nothing which is not entirely commercial. Also, some of the musicians especially if they also have strong political affiliations - like Aca Lukas and Svetlana Ceca Ražnatović – become "bargaining chips", in addition to their musical activity, but this is a highly complex and sensitive issue.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Both in terms of the Cultural Development Strategy (where the guidelines related to the development of musical creativity are quite general, but relatively neutrally set), and in terms of the place of music in Serbia's cultural production, it is noticeable that,

for now, this artistic branch has received less public attention than visual arts, film, theater, or literature. Nationalist, chauvinist, sexist and other elements exist, but their action is localized to certain genres, certain production-media spheres and for the context of state-building kitsch. Of course, there is significant potential for the development of music that is "palatable" and "communicative", which in itself is not bad, but in a populist key, mixed with ethnocentric elements, it can produce not at all pleasant results, which could be imposed as valuable and important. The general conclusion is that the current regime is not too interested in music, especially not music related to contemporary creativity, jazz or alternative rock. Sometimes opera singers are roped in to sing at the opening of a market, as we mentioned, or a festival is supported because of personal affiliations or the possibility of turning a buck, as is the case with Exit. But, as we said, the pandemic year of 2020 led to a radical turn even in relation to lucrative concert activities. What remains is a musical practice somewhat staring into its own navel, somewhat lonely in its closedness, left to itself, without institutions, without space, in need of expression, in need of being visible and of existing in this culture. In a way, music came out of the prohibitions of art in the 20th century much earlier than other artistic branches, becoming ubiquitous and a part of everyday life. That's exactly why that part of it that pleads for the artistic process and dedicated creativity, remains especially threatened, because, as the general logic dictates, anyone can play and sing and earn a few bucks. In the future, music should be treated in a way that would allow it to develop technologically and institutionally, to resolve the issue of royalties and their distribution, to protect the independent producer – musician-performer from the storms of everyday life and the political present, and to promote the traditional creativity of all people on the territory of Serbia. Ultimately – by developing musical literacy and musical education, the fundamental ability of people to listen, and therefore to hear and appreciate, is developed, which is the basis of a healthy society based on dialogue. Briefly put, music in Serbia is divided, placed in niches, segregated from other arts, divided within itself and treated as a sign of our divisions, our sectarianism and our insurmountable differences.

CULTURE IN THE MEDIA: FROM TRADITIONALISM AND NATIONALISM TO DISRESPECTING THE LAW

Nedim Sejdinović

CULTURE IN MEDIA STRATEGIES AND LAWS

The essence of media reforms, started with the adoption of the first Media Strategy⁴¹ in September 2011, and materialized by the adoption of media laws⁴² in August 2014, is a redefinition of the relationship between the state and state bodies on the one hand, and the media scene on the other. Even though there was a change of government in Serbia in 2012, the new parliamentary majority adopted the legal solutions outlined in the strategic document of the previous government, with minor changes. The state withdrew from ownership of the media, but did not relinquish responsibility for the media scene, that is, it continued to distribute funds from its budget in the media sphere, but this time by co-financing the legally defined public interest, within the framework of

⁴¹ The Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia until 2016, Official Gazette No. 75, October 7, 2011.

⁴² The Law on Public Information and Media, the Law on Electronic Media and the Law on Public Service Broadcasting.

independent expert commissions. The idea was that in this way, the state would not be a threat to media independence, but supportive of those projects that fill the media space with quality content and content that is missing, "based on the principle of granting state aid and protecting competition, without discrimination."

Such legal solutions were welcomed by trade unions, the international community and professional domestic and foreign organizations. Unfortunately, in practice, they resulted in the opposite of what they were supposed to achieve; because, although they are good in principle, i.e. they had good potential – above all, due to the lack of rule of law and the government's desire to control the media completely and at all costs - they had a disastrous effect on public information practices in Serbia. The privatized media passed from the hands of the state to the hands of party tycoons, and the competitive co-financing mechanism, with rare exceptions, mostly turned into the financing of regime media. Even though the laws were intended to open up new horizons of media freedom and encourage media professionalism and a culture of dialogue, the exact opposite happened, leading some analysts to the conclusion that it is futile to work together on strategic documents and new legal solutions with this kind of government. That is to say that the problem of media freedom is a political problem par excellence, the solution for which hinges on the change of the authoritarian government.

As for the values that are supported from the state budget, that is, the definition of public interest in the sphere of public information, it should be noted that culture in the narrower sense is relatively well represented in legal provisions, but that in the key part it is ethnocentric, traditionalist and identitarian. For example, public interest "preserving the identity of the Serbian people and national minorities on the territory of the Republic of Serbia". At the same time, it is stated that it is necessary to support media monitoring of cultural and artistic creativity. With regard to culture in the broader sense of the word, it should be noted that the need to co-finance the protection and development of human rights and democracy, the improvement of the legal and social state, the free development of one's personality and the protection of children and young people and the development of education, among other things, has been emphasized.

In order to preserve multilingual media and support intercultural media content, certain media experts, with the support of international organizations, have been advocating since 2009 that interculturality, which implies a dynamic exchange of information and values between different cultures, should be among the defined public interests in the comprehensive media law, the Law on Public Information and Media. It seemed in the beginning that this would not be a problem for the simple reason that the importance of interculturality for multicultural and multilingual societies such as Serbia is unquestionable. But that is only the case in theory. Resistance soon arose, and in the end this word was banished from the media legislation. It is difficult to determine whether the majority or a minority of the political elite is responsible for this, but the fact remains that none of them protested. In fact, they made this decision through mutual agreement, which they did not even hide from the public. Information in the languages of national minorities and the preservation of minority cultures and languages can be a part of the public interest, but not as a connective tissue important for society, one that connects minorities and the majority, and minorities with each other, that enables communication between different opinions and ideas, and that fights against ghettoization and self-ghettoization, promoting mutually intertwined diversity as an invigorating asset. A connective tissue that is particularly important for societies burdened by xenophobia and different forms of nationalism, societies that have emerged wounded from bloody inter-ethnic conflicts not so long ago.

This refusal to define interculturality as a public interest perhaps more than anything else testifies to the characteristics of our society, where elites of the majority and minorities cooperate exclusively on the basis of interest, while in reality ethnic and cultural distances are preserved and further reinforced. The good news is that in the recommendations within the new Media Strategy,⁴³ it is stated that it is necessary to recognize interculturality as a public interest. However, it remains to be seen whether this also become part of the legislation, and a particularly significant question is whether this – with this kind of law implementation – will have an adequate qualitative effect in reality in the media.

As far as culture in the sphere of electronic media is concerned, the role of the regulator, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), is extremely important. It is supposed to ensure media pluralism and media professionalism, as well as an adequate amount of cultural content in electronic public media, through tenders for awarding broadcast licenses, i.e. by allocating airwaves as a national asset, and by monitoring the work of broadcasters. It should also manage the overall cultural values promoted by electronic media. There is no need to comment on the infamously disastrous results of the work of this body, in a situation where national broadcasters - who on a daily basis, in the most drastic way, violate laws, regulations and ethical standards, spread nationalistic hate speech, misinformation and conspiracy theories – are continuously granted permission to operate. Cultural content has almost completely disappeared from electronic media, unless it is ideologically suitable to be included in the

⁴³ The Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2020–2025, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 11, 7 February 2020.

regime's propaganda system, or it is a mixture of traditionalism, nationalism, junk and kitsch.

Looking at public media services (Radio Television of Serbia and Radio Television of Vojvodina), they have a whole range of legal obligations in the field of culture, understood both in a broader and narrower sense. From encouraging a culture of public dialogue, when different views are expressed equally in all areas of society, through the already mentioned protection of the "cultural identity of the Serbian people and national minorities", to encouraging cultural and artistic creativity. Although in competition with other nationally broadcast electronic media, public media services seem close to professionalism and somewhat washed-up, it is still clear that the culture of public dialogue has been abolished there, that almost the entire production is harnessed to the needs of propaganda for the regime and the dominant cultural model, which implies traditionalism and nationalism. Numerous critical public figures from various social fields do not have access to the public media service, events that do not have the required tone of arbitrarily determined "national cultural values of the Serbian people" are rarely covered, and there is especially a lack of content that implies a critical culture of remembrance and, in general, critical thinking. In this sense, nationalist and self-victimizing content is dominant.

MEDIA IN THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

Self-victimization is perhaps the key word of the extremely problematic Cultural Strategy,⁴⁴ adopted in February 2020, which is the legacy of the controversial and nationalist Minister of Culture and Information Vladan Vukosavljević, known for numerous scandals and attacks on journalists and public figures.

⁴⁴ Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia from 2020to 2029, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, adopted 13 February 2020.

In contrast to media laws and strategies, where the key problem is their bizarre implementation, this document, in itself, to a good extent, is anti-modern and against recent civilizational values. Some even say that it is medieval. In addition to self-victimization, the key word is "genocide", which refers exclusively to crimes against the Serbian people. In this sense, content that thematizes the position of "the remainder of a slaughtered people", as the poet Matija Bećković "picturesquely" put it, is encouraged, while content that has a critical stance towards social and political processes, authorities, desecularization and dominant ideologies is excluded.

Even though the Strategy is not fully or formally in force, i.e. not all laws have been changed yet in accordance with what it prescribes, it is clear that the Strategy is being applied in practice, as evidenced by the (increased) abundance of diverse nationalist, traditionalist and self-victimizing cultural content, which contain what is clearly propaganda and are financed by the state budget. The Strategy is also in line with the current policy of the "Serbian World" and it defines the "Serbian cultural core" and "a cultural space that includes more than the territory of the Republic of Serbia", practically the "Serbian cultural space", identifying it with the "Serbian political space" in the context of "connecting the Serbian cultural space". Certain cultural experts have assessed that this document is "a reflection of the current political nationalism that is present every day in the media". In addition, in the Strategy, the legacy of the Serbian Orthodox Church is declared as being superior, and it is known that a large part of the meager funds from the budget intended for culture goes to "sacred" cultural content, although in reality funds for this are available from other sources, primarily from the church.

During the discussion about this document, as in previous cases when cultural policies were discussed, the cultural public

was largely concerned with the percentage of the budget allocated to culture, which is indeed inappropriately small, but perhaps the more important question is how these funds are distributed. They are distributed in a way that the culture that contains critical thought, that is, a critical stance towards society and its past, is completely marginalized, as demonstrated by several scandals, either those involving the financing of films, or those pertaining to book purchasing.

Although the Strategy states that culture is not sufficiently represented in the media, the mechanisms for filling this information gap have not been identified. In the meantime, the Ministry of Culture and Information supplemented the existing media competitions for co-financing with a tender for media content that promotes culture, and this year it spent RSD 30 million for this purpose. Which is good news, but... The results of the competition show that mostly small media or productions are supported, and that the content of the funded projects is mostly predetermined, traditional and not communicative. There is a lack of critical content. It is interesting that the media, which are critical of the government, and which participated in this competition, have opted for the promotion of the dominant cultural model.

The fact is that, in contrast to participating in the adoption of media strategies and laws, the international community and international organizations were not overly interested in cultural strategies and laws that define the field of culture. As a result, they have passed under the radar of a good part of the non-governmental sector in Serbia, which should also be dealing with these issues. In the opinion of many, this is an extremely wrong assessment, because the field of culture influences the direction society is heading in, as much as the media does, and in the long term even more. In addition, recent, communicative, modernculture and creative sectors can contribute to poverty reduction, conflict prevention, reconciliation, and encourage social cohesion and local development, especially if they are accompanied by quality and professional media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that media and cultural policies are intertwined, and that the issue of culture in the media and promoting culture and cultural values in the media should be approached with mutual communication and coordination between all important stakeholders, which has not been the case so far. We should bear in mind that traditional media can be treated as a cultural asset, provided that they are open, committed to professionalism, the promotion of recent cultural and social values, and a critical examination of the past and present, while on the other hand, media, i.e. new media, are the field of contemporary cultural and artistic creativity. The Strategy states that there will be changes to the media laws in accordance with this document, although it is unclear what exactly these changes foresee. Even though the topic of culture in the media is approached in the current Media Strategy, in terms of the variety of programs, it seems that not enough necessary attention has not been paid to it.

We pointed out earlier that it is very difficult in the existing political circumstances to change reality and practice by changing the law, and especially by adopting strategic documents. It is impossible and paradoxical to force someone to respect the law by changing the law, at a time when the rule of law is collapsing. Nevertheless, if we look at things in the long term, in the hope that political circumstances will change, recommendations for improving the level and quality of the presentation of culture and cultural values in the media by improving the quality of the media themselves, by amending existing strategic and legal documents in the field of culture and public information, include the following:

- It is necessary to urgently adopt a new cultural strategy, since the existing one is anti-modern, confusing, i.e. it fails to contribute to the development of culture and society. Adopting a new strategy must be widely inclusive.
- During the amendment of media laws and laws in the field of culture, as well as the preparation of appropriate strategic documents, it cooperation between participation of all relevant factors is necessary: from media and cultural associations, state institutions, through other interested civil society associations, all the way to universities, experts and international associations, is necessary.
- It is necessary for the state to find funds that will continuously finance and stimulate the promotion of missing cultural content and the promotion of contemporary cultural values in the media, and these values should be harmonized with the values of the European Union, given that Serbia is on the European path towards accession.
- It is necessary for the state, with the possible help of international institutions and associations, to support the education of journalists in the field of reporting on culture, considering the fact that the level of knowledge in the media in this field is at a very low level. It is also necessary to find funds for the education of persons from cultural institutions and organizations for communication with the media and the general public.

- It is necessary to find funds for media promotion of the completely marginalized alternative culture in Serbia, as an opposite to the established canon in culture and art.
- In the amendments to media laws, it is important to include in the public interest in the sphere of public information, in addition to interculturality, that is, the promotion of cultural diversity, a critical culture of remembrance, a culture of public dialogue, tolerance, cross-border cultural cooperation and the promotion of inter-ethnic reconciliation in the region. This applies to the strategic document in the field of culture, as well as to other relevant documents.
- It is necessary to find mechanisms that will stimulate multilingual media and media content, with the aim of increasing the level of interculturality in the media and society. It is very important, precisely because of multilingual media and media content, that interculturality is legally defined as a public interest that will be co-financed through tenders, as proposed in the Media Strategy.
- At all levels, the state should ensure that expert, independent and highly professional persons are on the commissions that evaluate media projects during tenders for co-financing projects of public interest in the sphere of public information. This also applies to media projects that aim to promote culture.
- The regulatory authority for electronic media should be obliged to periodically monitor and evaluate the quality and quantity of cultural content in electronic media, especially on public media services and electronic media with national broadcasting. These reports should be an occasion for public discussions on this topic, with the participation of

representatives of institutions and relevant cultural, media and other civil society organizations.

• It is necessary for the state to find funds, possibly with support from international funds, for the digitalization of media content and archives, with the possibility of unhindered access to the digital archive, given that this content can be valued, not only as informative, but also as a cultural asset.

LANGAUGE AND CULTURE

Svenka Savić

WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

Starting from the notion that it is not possible to define language unambiguously, as almost every definition and every theoretical approach is partially correct, that is, partially flawed. In this approach, we are referring to a common language, according to the Declaration on the Common Language (which bears a different name in each country, based on its constitution). It is not the Serbian language from which other languages in the region emerged, as some current Serbian language scholars claim, but a common language that was used in the states of the former Yugoslavia, which now is referred to as: Croatian in Croatia, Serbian in Serbia, Montenegrin in Montenegro, etc. Given that Serbia, like other countries of the Western Balkans, applied for EU accession, the orientation from the Declaration on the Common Language is a good theoretical basis for what should happen in the future - the convergence of individual state expressions of a common language. This can be done in different ways, one of which will be demonstrated using the example of gender-sensitive language.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITIES

For this reason, the arguments presented here, which are related to culture and other components of identity, should help us

understand why it is positive and healing to consider language issues in Serbia in a regional context – as the property of those who use a common language in now different countries on what used to be Yugoslav territory. Unfortunately, in Serbia today, this approach is supported by minority of language experts.

The current point of view (mainly among Serbian language scholars) is that language is directly related to national identity, and national identity is only one of its other components (gender, sex, age, education, profession and many others), which puts the relationship of language into a much broader cultural basis for joint action in the process of accession to the European Union.

The second point of view that I advocate is that it is important in Serbia and in the countries of the Western Balkans not to put monolingualism and mononationality first, but multilingualism, i.e. bilingualism, and in Vojvodina trilingualism (the mother tongue, the language of the environment and the foreign language, which are equally important because we are connecting with the EU). The language strategy in Serbia should be to turn to others through language, which is a sure way towards the future of language as a cultural matrix in our country.

HOW IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE STATE DETERMINED?

In Serbia, however, the Law on Official Use of Languages and Scripts was passed immediately after the independence of individual states from Yugoslav territory, according to which the following are used in the Republic of Serbia: 1. The Serbian language, 2. Ekavian variants, 3. Cyrillic script.

The Law on Official Use of Languages and Scripts is not in accordance with the Declaration on the Common Language from 2018; on the contrary, the Law does not emphasize commonality, but particularities related to the dominant group of citizens in the state (which is not the only group), so its determinant is *Serbian*.

In the discussion that has been going on for several decades, two views have been formed when it comes to the *script*: those who believe that the importance of both scripts, Cyrillic and Latin, should be recognized in official use, because both are forms of valuable cultural heritage (Bugarski, Filipović, Klajn, Savić), and those who favor a single, Cyrillic script (see the text by Pavel Domonji in this publication). The discussion about the importance of both scripts is a lengthy (and sometimes unnecessary) one, because numerous concrete examples from current practice, as well as from historical heritage, confirm the importance of both scripts. That is why I am advocating that in the future, the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia state that, in addition to the name common language, both scripts (Cyrillic and Latin) be used equally in official use. Because standardization refers to the script that provides written information for future generations (the current proposal states that Cyrillic is the "native" and "historical" script of the Serbian people and an important part of their identity, which is only partially true).

In the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2029, the issue of language is viewed differently from the one presented here. That is why I am advocating that in the next decade, equal attention be paid to the use of both scripts, which are important, especially in official use (in administration and the media, but also in education), as well as that attention be turned to the common language and its use in the region, not only in the function of daily communication, but also in the farreaching perspective of reconciliation, cooperation and mutual respect in the region.

While some believe that the use of the Latin script has taken over in Serbia, and that special attention is needed for the primacy of the use of the Cyrillic script (so that it does not become forgotten), there is no reliable data on the real use of the two scripts *nowadays* in the private and official sphere, in different genres, by different groups of citizens, in the digital sphere and beyond. A detailed research of this issue in relation to discourse and genre should still show data from usage practice (of course, taking into account that even today in Serbia, 10 percent or more of the population are illiterate, so intensive work on literacy in both scripts is needed).

STRATEGY FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC SPHERE

The standardization of language is a process realized in several successive stages, but it is never finished (and it implies: setting the rules of the standard language; the period when such rules are applied; the achieved use review period; followed by the (re)formulation (prompted by data from the application of those rules and the process is renewed again). A standard language implies official and public use in administration, information, education, science etc. However, there is no clearly defined boundary between private and public, or between official and unofficial language use. That would be another domain of research with the hypothesis that the binary division into public and private, i.e. official and unofficial, is difficult to sustain (because, for example, members of the Serbian parliament swear at each other profusely, spew hate speech and use expressions inadmissible for the public and official sphere). A future strategy should be based on detailed research on language use in various discourse situations. Relying on certain historical facts or mythical heritage will not bring valid results in the future.

That is why we say that the process is never finished. Different theories exist, depending on which certain results can be expected. At the moment, the least regulated (standardized) part is the part that refers to the *use* of language in different written and spoken genres, administrative, educational, or media spheres. In Serbia, the use of language is mainly dealt with by those who focus on *interdisciplinary* theories and methods (such as discourse analysis, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics), which have been relevant in linguistics since the second half of the 20th century. No one theory is comprehensive, or the best, or superior to the others, but they are all powerful in explaining the interdependence of society and language, and especially of certain social groups within a linguistic community. Unlike them, the structuralist theory of language is powerless to explain this complexity of use and is therefore unusable.

We can contribute to the standardization of language use if we choose one of the many theories, such as the theory of spoken (language) activity (Grice, Searle), according to which the use of linguistic and non-linguistic verbal messages takes place between interlocutors in a given context. We are referring to an inventory of possibilities, and not just a single standardized possibility, for specific use of a language expression, depending on who the interlocutors are and their context. The *context* plays a crucial role in the speaker's decision for a certain choice, that is, for the interpretation of the meaning of a statement of the interlocutor. More precisely, we are not talking about whether a language choice is correct or incorrect, good or bad, which is the case with the structuralist theory established globally at the beginning of the 20th century, and in Serbia in the 1960s (represented by the majority of Serbian language scholars in Serbia, and which was criticized in our country and in the region, not only in linguistic but also philosophical literature (see the collection of works "Language could care less")).

It is always important to emphasize from which theoretical position one approaches the explanation of the *languageuse* standardization process, in order to avoid the possibility of forming the opinion that only one theory of language is true and good (in the case of certain active Serbian language scholars in Serbia, it is the structuralist theory), more precisely, we must emphasize that interdisciplinary approaches to the standardization of language use are more remedial and effective than other (monodisciplinary) approaches if we want to encompass the complex nature of language.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE STANDARDIZATION PROCESS OF THE SERBIAN LANGUAGE AS CULTURAL HERITAGE?

Although some linguists give primacy to themselves as experts in dealing with and deciding on language standardization, we can say that members of the language of all ages (children, youth, adults, seniors) who consider it their own take part in that process. Of course, the institutions of the system are also important, since the way in which standardization will be implemented depends on them (through legislation), and political decisions on language policy are crucial. For we must keep in mind that the outcome of everything is always a political question about language in a given social context. And the same goes for the process of making a strategy on the development of language as a part of culture.

THE STANDARDIZATION PROCESS OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE USE IS CONNECTED TO THE BASIC POLITICAL VALUES IN THE COUNTRY

This means that any standardization is based on a general political and social point of view. If we look at the circumstances in the previous century, when Yugoslavia was formed (1918), the situation, as far as language and script are concerned, was focused on the togetherness and unity of three peoples (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes). There was a similar political perspective in Yugoslavia after the World War Two, when there was a clear emphasis on the brotherhood and unity of all nations and nationalities, so the basic language policy affirmed the equality of all languages of those nations and nationalities. However, after the formation of independent states from the unified Yugoslav space and the unified Serbo-Croatian language space, individual states were formed and their respective names were chosen for the official language. Thus, the Law on Official Use of Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Serbia stipulates the name of the language (Serbian), the chosen script (Cyrillic) and the pronunciation (Ekavian).

THE LAW ON OFFICIAL USE OF LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS SHOULD BE CHANGED

Groups of Serbian language scholars gathered around the Board for Standardization of the Serbian Language and Matica Srpska advocate for a change in the Law on the Official Use of Languages in Serbia, towards a greater connection between language and *national* and cultural identity. The second group, represented by linguists (focused on theoretical issues of language use and competent in researching different languages typologically) seeks a change in the Law, starting from the position of connecting official and public use (of language) with *others* in the region. It is necessary to reconcile the explanations of those two views for the benefit of building peace and trust between nations and between different generations of their citizens.

In our case, the proposal refers to the equal use of two scripts, i.e. the abolition of the provision that Cyrillic is the Serbian script, because it does not correspond to the historical truth, and the equal use of other relevant languages from the common corpus (as argued by Ranko Bugarski). The best example for such a different strategy can be shown on the example of another important identity feature, which is **gender** – more precisely, on the use of gender-sensitive language.

THE LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED CONSISTENTLY

In 2021, the Law on Gender Equality in the Republic of Serbia was adopted, and thus it was proposed to introduce gender-sensitive language into the practice of official language use in the public sphere in institutions and organizations. The Law is clear about this, but there is resistance in practice, primarily in bodies that "tackle" language, such as the Board for Standardization of the Serbian Language or the Department of Language and Literature of Matica Srpska, which associate the official use of language and script mainly with (Serbian) nationality as it refers to the nation's majority. Other functions of language were not assessed as essential for the identity of citizens.

However, language is as much a national feature as other components of overall identity (such as professional or gender components). Nationality is a possible and important feature, but not the only or most important one. Depending on the context and life situation, the importance of the mother tongue and official use also changes (for example, those who live in the diaspora, or who are outside of Serbia for a longer or shorter period of time – and according to the latest population census, their number is not small). When a language is standardized, all components of the language are taken into account both in relation to those who live in the state and in relation to those who are outside it.

OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC LANGUAGE USE IN SERBIA IS OFTEN DISCRIMINATORY

Gender Sensitive Language (GST). During the last few years, in discussions about the meaning and importance of gendersensitive language (GSL) standardization, there has been a divergence primarily between Serbian language experts and others, who look at language from an interdisciplinary perspective and have insight into global linguistic trends, and in particular, in the European context (M. Bašaragin, R. Bugarski, J. Filipović, S. Savić, M. Stevanović, S. Tomić and others). It is actually the domain of language use where the languages of the region converge. During the last three decades, this group has presented a lot of empirical data from different written and spoken genres, speakers of different ages, which prove the importance of using GSL, not only now, but also during previous historical periods of language use, as a link between speakers in the region (that is, in the now independent states of the Yugoslav space).

For this reason, it is important that, within the framework of the work on an alternative strategy of culture, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights organizes a group for language issues, connected with the basic idea of *diversity* expressed through language, and thus shows to what extent this approach is already in use in domestic linguistics and in language practice. We are referring to the languages that arose from Serbo-Croatian, for which a new common term was offered – SHBCG languages – to mark that commonality with language as well (Paul/Louis Thoman).

What is the *practice* of applying the language in official use like? It depends on which part of official use we are looking at. If one listens to the speeches of female and male MPs during the session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (in a television broadcast that can be followed by all citizens), one can gather numerous examples of intolerance, discrimination, sexism, hate speech (with a lot of swearing and cursing). In addition, numerous non-verbal messages (for example, MP Šešelj displays a minister's pink panties in her presence, with the aim of humiliating her), but also with plenty of attempts to fight.

Several laws define penalties for this type of behavior in public space, and those who are tasked with implementing them should do so. The future Cultural Development Strategy should develop mechanisms to suppress this type of linguistic and nonverbal behavior – in the media as well, where it is already an established practice that pro-government media outlets, especially those that can be classified as tabloids, spread different forms of hatred, including through texts and photos, both of which are a part of the language.

The data also confirms the spread of unacceptable hate speech and discrimination (sexism and other forms of degrading women) in various public spaces and the media. We would like to note that only a part of this unacceptable speech is available to the general public, more precisely what MPs say into the microphone – during the television broadcast, all the murmuring and interruptions of the speaker cannot be heard, but we also include this in discriminatory speech (which can be heard from MPs of the ruling party during speeches by opposition MPs). Until now, discriminatory speech and hate speech in the National Assembly in Belgrade have been scientifically analyzed in several time segments – the conclusion remains the same: in three decades, such speech has increased, irrespective of the fact that it is regulated by several laws (the Law on Language, the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Public Speech).

Against ageism. Numerous studies show various linguistic forms of discrimination against the elderly, and the corpus is particularly rich in the Serbian language when it comes to older women (*baka, baba, babetina...*)

Against juvenism. The forms of discrimination against young people are also numerous, both in the official and the public sphere, as well as among peers. It is unacceptable for juvenism to appear in official use and public discourse in institutions, especially in educational institutions, but we still don't know much about it, with valid research still lacking. A future cultural strategy should focus on the overall behavior of society towards young people and, as part of that, on the discriminatory behavior of adults using language in institutions.

Against ethnicism. Plenty has been written against all forms of ethnic, racial and national discrimination in domestic linguistics (most often it concerns members of the Roma and Jewish groups, but also those in Vojvodina, who have been part of the population for many years (such as the unacceptable expression "Zuska" used to denote Slovak women or Hungarian women...). A future cultural strategy should use existing data as an argument for determining sanctions. That is why female representatives of national councils should participate in the establishment of the Cultural Development Strategy in Vojvodina.

Against ableism. Discrimination against young and adult women and men with disabilities became obvious primarily due to the inconsistent terminology in official use (handicapped persons, the infirm, etc.). International associations for people with disabilities have made proposals for terms (in English), and in Serbia there are also competent people who deal with this within the language of the region (Mima Ružičić, Svjetla Timotić, Veronika Mitro, Marijana Čanak, to name just a few).

Discrimination against other groups of male and female citizens is also not allowed: against refugees, against displaced persons, against migrants, and it requires a linguistic revision in official use when a cultural strategy for the future is drawn up.

It can be stated that forms of language discrimination against "others" and "those who are different" are retained in public communication out of ignorance, but much more often they are retained out of indecency in public communication, which is one of the indicators of how politically and generally civilized people are the Republic of Serbia is (which is especially visible in the tabloid and government-affiliated press, but also on similar portals, on various social media, and in public discourse on various TV stations). The strategy should thus offer a mechanism to prevent such practices.

* * *

We can conclude that the standardization of language as a cultural process is an open, never finished process, in which changes are needed at this time when it comes to the process of Serbia's accession to the European Union, together with other countries of the Western Balkans. In other words, insisting on the only language being the one that is associated with nationality needs to stop.

The process of rapprochement of all Western Balkans countries to the EU is common and long-lasting. In it, the process of rapprochement between countries takes place in terms of language, with the use of a common language – this is the path towards the homogenization of both societies and the mentioned space in order to create, peace, security, and trust in the development of all. Because almost all of us believe that language is a reflection of reality – if in reality this process of approximation takes place, then it is language that governs it.

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EQUALITY OF SCRIPTS OFFERS MORE FREEDOM

Pavel Domonji

The Ministry of Culture and Information prepared, and the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted in February 2020 the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020– –2029.⁴⁵ This document sets strategic priorities for the next tenyear period. Improving and protecting the Cyrillic alphabet is one of those priorities.

The basic starting point of the Strategy is as follows: Cyrillic is the native and historical script of the Serbian people and an important part of its identity. As a living and productive script, the Cyrillic alphabet, it is emphasised in this document, contributes to the cultural diversity of contemporary Europe, it connects Serbian culture with the culture of ancient Greece and Byzantium, as well as with a large number of Slavic peoples.

The Strategy's task is to raise awareness of the significance and importance of the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as to improve its presence in the public space.

The desired improvement should be achieved in several ways – *by creating new institutions,* in this case the Council for the Serbian Language; *incentive measures* that should ensure the hegemonic

⁴⁵ Readers can get acquainted with the Cultural Development Strategy of Serbia at the following address: <u>https://www.kultura.gov.rs/extfile/sr/3993/strategija-razvoja-kulture-od-2020--do-2029-godine.pdf</u>.

status of the Cyrillic script in the public space, and which will encourage business entities, media, publishers or non-governmental actors to use the Cyrillic script; *by improving the legal framework* – proposed amendments to the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts, as well as *the expansion of teaching programmes* with contents that promote the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script.

With the Cultural Development Strategy, and even more with the proposed amendments to the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts, the Ministry of Culture and Information met the demands of a number of Serbian linguists, members of the academic community, political actors and non-governmental associations to provide the Cyrillic script with a privileged position in the public space. In their opinion, the Cyrillic script is endangered and on the verge of disappearing.

Speaking about the Cultural Development Strategy, the then Minister of Culture V. Vukosavljević stated that no one in Serbia would be using the Cyrillic script in two or three decades.⁴⁶ In a prognostic sense, this is a worthless and completely useless statement; in the ideological-political sense, it legitimises the proposed amendments to the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts. If the legislator were to adopt the proposed amendments, then at least two things would be achieved: *firstly*, the official use of the Cyrillic script would be expanded to the point after which any discussion about the official and public use of the script would become meaningless. This is certainly a desirable result, because, according to Minister Vukosavljević, this unnecessary and artificial division was made only in Serbia, while in all other

^{46 &}quot;In a few decades it could happen that no one uses the Cyrillic alphabet anymore", RTRS, 24 February 2017, available at: https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest. php?id=243709.

countries official and public use are synonymous⁴⁷ and, *secondly*, the freedom of citizens to use the script of their choice in public space would be limited.

For nationalists and a part of Serbian language scholars, the division into official and public use of the language and script is controversial because it enables the presence (and expansion) of the Latin script in the public space, so keeping that division is one of the main causes of the underrepresentation of the Cyrillic script.⁴⁸ Those linguists who cited digraphia as "our advantage" also contributed to such an unsatisfactory situation. Instead of protecting the Serbian language and script, they opened the door for the penetration of the Latin script, so they too, according to nationalists, are responsible for the rapid disappearance of the "Serbian script".⁴⁹

48 The division into official and public use of scripts is false and leads, according to Minister Vukosavljević, to the decreasing use of the Cyrillic alphabet. "Vukosavljević: We are not against the Latin script, we preserve the Cyrillic script", Radio Television of Vojvodina, 3 August 2018, available at: https:// www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/drustvo/vukosavljevic-nismo-protiv-latinice-cuvamocirilicu_939519.html.

Momčilo Mirić, president of the Association for the Defence of Cyrillic Alphabet "Dobrica Erić", believes that the Latin script should be removed from public use. "The law on the protection of the Cyrillic alphabet will bear fruit", Patriot portal, 7 August 2018, available at: https://patriot.name/ miric-zakon-za-zastitu-cirilice-ce-uroditi-plodom/.

^{47 &}quot;Amendments to the law protecting the Cyrillic alphabet forwarded to the Government", 021 portal, 25 July 2018, available at: https://www.021.rs/story/ Info/Srbija/193265/Izmene-zakona-kojima-se-stiti-cirilica-prosledjene-Vladi. html.

⁴⁹ Linguists have become the standard-bearers of the termination of the Cyrillic script, they are, says Dragoljub Zbiljić, the key leaders in erasing the script.
"Fight for the Cyrillic alphabet: There are few fighters for the Serbian alphabet", Srbin Info portal, 5 January 2016, available at: <u>https://srbin.info/kultura/</u>borba-za-cirilicu-malo-je-boraca-za-srpsko-pismo./

Sometimes the public gets the impression that the greater presence of the Latin alphabet is the result of some planned and deliberate action, undertaken with the aim of undermining the cultural identity of the Serbs.⁵⁰ In contrast to such conspiratorial scenarios are the daily choices of the citizens of Serbia. According to Ernest Renan, the nation is a daily plebiscite and every day, when they pick up a pen to write a telegram or fill out a form, the citizens of Serbia opt by plebiscite for the Latin alphabet. Apart from this, there are other reasons favouring the spread of the Latin alphabet. Latin is, for example, simpler and cheaper, it facilitates movement through the world of technological innovations, it is not possible to learn English without it, etc.

Nationalist-oriented linguists, however, ignore the practice and everyday choices of people. For them, language and writing are never just means of communication, but also strong national symbols. The Cyrillic alphabet is thus a recognisable sign of Serbian identity, it is "our basic identity mark" and therefore its suppression is never just a matter of greater or lesser presence in public communication, but also a matter of preserving national identity.

Perhaps one remark should be made at this point: a script, like a language, has no nationality. A writing system, simply put, is not a constitutive element of a nation. Members of different nations can use one script, and the same is true with language. As an example for the first case, we could cite Serbs and Macedonians, and for the second case, Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks and

^{50 &}quot;Is the Cyrillic alphabet endangered in Serbia?", Radio Free Europe, 26 August 2018, available at: https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/most-srbijacirilica/29452881.html. "Latin alphabet and 'Anglo-Serbian' suppress the Cyrillic alphabet", RTRS, 24 February 2016, available at: https://lat.rtrs.tv/ vijesti/vijest.php?id=189630.

[&]quot;What does the EU have against the Cyrillic alphabet?", portal of the Forum of Belgrade Gymnasiums, 7 July 2017, available at: <u>http://www.fbg.org.rs/</u><u>sta-ima-eu-protiv-cirilice/</u>.

Montenegrins. Of course, foreign examples are also possible. Scripts, says Ranko Bugarski, do not belong to nations, but to languages, and languages, again, are not the "property" of nations, but of their speakers, no matter what nationality they are.⁵¹

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights must insist on the above-mentioned position and solutions that give individuals more choices, unlike those hinted at in the Strategy or proposed in public. In addition, the constitutional norm must be taken into account. When offering appropriate solutions, one should take into account Article 20 of the Constitution, which states that the level of human and minority rights reached cannot be reduced.

Article 10 of the Constitution, which states that the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet are in official use in the Republic of Serbia, is often mentioned in public. If this position were to be supplemented after the word *official*, as it was proposed, with the words "*and public*",⁵² it would contribute to a greater presence of the Cyrillic alphabet in the public sphere, but it would not be in accordance with Article 20 of the Constitution.

As a human rights organisation, the Helsinki Committee should offer an alternative and much better wording. I suggest that the wording reads as follows: In the Republic of Serbia, the Serbian language is in official use. Cyrillic and Latin scripts are equal scripts.

I believe that the Committee (in the alternative cultural development strategy, but also in the adoption of a new constitution, when the issue comes to the fore) must insist on this formulation

⁵¹ "Dr Ranko Bugarski, linguist: The Cyrillic alphabet is not existentially threatened. It cannot and will not disappear", Buka portal, 30 August 2018, available at: <u>https://www.6yka.com/novosti/dr-ranko-bugarski-lingvista-cirilica-nije-egzistencijalno-ugrozena-ona-ne-moze-i-nece-nestati</u>.

^{52 &}quot;Vladislav Đorđević: Public use of the Cyrillic alphabet", website of the Serbian Movement Dveri, available at: <u>https://dveri.rs/2019/12/03/51706/</u> <u>vladislav-dordevic-javna-upotreba-cirilice</u>

for several reasons: first, it does not diminish the level of human and minority rights reached; secondly, freedom of expression is respected, and this is not possible if it does not also refer to the choice of the writing system and, thirdly, this solution enables everyone to use the script of their choice – in all three fields of writing system usage: private, public and official. It is always better for citizens when the Constitution contains solutions that enable more freedom – not less. Finally, the threads of freedom that bind the individual to the chosen script are much stronger than coercion and any state interventionism.

If the Ministry of Culture and Information cares about the greater presence of the Cyrillic alphabet in the public space, it can influence individuals to use the Cyrillic alphabet more often through enlightenment and moral appeal, but then it does not need any Cultural Development Strategy for such a thing.

I must use this opportunity to emphasize to several other things. Firstly: in the Strategy, Serbian culture is defined as pluralistic: it is Slavic, Byzantine, and Balkan. Therefore, it belongs to different "cultural-civilization ranges", and its character is heroic, open, democratic and enlightened-European. ⁵³ The question is: How is it that an enlightened, open and democratic culture cannot accept the Latin alphabet as an equal script? How is it possible that within a democratic and European culture, the choice of the vast majority of citizens is rejected with contempt? What kind of culture is it that is ready to reduce the rights of its citizens in the name of nationalistic dogmas? And, finally, if the Strategy is determined to preserve cultural diversity, and cultural diversity implies the possibility of different identity choices, what choice do individuals have if the Cyrillic script is imposed on them by force of law? The

⁵³ Government of the Republic of Serbia, Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 13 February 2020, available at: <u>https://www.kultura.gov.rs/</u> <u>extfile/sr/3993/strategija-razvoja-kulture-od-2020--do-2029-godine.pdf</u>.

authoritarianism of Serbian culture is not mentioned at all in the text of the Strategy. After all, this is not even necessary, because the manner of solving the "Cyrillic alphabet problem" shows a preference for authoritarian solutions.

One other thing is also interesting. While the Strategy calls for a lively and productive dialogue between different cultural actors, in reality, language and script are turning into a proving ground for intensified political struggles and cultural war. And in that war, those whose demands are met by the Strategy strip their opponents of all dignity, they apostrophise them as "quasi-elite", "Soros' commissars" and "Other-Serbia's commissars", "Cyrillophobes", "auto-chauvinist kulturtraegers", "Brussels Serbs"⁵⁴, etc., and accuse them of treating traditional Serbia, its values and symbols with contempt and derision.⁵⁵ If the "Other Serbia" holds in its hands "the very heart of Serbian culture"⁵⁶ and if the "comprador fifth column... is working on our disappearance and obliteration",⁵⁷ then

- 55 "Other-Serbians against the Cyrillic alphabet", Politika, 23 June 2017, available at: <u>http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/383521/Pogledi/</u> <u>Drugosrbijanci-protiv-cirilice</u>.
- 56 "Antonić: Why some Serbs are bothered by the Cyrillic alphabet", Srbin Info portal, 13 June 2017, available at: <u>https://srbin.info/pocetna/aktuelno/</u> <u>antonic-zasto-nekim-srbima-smeta-cirilica/?lang=lat</u>.
- 57 "Antonić: The imperial ambitions of "Bosnian" and "Croatian" can only be stopped if Serbs in the Republika Srpska use the Cyrillic alphabet", Sve o

⁵⁴ In addition to the above, the following names are also used in the public: "Atlantist kulturtraegers", "Other-Serbian autochauvinists". All of them are characterised by "antipathy towards the Cyrillic alphabet" and "selfdenial of national identity and values from the past". See: "Other-Serbians against Cyrillic", Politika, 23 June 2017, available at: <u>http://www.politika.rs/ scc/clanak/383521/Pogledi/Drugosrbijanci-protiv-cirilice;</u> "Antonić: Why some Serbs are bothered by the Cyrillic alphabet", Srbin Info portal, 13 June 2017, available at: <u>https://srbin.info/pocetna/aktuelno/antonic-zasto nekim-srbima-smeta-cirilica/?lang=lat;</u> See: "We have forgotten the Serbian language and our culture", available at: <u>https://www.ekspres.net/knjizevnost/</u> zaboravili-smo-srpski-jezik-i-svoju-kulturu;

what kind of dialogue can there be? And what kind of stimulating atmosphere for dialogue?

Finally, the Cultural Development Strategy talks about the Serbian cultural space. It should be pointed out that the cultural space is not identical to the territory of Serbia, but is much wider and includes all those spaces where members of the Serbian people live, and which are marked both by the active presence of Serbian culture and Serbian heritage, as well as by efforts to preserve and improve the national identity.

Insisting on connecting the Serbian cultural space and the unity of the nation has its own political implications, which should also be taken into account. In the Republika Srpska, the emphasis is shifting from the unique historical cultural space to the unity of the people, in order to legitimise the irredentist efforts for unification with Serbia. During the commemoration of the Day of Serb Unity, Freedom and the National Flag, the envoy of the President of Serbia, Minister of Defence Aleksandar Vulin, issued a challenge to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, saying in Banja Luka: "We are one political nation".⁵⁸ This means that Belgrade, as the centre of political loyalty of Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, will not only manage the cultural, but also the political space in which Serbs live and act, and no one, including BiH authorities, will look favourably on such ambitions.

Srpskoj, 16 August 2018, available at: <u>https://sveosrpskoj.com/komentari/</u> antonic-imperijalne-ambicije-bosanskog-i-hrvatskog-mogu-biti-zaustavljenesamo-ako-srbi-u-rs-koriste-cirilicu/?script=lat.

^{58 &}quot;Vulin, Dodik and Cvijanović: We look forward to joint successes", Radio Television of Serbia portal, 15 September 2020, available at: <u>https://www.rts. rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/4080502/srbija-republika-srpska-dan-jedinstva.html</u>.

THE ISSUES OF COMPLEXITY, PLURALITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN CULTURAL POLICIES

Goran Tomka

INTRODUCTION

In Serbia, the implementation of explicit cultural policies - those that openly deal with the field of culture – is rarely determined by clear, transparent documents in the form of strategies, plans and programs. Minister after minister, regardless of party affiliation, refused and delayed the legal obligation from 2007 to establish the process of writing a strategy and creating such a document. The Belgrade and Vojvodina secretariat for culture justified the lack of a plan and program with the absence of a national document, while city councilors in other cities followed their example, with the exception of cities such as Niš, Zrenjanin, Vršac and Novi Sad. Some cultural policy holders – in their macho, self-centered manner – even openly claimed that they did not even need such a document. And they are right: autocrats do not need a document that limits their work, that calls on them to act responsibly and with purpose, that limit their room to maneuver and call into question ad hoc interventions and meaningless courses of action. But for citizens living in a democratic society, planned documents represent the minimal assumption that public policy, which is conducted in their name, will be responsible.

When the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia was finally adopted at the beginning of 2020 (in March), many aspirations and influences on cultural policies became clearer. It has also become clear that the national cultural policy is lost in wanderings, inconsistencies and contradictions that will certainly hinder, if not prevent, any meaningful and consistent implementation of the Strategy. It would not be surprising if, at the first opportunity, the newly adopted strategy is abandoned by future creators of cultural policies, and the whole work of public, transparent planning is deemed pointless, and a return to cultural autocracy is declared.

Despite that, what has also become visible is the extent to which cultural policies, at the national level, in different ways exclude, neglect and marginalize numerous groups of citizens. This text will deal precisely with these exclusions. Starting from the assumption that social diversity and plurality must be reflected in the way in which cultural policies are conducted, the text will simultaneously suggest possible alternative approaches to implementing cultural policies that would be more open to differences and more accessible to different groups of citizens.

In section one, I will deal with the quality of the determinants themselves, i.e., the form and boundaries within cultural policies and the reasons why their creators and holders must be aware of the quality of the determinants, the boundaries they set and the framework in which they operate. In section two, I will address the existing limits in cultural policies in Serbia – their content and the forms of exclusion they carry. In section three, I will look at pluralistic policies dynamically, through time and their interpretation methods.

LIMITS AND DETERMINANTS IN CULTURAL POLICY

In order to be able to intervene within social reality, all policies including cultural policies must determine their scope and the definitions of their objects, users and instruments. For example, cultural policy must be set according to the existing definitions of culture and art, works of art, cultural events as well as institutions, citizens, potential aid beneficiaries, and the like. Otherwise, the result would be a policy that has no concept, that cannot be planned, that cannot be evaluated and for the implementation of which the authorities cannot be held responsible.

Yet, the very determinants on which the policy is based can have different characteristics and they will in many ways affect the accessibility or the lack of accessibility to cultural policy instruments and their objects, i.e., the cultures to which they contribute. Firstly, determinants can be narrow or broad. Let's say that culture also includes good behavior (making it necessary to sanction, say, inappropriate TV programs), or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, does it refer only to professional art? Or, does the category of stakeholders in culture include only institutions, or is there room for civil organizations as well, and is the field also open to informal groups, amateurs and children?

Secondly, the determinants can be rigid or flexible. If the makers of cultural policies do not have an active attitude towards the determinants, do not review them, do not change them for a long period of time despite calls and proposals to do so, then we can talk about rigid determinants. On the other hand, the flexibility of definitions is reflected in the fact that they are subject to transformation as a result of changes in the environment, new insights and calls to change definitions.

Finally, the way in which boundaries are set and determinants adopted can be exclusive or democratic. A larger and more diverse set of actors, or a smaller and narrower one, can participate in setting and defining the limits and determinants themselves. If the National Strategy is written by a small team of experts, usually men, of the dominant national, religious and racial affiliation, then we can safely talk about exclusive borders.

All in all, if the definitions are broadly set, flexible and democratic, this means that a large number of actors and citizens will have the opportunity to be included in them and participate in their creations. If, on the other hand, they are narrow, rigid and exclusive, then the number of excluded participants is large.

The exclusivity of cultural policies, however, is not only important because of the sense of exclusion experienced by certain actors. It is also relevant because of the fact that social phenomena do not exist in neatly arranged categorized drawers and shelves. As a rule, they are ambiguous, complex, and have many different causes as well as numerous consequences. They are not wrapped in vacuum packages, waiting for someone to pay attention to them, but change with the passage of time, as they mix and intersect with other phenomena.

Let us look at a few examples. Let's say that a certain body that implements cultural policy (for example, the secretariat for culture or the ministry) wants to achieve artistic excellence. A narrow, rigid and exclusive understanding will suggest, for example, that the secretariat should simply contact a few representative associations and transfer funds for their work. Such a solution primarily excludes many who do not belong to these associations for various reasons, as well as those whom the secretariat did not remember to contact, or those the secretariat does not like for whichever reason. In addition, this approach fetishizes and objectifies "artistic excellence" and separates it from the much larger and more complex environment where art originates and is created. Due to the complex processes of artistic creation and development, it would be better for the secretariat to first look at the whole situation, recognize that, for example, art teachers, schools and art faculties, galleries, journalists and media that deal with art and many others play an important role, then assess the needs of and issues within these fields in the art world along with their importance and contribution. After that, it should compile an overview of possible activities, interventions and strategies for the development of the entire field, among which numerous problems that are not of a financial nature will probably come to light. Of course, to gain such insights, a much larger and more diverse group of actors should be included in the process, i.e. this approach requires a broader, more democratic and flexible understanding of the limits and determinants of "artistic excellence".

THE CASE OF CREATIVE PRODUCERS: WHO NEEDS WHAT?

For several years in a row, Arts Council England (ACE) has been funding and awarding Theatre Bristol's "Creative Producers" project, which offered theater artists the help of personal producers. The project was created based on the insight that many artists are not at all comfortable with networking, looking for work, negotiating fees and other production processes and do not do well in them. In each of the annual evaluations, the artists were asked whether they would rather receive the donated funds intended for their producer in the project budget, or hours with the producer they were provided with. Almost 100 percent of the participants in the project chose to cooperate with the producers. This shows how direct financial grants are unjustifiably understood as the key and only instrument of cultural policy.

On the other hand, if audience development is the goal of a cultural policy, the most obvious approach is to call for tenders for audience development projects and distribute funds to cultural institutions for their propaganda. However, as described in the previous example, there is a significant chance that the funds end up where they cannot achieve the set goal, or that they are used for activities that fail in the same regard. Research has repeatedly shown that many people simply do not like going to the theater or museums and perceive them, depending on the context, as middle-class, incomprehensible, indoctrinating and the like. Many of them will not be attracted by any kind of propaganda messaging from those institutions, nor will they question possible prejudices about the institutions, especially if the content remains the same. However, cooperation with schools, media, celebrities, new and more accessible programs in public spaces and other types of shifts away from the usual forms, as well as the introduction of new personnel, establishing partnerships, a change of content, a change of communication and approach to audiences might have the desired effect. These solutions require a more careful approach to the problem, a better understanding of it, as well as a willingness to define cultural participation in a more comprehensive and flexible way.

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In conclusion, cultural policy planners do not have the luxury of being exclusive or too closed off in a bureaucratic sense in relation to the social problems they deal with. That is why, within decision-making, communication and the creation of cultural policy, it is important to pose the question of who, what and why we are excluding in this way.

KEY FOCAL POINTS IN SERBIA'S CULTURAL POLICY AND THE NEGLECTED OTHERNESS

The cultural policies of our country orbit around several default axes. Their instruments, concerns and resources are intended for specific, relatively small groups and their exclusivity and rigidity ignore many, in various ways. This is the cause not only of the frequent failures of cultural policies, but also of the marginal role that explicit cultural policies play in our country. Below is a discussion of several such focal points, as well as the ways in which they exclude and discriminate. The list is not exhaustive, but it is sufficient to serve as a reminder of the larger excluded groups and to provide a method for thinking about the various forms of otherness that are excluded.

NATIONAL CULTURE

According to the Constitution, the Republic of Serbia is "a state of the Serbian people and all citizens who live in it". The privilege granted to members of the Serbian people over others, which the Constitution unapologetically establishes, is also visible in numerous cultural-policy decisions. Ministries and secretariats at multiple levels specifically encourage the culture of Serbs living outside of Serbia. Thus, the Ministry of Culture regularly announces the "competition for financing or co-financing projects in the field of cultural activities of Serbs abroad", and the "competition for co-financing projects in the field of translation of representative works of Serbian literature abroad"; while the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities announces a "competition for financing projects in the field of protecting and preserving the traditional works of Serbs in AP Vojvodina and the cultural heritage of Serbs in the region".

Financing and promoting any culture, including the culture of the Serbs, in itself, of course, is not problematic. However, insisting on that particular type of identification and socialization significantly limits and discourages plurality and cultural diversity in several ways. The first and most obvious way is within the field of diverse national identities that adorn the cultural milieu of our country, when a clear hierarchy is created and forms of otherness are created, which foster a favorable climate for different types of division, discrimination and exclusion.

In regard to critical articles in the media addressing the promotion of the "Serbian cultural space", the Ministry of Culture announced that, "in the Strategy, national identity is simply accepted as a legitimate form of collective cultural identity". We completely agree with that. Everyone has the right to feel like they belong to a group, provided it does not offend or endanger others, and everyone has the right to feel like they belong to a national identity. However, all decision-makers in the field of culture should be aware of the democracy and openness of identity markers that are promoted and encouraged. The way in which Serbian cultural space is defined, for example, encourages biological, exclusive divisions. For example, when a minister declares that the Serbian cultural space is a "tectonic plate" that touches other cultural areas, and that "in the contact of cultural tectonic plates, sparks inevitably arise, along with challenges that sometimes represent the most prominent features of cultural areas", he, using a geographical metaphor, suggests a very exclusive, fixed concept of national identity (that is as hard as rock), while sparks and challenges (and not, say, fusion, which happens with tectonic plates) suggest that there is a conflict and a clear difference. Likewise, "tectonic plates" and "cultural spaces" irresistibly remind of the politics of blood and soil, where identity is intertwined with geographical territories and blood relations.

This irreconcilable difference and the way it creates social divisions and psychological challenges is displayed in interesting ways in the cases of multi-ethnic families, communities and personal ancestral histories. What should those whose mother is Serbian and whose father is French do, or those whose father is Albanian and Serbian, or those whose mother is Hungarian and Serbian? We know, as a rule, in a context where there is a clear desirability of one affiliation over others, some histories and affiliations will stand out, while others will be erased, hindered and forgotten. We have witnessed the sad history of erasure so many times in many generations that lived in this region.

Secondly, within the group that legitimately and through selfdetermination belongs to the Serbian people, the dimensions of Serbianness are clearly defined and it is suggested who should be a Serb and how. For instance, when the National Strategy connects Serbian culture with the Kosovo Myth, medieval chivalry and warriorship of the past centuries, it highlights the masculine, fighting and martial character of a culture, thereby marginalizing other features, and those who do not cultivate warriorship within themselves, or are not members of the male gender, should ask themselves if they are true Serbs.

Thirdly, it is important to realize that these cultural policy measures are exclusive in various ways that go far beyond the marginalization of those who openly and clearly do not belong to the Serbian people. However, cultural policies in Serbia, after glorifying the Serbian people, recognize and encourage other national identities within the national councils of national minorities and in other ways. Considering these first-order and second-order ethnic matrices together, cultural policies ethnicize and nationalize culture. In other words, the glorification and encouragement of that specific affiliation creates, first of all, a hierarchy of identity markers, at the top of which it places ethnic or national markers.

Creating and shaping identity is a complex, dynamic and never-ending concept. In this game of intertwining different identity markers – gender, professional, ethnic and others – certain markers have greater strength and priority, and this prioritization is something that goes beyond the personal level – it is a political process. In this sense, cultural policy, among other things, suggests not only that it is desirable to be a Serbian woman (and less desirable to be an Albanian or Vlach woman), but that in concrete cases we can imagine, it is more important to be a Serbian woman than an economist, a worker, a single mother, elderly woman, a lesbian, a punk, a vegan, a countrywoman, a handball player, a war veteran, a disabled person, etc. All of this, regardless of medical condition, profession, gender, class or subcultural affiliation, may define a person much more strongly and deeply and create opportunities for connecting with people with similar life experiences and mutual empowerment.

Focusing on one form of identity belonging and neglecting others, for the sake of creating national unity, reduces the wealth of opportunities for one's own identity development and narrows the political, psychological and social imagination. Of course, people will feel the way they feel and build communities with whomever they wish, no matter what any ministry does, but it is important to note that the processes of identity building in those cases are left to other communication spheres and influences which are often commercial, aggressive and in other ways exclusive (mass culture, Hollywood, advertising). In other words, in the space of the public, state framework that we can imagine as democratic, open and safe, there is no encouragement for all other forms of identity exploration, expression and sharing.

Finally, another important aspect of this biological concept of identity suggests the simultaneous necessity and sufficiency of the identity we acquire at birth, i.e. that being a Serb, for example, must include a parent or preferably parents who are Serbian nationals, as well as the fact that no additional effort or life experience plays a role in that affiliation. In the first case, it excludes all those who might be fascinated by Serbian culture and want to belong to it, while in the second, equally important case, it recommends laziness and disinterest. You don't have to know Serbian literature, you don't have to visit Serbia and learn about its beauties, you don't even have to speak or know the language, or contribute to the culture in any way, and yet, no matter how much you do, it won't make you a member of that culture. It is interesting to note that in many other cases, if you are a great connoisseur and practitioner of a religion, or a musical style, or a way of eating, you become a legitimate member of that culture. Those cultures, whose belonging is reaffirmed through creation, expansion, sharing, are cultures that are simultaneously open, but also rich, alive and dynamic.

So, when we talk about encouraging Serbian and other national identities, we face three possible problems. One is the priority of one national identity - the Serbian national identity. Another is the preference for national over other identities. The third is the closedness and exclusivity of these identity markers that are offered to citizens in a certain way. Together, they radically narrow and homogenize social diversity and create identity divisions and hierarchies. There is not a single line about interculturality that could open the door to otherness after all this. To feel free in a society implies the freedom to shape one's own experience of oneself, as well as the possibility to build togetherness and understanding with others, among other things, and community determined by belonging to a certain group. If different options are threatened by negative messages, but also by open complaints, threats and violence, then this fundamental freedom, which cannot be bought in a shopping center, or created in isolation, but can only be experienced in a genuine existence with others, is violated.

"CULTURE IN THE NARROWER SENSE"

Cultural determiners are notoriously problematic. The majority of ministries in European countries opted for narrower understandings of culture as specific professional activities, contrary to the scientifically and popularly understood meaning and use of this term. In this way, the ministries are actually opting for a

concept of culture that is limited to artistic creativity, media and legitimized heritage, while in some cases this definition extends to certain branches within creative industries. However, as a rule, popular and anthropological interpretations of culture as a way of life are excluded. This equates culture with professions and institutions and distances it from the everyday life of most citizens. Certainly, in the broadest sense, culture cannot be the subject of one department, or even the entire government, because it includes everything from the way children are raised and educated, food preparation, agriculture and craftsmanship to political culture and hygiene. Nevertheless, given the gap between the popular and bureaucratic understanding of culture, the creators of cultural policies, as well as actors in the field of "culture" defined in that way, are in danger of, on the one hand, distancing themselves from social reality, and on the other, excluding the activities that shape the cultural life of many citizens from the cultural sphere. Therefore, it is no wonder that many fields of creativity, in different countries, have fought long and persistent battles for their own inclusion in "culture". Notable examples include the circus or gastronomy in France, as they were only gradually recognized and became a potential beneficiary of public funds for culture, and a similar battle is still being waged in various countries by graffiti artists, street artists, creators of computer games, craftsmen and the like. With this in mind, it is important that the concept of culture is reconsidered, modernized and socialized from time to time, i.e. it is important to establish a relationship with social reality.

CASE: INVENT - WHAT IS CULTURE TO YOU?

Within the framework of the EU Horizon 2020 project INVENT (European Inventory of Societal Values of Culture as a Basis for Inclusive Cultural Policies in The Globalizing World), a survey was conducted in 2020, with the aim of finding out how European citizens understand culture. More than 800 respondents from nine European countries, including Serbia, offered their interpretations. Although there are significant national differences, there are two dominant types of interpretations of culture: a broader understanding, which includes habits, good behaviors, ways of communication and values, and a narrower one, which includes art and heritage and largely coincides with the interpretations of national ministries. As a rule, more educated and more privileged citizens have a narrower understanding, while less privileged ones have a broader understanding, which says a lot to everyone who tries to bring culture closer to another group.

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

In recent years, several analyses and studies have been carried out, both on the position of independent artists, civil organizations in culture and other non-institutional actors, as well as on the forms of support by the relevant cultural policies that these actors enjoy. All research unequivocally indicates that non-institutional forms of creativity in Serbia are disproportionately less supported by different levels of government. According to one of the studies, these actors, although they are usually in an extremely unenviable financial position, contribute financially to the budget of Serbia, of the city of Belgrade and other cities (by paying taxes and other fees from their own activities that are supported from other sources) much more than they receive as aid.

A kind of animosity between competent decision-makers in the field of cultural policies and non-institutional actors goes beyond the issue of funding, while conflicts between several ministers and state secretaries in the Ministry of Culture and Information with various representatives of associations that bring together non-institutional actors are already commonplace. Finally, the process of drafting the National Strategy, which stipulated an irrationally short deadline of 15 days for sending comments and proposals from non-institutional actors, which are extremely numerous and diverse, is another indicator of the neglect of the aforementioned actors and attempts to marginalize them.

The divisions created by these measures affect a whole range of aspects regarding work and creating in the field of culture and art, such as the possibility of exhibiting, presenting and promoting cultural values, the possibility of cooperating and connecting internationally, access to institutional funds and privileges in the field of mobility and professional development, access to public media and other state structures and resources. In addition, one of the important aspects of the institutional and noninstitutional differences is the issue of security and precariousness, which primarily refers to the security of employment and income, but also strongly affects other fundamental life issues, such as family planning, staying in the country, creating a home and others. Finally, the intolerance and mistrust created by these divisions gatekeep public resources and prevent the very important circulation and exchange of knowledge, skills and information between different parts of the cultural field, and in general impoverish the entire sector, and citizens by extension.

PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

Cultural policies in Serbia are primarily oriented towards professional artists. Issues of cultural participation, especially of marginalized groups, children and the elderly, do not make it onto the list of priorities of project financing, nor are they highly positioned as a topic covered by cultural institutions. Finally, amateurism, as another important area of cultural creativity, also does not enjoy the attention of cultural policies. For example, at the "Theater and School" conference in 2018, organized by BAZAART and dedicated to the cooperation between theaters and schools, a representative of the Ministry of Culture persistently claimed that the Ministry of Culture is not responsible for this issue, because it deals only with music, art and ballet schools, where cooperation with cultural institutions is at a satisfactory level. This anecdotal example is a good illustration of the narrow view of culture that is embedded in cultural policies in Serbia.

In relation to professional boundaries, an important question is also which dimensions these boundaries follow. What does visual art mean today? Is heritage really separate from theater or festivals? Where can you find art or museum pedagogues? Artists whose creations are not at least in some way multimedial and interdisciplinary are rare. These intertwining, collaborations and mutual inspirations are not supported by the competitions of the Ministry of Culture, nor are they clearly recognized by the Law on Culture or the National Strategy, which therefore seem anachronistic.

URBAN CULTURE

In Serbia, according to the 2011 census, 2,914,990 inhabitants live in slightly more than 4,000 settlements, which are categorized as being outside urban areas, which represents 40.5 percent of the total number of inhabitants. Although the process of urbanization and moving to the city is intensifying, the further depopulation of rural areas brings various social, economic, ecological and other kinds of disadvantages. The causes of these trends are numerous, and certainly one of them is the centralization and concentration of cultural and social life in cities. Despite the numerous inhabitants of rural areas and smaller settlements, there are no cultural institutions in rural areas, let alone permanent civil society organizations in the field of culture. In this sense, the cultural policy of Serbia is completely urbanized (in support of this, the Cultural Development Strategy does not contain a single measure for the development of rural culture, or culture outside of cities). Practically the entire legacy of the 20th century in the form of colonies, meetings, rural art caravans, festivals, events and, most importantly, cultural centers, has been lost. In some cases, rural areas and rural events are left to commercial or tourist stakeholders, thus becoming commodities and losing their authentic expression and relationship with the community. With their urban vision alone, the creators of cultural policies excluded almost half of the population of our country from their field.

OPENING UP TO OTHERS

The opening of cultural policies towards others requires conceptual changes in the definition and understanding of cultural and social problems. However, in order to achieve this, it is important to change the modus operandi of cultural policies. The process of drafting the Law on Culture and the National Strategy have shown that processes behind closed doors are preferred when it comes to cultural policies. Below, I offer several theses and guidelines for a possible change in the way cultural policies are created and implemented, without the ambition to achieve the comprehensiveness of the necessary changes in such a short text.

AVAILABILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA ON CULTURAL CREATIVITY AND PARTICIPATION

Without valid, reliable and extensive research, cultural policy, much like any other policy, remains in the dark. Research into cultural participation, needs and habits, research into the state of and processes in the education, creativity and presentation of artists, as well as work processes in organizations, institutions and collectives, are just some of the fields that, due to their complexity and dynamism, must be thoroughly understood before serious intervention, if we want intervention to really achieve its goals. In its introduction, the National Strategy, instead of precisely mapping out key issues, presents a rosy picture of cultural life in Serbia. Apart from the validity of these studies, it is important that they are widely available and that they become not only the basis for exchange of opinions on cultural development, but also necessary literature for cultural policy makers.

ACCESSIBILITY OF DECISION-MAKING LOCATIONS

Cultural policies represent a complex network of decisions at different levels and on different topics. From the minister's cabinet, through the offices of state secretaries, city secretaries and councilors, to directors, management boards, collegiums and advisory bodies of cultural institutions, all decision-making processes can be more or less characterized by democracy. In Serbia, these places are notoriously closed off. The opportunities to open them up are countless. Here are some ideas that have already found footing in different parts of our country and beyond: the inclusion of independent artists and non-institutional actors in the management boards of institutions; the creation of advisory boards consisting of youth or marginalized groups; cultural and artistic forums of citizens; open and participatory processes of creating city, provincial and national strategic documents; the participation of independent experts in the works of commissions, collegiums and the like.

ACCESSIBILITY AND THE OPENNESS OF INSTITUTIONS

Cultural institutions represent a huge and valuable resource for cultural policies. As infrastructure, as gatherings of a large number of competent staff, as accumulated knowledge and experience, they should represent the most accessible meeting point for cultural policies and citizens. Therefore, the openness and plurality of cultural policies is unthinkable without the openness and plurality of institutions. However, the most common way of talking about the openness of institutions is reduced to the idea of mere accessibility to the public. Although audience development programs are indispensable in the process of opening institutions, it is crucial to see that without the diversity of content and, more importantly, the diversity of employees, associates and partners, the diversity of the audience cannot be ensured. Therefore, the concept of assessing the plurality and democracy of cultural institutions, which is increasingly called 3P – programs, people, publics - includes the assessment of all these aspects. In fact, members of the working class cannot be attracted to a museum if the respective programs do not deal with the social reality of these people. Members of the Roma community cannot be attracted if none of the employees, collaborators, or program partners have experience of what life is like for Roma people or comes from that community themselves or, at the very least, belongs to another marginalized group. In all other cases, there is a good chance that attempts at rapprochement will be judged as condescending or preachy and, as such, will be doomed to fail. Therefore, the recruitment processes of permanent employees, associates and partners must be planned, taking into account the issue of plurality and openness. Programming and designing new content also cannot overlook the experiences and possible perceptions and interpretations of social and cultural minorities. Finally, diversity and openness must be found among the evaluation criteria of institutions. To think that the "open doors" of institutions are sufficient for accessibility shows a lack of understanding of the environment in which one lives.

ACCESSIBILITY OF CALLS FOR PROJECTS

For many actors, calls for project financing and co-financing represent a key source of their funds and survival. In Serbia, although there are important exceptions, selection processes are usually insufficiently open, transparent and accessible. For many actors within the cultural sphere, especially for those who are on the margins due to their experience, social position, or position in the cultural field, the processes of seeking funds are frustrating, incomprehensible, unfair, unclear and intimidating. In many cases, project selection criteria are unclear. Applicants do not receive support for applying or valid feedback, which would enable them to learn. Also, diversity of applicants is not a desirable outcome, nor is it among the criteria. Finally, numerous project selection processes, especially in smaller towns, take place completely outside of public scrutiny and control. It is clear that no single budget can meet all the potential needs of applicants. However, the application process does not have to be traumatic, non-transparent and unfair, and changing those cultural policy practices would represent a very important signal to all actors.

THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL SECTOR IN SERBIA'S NEW CULTURAL POLICY

Vladimir Paunović

To present the civil sector in culture, I will first present more closely the concept and characteristics of this sector in a general sense, using previous research. The essence of the action of the civil or third sector is in the self-organization, initiative and actions of the citizens themselves, in order to solve a problem or improve their lives and the lives of their community, for their own, professional or common good, when they realize that the state apparatus (public or first sector) and the profit or second sector, do not have the time, opportunity, profit or, best put, interest for resolving certain issues. The main representatives of the civil sector are civil society organizations (abbreviated as CSOs, as the currently used term is most often used in the sector itself), citizens' associations (as stated in the legislation) or non-governmental organizations (that is, NGOs, the abbreviation best known to the public). Non-governmental or non-profit organizations, informal groups and local civic initiatives, according to Žarko Paunović, one of the first researchers of this sector in Serbia, represent all those initiatives and organizations that were founded by the citizens themselves without the mediation or control of the state, and which are at the same time not affiliated to political parties and non-profit organizations, based on voluntary work and aiming to serve the welfare of their members, or to contribute to the general well-being of the community. Due to conceptual confusion and numerous communication noises, NGOs in Serbia are often confused with funds, guild associations, sports, cultural-artistic, recreational, religious, entertainment and hobby associations and groups, precisely because of some basic characteristics, although in general, they all belong together in the mentioned third sector. (Paunović 2006).

To precisely determine whether an organization can be considered non-governmental, non-profit and voluntary, the structural-operational definition of Salamon and Anheier is most often used, which with its seven elements is considered the most complete.⁵⁹ I will try to present it schematically, in order to clearly see the difference between NGOs and other segments of the sector, or another sector.

Conditions/Type of organization	NGO	Informal group	Government- organized non- governmental organization	For-profit organi- zation	Political party	Social enterprise
Formal structure	٠		•	•	٠	•
Separation from the state	•	•		•	•	•
Non-profit	٠	٠	•		٠	٠
Independence	٠	•		•	٠	•
Non-commerciality	٠	•	•		٠	
Primary political disengagement	•	•	•	•		•
Voluntariness	٠	•		•	•	•

If the civil sector was represented only through NGOs, it would be incomplete in some way, because there are other entities that can be included under that term, if we use activism and the desire

⁵⁹ Source: Paunović Žarko (2006). Non-governmental organizations, Belgrade: Official Gazette, p. 27.

to change things in the environment as determinants, things that the other two sectors, for the reasons mentioned, but also for other reasons, do not want to include among their activities. According to my interpretation, the broader civil sector, in addition to non-governmental organizations, also includes: non-governmental media, civil movements and actions, and opinion leaders⁶⁰ or "citizens – public". The division of NGOs into associations (universitas personam) and foundations (universitas rerum) is also known, according to which, in the former, people invest their work and free time, and in the latter, finances, with the aim of achieving the common good in both cases.⁶¹ When it comes to the classification of NGOs themselves, as the main representatives of the civil sector, one of the most useful ones is certainly the one used by the Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector from Belgrade,⁶² which is actually a modified classification of the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Civil Society Studies in the USA. I present the classification, supplemented by my examples, in the following table.

⁶⁰ Leaders or creators of public opinion, persons whose opinion on a product or problem is relevant to the broadest audience; (Source: <u>https://dictionary.</u> <u>cambridge.org/dictionary/english/opinion-leader</u>, accessed on 24 November 2018); Nowadays popularly called "influencers", due to their influence on social networking services such as Twitter.

^{61 (}Id: 33).

⁶² Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector (CRNPS) is the first independent agency, and then an NGO itself, which scientifically researched the civil sector in Serbia.

Type of organization	Example
1. Alternative cultural organizations	Association ICSS (Independent Culture Scene of Serbia)
2. Educational and research organizations	Belgrade Open School (BOS)
3. Environmental organizations, societies and movements	Scout Association of Serbia
4. Humanitarian organizations	Group 484
5. Socio-humanitarian organizations	Red Cross
6. Youth and student organizations	Students' union of Serbia
7. Organizations for local community development	Majority of local organizations
8. Professional and expert organizations	NUNS (Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia)
9. Human rights organizations	Humanitarian Law Centre
10. Think thanks ^A	Civic Initiatives
11. Peace organizations and groups	Women in Black
12. Women's organizations and groups	LABRIS
Organizations of refugees 13. and displaced persons	Association of Displaced Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija
14. International organizations	Prohelvetia (Switzerland)
15. Other unclassified organizations	Association of hedonists

A Organizations engaged in studying, researching and drafting proposals for public policies, laws, etc.

In my aforementioned research on the civil sector, I also classified NGOs and foundations as the main representatives, in the context of their origin in these areas, when they assumed, as I believe, their still current form of action. I also present this in the next table:

1.	Original or grassroots organizations	Local-type organizations, which statistically make up the largest number of formally registered organizations, as well as informal movements. They arise as an autochthonous response of citizens in a given environment, to a problem that arose or to satisfy a certain need.			
2.	NGO <i>"branches"</i> as part of the platform	Organizations created as part of a wider, most often project-based platform, which function for the duration of financial resources, but there are also cases when they achieve sustainability independently. A large number of examples indicate that these are initiatives of national/Belgrade organizations, but there are also cases when they gather around, logically, another "center of power". ^A			
3.	Political NGOs	A model in which a political organization ^B or trade union creates an organization, usually a Fund, modelled after the so-called "German model" (<i>Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung</i>), or when an NGO acts with the aim of becoming a political party. ^C			
4.	"Copy-paste" organizations	Established at the initiative of international organizations for the needs of an ad-hoc program or project, they usually stop working once the flow of resources ends. ^D			
5.	GONGO and QANGO organizations ^E	Organizations that directly represent the interests of the state, or were founded by public officials due to certain interests, and that have public or indirect funding from the budget.			
6.	<i>"Event"</i> organizations ^F	Organizations that represent the platform of creative industries for collecting state funds, related, as a rule, to the organization of festival events.			
 A One example is the National Coalition for Decentralization (NKD), headquartered in Niš. NKD was created in 2005 as part of a citizen's initiative to assign at least one national TV frequency to a station outside Belgrade during the decision-making process of the Radio Broadcasting Agency of Serbia (RRA) on TV frequency allocation. As the RRA did not respect this recommendation, more than 70 associations throughout Serbia joined the informal coalition of the NKD with the aim of decentralization in all walks of life. NKD worked as an informal coalition for four years, and in 2010 they registered as an association whose assembly currently includes 15 associations from 11 cities in Serbia (outside Belgrade). Source: http://nkd.rs/o-nama/#nastali (accessed on 23 November 2018). B One example is the Foundation for the Advancement of Democracy Ljuba Davidović of the Democratic Party or the Centre for Democracy Foundation, whose founders led the Democratic Centre. 					
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What is the situation in the civil sector in culture in Serbia? Investigating the fields of cultural production in Serbia, Cvetičanin locates civil society organizations dealing with contemporary art in the sub-field of limited cultural production, in its cultural field, and labels them as the independent cultural scene in Serbia. He states that out of about 550 NGOs with culture as their primary activity, roughly 150 organizations work in the field of contemporary art. This group of NGOs has the most educated membership in the entire cultural field in Serbia, because in 72 percent of the organizations, the membership has a university degree, and in 17 percent of them, the largest number of members have master's and doctorate degrees. These representatives of the civil sector in culture are also the most active in international, and especially in regional cultural cooperation, and about 1,500 of them, both members and volunteers, produce more than a thousand annual programs, with nearly half of the organizations having an annual budget of less than EUR 10,000. In 2011, these organizations formed the "Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia" network, which in 2004 had as many as 92 members, and they also played an active role in the establishment of the "Cooperative" Regional Platform for Culture (2012), in which (for now) involves participants of independent cultural scenes from the territories of former Yugoslavia. Apart from these organizations, cultural and artistic societies and professional associations of artists are also classified as civil society organizations in culture (Cvetičanin 2014:13).

My thesis is that the civil sector in culture, with respect for social justice, is one of the key factors for the implementation of decentralization in the culture of Serbia, as, in my opinion, one of the main elements of the modern cultural strategy (along with participation, a democratic value system, engagement of contemporary creativity and culture of remembrance). In the following segment, I will also present the relations of social sectors, in order to more precisely position their potential roles in the process of cultural decentralization. Dragićević – Šešić and Drezgić write that the synergy of all three sectors, i.e. elected authorities (the government and its ideology), expert authorities (public and private cultural institutions) and socially responsible forces (the NGO sector), should shift the center of gravity from the traditional concept of cultural policies aimed at the nation and the strengthening of national cultural identity, towards territorial cultural policy, where territory does not mean the spatial aspect of cultural policy, but "taking responsibility for the quality of cultural life in the entire country, region, city... for all communities, groups and individuals who live there." (Dragićević – Šešić, Drezgić 2017: 3).

The authors believe that regardless of the existence of the idea of public-private partnership,⁶³ it should be extended to all three sectors, because without their permanent interaction in cultural policy, there will be no real sustainable development in the cultural segment. This cross-sectoral approach enables a more realistic selection of cultural policy priorities and instruments, the expansion of its perspectives and alternatives, as well as "certainty to policy planning in terms of its sustainability and legitimacy". (Id: 5) The authors also present an overview of the interests and values of all three sectors, crucial for their own involvement in cultural policy. I will present both positive and negative characteristics in the following table, noting that the latter can affect full cooperation, because two sector partners "can always find a way to prevent the possible inclusion of elements that are risky for the status of art and cultural policy in the third one" (Ibid):

^{63 3}P – Public Private Partnership.

PUBLIC	PRIVATE	CIVIL	+/-
Traditional values; Professional knowledge and skills	Modern values; Transversal skills (communication, fundraisin ^g)	Social values (solidarity, new culture of remembrance, intercultural sensibility, social/ distributive justice)	+
Identity building	Orientation towards risks	Inclusion	+
Old elitism	Elitism and leadership	Equality	+
Institution building	Building organizations	Movements	+
Museums, archives and libraries	Companies, enterprises and agencies	Social circles, clubs, NGOs	+
Past	Future	Present	+
Routine business of a high standard in the main area of work	Innovations, new solutions, markets and products	Social experiment, dialogue, participation	
Opus	Product	Process	+
Sclerotization ^A	Commercialization Consumerism	Propaganda	-
Bureaucratization	Simplification	Amateurism (lowering of professional standards)	
Culture as a value in itself	Culture as an economic investment and business	Culture as a means of social change	

A Figuratively from the Greek word which medically represents "hardening, thickening of some organs and tissues of blood vessels" (Mićunović 1988: 438).

I would refer to the review of the negative characteristics of the sector in culture according to Dragićević – Šešić and Drezgić, where I think it is necessary to add "partocratism" (along with "bureaucratism") as a negative characteristic of the public sector, in the sense of the monopoly of the ruling political elite, not only in the selection of managers in the public sector, but also on the current monopolies in the distribution of public finances through tenders, on which the other two sectors also depend. And I personally believe that culture should be a means of change and that this cannot be a negative thing. Concluding their sectoral comparison, the authors note that the regional public sector is based on traditional relations between the nation and art, concentrated in larger cities, with conservative cultural policies and missions dating back to the 19th century. Without using strategic planning or evaluation in their work, their main goal is to build and promote national identity through libraries, theatres or museums, with uneven coverage of fields such as music, cinema or contemporary art. In their explanation of this sector, the authors state that it is subordinate to "partocratic leadership", that it utilizes 80 percent of public funds for culture and that it does not deal with current social issues such as distributive justice, accessibility, gender equity and equality (Ibid).

On the other hand, the civil sector in culture, according to them, does not have adequate space for work and is forced to implement activities in the spaces of the public sector, which is often not enough to spread its messages. They call this sector the organizations of "collective intelligence", which consists of numerous artistic and intellectual movements aimed at engaging citizens and spreading new ideas of European cultural and political discourse. During the first decades of this century, cultural theory dealt with the contribution of the imagination to civic activism in the sense of introducing art and critical reflection in the age of "spectacle and consumerism" through the efforts of the civil sector, which opened new spaces by putting important social issues on the agenda that had not been discussed before, such as intercultural sensibility, social or distributive justice (which was discussed in particular), dealing with the past... That is why the civil sector acted as a platform and space for direct democracy, but also for direct artistic practices such as interactive theatre and other forms of participatory arts (Id: 7).

The role of the civil sector in the process of decentralization of culture is, in my opinion, crucial, because as an autochthonous entity, it has a territorial distribution almost equal to that of public sector cultural entities (cultural centers, cultural institutions) outside of large centers, and, on the other hand, it does not have a dominant profit-making sense of purpose like the profit sector. An intersectoral partnership in which the state would transfer financial resources to the civil sector with constant control and partnership cooperation with state and profit actors where possible, would be the key for the leading subjects of cultural decentralization. It was determined that the civil sector in culture, based on criteria such as production and the degree of cooperation in the region and the world, has the potential to be the bearer of some kind of program decentralization; however, the funds allocated by the state for its work are at a low level. The first measure would refer to the diversification and enlargement of budget line 481, where NGOs in culture would be clearly classified according to the field of activity (separation from the other "civil sector" in the state – religious and political organizations), credibility (separation from GONGO organizations) and territorial affiliation (decentralization factor). However, without the participation of representatives of the independent cultural scene on the commissions and without applying the same model at the local level, this cannot be achieved. Along with financial resources, the measures should also refer to the use of public space, which is an important factor, both in the decentralization of culture and in strengthening the role of the civil sector. The main prerequisite for using the advantages of the civil sector in the process of cultural decentralization is, above all, of a political nature. It is necessary for the political elite to first accept the EU's recommendations on decentralization in culture and the role of the civil sector, and then arrange the framework for implementation with legal regulations, because without that, this topic remains only in the realm of possibilities. In these conditions, the independent cultural scene should ask the state for better conditions for achieving sustainability. This primarily implies a real partnership with the public sector and posing an open question to the authorities – do they even want an independent sector in culture? If the answer is yes, it should be confirmed by the highest documents, such as the National Cultural Development Strategy. Furthermore, the use of public spaces, equal treatment in relation to other sectors in culture, longer-term models of support for organizations whose work is assessed as the highest public interest, and the application of real decentralization in the territorial sense should also be provided. The benefits of partnership with the civil sector in working within international projects should be clearly presented to the state, because apart from promoting that model in the world (where it is commonly a positive model), it will also promote itself as democratic and European, in the true sense of the word. Competitions of the Ministry of Culture, as one of the basic forms of support for the sustainability of the independent sector in culture, should make radical changes in that case. It is necessary to carry out the so-called diversification of tenders from budget line 481, which is an initiative that must go to the Ministry of Finance. This is where the separation of all other entities from true citizens' associations should be sought. It is also necessary to diversify the competition for contemporary creativity and separate all creative industries and the so-called "daughter companies" of the profit sector from citizens' associations. The election and work of commission members must be public, transparent, credible, without any trace of conflict of interest and realized in cooperation with the independent scene itself and the professional public. Instead of the trendy development of the "festivalization" of cultural production and creative industries, the state should take a better look at the opportunities that the production of the independent cultural scene offers to Serbia. However, achieving the sustainability of the independent cultural scene stems from the will of the state to really accept the civil sector in culture as an equal factor in the local cultural life. Otherwise, there will be no question of its sustainability, because it will simply disappear.

"Capillary decentralization" of culture through the civil sector would use, similar to the Estonian model, functional equality in subsidies to achieve a higher goal (local animation, audience development and indigenous cultural initiatives), between the public and civil sectors, with a realistic assessment of the quality of work (human resources, programs, audiences) as the first criterion. The second criterion would refer to the relationship between the funds invested and the final effect (in this case, the revival of culture in smaller settlements, towns and villages, through the revitalization of cultural centers). The third criterion would be related to the autochthonous nature of the work, in the sense of whether the initiative is original, visiting (part of a larger project from another, larger city), or repetitive (classic guest appearances within a festival). The fourth criterion is related to the completion of the financial framework of subsidies - in addition to the program part, the financing of the so-called "cold standby" is mandatory, the same as the public sector. The fifth criterion of the financial support for this model would be related to territorial distribution, i.e. covering the so-called "white fields" (a term used in mapping for the lack of targeted content) of cultural activities. This form of activity in eliminating disproportions in the regional development of culture in Serbia would be financed from a dedicated Fund for the Decentralization of culture, which is also mentioned in the government Strategy, and which would be set up by increasing the budget for culture. In order for this model to be implemented at all, it is necessary for the state of Serbia to reach a "historic agreement" with the civil sector, which will not be a formal provision similar to the current one, but a new cooperation platform based on the tradition of activism and philanthropy in this region, recommendations of European countries and a new public policy as a modern theoretical model.

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POLITICAL CULTURE IN SERBIA

Duško Radosavljević

The desire to answer as precisely as possible certain political questions such as 'why some countries are democratic, prosperous and efficient, while others are backward, poor and dysfunctional' transcends political theory and political life. Also arising are questions regarding the quality of life, i.e. why people live longer in some countries, why some countries have a very high living standard while others do not, why people's level of education is higher in some parts of the world, why some societies are more democratic with more honest government representatives and an independent and efficient judiciary, while many other nationals are forced to live completely opposite lives – where the living standard and life expectancy are low, in an authoritarian, corrupt and inefficient state with a faulty judiciary. Since various causes are at the root of this problem, geographical reasons are often mentioned, as well as the (non)existence of institutions, the quality, influence and distribution of the elite, it is not difficult to conclude that the basis of these differences is, in fact, culture, i.e. its particular manifested form – *political culture*.

Political culture⁶⁴ as a term is used by political scientists, sociologists and historians, to show more closely the relevant political

⁶⁴ The study of the phenomenon of political culture began in the US. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba were the first to introduce "*political culture*" as a

stances of members of a certain country's society. These stances demonstrate the value system that is connected to the organization of state power. The level and manner of citizen participation in politics will inevitably depend on that society's degree of political culture, whereby political culture affects the relations that arise between the government and citizens. For this reason, political culture is also understood as a kind of orientation of citizens towards politics, understanding the legitimacy of politics, and the tradition of political action.

Subsequently, this term will denote a series of general stances of individuals in relation to various political objects, which are an expression of dominant political beliefs, values, norms and symbols created within the framework of a political community or a cultural political society. Thus, political culture is part of the collective consciousness of a society, and as such it exists as a system of symbols, beliefs, values and norms of that society. At the same time, this term also denotes the attitudes and/or orientation of citizens towards various political elements

The term political culture expresses political orientations, that is, opinions about the political system and its segments, as well as stances about the role of the individual in the system. This is important because through political culture, one can gain insight and an explanation for the role of identities, which cannot exist without certain beliefs, values and norms pertaining to political life.

The culture of the political system, the culture of the political process and the culture of political governance represent the fundamental determinants of political culture. Note that these determinants have their own components, and thus the culture of the political system includes national identity, political legitimacy and political trust. The culture of the political process sublimates,

concept into political sciences, in their book The Civic Culture (1963).

among others, the notions of political tolerance, rights and obligations, political efficiency or the competence of citizens, political interest, etc. The culture of political governance clarifies citizens' expectations from the authorities, the authorities' responses to citizens' demands, etc.⁶⁵

American authors and pioneers of research in this field, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, established three types of political culture in their analysis:

- the parochial type of political culture is characteristic of societies where the differentiation of specialized political functions has not yet occurred. Here, the differentiation of the political system in relation to other social subsystems is not yet observed, the community member's level of knowledge regarding the political system is very low, while attachment to it is based more on affectation than on knowledge about it.
- **the subject type** of political culture implies the existence of a clearly expressed orientation towards the political system and the administrative nature of politics. There is no developed awareness of the individual, as an active participant in political life, and members of society are subjects to the government more than they are active political actors.
- the participatory type of political culture presupposes the existence of a certain and developed network of political attitudes and orientations in relation to the political system and its segments. This type supports the development of relations that lead to a state in which society is stronger than politics, while the freedom and autonomy of individuals are the true measure of the quality of the political system.

⁶⁵ See also: Matić, Milan, Podunavac, Milan. 1994. Political system. Belgrade: IPS, and Stepanov, Radivoje. 2008. Introduction to politics and the political system. Novi Sad: Faculty of Philosophy.

Modern social researchers have tried, and continue to try, to clarify the political development and overall modernization of society with these different types of political culture, thus connecting the types of political culture with the strategies and accomplishments of political transitions in the recent period. That is why political culture is an essential determinant of politics, by means of which we understand the relationship between citizens and the state, the relationship between micro-politics and macro-politics, the potential outcomes of political stability, as well as changes, continuity and the modernization of countries and societies.⁶⁶

SERBIA - 2022

Anyone who took a closer look at our political life could easily notice that nowhere in the political struggle are there so few ideas introduced as in our country. —JOVAN SKERLIĆ

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This year, as we have become accustomed since the establishment of this political regime, elections were held in Serbia. We say "accustomed" because the unquestionable master of political life in Serbia, with his party/movement and satellite parties of the government, introduced the rule that every two years the mandates of the electoral-political bodies are to be "*cut*", so that his party/movement would remain in a perpetual state of competitive readiness and mobilization. This is a very bad solution, because it does away with any continuity in the work of the authorities, as well as any medium-term period which political projects could be tied to. At the same time, it is not only the cause

⁶⁶ For more on the phenomenon of political culture: Podunavac, Milan. 1982. Political culture and political relations. Belgrade: Radnička štampa, as well as the following texts: Šiber, Ivan. 1992. "Political culture and transition." Politička misao, Vol. XXIX, no. 3. p. 93–110, and Vujčić, Vladimir. 1997. "The term political culture." Politička misao, Vol. XXXIV, no. 4. p. 109–128.

of great instability within public and state administration, which far too often get "*new*" managers whose whims must be obeyed, but also a good basis for systemic corruption.⁶⁷

Although they were not general elections, a number of very interesting clashes for the position of the President of the Republic of Serbia stood out, as have parliamentary elections for the National Assembly, and elections for the City Assembly of Belgrade. We are firmly convinced that these were forced elections! In other words, that this was a win-win situation for everyone who participated in the elections⁶⁸. The part of the opposition most critical of the regime, the one that did not participate in the 2020 elections, the United Serbia and Moramo coalitions, saw a good opportunity to achieve a solid result and to position themselves as parliamentary agents for an (in)determinate period of time, even at the cost of not being able to participate more significantly in the formation of the new government, not to mention making changes to the political climate in Serbia. Nevertheless, the National Assembly can be a good starting point for the future dismantling of the regime. Especially for these party groups. Of course, this also means "latching" onto state funding, participation in public life to a certain extent, and a certain amount of recognition. The regime is based on a perpetual show of strength, with a huge party/movement leading it and having no other purpose for existing, except to constantly compete, as well as its chronic consumption of state resources and resources of other levels of government, which borders on criminal activities.⁶⁹ Of course, nothing new was noted in these elections either.

⁶⁷ See also: Perić Diligenski, Tijana. 2021. Debate on political corruption. Belgrade: Čigoja štampa.

⁶⁸ On the quality of party life in Serbia see: Jovović, Radivoje, Radosavljević Duško. 2019. Parties as protagonists of stagnation: The case of Serbia.

⁶⁹ See also: Radosavljević, Duško. 2020b. The pandemic, authoritativeness and how to resist it? Democratic tendencies. In: Stanojević, Ivan (ed.). The

Political actors did not compete with their ideas, solutions and proposals to "change our unfortunate state", as the great intellectual Svetozar Marković used to say, and instead they lashed out at any tough opponent, then dragged him through the mud, by peering into his political, public, and even more so, his family and private life, with the desire to humiliate, blemish and portray him as a beast, a thief, a lecher, a traitor and a foreign mercenary! In that situation, the questions of how and for whom the voters would vote - and whether they voted at all - become superfluous! With threats appearing as early as during signature collections for election lists, what can be expected when the race ensues, the outcome of which for many participants in the political sphere could determine their survival, not only in politics, but also as a form of existential gain, by extending their parasitic status in the long term. For many voters, the big dilemma was whether they were allowed to go to the polls, bearing in mind the regime's various pressures on them, pressures at their work, on their family, their environment, preventing them from being promoted, gaining employment, expressing basic opinions and civic participation. Đokica Jovanović issued an important warning: "Political parties were created in the name of certain programs. Now all those programs have faded, and the fight is being fought over minor, personal and narrow goals" (Jovanović, 2022).

If we accept the position that a developed civic culture would have to be expressed as a kind of mixture of participatory and subject elements, and thus based on the balance between knowledge about politics and the view that one can be an effective political actor, and the acceptance of the justification for the crucial influence of political elites in the political process, with the specific recognition of the elites for the needs, demands and aspirations

political consequences of the pandemic. Belgrade: Serbian Political Science Association/Faculty of Political Sciences.

of the masses, we must again ask ourselves, do we have a basis for this in present-day Serbia?⁷⁰ Or are we closer to the view that a specific mixture of the parochial and political order still prevails in Serbia, with certain characteristics of sultanism, as well as a kind of aspiration and solid achievements towards evolving and returning to the time before the year 2000, the time of Caesarian-plebiscite rule.⁷¹ The best expression of disrespect for political institutions, political actors, and ultimately all citizens of the country is manifested in the many flagrant violations of human rights, property and legal security, unprecedented arrogance and voluntarism of the head of the regime, such as the cases of the arrest of leading Serbian tycoon Miroslav Mišković, Savamala, the disrespect for court rulings, the unconstitutional introduction of a state of emergency, interference in the work of judicial and investigative bodies, usurpation of decision-making by other bodies of the executive branch, unconstitutional actions, the amateur management of the crisis during the pandemic and the risking of a large number of lives – these are just some of the features of the political life in Serbia during the past few years. When we add to that the exclusion of the political opposition, civil society activists, expert and other organizations, both from any discussion on the development of the state and society and from political life, it is not surprising that Serbia has long since sunk on all the indexes measuring the degree of a society's democratization. The conclusion that ultimately follows is that the basic need in Serbia is to reorganize political power, to include all the aforementioned actors in the process of creating a prosperous state, with significantly changed political agendas, priorities in internal, external and every other policy, if this political community is to do well

⁷⁰ Radosavljević, Duško. 2020a. "Elites in Serbia in 2020: State, experiences, perspectives and establishing dialogue" Politikon no. 26. p. 07–21.

⁷¹ See also: Podunavac, 2003.

and prosper. Wandering through the "*nonsense of historical reality*" has not brought any good to society or the state.

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CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE AND FACING THE PAST

Uglješa Belić

In our society, even after a full 75 years since the end of World War Two, questions are being raised anew and dilemmas are being "born" about who won and who lost in World War Two. Interpretations are being re-evaluated and values changed, not in accordance with general moral norms and scientific evidence, but exclusively in accordance with the needs of political parties and groups that form the alleged, democratic majority, with strong support from parts of and individuals from the ranks of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, and Matica Srpska. "Under such circumstances, there is also a great responsibility of the public media, which create an image of an 'undivided opinion of the majority voters' through sensationalistic, but most often incompetent and ignorant reporting. (The European Commission, non-governmental organisations and trade unions have mentioned the media situation in Serbia and expressed their views many times. The situation is equally bad in both print and electronic media. There are, of course, honourable exceptions who report daily in accordance with the requirements of the profession and investigative journalism. Professional and independent media are a minority, because they are denied access to viewers and listeners by the monopolistic behaviour of cable distributors and providers, who favour one side, even though they are owned by the state. In particular, it should be emphasised that the current political establishment enabled the shutdown of a number of local media, i.e. their takeover by members of the ruling party).

If we were to identify the beginnings of such a revisionist point of view, we will recall that they go back to the last decade of the 20th century and actually coincide with the time of the disintegration of the common, large state under wartime circumstances and the independence of the former republics. In the end, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro remained, only to cease to exist with the independence of Montenegro in 2006. Serbia's schizophrenic position is reflected by the fact that all the Yugoslav republics left it, and finally the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija after the war and the Kumanovo Agreement. In a political sense, it is the dominant time of the reign of Slobodan Milošević, his party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, and its coalition partners: JUL, the Serbian Radical Party, the Party of Serbian Unity, United Serbia, etc. The policy at that time was sanctioned by the international community with economic and political sanctions, which included entire lists of public and political figures who were banned from entering the countries of the European Union and the United States of America, and because of the crimes committed in Kosovo, the bombing of Serbia started in March 1999.

At the same time, within the country, the holders of that regime led to the suppression of civil rights and freedoms, draconian punishments against free media, liquidation of persons who represented the other side, tycoonisation and the collapse of the economic system. After long civil protests, which were confirmed by the victory of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), first in the presidential elections, and then in the parliamentary elections, in the fall of 2000, the system was changed and only partially

dismantled. A multi-party democratic system was then established. Until the brutal assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in 2003, it seemed that the transition was beginning to produce results in stabilising the political system and curbing nationalism, building and strengthening independent institutions, transforming the legal system and economic growth, which were the desired tools in the process of joining the European Union. After the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić, conservative political forces, with the economic help of some domestic tycoons and part of the international community, re-established their power. In the elections, the government was won by the votes of a huge majority of the voters, but the elections were also marked by large voter abstention. A political oligarchy was formed, the leaders of which were former officials of the Serbian Radical Party, which was renamed as the Serbian Progressive Party.⁷² Politicians from that party easily won the support of the Socialist Party of Serbia, along with parts of JUL, United Serbia and the Serbian Renewal Movement at the republic and local levels of government. With them, the vocabulary was partially changed, expensive, modern suits started being worn, and the negotiations on Serbia's accession to the European Union were officially supported. And yet, a conservative policy based on the church was implemented, in accordance with the idea of "all Serbs in one state", and as a result, the president of Serbia is simultaneously the president of all Serbs in the surrounding area, as well as the president of his political party. The coalition agreement from the 1990s remained in force in the second decade of the 21st century, from 2012, and continues to this day. (Younger readers can examine the press of that time and recognise these same personalities - with a partially changed

^{72 &}quot;Uglješa Belić: The mantra of the great reformer", web portal Autonomija, 30 March 2017, available at: <u>https://autonomija.info/</u> ugljesa-belic-mantra-o-velikom-reformatoru/

political image, while for older readers it is completely clear whom they are talking about, because they remember well the 1990s and the rhetoric of Vojislav Šešelj). At the provincial level, the situation is somewhat different, because a stable partner was found in the national party of the Vojvodina Hungarians, which by the way, since 2000, has participated in civil and democratic coalitions that waged a political struggle against the current power holders, and so full power was secured at the level of the AP Vojvodina as well.

This short political discourse was necessary, because social goals and means under the influence of the ruling neoliberal stances are constantly being transformed towards the right-wing and, unfortunately, continue to find a place in curricula at all levels of education, strategies for cultural development and protection of cultural assets, the healthcare and welfare system.

The revaluation of libertarian traditions from World War Two was used to affirm personalities and movements, but also their ideas that collaborated with the fascists. As a consequence of the above, the Partisan movement was neglected and declared ideological, even though, in the period between 1941 and 1945, it was the only anti-fascist movement that started an uprising, waged continuous battles against the fascists and liberated Yugoslavia and Serbia. Many members of the partisan movement laid down their lives in that struggle, and we are obliged to preserve their legacy and remember them.

By using the tool of historical revisionism, nationalist political elites dismantled the common, anti-fascist heritage and replaced it with an "authentic, Serbian" one. This tendency was started with the SANU Memorandum, and today it takes shape in Ćosić's formulations of the so-called *Moravian civilization*, or the current and frequent catchphrase used nowadays, "the Serbian world".

On a daily basis, the rehabilitation processes of convicted war criminals from World War Two, mostly D. Mihailović and M. Nedić, are recorded, as are the denial and minimisation of Srebrenica and other war crimes from the time of the breakup of Yugoslavia, as well as the protection and concealment of war criminals, disrespect and relativization of the decisions of the Hague Tribunal, which led to the so-called ideological balance.

Political elites in Serbia since the beginning of the 21st century, under that influence, have been changing the names of streets and squares in Serbian cities, introducing new ones, with the explanation of "returning to their roots". In those purges, the names of J. B. Tito and E. Kardelj have disappeared, but also the names of Svetozar Marković, D. Tucović, S. Vukmanović Tempo, B. Kidrič, Spasenija Babović, V. Nazor, M. Gubac, I. G. Kovačić, K. Popović, Ž. Zrenjanin, S. Kovačević... From the above, it can be seen that the personal images of primarily (non)Serbs, and even Serbs who belonged to the Partisan movement and were national heroes of the World War Two, or holders of power after it, are under the attack. Recently, it seems, the most active in this was Goran Vesić in Belgrade, who explains it as follows: "It is not normal for Belgrade to have a Croatian Street, Zagorje, Zagreb or Zadar Street, because those cities do not have a Belgrade Street."73 In this sense, he explains, this establishes reciprocity, because in the mentioned cities there are no more streets named after persons from Serbia!⁷⁴ We remember the wars of the nineties and the political leaders and their efforts for reciprocity, which was reflected in the expulsion and emigration of the non-Serb population from Vojvodina, and even its exchange for the Serbian population (the so-called retorsion).

I would add that it is not only the mentioned streets, but also those that were named after Yugoslav toponyms, so in Belgrade,

⁷³ BBC News in Serbian, the Adio Zagreb broadcast, Ljubljana, Sarajevo: Yugoslavia will no longer be on the streets of Belgrade, 27 July 2020

⁷⁴ Ibid.

and especially in cities around Serbia, there are no more streets that bore the names of: Zagreb, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, Pula, Adriatic, Tetovo, Triglav, Poreč, Skadar, Šar Mountain, Skopje, Prilep, Prizren, etc.⁷⁵ Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is a consequence of the ruling political totalitarian ideology, which does not have its own theoretical basis and is not systematically defined in political programmes, but it exists and is often used in public discourse. Therefore, there is some vagueness here, but it stems from national exclusivity and is perhaps deliberately presented in this vague and collaged way? In support of this claim, we cite the opinion of Umberto Eco, who, speaking about the recognition of fascism, says the following: "…that fascism as a form of extreme national-ism takes over the forms of the national culture that produced it, and the time in which it produced it."

World War Two in Yugoslavia was marked by the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the uprising against fascism led by the partisan movement to victory and the establishment of a new, common state of Yugoslavia. By disrupting the culture of remembrance and trying to make it more right-wing and change it, they are also trying to change history. Hence the neglect and suppression of everything that has to do with Yugoslavia. By introducing the Quisling movements (Chetniks, Nedić, Ljotić) into the new collective memory, that gap is largely filled, while the remaining space is filled with personalities from the so-called Serbian Middle Ages and church dignitaries.

The changed – and in fact false – culture of remembrance is becoming part of school programmes, teaching curricula and textbooks. We are educating and bringing up generations that celebrate condemned figures, and derogatorily address and refer to true winners and anti-fascists. For them, neither Partisans nor

⁷⁵ Compare: Dubravka Stojanović, Cobblestone and Asphalt. Europeanisation and Urbanisation of Belgrade 1885–1914, Belgrade 2020.

Yugoslavia can co-exist with Serbia. The extent to which this is anachronistic and outside contemporary political and cultural currents is evidenced by the case of the Irish woman Violet Gibson, who on 7 April 1926, stepped out of the crowd in Rome and shot at one of the most notorious dictators of the 20th century. The bullet only grazed Benito Mussolini's nose, and the Italian leader survived the assassination attempt. Among the many courageous acts of individuals against fascism in Europe in the 20th century, this act of Violet Gibson has remained almost completely forgotten in history. Of the four people who tried to assassinate *Il* Duce, she was the closest to accomplishing her goal. Now, almost a century later, an initiative has been launched to erect a memorial plaque to her in Dublin. Particularly interesting is the explanation that reads: "...that the public's attention must be drawn to a woman who was a dedicated anti-fascist, in order for her to receive a well-deserved place in the history of Ireland and its people."76 In connection to this, there is often damage to memorial complexes from World War Two. Sometimes deliberately for political and ideological reasons, and sometimes because of a dismissive attitude towards this type of legacy.⁷⁷

The fight against fascism must be formulated clearly and unambiguously and cannot be confused with collaboration during World War Two. In our country, however, this also happens, so on Victory Day, 9 May 2022, it was said in Novi Sad that Serbia should be proud of two anti-fascist and anti-Nazi movements and that both should participate in national reconciliation! (www.o21. rs, 9 May 2022). These are the words of the president of Matica Srpska at the celebration of Victory Day in Novi Sad, which

⁷⁶ BBC News in Serbain, Fascism and History: Violet Gibson – The Irish Woman Who Shot Mussolini, 31 October 2021

^{77 &}quot;They were baking a pig near the monument at Iriški venac", Radio 021, visited on 2 May 2022

show the entire crisis of the social and moral system. How else to explain such a message, passing by the Monument to the victims of the Raid in Novi Sad? How can all Serb, Bosniak and Croat civilian victims of the Chetnik movement in Serbia, BiH, Montenegro and Croatia be ignored? Apart from the fact that the claim about the existence of two anti-fascist movements is scientifically incorrect, it is also anti-civilizational, despite being wrapped in a church and Christian packaging. (author's note: as far as we know, Serbia would be the only country in Europe with two anti-fascist movements). The vocabulary used is full of names of saints, mentions of heaven and hell, that is, allegories aimed at highlighting the sanctity of the Serbian people as a whole, without any exceptions. The need to declare everyone a winner in Serbian history and to equate executioners with victims is a sick political aspiration that aims to establish an authoritarian regime by means of populism.

The legacy of the Partisan, Yugoslav and the only liberation movement has been constantly chipped away at, reduced and belittled in previous decades, and representatives of all levels of government and the media bear the greatest responsibility for this. One must take into account the fact that the largest number of media outlets are in a position where they depend on their founder and that subtly, that dependent relationship has turned into an obedient one, and at the same time, more and more space in the media is being given to revisionist attitudes that change the views of the past and present and offer a new and "bright" future. The situation is very similar when it comes to cultural institutions, where, without a strategy of cultural development, and also under the great influence of daily politics, they listen to the political noises that come "from above", so exhibitions and presentations are subordinated to the political (dis)taste and (lack of) knowledge of the party or parties that make up the political majority.

Important locations from World War Two, i.e. important symbols of anti-fascism, must be systematically preserved and maintained – for example, the location of the Srem front, the Battle of Batina, the Sajmište concentration camp in Belgrade (Zemun camp), etc. "...In the broader historiography of the Holocaust, the Zemun camp holds an important place, considering that it marks a period in which the killing of European Jews was extremely intensified. In addition, the systematic use of a mobile gas unit indicates the cunning and regularity of Nazi killing techniques; it will soon spread to all the death camps in occupied Eastern Europe. It is also the central place in the topography of the Holocaust in Serbia, considering that half of the Serbian Jews were killed right there, during a few short spring months in 1942."78 Its current appearance and function are characterised by "...at least five buildings, out of the thirteen originally built for the Sajmište complex, which were partially or completely destroyed during the Allied bombing of Belgrade in April 1944; after the war they were completely demolished. The remaining buildings are overgrown with greenery, covered with garbage, full of stray animals and wasp hives. Buildings are crumbling; some were inhabited by poor squatters, and others by artists who turned the space into studios (or into dilapidated apartments). Small shops have sprung up in some buildings – there is, for example, a car repair shop, a winery, a warehouse, an abandoned, overgrown and sad children's playground. The new Ušće shopping centre twinkles its lights through the treetops. The most prominent building of what remains on the site - the central tower - is abandoned and deteriorating. For many years, the former Spasić Pavilion, an architectural gem of the Belgrade Sajmište in the 1930s, housed a nightclub where many rock concerts were held, including the famous performance by Boy George in 2006; after that, in 2007, an international boxing

⁷⁸ Jelena Subotić, The big grey lorry, Danas, 9 October 2021.

competition was held. In the meantime, the nightclub was closed and replaced by the Poseidon gym, which offers weightlifting, fitness, mini-football and martial arts. There is a small restaurant outside. A second restaurant – *Salt and Pepper* – was opened right next to it and is located in the former Turkish pavilion, which was used as a morgue during the camp's existence. On its website, the restaurant advertises that it is located on a small street, tucked away in greenery, and that it offers extra-large portions, parking and free Wi-Fi. The story of the Zemun camp, as well as a large part of the story of the Holocaust in Serbia, remains almost completely outside the scope of public memory in Serbia."⁷⁹

Another example we must highlight is the Tomb of the National Heroes on Kalemegdan in Belgrade, which has been desecrated on several occasions with ultra-right slogans (author's note: the last time in May 2021), as well as the Monument to the sisters Rajka and Zdenka Baković in Niš, national heroines from World War Two.⁸⁰ A special type of destruction of the anti-fascist cultural heritage is the disruption and change of its content. In this sense, we highlight the Monument to the national hero S. Petrović Brile in Beočin, where the local self-government decided to "expand" the content in 2017, by adding a bust of another national hero Dimitrije Lazarov Raša from nearby Čerević, four busts of volunteers from the municipality during the wars of the nineties, but also a memorial plaque to the unit of the 1st Army of the Kingdom of Serbia, which entered Beočin in 1918! This kind of artistic concoction is not appropriate and only shows the ideological cacophony we live in, and also reveals the mechanisms used for distorting the past.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Z. Miladinović, *Danas*, 30 October 2020.

⁸¹ Compare: T. Kuljić, The culture of remembrance. Theoretical explanations of the use of the past, Belgrade 2006.

Historian Dr Jelena Subotić rightly calls this execution site at Sajmište in Belgrade "a place of non-remembrance." How many such places of non-remembrance exist in Serbia today? The culture of remembrance cannot be cyclically changed, just so that current political aspirations can leave their mark on it, while the previous ones are rejected and disappear, while revisionism becomes the most powerful tool for changing the history and culture of remembrance, and especially the government system. Paraphrasing one opinion, we can say that, where there is revisionism, there can be no democracy, and monuments become a tool for changing history.

There are no new historical facts or research, yet the world around us is still changing – convicted war criminals are given streets and squares, and court verdicts are not respected! After all, how can one explain the announced "memorial gathering" of ultra-nationalist organisations in Avala, near the Monument to the Unknown Hero on 29 May, which "marks the memory of the Nazi general W. Stettner, other than calling it primitivism, ignorance and fascination with fascism."⁸²

Uncivilised behaviour is becoming all too common – it is this "small" difference that makes the process of joining the European Union difficult and long-lasting. Anti-Semitism, chauvinism and anti-democratic behaviour are present on a daily basis. Such behaviours, which cause astonishment, include the session of the Assembly of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Presidency of Serbia, which denies the principles of the civil state and is (perhaps!) an introduction to the establishment of a state religion.

Germans have the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ("the struggle to overcome [the negativity of] the past"), which describes the attempt to analyse and see the past and to learn to live with that

^{82 &}quot;SKOJ requests a ban on the neo-Nazi gathering in Avala", Naslovi Net, 24 May 2022, available at: <u>https://naslovi.net/2022_05_24/danas/</u> <u>skoj-trazi-zabranu-neonacistickog-skupa-na-avali/30665932</u>

past, especially the Holocaust and the brutalities of communist institutions. What characterizes the term *Vergangenheitsbevaltigung* is learning from the past, including the honest admission that such a past really existed, while trying to correct, as much as possible, the mistakes that were made. And moving on. Thus, erecting public monuments to the victims of the Holocaust is a palpable commemoration of Germany's *Vergangenheitsbevaltigung*. However, as Jan-Werner Müller states in an article for The Guardian: "The real Holocaust memorial in Berlin might not be the physical entity, but the long-lasting, deeply self-searching discussion that preceded its construction."⁸³

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^{83 &}quot;Culture of remembrance – Acceptance of the past", EU portal in Serbia, 3 October 2017, available at: <u>https://europa.rs/kultura-secanja-prihvatanje-proslosti/</u>. Accessed on 5 May 2022.