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### Multiple Institutional Cultures in Southeast Europe within the Context of European Unification

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**ZALA VOLCIC**

**NEITHER “EAST” NOR “WEST”: THE PAST AND PRESENT  
LIFE OF YUGOSLAV IDENTITY**

*“Yugoslavia... – a noble idea... of unfortunately... false and empty brotherhood and unity slogans... For me...it was a diverse country... even though I know now that what I call Tito ‘s Yugoslavia – the country of my childhood – was a myth, a utopian entity... Yugoslavia was only kept together after World War II by the communists... Yes, there were the Olympic Games, and Yugoslav rock, the Slovene mountains and the Croatian coast ... and everything seemed to be sweet. But it was an artificial country – we all knew it... on the one hand, it offered a way to resist ethnic and national backgrounds. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was doomed from day one...”*

A Philosophy Ph.D. student, Maribor, Slovenia,  
in a personal interview, 2004

*“And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of Madeleine... the smell and taste of things remain poised for a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.”*

Marcel Proust, 1928, Swann’s Way

***Introduction***

If, to paraphrase a paraphrase, all world historical personages appear twice, in the contemporary context we might add: first as tragedy and the second time as advertising. So it was in 1999 that, in the emerging capitalist economy of Slovenia, the disowned specter of socialist Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, was reclaimed by the marketing industry to hawk Mercedes-Benz luxury cars.

The former leader was portrayed as the most discerning of consumers, who, as the ad put it, had »everything« – not just the leadership of all the Yugoslav republics, his own yacht, his own castle, and island, but also the car that went along with his high-class status: a Mercedes. It was a strange moment – perhaps the final sign that Slovenia (one of the former Yugoslav countries) had become a full-fledged consumer society free from the anxiety of sliding back towards its socialist past. For consumer society has long promulgated itself by marketing nostalgia for a lost, idealized past whose best attributes might be (or so the advertisements suggest) recaptured through consumption. The irony of using Tito to sell cars was perhaps not lost on those younger viewers who remembered the prosperous years of the 1970s and 1980s, which, more than anything else, had laid the foundations for the independence movement and the fall of Yugoslavia. It is the complex and powerful role of memory, identities, and hybrids that this paper sets out to consider in more detail, while drawing on interviews with the Slovenian and Macedonian young intellectuals.

### ***Theoretical Mapping: Communities, Identities and Hybrids***

Most major works on boundaries, identifications, production of subjectivities, collective identities, narratives, and hybrids engage with Anderson's argument (1983) that the building of European nation-states was intimately connected to the rise of print and capitalism. By now Anderson's idea of the imagined community has become a commonplace to theorize felt sense of belonging to a place universally (Anderson was, interestingly, focusing his research on Malaysia). More recent work has taken up the idea of an imagined community as providing a means of self identification and has offered theories about the ways in which this envisioning might take place (Barbero, 2002).

The study from below, as anthropology recognized, is essential for a clearer understanding of the processes of diverse representations, production of meaning, and identity formations. Nonetheless, it was not until the violent collapse of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s that anthropologists started to explore the lives and discourses of identities in the context of former Yugoslavia (e.g. Denich, 1996; Hayden, 1993; Ballinger, 1994; Ramet, 1992, 1996; Bowman, 1994).

A central focus of anthropological exploration in the former Yugoslav context has been the way in which people's senses of belonging to specific places are in part created by the religious and ethnic distinctions they make. For example, Hayden argues for the recognition of state discourses and legal materials as constitutive of nations and national identities. Through an investigation of former Yugoslav states' government discourses, and specifically, their

new constitutions, Hayden (2000) claims that the state plays a crucial role in the nationalization and ethno-ization of populations. While looking at different practices that define the boundaries of national and ethnic identities, and with that citizenship, his contention is that the boundaries of the state are not merely territorial, but are a function of the state's discursive authority. His approach provides particularly valuable insight into the question of how the boundaries and meaning of a community attempt to become fixed through (constitutional) discourse. To put it simply, the transition from state socialism to state chauvinism was promoted, according to Hayden, by a kind of a bureaucratic exclusionary ethnic imagination, leaving no space for other alternatives. While presenting empirical data, he is helpful in demonstrating how Yugoslav identity was actually preferred by the younger generation.

The above research explores questions about the ways in which group identities are formed, and the functions that they serve. It simultaneously recognizes that it is not just the legal statutes, but also the every-day practices to which they are attached, that define identities of any community. It is this array of cultural and symbolic resources that I am interested in developing further in my article. I focus here on how and which generational (and class) distinctions are understood, negotiated and put to work by actors themselves.

Through in-depth interviews with young Slovenian and Macedonian intellectuals from the last Yugoslav generation I explore the perception of Yugoslav identities and I argue for its understanding as *a hybrid*. I suggest that understanding it as a hybrid helps to unveil the complexities of social reality, its diverse and multiple dimensions, the overcoming of traditional/modern/postmodern models, and at the same time, it resists the boundaries and dichotomies (*neither/nor*).

### *Intellectuals and Their Role*

I do not seek a precise definition of who an intellectual is or is not – simply, to be an intellectual, means to make knowledge based ideas in the public sphere, and to participate in social relations on the basis of this exchange (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983). I view intellectuals as the ones who exert public influence through their practice in the public sphere. I find Gramsci's argument on the fusion of the intellectual's role with the national question particularly fruitful. For Gramsci this fusion is part of the same social and political process – a struggle for power in society among distinct social groups, including intellectuals. I also follow Bauman's argument here: he treats intellectuals as occupants of a space who form and transmit discourses in a social space, and constitute the means through which society is imagined, hailed, and thought by its members (1987).

### *Positioning the last “Yugo” generation*

As some Slovene sociologists point out, ask anyone over twenty-five about the Yugoslav past and they will immediately talk about how respected Yugoslavia used to be, how wonderful the summers on the Croatian coast were, how easy it was to travel without a visa, how shopping trips to Trieste were common and how often music mobilized young people (Debeljak, 2004).

As a researcher, I am not ambiguous about my own political and cultural commitments, yet I strive to avoid using sympathy too locally. In the discussions I had with members of this particular generation, I wanted them first to remember the 1980s, and the memories they have of former Yugoslavia. I asked them to reflect on socialist Yugoslavia as well as on “Yugoslavism.” Here I understand “Yugoslavism” to mean that it has been both a strong and a weak attempt to allow that generation to identify with two layers of identification, the national and the federal (supranational).

The existing network of collective identifications in Yugoslavia, including collective memories and collective attachments to space, changed during the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Before the 1980s, the symbolic divisions of Yugoslavia into its Northern and Southern parts were not seen as irreconcilable. Each republic and province was seen as an integral part of Yugoslavia, and thus as part of a cultural whole which, while internally diverse, actually shared a common identity: it was neither Western nor Eastern. The positioning of Yugoslavia as neither-Western-nor-Eastern provided Yugoslavs with a strong symbolic capital. The creation of the Non-Aligned Movement in the 1950s became especially important for Yugoslavia’s neither-Eastern-nor-Western positioning, and developed into a mantra of the socialist Yugoslav political identity.

It was in the late 1980s that this particular image of Yugoslavia – unity-in-diversity – began slowly collapsing. Political elites, chiefly in Slovenia and Croatia, began redefining the internal diversity of Yugoslavia as an obstacle to its further development. Yugoslavia was gradually perceived as an uncomprehensible mixture of incompatible civilizations, religions, or cultures: the Western and the Eastern one, the European and the Balkan one. I was especially interested in changes within the symbolic maps of belonging in my informants’ narratives. Images like Europe *vs.* the Balkans would often be applied to divisions *within* former Yugoslavia itself, and *within* particular nations, thus dividing them into a European part and a Balkan part (see more in Bakic-Hayden, 1995).

### *Some Notes on the Fieldwork*

In-depth interviews formed the core of my research and the heart of my experience. Between October 2004 and July 2005 I spent a total of four months in Slovenia and Macedonia, and conducted over 32 interviews, with some follow-ups on the Internet. My informants were active in a number of public spheres: university, media, art, and civil society institutions (for example, University of Skopje, or different radio and television stations...). In addition, I met with and interviewed many people who worked in media. I also interviewed many people who worked in NGOs and civil society institutions, as well as politicians and academics. Much to my surprise, it was rather easy to obtain interviews on the topic of former Yugoslavia. It was as if people *wanted* to talk about it, as if they were eager to “*get it out.*” I would start with one person and it would quickly become a snowball effect – (meeting more people), because my informants live and work in very tight-knit communities. This is especially true in both the NGO sector and the communications (media) industry. Although I did have an interview guide/questionnaire, I seldom relied on it. My goal was not to get through as many questions as possible, nor to find answers to fit any pre-determined categories. I allowed my subjects the space for personal reflections, flow of disconnected statements, intimate memories and digressions. We most often met in cafés, occasionally in their offices, sometimes in their homes. Many times, even with a tape recorder in hand, the interviews felt more like social visits partly because people generally had an easygoing attitude about being interviewed and frequently others joined in.

Deciding to conduct a research on Slovenian and Macedonian spaces of identity and common Yugoslav memories has some serious flaws, but also important challenges and advantages. Slovenia is considered to be somehow a homogeneous national community (a perception that is rarely questioned). Macedonia, on the other hand, is marked by the so-called Macedonian national question: conflict between opposing nationalistic viewpoints and ideologies, all of which reify nations, national cultures, and national identities, which are projected far back into the past and treated as eternal and natural (i.e. Slav Macedonian, Albanian, Greek). Slovenia has escaped the tragic events of Macedonia; Slovenia joined the European Union on May 1, 2004, adopted the EURO as its currency in 2007, and has been commonly defined as “a success story” in political and economic terms. Macedonia’s economy, on the other hand, needs growth and new jobs (Brown, 2005). Macedonian diplomats have been negotiating that country’s EU integration over the last nine years. The fifth anniversary of the *Ohrid Framework Agreement* in August 2006 marked the completion of the formal implementation phase of the peace deal, which ended the fighting between ethnic-Albanian’ armed groups and the government.

At the beginning of my research, I hoped that precisely the differences between Macedonia and Slovenia would give my work a valuable comparative angle thereby enabling me to analyze in-depth the common Slovenian-Macedonian memories of former Yugoslavia. However, there are no real differences between the memories of Slovenian and Macedonian informants about former Yugoslavia. The recurring memories are very similar, they follow the same logic and denote similar events, and in that, the clusters (of memories) do not differ. At the beginning of my research, I also expected to be able to recognize “the Eastern” and “the Western” versions of their narratives, but the connotations of West and East do not significantly penetrate the discourses of the interviewed – perhaps another indication that may prompt one to think about Yugoslav identity as a mixture, as a hybrid – neither/nor Western or Eastern.

I explore if/how my informants were “interpellated” as Yugoslav subjects and follow their “free-floating memories.” I group them, for the sake of a clear analysis, into the communal “imagined memory” concept. The notion itself is problematic to the extent that all memory is imagined, and yet it allows us to distinguish memories grounded in lived experience from memories compiled from archives and texts only.

### ***Historical Frameworks:***

#### ***Inclusivity vs. Exclusivity in/of former Yugoslavia***

The first quotation used at the beginning of this article captures beautifully the ambiguity in the sense of identity associated with the former Yugoslavia, the feeling of belonging it inspired, and some of the sensibilities around it. Most of the scholarly literature as well as my informants’ narratives explain Tito’s success in containing various nationalist aspirations during his rule (1945-1980) with his charisma and adept use of force. In the words of one of the informants, “Yugoslavia was six nations, five languages, four religions and one Tito.” Everyone recalls the slogan which epitomized Yugoslav ideology: “After Tito, Tito!”

A significant element within my informants’ discursive construction of the former Yugoslavia involves the articulation of difference *outside* and *within* Yugoslavia. These markers of difference were important for my Macedonian (and some Slovene) informants who did and continue to perceive themselves as superior to both Eastern and Western Europe. A crucial element of difference was grounded in the historic rupture with the Soviet Union in 1948. My informants recall Tito’s “NO” to Stalin as one of the most important historical events, and further point out that former Yugoslavia was the only country that granted its citizens the right to travel outside its borders.

Barth (1969) argues that there are two models of identity. The first is identity as self-differentiation and unity. The second is the identity that comes from interrelation, where identity is connected with differentiation from the Other. His argument is that identities simultaneously negate and reaffirm each other. In the geographical and political classification after WWII, former Yugoslavia secured its place as being «different» from both Eastern and Western Europe. The death of Tito in 1980 and the collapse of the Yugoslav economy during the 1980s, however, challenged the hegemony of the Yugoslav imagined community and its identity (see Guzina, 2003).

The rest of this paper is divided into two main parts. In the first part, I deal with my informants' memories about Yugoslav identity. I focus especially on discourses that point to the former Yugoslavia as an open, multicultural, but also an artificial, and even utopian, pastiche. In the second part of the paper, I will argue that most of the Slovenian and Macedonian informants alike express a particular kind of sentiment -*Yugo-nostalgia* that presents itself as a kind of a hybrid phenomenon.

The main question in this article is: how were the different components of the former Yugoslav identity welded together? What was the crucial element in that mixture – was it the self-consciousness of being different in the Cold War model? Was it being part of a larger whole? Or was it being multicultural – both Western and Balkan? I argue that the Cold War was instrumental in shaping Yugoslav identity, precisely because it served its “in-betweenness.” When the poles disappear, the “in-betweenness” becomes meaningless. Importantly, Yugoslav identity throws light upon the concept of hybridity — the “category that allows us to announce the painless disappearance of the conflicts underlying cultural resistance” (Barbero, 2002: 632).

## **1. THE SITUATED POLITICS OF BELONGING AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA**

I advance a rather simple argument here: the narratives indicate that most of my informants identify with the former Yugoslavia as cultural and civic spaces that were based on a common Yugoslav socialist culture, myths, and rituals. At this point of my analysis I would like to introduce the concept of “identity markers” (Hall, 1992). Identity markers are defined as those characteristics that are perceived as carrying cultural importance. Put simply, what identity markers do my informants use while defining former Yugoslavia? Let me state that I understand the limits of my appropriation of *identity markers* here, as I am only going to list and shortly define different identity markers as they appear in their memories. I do recognize that there are indeed contradictions, tensions, and hidden connections among them; understanding how they have

shaped *identity markers* requires analysis, for example, of educational dynamics, material reality, and high culture in the former Yugoslavia. In what follows, I briefly introduce some of the main memory markers of the Yugoslav identity and locate them according to the narratives of my respondents. These are: *Yugoslav Education: We're Pioneers*; *Different Yugoslav Rituals and Tito in the Memory*; *YU Rock'n'roll*; *Yugoslav products*; *Sports and YU Army*; and *Pan-Yugoslav Media/Film*.

1. *Yugoslav Education: We're Pioneers*: Memories about the former Socialist Yugoslavia were first and foremost about Yugoslav education; it inculcated students in the ways of “brotherhood and unity” (similar to today’s EU “unity in diversity” sentiment). This entailed participating in the communist Pioneers, civil defense exercises, and school trips to other parts of Yugoslavia. Generally, the Yugoslav education strongly emphasized the multicultural and multi-ethnic aspects/characteristics of the country. Yugoslavia’s diversity was often exaggerated; it was primarily imagined, narrated and created in songs, poems, literature, theatre, and schools. According to an anthropologist in Skopje, In Yugoslavia, we were taught in all the schools that we were Tito’s Pioneers, the Yugoslavs. I remember learning the Yugoslav geography and history that was associated by being a Yugoslav. One had to employ love for the people, different cultures, landscape and territory of the country.

Teaching in the former Yugoslavia centered on the memorization of the history and geography of the country. In schools, as my informants recall, students saluted the Yugoslav flag and sang patriotic songs.

2. *Different Yugoslav Rituals and Tito in the Memory*: Different rituals formed part of the ideological machinery in the former Yugoslavia; they aimed to engineer the creation of Yugoslav citizens. The ritual of the Youth Day is one example – each year, on 25<sup>th</sup> May, a rally of Yugoslav youth ran through the Federation with a white baton. Partaking in this ritual allowed the participants to imagine a common cultural community. Through the symbolic meaning of this day, this generation affirmed their membership in the Yugoslav imagined community.

3. *YU Rock*: In almost all of my informants’ narratives about Yugoslavia, a specific song was recalled and sung – the song is titled “*Yugoslavia*” and the opening words read: “Dance to rock’n’roll, all of Yugoslavia, everything before you folds and unfolds.” Undoubtedly, an important marker of the former Yugoslav identity is music, which is known in the region as Yugoslav Rock. The Yugoslav imaginary, for this last Yugoslav generation, is about its music, its unique, culturally specific brand of rock’n’roll. Consequently, the generation identified Yugoslavia in the 1980s with Yugoslav rock culture. According to an actor in Ljubljana,

... Yugoslavia was all about the ideology of Tito's socialism that I despised... and the Yugoslav rock'n'roll that I loved. Do you remember "*Mi smo ljudi cigani, sudbinom prokleti*," "We are gypsy people, cursed by fate"...or "*Balkane, Balkane, Balkane moj, budi mi silan i dobro mi stoj*"... "Balkans, Balkans, Balkans of mine, be mighty for me and stand strong." All these lyrics are strongly engrained in our generation. they still now represent identification among the youth. Rock music was the only way of holding Yugoslav people together and not tearing them apart.

Yugoslav bands, such as *Elektricni orgazam*, *Bijelo Dugme*, *Idoli*, *Sarlo Akrobata* were seen as the cultural links between different nations. It is perhaps useful, in this connection, to point out that my informants recall this period as the "golden years of Yugoslav rock and roll," which offered to them something Yugoslav, an identity that was a rich mixture of good music, smart lyrics, travelling to concerts, and hanging-out.

4. *Sports and Serving YU army*: To my follow-up question — when did you feel the most like a Yugoslav — most of my male informants responded that this was so during their military service and during different sporting events. According to an art historian in Skopje, "during Olympic games and other international sports competitions, I was elated to be so un-problematically supporting Yugoslavia. I don't remember ever feeling so undivided about anything else."

5. *Yugoslav products*: Importantly, memories of different Yugoslav products resonate very powerfully in almost all of the interviews I conducted. Most of the names that my respondents would cite are: *Gorenje (the TV sets)*, *Kras*, *Zastava/Jugo car*, *Podravka Vegeta*, *Jetrna pasteta*, *Cocta*, *Radenska*, *Slovenijales (the furniture)*.

6. *Media*: Finally, some of the informants would cite *pan-Yugoslav media, films, and TV shows* as important in providing and mobilizing Yugoslav identity. These media addressed and hailed the members of the various nations as Yugoslavs and could shape their attachment to a common, Yugoslav space. One sees here how a process of remembering and retelling identity-markers in fact involves a number of memory *products* — pictures, media scenes, videos, and so on. The activity of remembering, or what Kuhn (2000: 186) defines as identity „memory work,“ is an „active practice of remembering which takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its (re)construction through memory.“

These identity markers point to much larger concerns — those of the appropriation, borrowing, and mixing of memories. In an attempt to critique these identity-markers, to unveil their connections and relationships, as well as to bring their "inherent" and less obvious contradictions to the fore, I argue that the landscape of Yugoslav memories not only recalls the former Yugoslav culture, but also becomes a contemporary site of negotiation. Here, Yu-

goslav community *couldn't survive* the destruction wrought by differences that caused the war. While discussing the Yugoslav markers has been quite straightforward, analysis of the narratives offered by my informants presents quite a challenge. The next section explores the former Yugoslav identity as it appears in two ambiguous and contradictory images, to say the least. For the sake of clarity, I have divided the narratives into two different clear-cut groups, providing citations from the discussions I had. These two models are not mutually exclusive, and my attempt to discuss them in isolation as ideal types is solely for analytic convenience.

### *Contradictory views of Yugoslav hybrid identity*

*First*, former Yugoslav identity is remembered and narrated as an open one, a culturally rich one, full of possibilities, enjoyment, and excitement, as a space *in between* two opposed global blocks at the time, as a place of the Non-Aligned Movement. In this account, positive aspects were emphasized: the multicultural slogan “brotherhood and unity,” anti-fascism and resistance, and Tito’s leading role in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. In these memories, Yugoslavia promised freedom, openness, development, modernization, multiculturalism, and pluralism. For example, some of my informants describe it in the following superlative terms. According to a Slovene radio journalist,

I have an idealized version of the 1980s and the Yugoslav era. In my memory, this period is heavenly... I don't know really how to describe it ... it is like, everything was perfect, I mean, I know it wasn't. but, for me, it was beautiful, nice, spiritually and culturally rich, cosmopolitan. We have traveled all around the country.visiting friends and relatives.

The above citation gives some sense of how the remembered space of the former Yugoslavia was an idealized one of warmth, childhood, democratic potential, and multiculturalism. The former Yugoslavia, in these narratives, was about a common understanding and cultural diversity that promoted a vision of multiethnic identity. It presents itself as an ideal childhood home, as a secure, warm, creative, safe, and intimate space, full of sweet feelings. Especially for this specific last Yugoslav generation, the 1980s were a period of freedom, of a “liberal” form of socialism, of a position between the East and the West.

*The second* cluster of images and interpretations of Yugoslavia that is common in my informants’ narratives, however, was the understanding of Yugoslavia as a kind of a false, artificial, empty, utopian entity, as a kind of a perverse dream creation. In a way, the dream metaphorically appears as *an uncanny* entity in the sense that Freud uses the notion of the “uncanny” (1963) to

refer to those experiences that are “undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror” (1963: 193). Yugoslav memories are able to arouse a feeling of the uncanny in a particularly strong way – insofar as the notion of the uncanny denotes something beautiful, familiar and repulsive, frightening and unfamiliar at the same time. In this sense, Yugoslav identity appears as an uncanny *feeling of belonging*, whereby that which has been familiar becomes suddenly and inexplicably strange and alien, but this is then the strangeness of that which is most familiar. Yugoslavia starts to denote something terrifying which is at the same time strange and familiar. Furthermore, it becomes a home which is not home anymore. This “uncanniness” of Yugoslavia – if you will – is terrifying precisely because it can not be adequately explained, and it always poses itself in the lines of a possible return.

In many of the current narratives, more among Slovenian informants than among Macedonian ones, Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity” beliefs were seen as a large-scale ideological project that aimed to create and impose “unreal” collective identity across all South Slav ethnic, religious and social lines. In short, the slogan of “brotherhood and unity” in these narratives is rejected as a terrible ideological Communist mistake. According to a Ljubljana lawyer, “I should say that there is something *wrong* and plastic about the way we lived in Yugoslavia. Many Slovenes, including me, viewed Yugoslavia as a prison for us, a state that postponed our independence. It was a failed project on different levels...” [My emphasis]. Such sentiments about Yugoslav identity always point to its hidden, perverted, *vamp*, and even dangerous side.

The critical comments above depict Yugoslavia mostly as an imagined community that was a deceptive and corrupt communist entity. They also point to the diverse ways in which my informants experienced the shifting forms of identities that their experiences reflected and re-created. In the words of an informant

I miss that which I thought was happiness in Yugoslavia... I was living in a world in which life was good to me, wonderful, nice and pleasant. there were of course people who were dissatisfied with the country and the way of living. I can't make them believe it was happiness. I think the life in Yugoslavia was good, considering the history and all the other circumstances. Now, when I think back, I can say I do not miss my Yugoslav life. Yugoslavia of my youth no longer exists. It is a ghost. It is like life and death. I was one man, Yugoslavia was one country. But it is all done... *We now live other lives...we're a part of Europe now...* [my emphasis]

If Yugoslav identities and loyalties were somehow felt rather strongly by this particular Yugo generation, however, so were the ambivalent, hybrid feelings about it – seeing it simultaneously as warm, beautiful, decadent, bizarre and horrible. Again, Freud's notion of the “uncanny” can be helpful here, while

analyzing these transformational processes. I want to explore further the strikingly similar implications that the “phantasmagoric” and the uncanny have for the refiguring identities as hybrids. In this sense, I use the notion of the uncanny in a metaphorical way, rather than solely in a comprehensive, explanatory way. The past (Yugoslav) experiences – initially very familiar and strongly felt – are lost, but constantly return to trouble the stable boundaries between interior/exterior; subject/object; and crucially, Yugoslav/Slovenian/Macedonian. They represent *a hybrid* – something that challenges and resists the (spatial and temporal) dichotomies – between past/present; and West/East. Again, something that is at once mysterious, warm, creative, inaccessible, cruel, vulgar and attractive, necessary and lethal.

The next section will examine the ways in which identity markers of Yugoslav culture have been preserved and re-appropriated in a specific form of nostalgia. My question here mostly deals with contemporary cultural representations, practices, and discourses of the Yugoslav hybrid identity. Some define *Yugo-nostalgia* as a return to the collective experience of citizens whose individual lives were embedded in the life of the collapsed state. I take instead a more critical position here, especially in the light of the wars. I place *Yugo-nostalgia* in the context of global capitalism and its production of a nostalgia consumption industry. I do not completely reject the argument that many layers of the *Yugo-nostalgia* tell very creative stories that should be analyzed. If this nostalgia is escapist, it gives nostalgia something to live for: the promise of a

return to and restoration of a world that never was. In some forms *Yugo-nostalgia* can be a vital, productive tool in the emotional reconstitution and preservation of histories.

The term nostalgia is full of contradictions – posing numerous theoretical problems, but also, in the Yugoslav case, practical challenges. However, I might warn the reader here that I have trouble accounting for the pure enjoyment and consumption that *Yugo-nostalgia* produces in culture. By focusing on nostalgia mainly as a form of commodity and insincerity, I might have dissuaded one from further pursuing questions about enjoyment and agency. Of course, *Yugo-nostalgia per se* is not problematic. What is problematic is precisely how it gets used, borrowed, appropriated, and exploited in the region for either nationalistic/populist and/or commercial purposes.

## 2. THE MANY FLAVORS OF YUGO-NOSTALGIA

*Yugo-nostalgia* is not the same phenomenon as the communist nostalgia in the rest of Eastern Europe. Again, former Yugoslavia is the place in Europe that has left destruction and ethnic cleansing in the wake of its collapse. Memory constantly reinvents the Yugoslav past. I argue that instead of being politically questioned, challenged, and negotiated, memory gets detached from (political, historical) life and is subsequently packaged, and sold, for hard currency. No doubt, images of living together in the former Yugoslavia generate discourses of healing and produce new notions of belonging and nationalism. The discourses surrounding these images raise questions about the destructive aspects of nationalist discourse, memory about the war, and the construction of memory. Nostalgia is potentially dangerous because in its benign form it allows different political actors to rewrite, reshape, and/or erase the years of co-existence in Yugoslavia. Worse, nostalgia enables the denial of the wars and the refusal to take any responsibility for them. Meanwhile, such political actors refer to Yugoslavia as a seductive, utopian place, and return back into the imagined, celebrated, and popularized Yugoslav past rather often. Consider here, for example, the following statement made by a Slovenian film-director who claims that

It seems as if the Balkans and the memories of former Yugoslavia are a formula for any contemporary films' success. We need some *happy Yugoslav times fiction*, and we need to erase from our memory the tragic war times of the 1990s. Who cares about the wars these days? Yes, maybe capitalism has been embraced rather too enthusiastically here, but it is either you ride it, or lose it. We need to get rich.that is all.

In a way then, *Yugo-nostalgia* mobilizes a sense of loss that is, ironically, borrowed and exploited by the promoters of the nationalistic and/or commercial discourse. Nostalgia for Yugoslavia – for the lost “golden era” thus serves both the rhetoric of the nationalists and the new capitalist elites. In this sense, those who celebrate the *Yugo-nostalgia* imply that nostalgia can resuscitate what was best about the old times. The term “phantasmagoric” as it is used in Benjamin might be appropriate here: the status of the commodity (or, as I am arguing, *Yugo-nostalgia*) is that of a “delusional expression of collective utopian fantasies and longings, whose very mode of expression itself, as delusional, ensures that those same longings remain mere utopian fantasies” (Pensky, 2004: 34). In the next subsection I am interested in roughly defining different layers and forms of *Yugoslav nostalgia* that we witness continually in the region. I see *Yugo-nostalgia* in three forms:

1. *Revisionism*: This is a revisionist kind of nostalgia in which one witnesses the rewriting of history, as well as political calls for renewal of a shared sense of belonging to the Yugoslav community. Revisionism is a form that presupposes the existence of some verifiable historical reality that can be transformed and reshaped to suit the present.

2. *Aestheticism/Traditionalism*: This form comprises different cultural fields and forms of recalling the Yugoslav cultural past, while *preserving it*. This form of nostalgia looks up to a Yugoslav culture and its past as something sacred, as something that needs to be protected as it was. Hence Yugoslavia is reconfigured but preserved. The implicit call for preservation and return to a real past also highlights the effects of what Bernstein (1992) terms “aesthetic alienation:” the paradoxical relation of art to the past and scientific truth in modernity. Whereas art may once have represented a realm where humans could reflect upon themselves, the emergence of scientific positivism, mass society, and modernity more generally, now privilege access to objective truths.

3. *Escapism/utopianism*: This form of nostalgia celebrates and fosters imaginary Yugoslav feelings and products that offer an imaginary escape into the Yugoslav past mostly through *consumption*. This type of nostalgia rather avoids the historical. This form offers some interesting cultural hybrids of Yugoslav memories, repackaged for consumption.

These three levels and types of *Yugo-nostalgia* correspond to Nietzsche’s trinity of methods for history (1983). Nietzsche provides a schematic model of three means of relating to history and the ways in which history is necessary for life. He distinguishes between a *monumental* method, an *antiquarian* method, and a *critical* method. They attend to different employments of the past. I will compare and align these three definitions of history with definitions of *Yugo-nostalgia*.

*Monumental* history, Nietzsche argues, triggers revisionism, as humans struggle to imitate heroic struggles. In short, monumental history uses the past in order to forge the future (i.e. revisionism). Here, history is always in danger of becoming a myth. It appropriates specific historical events into monuments, while it abuses the past. Monumental history invokes the desire to assist some particular framing of the present. The past gets reshaped to fit whatever we think the present should reflect of it. This is the approach commonly used in ethnic conflicts, since it easily invents national myths.

The *antiquarian* historical method uses the past in order to continue the past – the past is then arranged and framed in a museum way – in an aesthetical, systematic, organized way. Tradition and folk art, for example, are superior, simply because they are old. The very idea of a „new tradition” appears absurd, everything new gets rejected. The idea to create something new is

diminished, and replaced by the need to recycle. This approach advocates the preservation of society. The antiquarian historian is a preservationist, recording the world for the generations to come.

The *critical* historical method cuts the past in order to build the future anew (in a strange way similar to my third definition of *Yugo-nostalgia* -escapism – perhaps nostalgia offers then an escapist image). It judges history and condemns it. There is neither mythologizing for the sake of the present nor a desire to preserve.

### ***Mapping Yugo-nostalgic identities and practices***

*Yugo-nostalgia* has produced diverse events, new spaces, identities, memories and complex media representations. It was in Skopje, in 2004, that the Macedonian producer Ristoski introduced “the first real Yugoslav reality show.” As he claims, the show started as an attempt to re-connect the former-Yugoslav region through popular culture after ten years of wars. “...The show is not *per-se* Yugo-nostalgic in any sense. All we want is to have fun, as we used to when we were living in one country.”

The Yugoslav reality-show hosted 12 participants (two from each former republic), who for 95 days shared the same house in Skopje and engaged in an apparently normal banal daily routines, such as cooking, cleaning, talking with friends, etc. More than 50,000 applicants from all the former Yugoslav republics competed for participation in the 2004 show. “*That’s me*” was widely broadcasted in all the former Yugoslav countries on various private, commercial television stations. Additionally, Web users could access the so-called “*That’s me*” house at any time through live cameras. This feature of the show presented an innovative relationship between the television program and its audience.

Generally, the promise offered by any reality television show is to negotiate the participants’ identities and to empower viewers. Likewise, the promise of the show “*That’s me*” lies in its *supposedly democratic* and open potential: everyone can now participate, and everyone can vote via mobile phones. As Ristoski claims, “This is very different from the socialist former Yugoslavia. Now, we are allowed to vote, be active, and participate in the process.” Yet, equating democracy with the new “interactivity” (observable in the current pop cultural obsession with reality-based programming) is rather simplistic and problematic. Thus, I would argue, television shows like the *reality TV show* “*That’s me*” do more than celebrate the “active” audience; they encourage viewers to understand history in populist ways and through clichés. My conversations with producers and fans show that they both tend to attribute

reality TV's success to its "democratic" character and its lottery-like ability to make a star or celebrity out of anyone. Of course, the form of democracy on offer in Skopje is a strange one. Indeed, one of the results of the reality TV boom has been to focus attention on the *apparatus* of celebrity production rather than on the intrinsic qualities of the star, and her/his aura.

The participation of the public is reduced here once again to the role of consumer or spectator. For example, after analyzing the show "*That's me*" one can easily detect the producers' excessive emphasis on particular aspects of interaction between the participants that was clearly designed to construe a specific stereotypical image of the residents and, therefore, influence the audience's voting decision. Similar to fiction in which the narrative threads are carefully intertwined by script writers, the televised "*That's me*" displays carefully selected and edited events and juxtaposes them in planned sequences. The show played out and rested on some essential (national) stereotypes, and a few "Balkan" scandals were supposed to reinforce the "local flavor" to "spice it all up" – for example, male participants, who while fighting, swear and show each other their private parts. In short, what I suggest here is that the appeal of the real, the appeal "to live like it was in Yugoslavia" in this context, becomes the promise to access the reality of manipulation. The show demonstrates that the promise of experiencing "real Yugoslavia" can be effectively commodified. *Yugo-nostalgia* here then takes on a consumerist, utopian, and escapist layer of meaning. Paradoxically, the show "*That's me*" attempts to convince its individual participants and viewers that they matter – that they are worthy of individual attention – while working to count them and sell them off to advertisers.

### **Conclusions**

In this paper I have argued that Yugoslav identity should be understood as a hybrid. I have demonstrated this assertion through an analysis of the (re)creation of memory about the former Yugoslavia. My goal here was to suggest a framework for thinking about Yugoslav identity – and Yugoslav identity could serve as a compelling metaphor for the current situation in the EU. In fact, the phenomenon of hybrid identities (for example, supra-national ones) reveals the dynamic which results from the desire to produce knowledge. Yugoslav identity is indeed *a hybrid identity* and a peculiar vehicle for desires, wishes, anxieties – that pretends to offer access to reality but in fact only offers access to the long history of the prior uses, meanings, memories and unstable realities of the objective world.

I studied memories of the Yugoslav past by grouping them into a cluster of themes. In this manner, I hoped to show the logic that establishes connec-

tions among various memories. This paper has argued that the memories, views, feelings, definitions of the former Yugoslav community now generally render themselves in the form of a collage that comes to be remembered as a beautiful, and in a way even utopian past. In a way, Yugoslav identity turned something frightening into something uncanny.

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