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Culture, Memory and Collective Identities in the (Re)Making: The National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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INTRODUCTION

Between October 2012 and September 2015, the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Zemaljski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine*) closed its doors to visitors and ceased all the research and conservation activities it had performed for nearly a century. The Museum had survived many tumultuous periods—the most recent one having been the three-year siege of Sarajevo (1992–1995); nevertheless, it was unable to cope with what followed—the absence of appropriate cultural policies that would enable it to perform its primary function as a cultural institution of national relevance. Rather than considering one particular form of cultural production here, I would like to draw attention to the problem of consensus in regard to cultural valorization, and its financing, in post-conflict and post-socialist contexts, as is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The National Museum provides an interesting case of the intersection between the formation of new class distinctions in Pierre Bourdieu's terms, the shifts in the understanding and valorization of cultural heritage under various political and economic systems, and the place of culture in post-conflict contexts of competing identities and powers. For the present case study, Bourdieu's following remark is particularly resonant:

These [class] constructions are not effected in a social vacuum, as some ethnomethodologists seem to believe: the position occupied in social space, that is, in the structure of the distribution of the different species of capital, which are also weapons, governs the representations of this space and the stances adopted in the struggles to conserve or transform it.¹

In line with Bourdieu's understanding of class as a space of relationships,² Alan Warde indicates that dislikes/distastes are primarily associated with social division.³ We can say that the situation Bourdieu describes in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) finds significant echoes in pres-

1 Bourdieu, Pierre (1994), p. 28 as cited by Loïc Wacquant, "Symbolic Power and Group-Making: On Pierre Bourdieu's Reframing of Class," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 13:2 (2013), p. 277.

2 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society* 14:6 (Nov., 1985), p. 725.

3 Alan Warde, "Cultural Hostility Re-Considered," *Cultural Sociology* 5:3 (2010), pp. 341–366.

ent-day Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁴ particularly when it comes to the manner in which social boundaries are symbolically constructed through tropes aiming at valorization (or not) of a particular kind of cultural good (e.g., heritage). Bourdieu's analysis of the distribution of cultural and economic capital among the dominant class have exposed the role played by the predisposition toward certain types of cultural good as essential in the formulation of social differences.⁵

Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes. In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, all determination is negation; and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ("sick-making") of the tastes of others. "De gustibus non est disputandum": not because "tous les goûts sont dans la nature," but because each taste feels itself to be natural—and so it almost is, being a *habitus*—which amounts to rejecting others as unnatural and therefore vicious. Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent. Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes; class endogamy is evidence of this. The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated.⁶

Bosnian and Herzegovinian society relatively recently underwent a violent inter-ethnic conflict marked by substantial loss of human life, population displacement, and destruction of cultural heritage. In order to gain a clearer insight into the tensions between social groups and the role of taste dislikes in them, which are manifested primarily through polarized discourses on heritage and state-subsidized culture—as I will try to show in this paper—I believe that it is necessary to take into consideration the segment that deals with forms of collective remembering, and the role of cultural institutions in it, and accordingly, these constitute a vital part of the following analysis.

In consequence, through four aspects—culture as a tool applied to the uses of the past for present purposes (regimes of historicity of cultural heritage), nation-building (collective goods and competing forms of collective memory), the problem of redefinition of cultural heritage (mediation of remembrance via cultural institutions and artefacts), and the permanent competition of social groups for power (struggle according to Bourdieu)—I provide a framework for an analysis of overlapping problems using the example of the former cultural institutions of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, among which is the National Museum. In the first part, the methodological framework of the research is provided. Section 2 illustrates the (nostalgic) division between

4 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

5 Ibid., p. 260.

6 Ibid., pp. 56–57.

past and present through the Seven Non-Aligned Institutions of Culture. For a better understanding of the case of the Museum, as well as the collective valorization of culture and cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in section 3 I have relied on the work of French sociologist Nathalie Heinich, and more specifically her *axiologie patrimoniale*, or as she rephrases it, the relation between heritage and emotions as a starting point for analysis.⁷ Because emotions lead to the expression of values, and valorization leads to hierarchies, which later crystallize around competing identities, cultural memory, i.e. forms of collective remembrance, were added to the analysis in section 4. In section 5, the paper provides the historical background of the National Museum. Then, section 6 examines the Sarajevo Haggadah, as the implications of the narrative of this “star object” of the National Museum provide a background against which the Museum’s existence was justified and valued during the siege of the city. Nevertheless, with the institutions of the former Socialist Republic in crisis in 2012, the symbolism of the Sarajevo Haggadah was cast aside. Therefore, section 7 moves the analysis toward the polarization between successful and unsuccessful cultural entrepreneurs that emerged simultaneously with the crisis. The crisis is taken as an indicator of the shift in the understanding of culture as either a collective good or a marketable commodity. The example of the National Museum’s campaign to reopen the museum, which eventually did happen in 2015,⁸ was organized in cooperation with the non-governmental organization *Akcija*, and shows an attempt at overcoming the division of institutions according to the B/H/S lockdown.⁹ It also represented a move towards reinstating (national) culture as a collective good.

1. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, between 2015 and 2017 six interviews were conducted with individual cultural workers involved in the management of two cultural institutions of the former Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and of three organizations based in Sarajevo (*Akcija*, Cultural Heritage Without Borders, Association of Filmmakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The interviewees were selected according to their position and role within the cultural sector, their experience and work in their respective institutions/organizations, and because they were the target of most of the criticism that emerged in 2012. Each interview lasted between one hour and one

7 Nathalie Heinich, “Emotions patrimoniales: de l’affect à l’axiologie,” *Social Anthropology* 20:1 (2012), p. 21.

8 Aida Đugum, “Zemaljski muzej ponovo otvoren, pravni status ostaje neriješen” (2015) <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/zemaljski-muzej-ponovo-otvara-vrata/27248791.html> (accessed on December 6, 2017).

9 B/H/S stands for Bosanski/Hrvatski/Srpski, which means Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS).

hour and a half. The questions focused on the timeline of the 2012 crisis and the closure to the public of the National Museum and National Art Gallery, the negative campaign against the former socialist institutions of culture that emerged simultaneously, and their understanding of it. The questions then turned to 2015 and the attempts made by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to resolve the crisis, before shifting to the present day (2017) in order to clarify whether the working conditions had changed. In addition to providing a linear narrative in establishing the origins of the problem faced by the institutions, the interviews helped identify the tropes used to express stances of defense and support, or negative attitudes towards the institutions in question. Furthermore, I draw on secondary sources, such as symposiums that took place in 2012 concerning institutions of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina that were formerly socialist institutions, newspaper and magazine articles and radio broadcasts featuring cultural institutions in general but the National Museum in particular. The purpose was to identify, on the one hand, the main tropes of the positive/negative dichotomy concerning state subsidized culture, and, on the other, the regimes of historicity within which such issues are located.

2. THE SEVEN NON-ALIGNED INSTITUTIONS OF CULTURE: FROM COLLECTIVELY OWNED CULTURE TO NO ONE'S PROPERTY

The transition from state socialism to capitalism in the former Yugoslav republics was characterized by the passage in the early 1990s from collective ownership (*društvena svojina*) to state ownership (*državna svojina*).¹⁰ After that period property was finally privatized, often for only symbolic amounts of money and with destructive effects, by a minority close to the ruling elite.¹¹

Culture, however, posed a different kind of problem. First, culture as such, although managed by the public sector, could not be privatized. Second, one particular segment of the cultural institutions—those dealing with cultural heritage and contemporary art production (e.g., ArsAevi—the Museum of

10 Yugoslavia embarked on a more decentralised system—embodied in socialist self-management—from the 1970s onward, and its governance cannot be equated to that found in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc. By Yugoslav state socialism I simply emphasize the one-party system in place after World War II until the disintegration of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the introduction of multi-party elections followed by economic liberalisation. See Aleš Erjavec, "Introduction," in Aleš Erjavec, ed., *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism* (University of California Press, 2003), pp. 1–54.

11 Ervin Mujkić "Državna imovina u Bosni i Hercegovini: geneza problema," in: Edin Šarčević, ed., *Državna imovina* (Sarajevo: Fondacija Centar za javno pravo, 2012), pp. 23–65: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ervin_Mujkic/publication/255701242_Drzavna_imovina_u_Bosni_i_Hercegovini_-_geneza_problema/links/00b495203a36b9af8b000000.pdf (accessed on November 28, 2017).

Contemporary Art, SCCA—Sarajevo Centre for Contemporary Art)—provided (perhaps not always voluntarily) resistance to ethno-nationalist appropriation in the time during which they found themselves in a legal limbo. When the problem of the former institutions of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was made public, the name “the seven non-aligned institutions of culture” (*sedam nesvrstanih institucija kulture*) was coined, in reference to the Non-Aligned Movement Yugoslavia initiated in the midst of the Cold War in opposition to both the USSR and the USA. This slightly ironic but nevertheless Yugo-nostalgic term signifying the non-alignment of (today’s) former republican institutions of culture with nationalistic political representation (The National Museum of BiH; the Cinematheque of BiH; the National Library; the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts; the Historical Museum; the Art Gallery of BiH; the BiH Library for the Visually Impaired) was meant to emphasize the complete disinterest on the part of both the political administration, and the general public in regard to the legal status and budget of these institutions. Since the end of the conflict, which was reached by the Dayton Peace Agreement in Ohio, USA in 1995, the absence of appropriate financing of the seven cultural institutions in a time of continuously generated political crisis has gradually added to the overall confusion. In the media and in general public discourse, the problem of these institutions was linked to the remnants of socialism and the inability of those managing culture to adapt to new market-driven cultural contexts. This trope, symbolically dividing those who had “found their way” (*oni koji su se snašli*) and “those who had not found their way” (*oni koji se nisu snašli*) is a recurrent one.¹² It appears that again, as in the idea of a non-aligned culture, a temporal division between past (state socialism/one-party system) and present (neoliberalism/capitalism/democracy) is manifested through language. This division has multiple implications in the way culture is being valorized currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as I will try to explain later.

3. CULTURE AS A TOOL FOR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY MAKING

In *Régimes d'historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps*, François Hartog develops a lengthy analysis of the ways the past and the present interrelate in various understandings of history. Although the book primarily refers to France, regimes of historicity, as he explains, are “concepts providing tools for a comparison of different histories, but, principally to highlight the forms of time experience, here and there, today and yesterday.”¹³ In times of significant

12 Larisa Kurtović, “‘Who Sows Hunger, Reaps Rage’: On Protest, Indignation and Redistributive Justice in Post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15:4 (2015), p. 645.

13 François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2012), p. 29.

change, such as that experienced in the Balkans, regimes of historicity have been inscribed in the context of competing memories, ideologies and identities. Human and infrastructural losses, including the loss of cultural heritage, and its neglect, marked both the conflict and its aftermath.¹⁴ Placing the question of the production and valorization of culture in that context, and in terms of an endeavor requiring collective efforts, we must take into account the emotional component embedded in any discourse on culture, cultural heritage and, indirectly, cultural memory. The emotions surrounding what is lived as an identity under threat (of disappearance) contributes towards the building of “intimate” relationships, both individual and collective, to culture in the broadest sense. Without going further into detail about the reasons for which cultural heritage became a target, and is associated with crimes against humanity and genocide, it is nevertheless necessary to keep that aspect in mind as it constitutes an integral part of the emotional dimension associated with cultural heritage. Unlike Nathalie Heinich in *Emotions patrimoniales: de l’affect à l’axiologie* and *La Fabrique du patrimoine: De la cathédrale à la petite cuillère*,¹⁵ who grounded her research partially on the fieldwork of curators and conservators in which their particular vocabularies play a central role in the discourse about and consequent valorization of heritage, in the Bosnian examples examined here, I propose to focus on the relationship of the general public with culture: culture and related objects and institutions that perform an active role in the shaping of collective memory as a basis for the formation of collective and individual identities. As mentioned earlier, this concordance of emotions, collective identities and the issue of valorization of cultural heritage finds an echo in Bourdieu’s questioning of the politics of group-making—namely “the sociosymbolic alchemy of group-making whereby a mental construct is turned into a historical reality through the inculcation of schemata of perception and their deployment to draw, enforce, or contest social boundaries.”¹⁶

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) set the foundation for an understanding of collective memory as a socially mediated phenomenon, which is shaped by communication. In regard to Halbwachs’ theories, in *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, Jan Assmann explains that this means the following:

14 John Chapman, “Destruction of a Common Heritage: The Archaeology of War in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Antiquity* 68:258 (1994), pp. 120–126; Milena Dragičević-Šešić and Sanjin Dragojević *Menadžment umetnosti u turbulentnim vremenima* (Beograd: Clio, 2005); Andras Riedlmayer, “The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992–1996: A Post-War Survey of Selected Municipalities,” *Forum Bosnae* 46 (2008), pp. 146–173.

15 Nathalie Heinich, *La Fabrique du patrimoine: De la cathédrale à la petite cuillère* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2009); Heinich, “Emotions patrimoniales,” pp.19–33.

16 Wacquant, “Symbolic Power and Group-Making,” p. 274.

Every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others. These "others," however, are not just any set of people, rather they are groups who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past.¹⁷

Furthermore, the proposal of anthropologist James E. Wertsch concerning the understanding of objects functioning as (cultural) tools that enable access to the past is valuable. On the premises of Lev Vygotsky's mediated action, Wertsch argues that the main issue in regard to what we understand under the term collective memory is in fact how we develop ways to remember—in groups or individually—through the use of cultural tools.¹⁸ The notion of an action (remembrance) mediated through institutions and objects (among these monuments) could provide a framework for understanding the role museums, such as the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, play in reshaping (positively and negatively) collective identities. The positive and negative connotations do not only imply different readings by different national/ethnic/linguistic groups according to what are perceived as their characteristics, values and traditions. Besides the ethno-nationalist connotations, the tropes also reflect social stratification in the re-making, as expressions of valorization are reflections of the formation of class characteristics.

4. CULTURE, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND NATION-BUILDING

Any discussion on the topic of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina must take into account the destruction that took place during the post-Yugoslav wars (1991–1999), which was perhaps most salient during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995).¹⁹ The scale of systematic destruction that occurred in that period inevitably reflects on today's valorization of a certain type and form of cultural production and cultural heritage over another. To put it simply, the heritage of one national group is (mostly) perceived negatively and as such devalued by the other groups. However, the problem of valorization is key to understanding the hierarchy(ies) existing today. Because Bosnia and Herzegovina is a complex political system composed of two entities, one centralized (Republika Srpska—RS) and the other fragmented (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina—FBiH), managing culture and heritage is conducted

17 Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," translated by John Czaplicka, *New German Critique* 65 (1995), p. 127.

18 James Wertsch, "Collective Memory," in Pascal Boyer and James Wertsch, eds., *Memory in Mind and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 119.

19 It is important to note that within the general Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (often referred to as the Dayton Peace Agreement), Annex 8 made provisions for the establishment of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments as a state institution with the aim to "issue decisions designating movable and immovable properties as national monuments, applying the Criteria for the designation of properties as national monuments" (Official Gazette of BiH nos. 33/02 and 15/03).

on several levels: state (1), entity (2), and canton (10 in total in the Federation). Although this could, in theory, appear as a relatively equal distribution of competencies, it nevertheless adds to the overall confusion in any attempt to administer culture (and heritage). The institutions inherited as state institutions from the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1945–1992) have been in a legal vacuum since 1996 as the new state *per se* did not inherit competencies to directly administer and budget culture or education. The competencies have been largely transferred to the entities, which are in turn supposed to monitor the cantons and municipalities. However, in practice this does not function well as neither the entities nor the state government have the mechanisms to intervene on cantonal levels. This means that the cantons *de facto* function as states within a state, with their own governments and ministries. As former (and current) national institutions are concentrated in the capital city (which is also part of a canton), major cultural and political institutions, along with foreign diplomatic missions, are located in Sarajevo, producing additional social, economic, and political tension. These tensions are reflected not only in the involuntary competition created between cities (e.g., Mostar, Banja Luka, Tuzla, etc.), but also between the national(ist) connotations that are assigned to specific places, as the demographic structure has been greatly altered since the 1990s. In fact, any discussion regarding the status and importance of a given institution is automatically placed in relation to the overall political context, stripping it of its initial institutional function.²⁰ In that context, we can conclude that support for culture is perceived as the prolongation of political methods, or to paraphrase, the absence of support is a way to make a long-lasting political statement to former and/or future coalition partners. This situation can best be seen in the attempts to organize events, such as international film festivals, in Banja Luka (a city in the entity of RS, with a Serb majority) and Mostar (a city in the FBiH, with a slight Croat majority, but deeply divided between Croats and Bosniaks), as counterparts to the Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF). During an interview conducted with a producer involved in the film industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I was told that support to culture is very often a politically

20 An illustration of these antagonisms can be found in the political crisis that emerged among the country's major political parties. In fact, in 2010, the alliance between the Croat Democratic Alliance (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica—HDZ/Catholic), the Socio-Democratic Party (Socijaldemokratska Partija –SDP/Former Communists), and the Party of Independent Socio-Democrats (Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata—SNSD/Serbian Orthodox) was followed by the exclusion of the Croat Democratic Alliance (HDZ) by the majoritarian-SDP in 2012 and their replacement by another coalition of Croat parties in the federal government. The situation provided an argument for the HDZ in maintaining that the Sarajevo elite, constituted essentially of the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije—SDA/Muslim) and the SDP, did not respect the political will of Croats, formulated through the election results. In the following years, it led to a systemic boycott and lack of financial support of HDZ-held ministries and Croat companies to cultural institutions and events in Sarajevo.

motivated attempt to reclaim ethno-national interests by providing funding to targeted cultural events (e.g., sponsorship through state enterprises controlled by political parties):

In their earlier days, when the SDA-HDZ coalition was in place [*before the 2010 elections*], support to the SFF was never a problem. Now the problem has emerged because of the (success of) the SDP, [*which resulted in*] the HDZ being expelled from the coalition on the federal level. And that is when this whole anti-Sarajevo story emerges. Basically, the HDZ controls Eronet [*a mobile network operator*] and the Ministry of Culture [*federal level*], and so funding that comes through Eronet and the FBiH Ministry of Culture is now systematically going towards events and institutions closely related to the HDZ's friends, partners, relatives.²¹

According to this understanding, it appears that the funding of cultural events is allocated along ethnic lines, which implies that those who are on the receiving end of the funding are within the (appropriate) ethnic group. When this situation is analyzed in the case of SFF, the withdrawal of financial support to the festival following the 2012 crisis was in fact interpreted as an attempt to oppose SDA and SDP-dominated Sarajevo. Because the withdrawal was politically motivated, and intra-group oriented, in this producer's opinion, these attempts did not produce the expected results. For instance, Banja Luka received substantial funds from the SNSD but nevertheless failed to develop beyond that initial festival, as opposed to being an independent cultural initiative (such as the SFF).

Their [HDZ] approach is "Why would they do it in Sarajevo when all this [*film festival*] could be happening in Mostar?" Dodik [*Milorad-SNSD*] tried the same thing ten years ago when he gave a lot more money than the HDZ did to the festival in Mostar, yet the festival in Banja Luka happened only once.²²

5. THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established in 1884 during the Austro-Hungarian rule of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918). With the gradual development of its collection, the Museum was finally moved to its present location in 1913. The establishment of the Museum reflected a willingness for collecting and studying archaeological artefacts and coincided with an attempt to give a central place to Bosnian culture and identity in times when Bosnia and Herzegovina was still in an ambivalent position between the occupying forces of the new Austro-Hungarian (Christian) Empire, and the former Ottoman (Muslim) Empire, and when neighboring countries (Croatia and Serbia) were rapidly transforming into nation-states. We can say that, as

²¹ Source: Personal interview with a film producer, April 20, 2016.

²² Ibid.

Sharon MacDonald indicates on the musealization of folklife, that the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, given its organizational structure, belongs to what she terms the “first wave” of museums dedicated to everyday life that were established in the late nineteenth century.²³ As she further explains, this was:

A period of wider expansion of museums more generally and also the formation of the nation-state. These museums were part of a broader institutionalization of the past. More specifically, however, they were also part of a materialization that helped make the new nation-states imaginable.²⁴

In her discussion of the birth of public museums in the late 18th and early 19th century, Macdonald describes the necessity for an individual identification with the nation-state and other individuals to be based on cultural relations, or as she phrases it “a matter of shared knowledge and practice, of representation, ritual and symbolism” as an essential feature of public museums.²⁵ It appears that the initial role that was ascribed to the National Museum—a public museum meant to instill in an individual a national sense of belonging to a larger social group—has faded since 1992. The reasons for this are manifold, and I will now discuss some of them.

During the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the Museum had the status of a republican institution that, in addition to functioning as an exhibition space, held an even more important function—that of a research center in which some of the most important archaeological projects (e.g., Bobovac in the 1950s), which would prove crucial for the future of the socialist republic, and later in the 1990s of the independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, were conducted. As Sharon MacDonald explains, once cultural heritage is identified as such, it is altered, and this occurs in particular ways through “metacultural operations,”²⁶ such as conservation, listing and becoming part of the “tourist gaze,”²⁷ which have multiple consequences for the people and other matters within its orbit and for its future.²⁸ As Corinne Kratz and Ivan Krap note in *Museum Frictions*:

23 “The Museum consists of a Department of Archaeology, an Ethnology Department and a Natural History Department, complemented by a botanical garden, a living display into which a necropolis of *stećak* tombstones—those unique tombstones of mediaeval Bosnia—fits so harmoniously.” Aiša Softić, ed., *The National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: Zemaljski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine, 2008), p. 5.

24 Sharon Macdonald *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 141.

25 Sharon Macdonald, “Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities,” *Museum and Society* 1 (2003), p. 2.

26 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “World Heritage and Cultural Economics,” in Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, eds., *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 162.

27 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

28 Macdonald, *Memorylands*, p. 18.

The museum became one of the institutions and practices associated with modernity, part of the checklist for being a nation, a means for disparate groups to present and claim their histories and values in the public sphere, and simultaneously an arena and means for constituting identities.²⁹

The transition from state socialism to capitalism in the post-conflict context, additionally burdened by an excessively complex administration, has put institutions, whose importance had never, until then, been questioned, under great pressure. Because “cultural heritage represents goods that possess value that cannot be marketed and as such are preserved by and for the benefit of collectivities,”³⁰ the issue of what should be preserved here overlaps with the issue of how it should be preserved and why. The gradual erosion of collective goods, due to the passage from nationalization to privatization, left behind one important part of cultural goods, which did not fit into that transitional context and provided “resistance” to any sort of identitary fragmentation. Although this resistance is due to their nature—as former institutions of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina—the respective locations of the institutions play an important role in the assignment of a “group” symbolic, as acknowledged in the interviews. For example, the location of the National Museum and the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo means they are perceived primarily as a Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim)/Bosnian institutions, which represent not a collective (multi-ethnic/multi-national) cultural “good,” but rather a channel used by the Bosniak majority to impose its unitary values on the other national groups (Serbs and Croats). This is of course an overly simplified explanation, but it illustrates the difficulty of reaching a consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina today regarding which collective goods deserve to be preserved if they do not fit into the tri-partite B/H/S ethnic division. As Benedict Anderson underlines in the chapter “Cultural Roots” in *Imagined Communities*:

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.³¹

To what extent Anderson’s idea of a movement through time of a given (presumably harmonized) community can be applied to the National Museum’s collection and to the Bosnian fragmented ethno-nationalist identities landscape, remains a question to which there are a variety of answers.

6. THE “STAR OBJECT” AND THE NARRATIVE OF THE SIEGE OF THE CITY: THE SARAJEVO HAGGADAH

The current status of the National Museum is often put in the context of either the post-Yugoslav wars or the siege of Sarajevo (1992–1995), or as a metaphor

²⁹ Karp et. al, eds., *Museum Frictions*, p. 3.

³⁰ Godelier (1996) as cited by Heinrich, *Emotions patrimoniales*, p. 19.

³¹ Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 25.

for the inertia in which the country has been trapped since the war. The romanticized story of the Sarajevo Haggadah's adventure has conflated the narrative of the Sephardic Jews' escape from Spain in the 15th century to the Ottoman Empire with Bosnia's more recent past. As Sarajevo-born and Zagreb-based writer Miljenko Jergović explains,³² the Haggadah was preserved on several occasions, two of which were key moments. First, upon arrival of the German troops in Sarajevo in June 1941, and a second time in 1992 when the book was transferred to the safe of the Central Bank, as the Museum was on the demarcation line between Serb and Bosnian forces and consequently under constant shelling and mortar attacks.³³ In fact, as in other narratives related to Sarajevo, the story of the book conflates two historically significant periods: the advent of fascism and the occupation of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers, and the attack on the newly independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Holocaust, and the war in Bosnia that culminated in genocide in Srebrenica in 1995.³⁴ The fact that the Haggadah emerged unharmed and in the possession of the state is used as an indication of the multicultural, multi-ethnic and tolerant character of the Bosnian Republic, and the status of Sarajevo as a "European Jerusalem." Accordingly, for those who identify as Bosnians, the Haggadah and the National Museum are turned into symbols of anti-fascist, universal values that demonstrate that Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina respect its peoples' differences. The situation, however, is far more complex, as can be seen in the new social distinctions and inequalities currently taking place.

7. THE MUSEUM AND NEW CLASS DISTINCTIONS

In the first segment, I mapped the overlapping issues surrounding the formation of collective identities that are mediated through cultural artefacts and institutions in general, and the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular. Although this perspective can be very useful in the current post-Yugoslav, Bosnian context to our understanding of how valorization of cultural institutions operates, I nevertheless believe that it is not sufficient to provide a deeper analysis of the struggles that are taking place. In fact, I will argue in this part that issues of competing identities and memories often serve the purpose of nothing more than masking social inequalities and unequal access to already scarce resources, which manifests itself among Sarajevo's intelligentsia. An ex-

32 Miljenko Jergović "Sarajevska hagada. Lipanj 2008 (kratka povijest)" (2008) <http://www.jergovic.com/preporuke/sarajevska-hagada-kratka-povijest> (accessed on April 26, 2016).

33 Azra Begić, "The Fate of Moveable Cultural Heritage in Sarajevo and Central Bosnia: An Insider's Observations," *Museum Management and 14:1* (1995), pp. 80–91; Marian Wenzel, "The Zemaljski Muzej, Sarajevo, in March 1995," *World of Museums* (1995), pp. 203–205.

34 The conflation of the anti-fascist struggle and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) appears recurrently, most often in April and May every year. For instance, the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo is taken to be April 6, 1992 while April 6, 1945 marks the entrance of the Partisans into the city. Both events are currently conflated in commemorations.

ample of this situation can be found in the annual call for project funding of the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sport. In 2015, seven institutions and organizations complained against the decision of the Ministry to allocate funding based on criteria that were not defined in the call. In 2017, they engaged in a civil procedure against the Ministry for distributing the funds according to ethnic background rather than the quality of the proposed projects.³⁵ Despite this attempt to take legal countermeasures against what are perceived as unprofessional (and nationalistic) practices of governing bodies, it must be noted that it took nearly five years for public criticism of such practices to emerge.

In order to understand such a discrepancy, I propose taking a brief look at the wider social context, as the Museum today performs its function in a complex political setting of growing social and economic inequalities. In his 1983 text *The Field of Cultural Production, or: the Economic World in Reverse*, Pierre Bourdieu explains that “a literary or artistic field is a field of forces.”³⁶ Following this line of thought, it can be argued that today in Bosnia, culture (and cultural heritage) is a site that serves, in part, the purpose of reinstating distinctions of taste (i.e., lifestyles, inculcated values), and of national / group / class belonging. Furthermore, culture, or to be more precise, discourse on culture, serves the purpose of empowering those who are already engaged in the field of power since it helps reinforce symbolically, and ultimately economically, their position within the field. These new distinctions become indicators of a particular stance and thus a belonging that is always in opposition to other social/ethnic groups, imagined or real.

For the sake of analysis, I propose to look at two main issues associated with the National Museum’s functioning since the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first is the question of cultural heritage as a collective good independent of national/ethnic divisions, and the second is the polarization between the commercialization of culture versus state-subsidized culture.

7-1. Cultural Heritage as Collective Good

“I am the Museum” (*Ja sam muzej*) was a campaign implemented by the Sarajevo-based NGO *Akcija*, which began, according to one of its employees, out of a willingness to address the impasse the Museum had reached in 2012 followed by a three-year closure of its premises, and a deeply negative image of the Museum among the public.³⁷

The problem of the seven institutions of culture has remained unresolved for the past 20 years. Our campaign aimed to influence policy until the Museum reopened, although we had no idea how long this would take.³⁸

35 Angelina Šimić, “Nacio-kriteriji i kultura ne idu skupa. Oslobođenje,” October 11, 2017 http://www.mess.ba/2016/images/Mess2017_Festival/Pressclipping/MESS_20171011.pdf (accessed on December 13, 2017).

36 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” *Poetics* 12:4 (1983), p. 312.

37 <http://jasam.zemaljskimuzej.ba/about-us> (accessed on April 21, 2016).

38 Source: Interview with NGO employee conducted on March 10, 2016.

Although a negative image of the former institutions of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was prevalent in the years before this, and thus this culmination cannot be seen as a phenomenon that occurred simultaneously with the closure of the Museum, it nonetheless demonstrated to what extent the Museum and its staff had been viewed negatively among the general public. This negative connotation that became attached to the Museum was most visible during TV debates and round tables, often opposing the (successful) figures of cultural workers from the NGO sector with those (still) working (struggling to make ends meet) for the public sector. The negative discourse emphasizing the responsibility of the National Museum's management was, surprisingly, not emerging from within the political (nationalist) bureaucracy, but among Sarajevo's left-leaning, liberal politicians (e.g., *Naša Stranka*) and members of the intelligentsia, as shown in the TV debate "The Collapse of Culture" (*Slom kulture*) on the national broadcasting network.³⁹

To summarize, the arguments demonstrating the inability of the public sector, and more particularly the National Museum staff, as they were considered solely responsible for the difficulties the Museum was facing, were:

- the public sector is a remnant of state socialism, which has proved its inability to adapt to the market economy and as such should be privatized
- the employees are unable to speak and write in English (which proves they belong to another time)
- the employees lack managerial skills and the knowledge to write project proposals which would enable them to access appropriate funding
- the employees are lazy (also a remnant of state socialism), they do not encourage school visits and do not publish academic research, although they had been receiving the necessary funds well before the political crisis in 2010.⁴⁰
- the employees largely rely on the state to do their work (i.e., secure funding)
- the Museum staff could generate additional income by offering market-oriented incentives (e.g. the creation of a Museum shop and/or the opening of a Museum cafe)
- the employees are reckless, endangering the collective good and preventing a wider public from viewing the artefacts (illustrated in their opposition to sending the Sarajevo Haggadah to the New York Metropolitan Museum in 2013)
- the staff behave as if the collection of the Museum belongs to them (they have basically taken over something that belongs to all citizens)

Overall, the criticism also raised the doubt that even if the National Museum were to be transferred to the state-level budget, which was considered the most

39 Treća strana - Emisija 16 (12.01.2012.): Slom kulture u BiH <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=480y-HoWOGI> (accessed on December 7, 2017).

40 Ibid. Sabina Čudić (Naša stranka)

likely option back in 2012, “citizens might still be unsatisfied with their work, as they have been so far” according to Sabina Čudić from *Naša stranka*.

Most of these comments did not take into account the fact that the Museum cannot employ new (younger) staff members due to complicated procedures requiring ministerial authorization while this public institution (and others) is in a legal limbo and lacks not only a supervising authority, but also permanent financing.⁴¹ Furthermore, funding secured through various other sources (notably European funds for culture) does not cover the daily costs of running a museum (conservation, restoration, material costs, etc.) In fact, funding secured via projects often constitutes a very small percentage in the overall budget and can serve only to cover the costs of the project in question. Above all, the arguments against the Museum staff did not address the absence of their salaries, due to non-existent budgets. The Museum closed its doors because, among other things, the staff had not received their salaries for nearly three years, and because the costs of the physical maintenance of the Museum were overwhelming given the available funds. In addition, it is important to note that the crisis in the Museum’s finances was reached in the period between 2009 and 2012, which coincides with significant difficulties in the formation of governments on federal and state levels, as indicated earlier in the discussion regarding the main political parties and the 2010 elections.

Two strands can be identified according to the tropes that emerged in relation to the 2012 crisis of the seven institutions of culture:

Cultural mercantilism	Cultural diffusion ⁴²
Cultural industries	Elite culture ⁴³
Low	High
Newly rich	Old communist bourgeoisie
Post-socialist entrepreneurs	Old middle class
Ethnic particularism	Yugo-nostalgia
Nationalism	Legacy of anti-fascist struggle
Memory	History
New	Old
Capitalism	State socialism
Opportunism	Activism
Winners	Losers
Emotionally embedded discourse on culture	Scientifically embedded discourse on culture
The Balkans	Europe
Local	Global
Individualism	Collectivism
Political decentralization	Political centralization

41 An illustration of the difficulties encountered by the Museum’s management is the number of employees. Today, the Museum has 45 employees. Under normal conditions it would require 120 people to operate at full capacity.

42 Dragičević-Šešić and Dragojević, *Menadžment umetnosti*, pp. 24–25.

43 Ibid.

The Museum's closure in 2012 exposed the divisions between the public sector and the non-governmental sector (perceived as cultural entrepreneurs); but not only that. It primarily exposed a willingness to assign full responsibility to the Museum staff and, at the same time, a state of oblivion to the malfunctioning or inexistence of appropriate current (cultural) policies. The project "I am the Museum" helped in enhancing the public image of the Museum,⁴⁴ provided a platform for collaboration between the public and NGO sectors, and resulted in the reopening of the National Museum and the return of visitors.

For us it was shocking news to discover (before the reopening) the opposite situation to that in which the staff were presented by the media, as kidnappers of the Museum—despite being left without income for years, and desperately guarding the Museum. We were truly upset by what we'd seen and decided to do something.⁴⁵

However, although the Museum today is visited daily, mostly, though not exclusively, by school excursions,⁴⁶ its status and long-term budgeting have yet to be resolved.⁴⁷ The engagement with culture, as a collective good ignored by the political administration, was presented by those who were engaged in the project "I am the Museum" as citizen activism. That one portion of citizens see themselves as those who need to actively engage in political actions for the benefit of the collective points to the status of culture as a marker of distinction in a society that is still being dynamically transformed. As Larisa Kurtović explained in regard to the Bosnian Uprising protests that took place in 2014:

This post-war redistribution of wealth has created in Bosnia a brand new class structure comprising a small, wealthy elite, a large pool of unemployed and increasingly impoverished citizens, and an insecure middle class largely employed in the public sector, the remaining privatized and semi-privatized firms, and non-governmental and international organizations. Access to these middle-class jobs hinges on one's ability and willingness to participate in clientelist networks, most of which are forged through family and party connections.⁴⁸

The 2012 crisis exposed regimes of historicity that mask growing social divisions, particularly among the intelligentsia. In culture, this division mostly operates between old and new, between socialism and neo-liberal capitalism, between winners and losers, and between those who deserve/are worthy of public support and those who do/are not.

44 Which happened almost overnight according to NGO *Akcija's* employees, thanks to the presence of public figures that they invited to take part in the project.

45 Interview with an NGO employee conducted on March 10, 2016.

46 On certain days this number amounts to 600 people, which is a veritable record. (Interview with a curator of the Archaeological Department, Sarajevo, April 27, 2016)

47 The debt accumulated by the National Museum between August 2013 and September 2016 reached the sum of 2,126,210 KM (1,090,365 euro) for salaries, etc. which excludes the additional sum of 230,000 KM (115,000 euro) of interest rates on social security contribution fees. Source: the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

48 Kurtović, "'Who Sows Hunger, Reaps Rage,'" p. 645.

7-2. *Commercialization of Culture versus State-Subsidized Culture*

Dealing with culture and cultural heritage, in terms of production or preservation, gradually becomes a statement about one's willingness to engage with something that the "small, wealthy elite" ignores, but the middle-class (or at least some of its members) considers important. Culture is symbolically appropriated through activist engagement, such as the "I am the Museum" campaign, and serves as a medium for regaining social and political legitimacy in opposition to those in the dominant class who possess more important economic capital but lack cultural and social capital. The absence of an adequate cultural policy concerning the former institutions of the Socialist Republic was visible well before the 2012 crisis. Namely, permanent financing was never consistently implemented, and the amount of funds provided to these institutions fluctuated from year to year, sometimes with an absence of funding from one level (e.g., Canton) one year, and from another level (e.g., Federation) the next year.

When considering the present (2017) state of affairs, it appears that, despite numerous attempts by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, foreign diplomatic missions (notably the US Embassy), cantonal, federal and municipal governments, and local NGOs, the situation in which the National Museum operates remains unchanged.⁴⁹

People don't understand the situation. They think that if the Museum is open to the public, the problem must have been resolved. From the point of view of the legal status [*of the National Museum*] nothing has changed. From the point of view of the infrastructure, even less [*was undertaken*]. The Museum is permanently under threat, not danger, but threat from humidity, old electric installations and plumbing.⁵⁰

Today, the main concerns of the employees of the National Museum are problems not visible to its visitors, namely the walls, the basements, the conditions for the preservation of the collections, etc. However, there also re-emerges the problem of financing the realization of a study preceding any physical intervention on the buildings constituting the National Museum. As further explained by my interviewee, this amounts to approximately 500,000 euro, yet in their current position it is almost impossible to gather such a sum. Most of the support received for such refurbishment work is financed through external support, and this remains insufficient. In a context in which subsidies to culture,

49 For some of the institutions, such as the History Museum, attempts were made to transfer the Museum on to the budget of the City of Sarajevo. According to the Museum's director, Elma Hašimbegović, the reason for the failure to achieve this transfer was primarily of an economic nature, although an ideological one cannot be excluded. Source: Personal interview with Elma Hašimbegović, director of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 29, 2017.

50 Personal interview with a curator of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 20, 2017.

scientific research and education diminish from year to year, the National Museum nevertheless manages to generate income that, given the circumstances, must be channeled towards salaries and payment of debts. Without a targeted cultural policy for cultural heritage in general, and the National Museum in particular, there seems to be hardly any possibility to escape the status quo. As one curator remarks pessimistically about the National Museum:

This Museum is too big for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is going to collapse.⁵¹

As mentioned earlier, the call of the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sport represents one example of funding for cultural organizations allocated along B/H/S lines. Five years ago, one of the main criticisms of the staff was their apparent inability, or unwillingness, to look for funding beyond the public budgets available to them. Nevertheless, some of the most vocal critics of the National Museum's closure to the public in 2012, such as the MESS International Theatre Festival (which is a public institution, although on the cantonal level), or the East West Theatre Company, have had their programs sponsored through such calls for years, and continue to operate thanks to public funds with budgets that would otherwise be unsustainable. Therefore, when it comes to state-subsidized culture, the question of what should be subsidized intersects with why institutions that do not properly fit the B/H/S division should be funded with public money at all? In that sense, any discussion of state-subsidized institutions, cultural, scientific or educational, is inevitably interlinked with the introduction of a hierarchy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, national/ethnic cultures/cultural productions appear to have easier access to public funding, while those that are "non-aligned" are left to fight for their position in the market. The emotional dimension of the 2012 crisis, both for those supporting the institutions of the former Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and those criticizing them, indicates how value is added according to what is perceived as worth protecting from the point of view of the individual's position in the field of power. To embrace the discourse on the necessity to be market oriented, and to place the burden of responsibility solely on the staff of the National Museum or History Museum, illustrates, I believe, the acceptance among the intelligentsia of the current B/H/S division of all spheres of life. In addition, the relatively late willingness to criticize the way in which funds are allocated to cultural institutions shows the preparedness to play along ethnic lines in times of (permanent) economic necessity. The "I am the Museum" campaign represented an attempt to overcome the lockdown, but, overall, it appears to have achieved limited results.

⁵¹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The statement that “heritage should not be studied from the past but rather from the present and concerning the present” is fully applicable to the current Bosnian context.⁵² Through the example of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I have attempted to propose an analysis of the overlapping issues surrounding this cultural institution, which although it bears the title of a “national” institution, faces several challenges in the attempt to restore its legitimacy. Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of social reality as primarily *relational* and “constituted of webs of material and symbolic ties” is particularly valuable in the attempt to understand the social changes taking place.⁵³ Bosnia and Herzegovina’s National Museum is one illustrative example of the intersection between the dynamic reconfiguration of social classes in a transitional context (from state socialism to capitalism), and nascent national self-awareness (state-building) coupled with competing forms of collective memory. The topic of cultural heritage in present-day Bosnia is entangled with a deep traumatic and conflict-related burden that contains a significant emotional dimension. Nathalie Heinich’s analysis of the emotional attachment to culture provided a starting point for questioning the issues of the reconfiguration of values accorded to cultural heritage and the tropes used to describe it. The negative tropes attached to the National Museum offered, I believe, a valuable starting position to approach the particular situation in which two understandings of cultural heritage (and culture in general) intersect: the first, in which heritage is seen as a site structured by and for competing identities and memories, and the second, in which culture is seen as a service that, given the current economic crisis, needs to be (more) independent of the state. Consequently, as described above, when considering the process of production of culture as a collective endeavor, it is necessary to take into account current political and economic contexts. The post-conflict, post-destructive aspects are in Bosnia’s case an integral part of the way culture is integrated into national identity narratives and consequently valorized (or problematized), as has been shown in the example of the Sarajevo Haggadah and the campaign “I am the Museum” of the NGO *Akcija*. In a social context shaped by the memory of war and destruction, culture becomes a tool for reclaiming certain values and traditions as central, always in relation to other groups’, and if I may add, other classes’, values and traditions. Cultural heritage thus becomes an ideal ground—a field of power as Bourdieu defines it—on which present affirmations of identity are imprinted. The past, and its nostalgia, as shown in the labelling of institutions as “non-aligned,” is reconfigured according to present day agendas, in terms of both identities and economies, by means of adapted regimes of historicity. These regimes of histo-

52 Glevarec and Saez (2002): 263 as cited by François Hartog, “Time and Heritage,” *Museum International* 227 (Vol. 57, No. 3) (Oxford; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 14.

53 Wacquant, “Symbolic Power and Group-Making,” p. 275.

ricity, in our example, imply a “method of self-awareness in a human community.”⁵⁴ It can be concluded that the National Museum thus generates multiple meanings for a variety of social, and in this specific context, ethnic groups. The highly charged symbolism of the Museum’s history overlaps with the history of Sarajevo through two key events (World War II and the Siege of Sarajevo 1992–1995), with genocides and the preservation of multiconfessionalism and multiculturalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina; on the other hand it is also a means to reclaim legitimacy for an “insecure middle-class.”⁵⁵ The crisis that culminated in the closure of the National Museum in 2012 exposed a diametrically opposed understanding of culture: as a public good and as a marketable commodity. Although an attempt was made to partially incorporate the seven institutions of the former Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Law on Museums, and to resolve their financing through the voluntary participation of municipalities across the country, they still find themselves in a lockdown situation due primarily to their legal status.⁵⁶ In order to resolve this lockdown, it is necessary to engage all three B/H/S components and the various political and cultural actors in the effort. However, when one looks at what has been done since the 2012 crisis until today, five years later, it seems that it will be difficult to achieve this any time soon.

54 Hartog, “Time and Heritage,” p. 8.

55 Kurtović, “‘Who Sows Hunger, Reaps Rage,’” p. 645.

56 Sarajevo Canton Gazette 13/17.