

**Cultural policies in post-conflict, post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina:
The Bosnian pavilion at the Venice Biennale of art.¹**

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Abstract:

In this paper I argue that post-conflict, post-socialist cultural policies in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, characterized by nationalism and elite culture, are detrimental to art and culture in the long-term. The policies' negative effect is visible in the example of the country's participation in the Venice Biennale of art. Bosnia and Herzegovina's art and culture are caught in the nationalist matrix, and as the 'rotational' model of the Bosnian national pavilion exemplifies, the sector is incapable of surmounting the recurrent under-funding and inadequate policies to escape this matrix, regardless of the quality of proposed projects. Drawing from Milena Dragičević-Šešić's year-long research on cultural policies in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, I base my argument on the understanding that contemporary art needs conditions that enable and nurture its propensity for experiment. Because this requirement has been systemically and intentionally undermined, the eventuality of surmounting such conditions are rendered increasingly less plausible.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, contemporary art, cultural policy, modernism, nationalism, Venice Biennale of art, (post-)Yugoslavia

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1. Introduction

The economic crisis and political antagonisms in the 1980s in the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, and the post-Yugoslav wars that followed in the 1990s, not only provoked human rights violations but also, inevitably, affected all spheres of life, including art and culture. As noted by Milena Dragičević-Šešić and Sanjin Dragojević in regard to problems that were faced by the cultural sector in areas that were turbulent in the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced several conditions and cultural consequences of such turbulences: interethnic and intercultural conflict, ghettoization of culture, forced and controlled migrations, absence of social and cultural cohesion, corruption, the declining of professional standards, the disappearance of the middle class, destruction of cultural heritage.²

I argue that post-conflict, post-socialist cultural policies in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, characterized by nationalism and elite culture, are detrimental for art and culture in the long-term. The policies' negative effect is visible in the example of the country's participation in the Venice Biennale of art. The country's art and culture are caught in the nationalist matrix, and as the 'rotational'³ model of the Bosnian national pavilion exemplifies, the sector is incapable of surmounting the recurrent under-funding and ethnic-based policies to escape this matrix, regardless of the quality of proposed projects. Drawing from Milena Dragičević-Šešić's year-long research on cultural policies in Southeast and Central Europe, I base my argument on the understanding that contemporary art needs conditions that enable and nurture its propensity for experiment, and because these pre-conditions have been systemically -- and intentionally -- undermined, the eventuality of surmounting such conditions is rendered increasingly less plausible over time. As I will try to show, the art scene in Sarajevo during the siege continued functioning, although in extreme conditions, on the premises laid down by Yugoslav socialist modernism and the country's dedicated inclusion in international

² Dragičević-Šešić, Milena; Dragojević Sanjin (2005) *Arts Management in Turbulent Times. Adaptable Quality Management: Navigating the arts through the winds of change*. Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation. pp. 24-27

³ Namely the rotation in the participation of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska, the two major entities forming post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, that occurs every two years following the calendar of the Venice Biennale. A similar situation occurred for participation in the Eurovision contest, until funding ceased.

artistic projects.⁴ Since Socialist Yugoslavia's cultural policy emphasized an international and cosmopolitan orientation,⁵ such stances continued shaping cultural activism during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, and the siege of Sarajevo in particular. Today, however, as the emancipatory potential of contemporary art has been shattered, as has the former country, and has been absorbed by the present-day Bosnian and Herzegovinian administrative and political apparatus, I argue that what remains is form, without the substance necessary to revitalize the potential for positive change. In fact, the traditional divisions in the public, private and civil sectors that have been the main areas for the implementation of cultural policies, has proved additionally complicated by their respective ethnic characters and the post-socialist, post-conflict conditions of their implementation.⁶

In the first part of the paper, I propose to chronologically outline the Biennale's history and its status as a key international institution in the art world. I then turn to a brief history of the participation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and SFRJ (Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) in the Biennale, before tracing Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-independence pavilions until the last exhibition in 2019. In the final section, I provide an overview of current policies specifically targeting contemporary art, and more precisely of the decision-making process regarding the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Venice Biennale and its relation to memories of the war and national identities in the remaking as determinant factors in the ways culture is administered, and consequently (under)valued and (under)promoted, in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. As Milena Dragičević-Šešić identified, the peripheral position of countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, in terms of participation in international art projects, the weakening of state cultural institutions and the neoliberal approach to the budgeting and administering of culture, on top of the conflict between nationalism and Europeanization, have contributed to making the already delicate position of cultural producers even more fragile.⁷

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the different aspects of youth culture, organizations and activism in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, see: Spaskovksa, Ljubica (2017) *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The rethinking of youth politics and cultures in late socialism*. Manchester: Manchester. University Press.

⁵ Böse, Martina; Busch, Brigitta; Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2006) *Despite and Beyond Cultural Policy: Third and Fourth Sector Practices and Strategies in Vienna and Belgrade*. In: Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou (eds) *Transcultural Europe: Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe*. p.134

⁶ Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2014) *Vers les nouvelles politiques culturelles. Les pratiques culturelles engagées*. Belgrade : Clio et l'Université des arts de Belgrade. p.39

⁷ Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2019) *The gaze from the semi-periphery*. In: Fitzgerald, Sandy (ed) *A Conceptual toolkit for arts and culture: An outcome of the Creative Lenses Project, Models to Manifestos*. Olivearte Cultural Agency. pp. 94-101.

2. About the Biennale

“World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish.”

Benjamin, Walter (The Arcades Project, p.7)

From its origins in 1887, the Venice Biennale was first conceptualized as an exhibition of Italian art. With the inauguration of several international expositions, such as the London “Great Exhibition” in 1851, followed by the Paris exposition in 1900,⁸ as well as the emerging tourist industry, other European cities also began to establish such events, centered on the arts and culture (i.e. international artistic and cultural production), in an attempt to reinforce their respective status, as well as to promote local art and culture.⁹ From 1895 the Venice Biennale of art opened up to international artists, whose presentations took place through national pavilions, with the participating countries exhibiting artists selected by their national academies. Although this paper’s focus is on contemporary visual art, the Biennale also includes major events dedicated to other disciplines - architecture, cinema, dance, music and theater. The Biennale, itself a multifaceted and rich topic for research, has been the subject of numerous academic studies, not only in the field of culture, but also on the (negative) impact of mass tourism on the living environment of the city’s inhabitants, as Venice attracts considerable numbers of tourists.¹⁰ The Biennale is echoed in other similar transnational events dedicated to (modern) contemporary art / architecture, such as the Sao Paulo Biennial (est. 1962), Dokumenta Kassel (est.1955),¹¹ Istanbul Biennial (est. 1987), Gwangju Biennial (est. 1995) or art fairs such as the Torino Artissima international fair of contemporary art (est. 1994), London Frieze (est. 2003), Frieze New York (est. 2012), etc.

⁸ Altshuler, Bruce, *Exhibition history and the Biennale*, in: *Starting from Venice: Studies on the Biennale*, ed. Ricci, Clarissa (2010). Milan: *et.al.* / EDIZIONI. p. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.* p.19

¹⁰ Today, besides the reputation of the Venice Biennale as a major art event, pressure is put on the city by the tourist industry and the environmental impact of rising sea levels, gentrification etc. The presence of cruisers in the Venetian lagoon, cruisers that carry sometimes up to several thousand people who visit Venice only for a few hours, is considered a serious problem by the city’s government. See: Pullela, Philip *Death of Venice: ‘Visitors are killing our city’* The Independent, 25 September 2011 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/death-of-venice-visitors-are-killing-our-city-2360518.html> accessed 27 July 2020

¹¹ “São Paulo was created to establish that city as a cultural center as well as to integrate Brazil into the international art system, and Documenta to aid in the reconstruction of Kassel as well as to announce the return of Germany to the brotherhood of civilized nations.” Altshuler, B. op. cit. p. 25

The Biennale is of utmost importance as a meeting place not only for curators and artists, but also for prospective collectors, art professionals, academics, students and cultural tourists, in its function as an encounter with the most up-to-date art production. It also functions as a critical point of reference in relation to global events. Working with a team of curators (given the scale of the enterprise), the head curator of the Biennale of art nominates a single theme that reflects the curator's authorship and often echoes major socio-political issues (e.g. protection of the environment, the refugee crisis in Europe, the war in Syria, Palestine, etc.). At the same time, quite apart from the Biennale - which itself generates significant visitors and funds - Venice is also a victim of its own success, with 23 million visitors in 2012 and still growing.¹² Venice's "success" overlaps with issues concerning the city's gentrification and raises questions regarding the quality of life of the local citizens as well as the increasing difficulties and costs the city faces for the conservation of its cultural heritage.

As Beat Wyss and Jorg Scheller write:

As genuine hybrids, biennials form arenas not only for the interaction of artists, but also for the interaction of agents of primary and secondary art markets, of globalized capital, of cultural policies, of identity politics, of the tourist industry, and so forth. In contrast to museums with their permanent, canonical collections and their assignment to restore and to protect artifacts, temporary biennials mirror the flexible, dynamic and unstable conditions of the globalized world.¹³

The Venice Biennale of art is, in itself, a wide topic for academic research. The current pandemic is reshaping the global tourism industry and will certainly impact the city of Venice and its Biennale in different ways, although the true extent will become clearer over the following years.

In addition to the Biennale's own specificities, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian post-war context provides an opportunity to look more closely at the enmeshment of global

¹² Minoia, Paola. Venice reshaped? Tourism gentrification and sense of place, in: *Tourism in the City - Towards an integrative agenda on urban tourism*, eds. Bellini N., Pasquinelli C. (2017) Springer: Heidelberg, pp. 261-274.

¹³ Wyss, Beat and Scheller, Jorge. Comparative art history: The Biennale principle, in: *Starting from Venice: Studies on the Biennale*, ed. Ricci, Clarissa (2010). Milan: *et.al.* / EDIZIONI. p. 52.

trends with the local legacies of the most recent war. Since these local specificities were formed by historical and socio-political factors, it is necessary to look briefly at some of them first.

3. Yugoslavia(s)'s participation

To understand the different issues that emerge in conjunction with present day Bosnia and Herzegovina's participation in the Biennale, the historical context behind it needs some exposition.

A divergent point in the history of the territorial space occupied by the south Slavs can be attributed to the year 1878 when a core, and time would show, crucial political change took place. At the Congress of Berlin - a conference of the six great European powers of the time - far-reaching decisions were made. Among others, the Congress decided that ~~the~~ Serbia (and Montenegro) would be granted full independence from the Ottoman Empire. The independence of Serbia officially lasted 40 years, until 1918. During the same period, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, with Bosnia and Herzegovina occupied by its military forces in 1878; albeit the Ottoman Empire maintained formal sovereignty over it.

The first artist representing the Kingdom of Serbia in the Biennale was Croatian-born sculptor Ivan Meštrović in 1914. This was a symbolic materialization of the Kingdom's cultural policies, favoring a pan-Slavic Yugoslav identity united through language, which emerged in Belgrade in the early 1900s. The participation of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1914 also coincided with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo and the start of the First World War.¹⁴ The context of the assassination, executed by the youths of *Mlada Bosna* [Young Bosnia], was marked by the idea of anti-imperialism and the right to self-determination of the south Slavic nations, linked by a common language.¹⁵ Academic research suggests that links between the *Crna ruka* [Black Hand] pan-Serbian nationalistic organization, elements of the Serbian secret services and *Mlada Bosna* determined the execution of the assassination plot.¹⁶

¹⁴ Mladinić Machiedo, Norka (2007) Prilog proučavanju djelovanja Ivana Meštrovića u Jugoslavenskom odboru. *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*. Vol. 39, no. 1, Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest. p. 134.

¹⁵ For more on the topic see Dedijer, Vladimir (1966) *Sarajevo 1914*. Belgrade: Prosveta.

¹⁶ As a key event in the modern history of Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the connotations associated with the assassination have passed through several stages; from being saluted as an act of courage aimed at liberation from foreign occupation and colonialism (during socialism), to vilification - seeing the act itself as a materialization of Serbian nationalism and the implication of Serbian secret services in Bosnian affairs. See: Katz, Vera "Ideological use of Memorial Plaques dedicated to Gavrilo

In the spirit of this pan-Slavic, Yugoslav identity, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was established in 1918 and lasted just over a decade until 1929, when the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was established; which in turn lasted until it was invaded by the Axis Powers in 1941, and its provinces [*banovine*] were divided up according to the invaders' zones of influence (Italian, German, Bulgarian, Hungarian).

In accordance with the decision of Duke Pavle Karađorđević to showcase art from the Kingdom at the Biennale in 1938 and 1940, the Yugoslav pavilion was built in 1938. This decision, which continued the propagation of merging art and politics, put the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis Fascist Italy. It can also be argued that this prevalent ambivalence of the monarchy opened the door to more direct collaboration with the Axis following the invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941.

During World War II - which in Yugoslavia was an amalgam of social revolution, foreign military occupation (i.e. national liberation struggle) and civil war - culture, and especially high-brow art, was put on hold as conditions were extremely difficult, if not impossible, for its perpetuation. Art continued to be produced, yet it was now shaped by the armed struggle for liberation and the Partisan movement. The Yugoslav Communists saw culture as an integral part of the struggle, primarily as an ideological weapon, but also as a tool for social emancipation, in a country that was predominantly rural and plagued with high rates of illiteracy and poverty.¹⁷

The Yugoslav Communists emerged victorious in 1945 and their efforts to rebuild a devastated country required coordinated efforts in all fields. Culture and education were prioritized as they were seen as tools for the social emancipation and development necessary to create a fair, solidarity-based socialistic society.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, art exhibitions held in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana were organized through newly established artists' associations and under the directives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.¹⁸

Princip in the upbringing and education of generations of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina." In: *Prilozi-Contributions*. Kamberović, Husnija (ed) Vol. 43, Sarajevo: Institut za historiju (2014), pp. 99-111. On the conflicting nature of the memorialization of Gavrilo Princip, see: Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2017) Les guerres, les conflits et le patrimoine de la violence : de nouvelles missions pour les politiques publiques. In: *Cartaditalia. 2018 année européenne du patrimoine culturel*. Grossi, Paolo (ed) Brussels: Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Year IX, Vol. 1, 2017, pp. 164-189.

¹⁷ Dimić, Ljubodrag (1988) *Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945-1952*. Belgrade: Izdavačka radna organizacija "Rad"

¹⁸ Šuvaković, Miško (2017) *Kulturalna politika i moderna umetnost od socijalističkog realizma do*

4. Representing Socialist Yugoslavia – Cultural Cold War

In 1948 the political split between Yugoslav Communists and the USSR, by means of the Cominform Resolution, marked Yugoslavia's break-up with Soviet-styled socialist realism in art and culture.¹⁹ Following this break, Yugoslavia turned toward the U.S. and the West for financial and political aid.

On the domestic plane, Yugoslavia-styled socialist self-management in the early 1950s meant not only the distancing from the USSR but also the commitment of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) to a "liberal" society, which was never truly achieved. As Branislav Jakovljević writes: "socialist realism as a political economy was never eliminated or replaced by a different organizational and funding model."²⁰

This liberalization on the surface would have several outcomes, creating a schizophrenic situation in which self-management by the working class from below was never entirely implemented as the LCY continued exercising full control from above.

Even though Yugoslavia's modernization and development were initiated by the LCY immediately after the end of WWII, the rapprochement with the U.S. and other Western countries in the 1950s resulted in a faster and more pronounced Americanization and Westernization of Yugoslavia's culture. The gradual introduction of U.S. popular and youth culture (e.g. Disney) and consumerism (e.g. Coca-Cola),²¹ took place in parallel with the promotion of U.S. high culture (abstract expressionism in painting), theater and Broadway musicals.²²

Thus the years of Yugoslavia's reimagining of a socialist-styled modernity coincided with Yugoslavia's balancing between the U.S. and U.S.S.R on the geopolitical plane, while on the domestic cultural plane this translated, in pace with rapid economic growth,²³ into the acceptance of "the universalism of post-war modern culture, along with all (social) values linked to the idea of individual freedom of choice and autonomy

socijalističkog modernizma – Slučaj Socijalističke Jugoslavije 1945-1991. *Sarajevske sveske* br. 51. <http://www.sveske.ba/en/content/kulturalna-politika-i-moderna-umetnost-od-socijalistickog-realizma-do-socijalistickog-modern> accessed July 25, 2020

¹⁹ Edvard Kardelj's address to the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences in December 1949, and later Miroslav Krleža's speech at the Writers' Congress in Ljubljana, October 5, 1952 are considered key events in the breaking from socialist realism. In the visual arts, the shift was materialized by Petar Lubarda's exhibition of paintings in 1951.

²⁰ Jakovljević, Branislav (2016) *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia 1945-91*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. p. 11

²¹ Dimitrijević, Branislav (2016) *Potrošeni socijalizam: Kultura, konzumerizam i društvena imaginacija u Jugoslaviji (1959-1974)*. Belgrade: Reč

²² Vučetić, Radina. (2018) *Coca-Cola Socialism: Americanization of Yugoslav Culture in the Sixties*. Budapest: Central University Press.

²³ Bilandžić and Tonković 1974: 51 as cited in Jakovljević, B. op. cit. p. 12

of art.”²⁴

In line with such values, the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) first participated in the Venice Biennale in 1950 (with Vojin Bakić, Zoran Musić, Vanja Raduš and Kosta Angeli Radovani) and its participation lasted until 1991.²⁵ Yugoslavia also participated in the Sao Paolo Biennale in 1953.

Modernism became not only the dominant art trend, but also an important foreign policy element. Yugoslav modern art was presented at numerous international exhibitions, thus demonstrating Yugoslavia’s specificity in the socialist world, distancing itself from the Soviet Union and Socialist Realist art, as well as belonging to more culturally developed countries.²⁶

Yugoslavia’s participation in the social, political and cultural modernist project alongside other Western countries was intended to symbolize the progressive character of Yugoslav socialism (self-management), which could balance both “East and West”, while keeping alive the idea of a nation that had liberated itself from foreign occupation (Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Axis powers) and capitalism.

As Nenad Makuljević writes,

“The idea of South Slav unity is closely associated with the idea of Yugoslav culture and art. Cultural closeness, understood in the broadest sense, as well as a common space and historical fate, contributed to the building of togetherness among the South Slavic peoples.”²⁷

The building of “togetherness” that Makuljević mentions had started well before the creation of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) in 1945, and the project

²⁴ Kolečnik, Ljiljana (2012) Konfliktne vizije moderniteta i poslijeratna moderna umjetnost. in: *Socijalizam i modernost: umjetnost, kultura, politika 1950.–1974.* Kolečnik, Ljiljana (ed) Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti – Muzej suvremene umjetnosti p. 129

²⁵ FPRY did not take part in the Biennale in 1948.

²⁶ Makuljević, Nenad (2017) Yugoslav Art and Culture: From the Art of a Nation to the Art of a Territory. In: *Yugoslavia from a Historical Perspective.* Eds. Perović et al. Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. p. 452.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 442

of a South Slavic, Yugoslav identity, incorporated by the communists in their ideological and armed struggle during World War II, was a progressive, modernist project. As mentioned above, because of the closeness of Yugoslav art and culture with the idea of a Yugoslav nation, art and culture associated with Yugoslavia would be targeted physically and ideologically during the post-Yugoslav wars in the 1990s.²⁸

Socialist Yugoslavia regularly took part in exhibitions of art and cultural events abroad, while at the same time organizing large-scale exhibitions of Yugoslav modern art in the country along with exhibitions of major figures of modern art from abroad.²⁹ In terms of Socialist Yugoslavia's participation in the Venice Biennale, it would end in 1990. Due to the assumed legal continuity between Socialist Yugoslavia and the new Yugoslavia, which then consisted of the remaining republics of Serbia and Montenegro and lasted only until the independence of Montenegro in 2006, Serbia inherited the Yugoslav pavilion, while the other emerging countries (of ex Socialist Yugoslavia) also presented their own art productions at the Biennale, although their participation did not occur regularly.

5. Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Venice Biennale

Let us now turn to the national pavilions that emerged as a consequence of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The disappearance of Yugoslavia made room for the emergence of seven new national pavilions. Croatia's participation in the Biennale began in 1993 while the country was at war and has since then occurred regularly. The "new" Yugoslavia was barred from participation in 1993 as it was under international embargo. Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were present in 1993, although in the latter case, the country was represented through the inauguration of Ars Aevi – the Sarajevo Museum of Contemporary Art Collection project, which was officially, and in full capacity, introduced to the Biennale public four years later in 1997. In its infancy stage, the Ars Aevi collection was initiated as an individual project of one of the organizers of *Jugoslovenska dokumenta*, Enver Hadžiomerspahić. According to art historian Nermina

²⁸ See the documentary film *Neželjena baština* (Unwanted Heritage) by Irena Škorić, Croatia 2016, 100'; Darko Karačić, Nataša Govedarica and Tamara Banjeglav (2012) *Re: Vizija prošlosti: Politike sjećanja u Bosni i Hercegovini, Srbiji i Hrvatskoj* (Re: Vision of the Past: The Politics of memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia), Sarajevo: Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Sarajevo

²⁹ One such important event is the exhibition of British sculptor Henry Moore in Yugoslavia (Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana) in 1955. See Koščević, Želimir "Henry Moore's Exhibition in Yugoslavia, 1955", *British Art Studies*, Issue 3, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-03/zkoscev> accessed May 3, 2020

Kurspahić the *Jugoslovenska dokumenta* in Sarajevo were a “testing field for the aesthetic value of socially significant visual art whose producers were insufficiently recognized culturally, critically or socially in the country”; furthermore, she underlines that the particularity of the project was “articulated in its preliminary phase by three artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina: Jusuf Hadžifejzović, Radoslav Tadić and Saša Bukvić”,³⁰ which is important to remember given the transformation the field of contemporary art has undergone since then and its current state-of-affairs, namely the marginal character of contemporary art, to put it mildly, in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian present-day context.

Art historian Jerko Denegri sees in the Ars Aevi project the internationalization of *Jugoslovenska dokumenta*, which was planned for 1991, yet never materialized.³¹

Jugoslovenska dokumenta, founded in 1984, was organized in Sarajevo on only two occasions (in 1987 and symbolically in 1989) and was conceptualized as a large-scale biennial exhibition of the most up-to-date Yugoslav art.³² With the beginning of the post-Yugoslav wars, with the conflict in Slovenia, and then Croatia, spilling over to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with the start of the siege of its capital city Sarajevo, museums, archives and libraries were deliberately targeted, along with schools and hospitals.³³ According to Hadžiomerspahić, the idea of the creation of the Ars Aevi collection project emerged during one such targeting -- the shelling of the Olympic Museum on April 27, 1992.³⁴ Hadžiomerspahić and his family, like many Sarajevans, left Sarajevo because of the war. They went to Italy, where he recreated a network of artists and curators. By means of endowments from individual internationally established artists, and with the support of Italian and Venetian authorities, the Ars Aevi collection was born. The collection contains a double meaning: first, as a political act, as this project was the seed of an envisioned project, i.e., that once the war ended it would become a public museum with the strong anti-war message embedded in its

³⁰ Kurspahić, Nermina ‘Recodified Memories’. In: *Ars Aevi Collection – Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo*. Hadžiomerspahić, Enver (ed) Sarajevo: International Project Ars Aevi Museum/Centre of Contemporary Art Sarajevo (2006) pp. 391-393

³¹ See: Burić, Ahmed interview with Jerko Denegri, BH Dani, no. 192, February 9, 2001

³² For Ješa (Jerko) Denegri Yugoslav art’s time framework is between 1900 and 1989, which ends with the exhibition *Jugoslovenska dokumenta* in Sarajevo. Erić, Zoran. (2014) *50 umetnika iz zbirke Muzeja savremene umetnosti – Jugoslovenska umetnost od 1951. do 1989*. Exhibition catalogue “Jugoslovenska umetnost od 1951. do 1989.” Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti. In addition, see Karamehmedović, Muhamed (ed) *Jugoslovenska dokumenta ’89*. Sarajevo: Olimpijski centar Skenderija, 1989.

³³ On the art created during the siege of Sarajevo see Mandić, Asja. The Formation of a Culture of Critical Resistance in Sarajevo: Exhibitions In/On Ruins. *Third Text*. Vol 25, 2011, pp. 725-735

³⁴ Marta Vidal, *Ars Aevi: A Museum for Peace*.

<https://balkandiskurs.com/en/2015/12/23/ars-aevi-a-museum-for-peace/> accessed June 1, 2020

birthing. Second, it immanently inscribes Sarajevo and its cultural scene as an integral part of the international mainstream art scene due to its close relationship not only with the Venice Biennale, but also with other art circles in Italy (notably the Fondazione Cittadelarte - Pistoletto in Biella) and abroad.

Ars Aevi was present at the 49th Biennale in 2001 with the work of graphic designer Anur Hadžiomerspahić and his series of posters titled *Human Condition*, which was created between 1993 and 1997. The posters questioned issues that had a direct impact on the experience of the artist's city of birth, Sarajevo; the war and destruction, cynical manipulation, and Anur Hadžiomerspahić's own attempt at understanding such violent changes from a personal perspective.³⁵

Two years later, the country was, so to speak, again officially present at the Biennale. Once again, Ars Aevi organized the participation and facilitated all aspects of the Bosnian pavilion's promotion and visibility. The curatorial team of Ars Aevi, headed by Asja Mandić, selected four established contemporary artists: Maja Bajević, Jusuf Hadžifejzović, Edin Numankadić and Nebojša Šerić-Šoba, whose work was exhibited at the Palatto Zorzi. Bosnia and Herzegovina did not participate to the Biennale in 2005 and 2007.

In 2009 Bosnia and Herzegovina was again absent, despite an initial invitation on the part of the Biennale's organizers and the selection of nine Bosnian artists. That year, while the country's national pavilion was absent, Ars Aevi showcased its collection among the collateral events with Braco Dimitrijević's *Future Post History* curated by Amila Ramović. It seems that fractioning among the cultural elite and dissatisfaction as to the key role Ars Aevi was playing was emerging, not only concerning the question of national representation, but also regarding the influence Ars Aevi had on the choice of participating artists. This gradual lack of support for Ars Aevi's involvement became more visible in 2009 and 2011, resulting in Bosnia and Herzegovina's non-participation in the Biennale.³⁶ One of the main criticisms levelled at the Ars Aevi Museum of

³⁵ Mandić, Asja. (2007) *Human Condition (1993-1997)* In Hadžiomerspahić (ed) *Artefacts*. Sarajevo: ArsAevi. <https://nomad.ba/3x/anur-hadziomerspahic-human-condition-1993-1997> accessed October 16, 2020.

³⁶ 2010 was a key year for culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it was marked by a political crisis that translated into difficulties in forming the state-level government after the general elections. The escalation of this particular problem turned into a crisis for former state institutions of culture, with the closure of various institutions, most notably the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) and the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2012). See: Gavrankapetanović-Redžić, J "Culture, Memory and Collective Identities in the (Re)Making: The National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina" *Acta Slavica*

Contemporary Art Collection project was the issue of transparency, as the project was receiving state funding while still being formally registered as a non-governmental organization.³⁷

In 2012, perhaps due to the history of the founding of the Ars Aevi project, its strong symbolic links to the siege of Sarajevo, its proximity to the organizers of the Biennale and its recurring participation in the Biennale, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Ministarstvo civilnih poslova/MCP), whose Sector for Science and Culture is in charge of “coordinating all national representations abroad”, decided to intervene.³⁸

Probably with the goal of formalizing and putting under administrative control Bosnia and Herzegovina’s participation in the Biennale (and thereby ending Ars Aevi’s growing influence), the MCP decided to establish a model of “equal” participation based on the entities – namely, a selection by rotation of the two entities that compose Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Republic of Srpska (Republika Srpska/RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine/FBiH). The proposed model was molded according to the politico-administrative structure (or ethnic division) of the country, as the MCP, which is a state-level ministry, decided to delegate the decision making and selection of artists to lower administrative levels, i.e., the entities. In the next section, we will see how this rotational model was implemented in practice, how such a decision mirrors current cultural policy, and what the consequences have been.

6. Cultural policies

According to the General Framework for Peace or the Dayton Peace Agreement (ratified in November 1995), which formally ended the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country is *grosso modo* divided in two: the RS and the FBiH. In practice this division sealed the country’s separation into ethnically homogenous territories, the homogeneity having been enforced through systemic violations of human rights, war crimes and massive displacement of populations during the 1992-95 war. Culture and education, being particularly sensitive topics due to their role in the upbringing of the younger generations of the now ethnically divided Bosnia and Herzegovina, were relegated to the administrative level of the entities. In practice, this

Iaponica, Sapporo: Hokkaido University, Vol 39, 2018, pp. 71-90

³⁷ Ars Aevi officially became a public institution of Sarajevo Canton in 2018 and as such is fully budgeted (and controlled) by the cantonal government.

³⁸ “Sektor za nauku i kulturu nadležan je za koordinaciju aktivnosti sa nadležnim entitetskim tijelima vlasti i za definisanje strategije na međunarodnom planu u područjima nauke i kulture.” www.mcp.gov.ba accessed May 10, 2020

creates another, administrative, difference between RS and FBiH. In RS, there is one Ministry of Education and Culture in charge of their respective mandates, making it a centralized structure. In FBiH, despite the formal existence of a (central) Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ministarstvo kulture i sporta/MKSFBiH), the situation is different in practice. This is because FBiH is partitioned into 10 cantons, and each canton has its own ministry of culture and education. Although the MKSFBiH holds nominal seniority in terms of hierarchy over the cantonal ministries, it has weaker powers of implementation and decision making. The 10 cantonal ministries have significantly more leverage than MKSFBiH because the cantonal assemblies directly budget and administer culture via their respective ministries.³⁹ Furthermore, as each canton often has either a Croat majority or a Bosniak majority, this impacts directly on the decision-making process of the cantonal ministries of culture and education and their implementation of cultural and educational policies (e.g. textbooks for history, language and geography).

The year 2013 is interesting for our exploration of the topic of cultural policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina because it shows: a) the “rotational” entity model applied for the first time, and b) the importance of cultural networks in the war of position among the intelligentsia (cultural workers, cultural intermediaries) that is taking place.⁴⁰

In 2012, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Republika Srpska (Muzej savremene umjetnosti Republike Srpske/MSURS) in Banja Luka was chosen as the institution to select and curate the work of the artist(s) that would represent Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Venice Biennale in 2013. The curatorial team of Sarita Vujković and Irfan Hošić invited Mladen Miljanović and his “Garden of Delights” to represent Bosnia and

³⁹ One particular example here is Sarajevo Canton. In 2018 the annual budget of Sarajevo Canton was 769 080 000 KM (approx. 384 040 000 euro). For comparison, the 2018 budget of RS was 3 300 000 000 KM (approx. 1 560 000 000 euro), while FBiH's budget was 2 900 000 000 KM (approx. 1 450 000 000 euro). The question of redistribution of taxes through the state level, primarily those collected through VAT (which amounts to 17%) is a fierce political issue. This has some echoes of similar problems in SFRY, see: Gligorov, Vladimir (2017) Yugoslavia and Development: Benefits and Costs. In *Yugoslavia from a Historical Perspective*. Perović et al. (eds) Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. pp. 409-441.

⁴⁰ As noted by Böse, Busch, and Dragičević-Šešić, the narrative of civil society is not necessarily only a positive one. Under the guise of emancipatory endeavor, the civil society might instead contribute to masking the unequal character of the society in which they are operating. “Despite and Beyond Cultural Policy: Third and Fourth Sector Practices and Strategies in Vienna and Belgrade”. In: Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou (eds) *Transcultural Europe: Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe*. (2006) p.133

Herzegovina at the 55th Biennale of art. At the same time, Ars Aevi marked the 20th anniversary of its collection and exhibited, simultaneously, the “Ars Aevi Collection in Progress 1993 -2013” at the Arsenale. Its invitation read:

In 1993, the first year of the siege of the Olympic city of Sarajevo, during the opening of the 45th Venice Biennale, an invitation was sent out into the world from Venice with which Sarajevo called upon the artists of the world to contribute their works to form the Ars Aevi Museum Collection of their future World Contemporary Art Museum in Sarajevo. In the two-decades-long process of formation of this unique collection, artistic directors of renowned European museums, centres and foundations took on the role of organisers of founding exhibitions where artists of the world presented and donated their representative works to Sarajevo. Recognising the Ars Aevi Project as an ethical expression of international collective will, the famous architect Renzo Piano, a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, presented Sarajevo with his architectural designs for the Ars Aevi Museum.⁴¹

This short excerpt emphasizes the legacy of the war in the establishment of the Ars Aevi Museum Collection. It also situates its birth in the Olympic past of Sarajevo as well as the European character of the city. The formal and informal networks established by Ars Aevi, particularly abroad, echo similar situations as described by Milena Dragičević-Šešić regarding NGOs working across post-Yugoslavia.⁴² These networks are important as they enhance communication and facilitate presentation and recognition, both abroad and in domestic contexts, especially when the number of NGOs working in the field of (contemporary) art has been diminishing over the years.⁴³ Yet they also can be perceived as being biased towards one particular actor over another, despite or perhaps because of well-established international networks facilitating their work, as the gradual marginalization of Ars Aevi between 2004 and 2011 shows.

⁴¹ http://www.diogenpro.com/uploads/4/6/8/8/4688084/poziv_za_izlozbu_ars_aevi.pdf accessed May 21, 2020

⁴² Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2009) Informal Artists NGO Networks: Reintroducing Mobility in the Region of South East Europe. In: Vujadinović, Dimitrije (ed) *Mobility of Artists and Cultural Professionals in South Eastern Europe*. Belgrade: Balkankult fondacija.

⁴³ Ibid.

In 2015, the MCP delegated the commission of the Biennale artists to the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Umjetnička galerija BiH/UGBiH). However, as one of the seven (former) state institutions of culture, the UGBiH was facing serious administrative and financial problems itself, and it proposed only one project to the MCP – theater director Haris Pašović's work "Hope" on the Srebrenica genocide and the issue of missing persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to various sources the project was "sabotaged" because of its topic. Simultaneously, the participation of Haris Pašović in the Biennale also sparked a debate among cultural workers/intermediaries in FBiH, especially in Sarajevo, concerning the question of who should be entitled to represent the country, since no institution openly supported the proposal. The project never reached Venice; it was dismissed because, officially, the procedural deadline had not been met.

Although the rotational model helped overcome the issue of the formality of the country's participation, according to art historian Aida Abadžić Hodžić, who supported Pašović's proposal, it also created a 'bipolarity' between Sarajevo and Banja Luka, while cultural institutions from other cities are being excluded.⁴⁴

After a pause of four years, in 2017, it was the turn of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Republika Srpska, which commissioned the work of Radenko Milak, "The University of Disaster", in collaboration with Roman Uranjek.⁴⁵

And for the latest Biennale in 2019, the Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art Sarajevo, today a public institution, commissioned the work of Danica Dakić, "Zenica Trilogy".⁴⁶

7. Analysis

In this section, I propose to turn to the *Action Plan for the Implementation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Cultural Policy Strategy - with an extended application 2017-2018*. (Akcioni plan za implementaciju strategije kulturne politike u BiH sa produženim rokom 2017-2018.),⁴⁷ which is the most recent document available on the website of

⁴⁴ See Abadžić Hodžić, Aida (March 26, 2015) *Venecijanski bijenale. Novonastala situacija je okidač za moguću promjenu, Oslobođenje*, KUN, pp. 32-33

⁴⁵ Curated by Fredrik Svensk, Sinziana Ravini, Anna van der Vliet and Christopher Yggdre, in collaboration with Hans Ulrich Obrist.

⁴⁶ Curated by Anja Bogojević, Amila Puzić and Claudia Zini.

⁴⁷ Ministarstvo civilnih poslova Bosne i Hercegovine, *Akcioni plan za implementaciju strategije kulturne politike u BiH sa produženim rokom 2017-2018*.

the MCP Sector for Culture and Science. Over 19 pages, the Action Plan (hereafter AP) proposes the following: goals; links to goals defined in the Cultural Policy Strategy; priorities (i.e., indicators of long-term effect), measures (i.e., indicators of direct effect); indicators; activities; timeframe (up to 2018); coordinating bodies/institutions; leading institutions; and technical support necessary for implementation.

Pertinent to our topic, and in line with the coordinating capacities of the MCP, the AP primarily highlights the relationships briefly described above, namely the essential role of the entity and federation ministries along with cantonal ministries and Brčko District (Brčko distrikt)⁴⁸ in the realization of indicated goals via defined measures dealing with “instruments of cultural policy; animation of culture and cultural policy; cultural pluralism and international cultural cooperation; and cultural policies and marketing in culture”. When looking at the specific activities the AP proposes, it is interesting to note the proposal for the creation of councils of culture on all administrative levels by 2018. Although from this document alone it is difficult to grasp the function of such bodies, it must be noted that they do not formally exist as of mid-2020. Regarding the planification of the international presentation of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s culture, this is conducted by the MKSFBiH and the MKPRS, therefore the rotational model described earlier does nothing more than mirror an already established system of governance and translate it into a concrete curatorial decision like that related to the Bosnian (national) pavilion at the Venice Biennale of art.

There are also several practical issues regarding the AP. First, its activities and indicators are primarily concerned with: harmonization of existing report forms (as they greatly differ from ministry to ministry); creation of databases of cultural events organized in BiH and abroad; and analyses on various levels (statistics concerning the number of employees in ministries and cultural institutions, existing capacities in terms of protection of cultural heritage, etc.).

If we want to understand how the existing conditions impact on the work of cultural institutions in practice, the most useful analyses of the multi-dimensional problems faced by the cultural sector were completed by the non-governmental organization *Akcija*, some of whose reports are available on the organization’s website. The documents I refer to are: 1) Key needs of the cultural sector in B&H;⁴⁹ 2) Report on the

<http://mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/nauka-i-kultura-dokumenti> accessed May 20, 2020

⁴⁸ Brčko District, formed in 1999, is a self-governing, ethnically mixed entity, separated from both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska.

⁴⁹ *Akcija* (2014) *Ključne potrebe sektora kulture u BiH: Zaključci istraživanja udruženja “Akcija” provedenog u Zenici, Mostaru, Tuzli, Banja Luci i Sarajevu*. Sarajevo: Akcija.

state of affairs in the field of cultural management, cultural institutions and organizations in BiH, and analyses of their training needs;⁵⁰ 3) Report on the cultural sector in Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla.⁵¹ Although all three documents precede the AP by several years, they are valuable input as 1) they are based on interviews with institutions and organizations of different profiles, size and location, 2) they show that some elements of the recommendations from these three reports were indeed included in the AP (e.g. cultural industries), and 3) they also show that since the time of their writing, not much has changed.

Despite well-intended goals (e.g. increase of funding for culture; increase in the number of curators and educators in museums, etc.) the institutional capabilities for implementation are questionable for several reasons. First, budgets for culture are dependent on government(s) formation(s), which in Bosnia and Herzegovina often take a long time to form, causing dramatic delays and debts for institutions dependent on public funding. Second, the MCP does not have any legal means to enforce, for example, budget increases for culture on cantonal levels. For such an increase to occur, it would require inter-party negotiations that are usually lengthy and problematic, given the highly fragmented political landscape and the occurrence of local and general elections every two years. And last but not least, all decisions regarding strategies and cultural policies on the state and entity levels point to the rather symbolic status of culture for the political elite, which translates into *ad hoc* solutions rather than long-term methods for attaining goals, despite the appearance of the inclusion of various factors that attempt to aid the cultural sector. The two reports illustrate the significant distance between institutions/organizations and the ministries, particularly the MCP as the highest institution in charge of culture.⁵² It also reflects an ongoing problem in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, the gap between laws (sometimes very well crafted), official decisions and strategies, and their (non-)application or very

⁵⁰ Vežić, Aida and Simjanovska, Violeta (2011) *Izveštaj o stanju u oblasti kulturnog menadžmenta, kulturnih institucija i organizacija u Bosni i Hercegovini i analiza njihovih potreba*. Sarajevo and Skopje: CIU Multimedia and Akcija Sarajevo.

⁵¹ Isanović, Adla (2006) *Kulturni sektor u Banja Luci, Mostaru, Sarajevu i Tuzli: Dijagnostičiranje stanja kulturnog sektora, identifikacija ključnih problema u radu kulturnih institucija i organizacija i mogućih rješenja (na osnovu mišljenja kulturnih djelatnika u ovim gradovima)*. Sarajevo: Mediacentar.

⁵² Another example of an institution facing multiple problems, first of legal recognition and then of financing, is the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. See Dragičević-Šešić, Milena and Nießer, Jacqueline (2018) *COURAGE: Cultural Opposition: Understanding the Cultural Heritage of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries*. Country Reports: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro. Regensburg pp.17-19. <http://doi.org/10.12345/cr-serbiaetal> accessed November 11, 2020

selective and partial application in real life. In that sense, the quality of any strategy or cultural policy is inconsequential, if its implementation is actively sabotaged or known to be impossible to achieve.⁵³ Current conditions produce an appearance of efficiency, which is merely declarative in nature, and an additional sign of the insurmountable distance between the governing and the governed - between policy makers and cultural workers, artists and the public.

8. Conclusion

I have attempted to provide in this paper an overview of cultural policies and their reflection on the presentations of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian national pavilion at the Venice Biennale of art. The historical legacy of the Yugoslav path to modernization, its policy of openness toward the West and the participation in modern art exhibitions that the country engaged in from the 1950s, is contrasted with present-day Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultural policies marked by ethno-centrism, a weakened civil society and a dominant nationalistic elite. With Yugoslavia's implosion in the 1990s, the new post-Yugoslav 'nation'-states streamed to the "reconstruction" of boundaries violently separating the different nations that constituted Yugoslavia. Given the brutal character of the post-Yugoslav wars, and the peculiar role that culture (and education) played and continues to play in sustaining social and political fragmentation, the idea of a national art pavilion at an international or transnational exhibition such as the Venice Biennale, is not without paradox.

Yet, as Wyss and Scheller write:

The assembly of pavilions does not provide insight into the "nature" or "essence" of nations, but rather into the manifold ways of constructing, inventing and representing concepts of (inter-, trans-) national or (inter-, trans-) cultural identities via inclusion or exclusion,

⁵³ The most recent (October 2020) example of obstacles is illustrated by the attempt of Sarajevo Canton to take full responsibility for the financing and administering of the 7 (former) state cultural institutions. Because the administrative apparatus of the country is a legal conundrum and culture is administered by several political levels simultaneously, the Ministry of Culture of Sarajevo took formal steps by addressing to the MCP, as the higher state-level body, a request to take charge of these institutions. The MCP decided that all levels, including the Republic of Srpska, must agree on the matter. The move can be interpreted as an attempt at sabotaging the resolution of this two decades-long problem. In addition, it must be emphasized that due to their location in Sarajevo, these institutions are considered Bosniak institutions rather than Bosnian and Herzegovinian institutions of culture. The seven institutions of culture in question are: The National Art Gallery, the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Museum of Literature and Dramatic Arts, the Historical Museum, the National Library, the Library for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Cinematheque.

rapprochement or distancing.⁵⁴

The example of the Action Plan of the MCP, and the problems that have been piling up in the cultural sector since the end of the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, show, primarily, a lack of grasp of real, every-day issues by policy makers, and the difficulties in implementing policies given the existing complex administrative structure, the quasi-permanent under-funding and the fracture between nationalist rhetoric and openness towards Europe. On one hand, present-day cultural policies are marked by the *laissez-faire* attitude of policymakers, contrasting with cultural policies during socialism. On the other hand, the diminishing of financial support has provided an impetus towards a discourse promoting a market-oriented culture. The case of Bosnia and Herzegovinian culture's difficult transition from state-funded to legal and financial limbo is not an isolated case, as has been extensively documented by the work on cultural policies in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe by Milena Dragičević-Šešić. The two-fold, in essence contradictory aims of cultural policies during transition, which can also be applied to our example, are: "a) identity-related questions (insistence on national traditions and exploration of the past) and b) the need to integrate into the world (ending isolation and introducing civil society values and European values)."⁵⁵

As the case of the Bosnian pavilion at the Venice Biennale of art exemplifies, the vacuum left by policy decisions is filled by the cultural elite, most successfully by those close to the governing (nationalist) elite. Since the end of the war, the cultural elite and the (remnants of) civil society of Sarajevo and Banja Luka, as representatives of the entities' cultural scenes, are those who are attempting to fill the gap that has been left by the absence of implementable policies. Yet, even when well-intended, such attempts at reenergizing contemporary art end up either absorbed by the administrative and political apparatus, which is in its essence ethnic-oriented, or simply discarded.

Through the topic of the Bosnian pavilion, I have attempted to show that Bosnia and Herzegovina's participation in the Biennale amalgamates issues of nationalism and elite culture. Sarajevo and Banja Luka, through their concentration of cultural producers and cultural institutions, are representative of such a cleavage between elite culture and

⁵⁴ Wyss, B. and Scheller, J. Comparative art history: The Biennale principle. in: *Starting from Venice: Studies on the Biennale*, ed. Ricci, Clarissa (2010). Milan: *et.al.* / EDIZIONI p. 53

⁵⁵ Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2014) Politiques culturelles en Europe centrale et orientale. In : *Vers les nouvelles politiques culturelles. Les pratiques culturelles engagées*. Belgrade: Clio et l'Université des arts de Belgrade. pp. 29-36.

nationalism, reflecting the existing administrative ethnic-based division and the post-conflict, post-socialist cultural policies that were established following the Dayton Peace Agreement. As Milena Dragičević-Šešić writes:

“It seemed that the reality of previous Yugoslav cultural space above all existed as a reality only in the consciousness of a few artists, and especially in those open to experiment, devoted to the search for a new sensibility, those who saw both European and global artistic space as their own.”⁵⁶

Following her line of thought, we can conclude that any traces of such legacies of freedom and experiment that contemporary art embodied in Socialist Yugoslavia, have been systemically and successfully devastated in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s post-conflict, post-socialist cultural policies are negatively impacting art and culture because they reproduce the nationalist matrix that essentially negates their emancipatory potential.

⁵⁶ Dragičević-Šešić, Milena (2001) Borders and Maps in Contemporary Yugoslav Arts. In: *Redefining Cultural Identities: Southeastern Europe*. Ed. Švob-Đokić, Nada. Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, pp. 74-75