

## *Enjoy Sara-jevo*

### Coca-Cola, Material Culture and the Siege of Sarajevo

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#### Introduction

This article argues that the narrative of the independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of its capital city Sarajevo under siege (1992–1995) was built on the trope of Sarajevo's European, Western-orientated, cosmopolitan cultural identity, based on the image initially nurtured by Socialist Yugoslavia. In the new context of the implosion of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1991) the siege of Sarajevo, and the war in one of the Yugoslav republics, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Yugoslav socialism was replaced by the multiethnic and cosmopolitan character of the young Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Used in contrast to an Eastern/rural/backward identity, as attributed to the Serb army encircling the city, the trope reproduced the urban–rural social divide that was prevalent during socialism, and exacerbated it further as economic problems piled up. Industrialisation and the rural exodus of the 1950s and 1960s increased the population in urban areas. The economic crisis in the 1960s increased unemployment and compounded social inequalities. On top of issues of unemployment, unequal access to housing and class inequalities, nationalism gradually made its return until the first democratic elections in 1990 officially positioned nationalism as the principal governing ideology. I argue that the image of Sarajevo during the siege, as a by-product of foreign attention to the plight of the country and its citizens, was built on the pre-existing premises that promoted Socialist Yugoslavia as Western-orientated and therefore progressive, in contrast to other communist countries beyond the Iron Curtain. In the new context of the post-Yugoslav wars, cultural references to the West and the US played an important role in reinforcing this more 'palatable' image, considering on the one hand the negative

references associated with the post-Yugoslav conflict as the result of centuries-long Balkan hatreds and, on the other, the existence of an autochthonous Muslim Slav population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It must be remembered that the recurrent trope of Muslim terrorism and defence of European Christian values by Serbian propaganda in the 1990s was systematically used at first against Bosnian Muslims and later against Kosovar independentists.

At the same time, facing the daily prospects of survival under the violent siege of the city, Sarajevo's citizens, and particularly its artists and cultural actors, found inspiration in these Western cultural sources as a response to violence and destruction, and as a way to maintain their physical and mental sanity. The symbolism ascribed today to the material culture of the siege of Sarajevo is concerned with (past) materiality and is examined as a tool to consolidate group identity in the present. Through the conservation and display of objects created during the siege, and the conservation of testimonies, the gradual institutionalisation of the memory of the siege has created a community that is defined by its experience. The examples analysed here, therefore, condense three aspects of material culture of the siege of Sarajevo: the redesign of objects, cultural resistance, and the institutionalisation of remembrance.

In the first part of this article, I look at the entwinement of socialism and consumerism in Socialist Yugoslavia following the 1948 Tito–Stalin split and the broader social, economic and political changes that affected Yugoslavia from both inside and outside. The legacy of Yugoslavia's opening up towards the West in the 1950s<sup>1</sup> – and thus the symbolic appropriation of Western cultural models – marked life in Yugoslavia and Sarajevo before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995). Later on, through several processes of transformation during the war and in its aftermath, the connotations associated with these 'westernised/progressive' models played a role in the construction of the image of Sarajevo's cultural resistance, improvisation and creativity.<sup>2</sup> Before turning to the symbolic and practical use of art and cultural products from the US and the West in Sarajevo during the siege, it is necessary to look at the various factors that preceded and created a basis for such developments. One such aspect is the issue of social inequalities in Yugoslav socialism. For a better understanding of the entanglement of culture, cultural policies and class, I turn to Darko Suvin, Branislav Jakovljević, Branislav Dimitrijević, Ljubodrag Dimić, and Radina Vučetić, among others. I examine the consumerism of 'ordinary' goods (eg Coca-Cola) and culture (eg avant-garde theatre, musicals, popular and high culture) from the West during socialism as tokens of Yugoslav socialism's 'progressive' character, which would become tokens of Sarajevo's uniqueness and cultural openness in times of hardship.

In the second and third parts, specific examples of the material culture of the siege of Sarajevo and cultural resistance to the violence of the siege are examined. In line with this, I turn to the symbolic and practical (re) design of the Coca-Cola logo by the young designers of Trio Sarajevo, and the repurposing of the cans themselves, during the siege of the city. For the purpose of analysis, in this segment I include excerpts of an interview conducted with Trio's Bojan Hadžihalilović in March 2021. I begin my analysis with the understanding that redesigning objects in times of war enables people to adapt and physically survive threats affecting

1 Miško Šuvaković, 'Kulturalna politika i moderna umetnost od socijalističkog realizma do socijalističkog modernizma – Slučaj socijalističke Jugoslavije 1945–1991' (Cultural Policies and Modern Art from Socialist Realism to Socialist Modernism – The Case of Socialist Yugoslavia 1945–1991), *Sarajevske sveske* (Sarajevo Notebook) 51, 2017; <http://www.sveske.ba/en/content/kulturalna-politika-i-moderna-umetnost-od-socijalistickog-realizma-do-socijalistickog-modern>, accessed 13 September 2019

2 Larisa Kurtović, 'Paradoxes of Wartime 'Freedom': Alternative Culture during the Siege of Sarajevo', in B Bilić and V Janković, eds, *Resisting the Evil: (Post-) Yugoslav Anti-War Contention*, Nomos, Southeast European Integration Perspectives, Baden-Baden, 2012, pp 197–224

their physical and mental health. I argue that, for example, the redesigning or recycling of Coca-Cola cans for use in the improvised gardens that emerged because of the shortage of food in the city also created the possibility for a psychological (perceptive and symbolical) reinterpretation of the situation (the social environment of emergency). Today, traces of the siege's material culture are partially preserved by the Historical Museum and the FAMA Collection of the Virtual Museum of the Siege of Sarajevo. The use of ordinary objects raises questions of the reappropriation of space, both in terms of territory and the affirmation of identity in asymmetric power relations. In that respect, I argue that in Sarajevo, Coca-Cola cans initially served new, war-imposed practical purposes, and in time acquired the status of a symbol of resistance to the dehumanisation, de-culturation and violence imposed on a large scale by the Bosnian Serbian forces that besieged the city between 1992 and 1995. Furthermore, Coca-Cola and other (cultural) products of consumption provided a sense of normality and rebranded an image of the city and its inhabitants as Western-orientated (Coke cans, rock music, cultural resistance, multiculturalism, progressive anti-fascists), which was depicted in stark opposition to the violence and hatred of the besiegers (depicted as Eastern-orientated, conservative, traditionalist, violent, fascist, etc).

## Socialism, Consumerism and Culture

In the years following the end of World War II, the victorious League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) faced the challenge of ruling and reconstructing a heavily devastated country that had also been painfully divided along ideological lines. A political idea had won an armed victory, but in order to achieve the goal of building a (utopian) communist country in which the working class would be the governing force, rapid modernisation and education was required. Yugoslav communists aimed at modernising and building a new progressive communist country by increasing literacy, rebuilding schools and by reopening universities, museums, libraries and cinemas to the masses, especially to those who were less likely to have access to art, culture and education. In that sense, the policies in place aimed at transforming Yugoslav society in line with the emancipatory and solidarity-based character of the anti-fascist liberation struggle.<sup>3</sup>

A major challenge for the communists was that much of the population had not been exposed to communist ideology, and early in the war the communists worked on spreading its messages and gaining the support necessary to pursue the armed and ideological struggle. As Ljubodrag Dimić explains, Yugoslavia was one of the least developed European countries before the war, and given the degree of destruction and human loss the country experienced (1,706,000 deaths, of whom 90,000 were officials and 40,000 intellectuals), the communists faced considerable challenges in the aftermath of the war.<sup>4</sup> According to Branka Doknić in *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, the rapid industrialisation and electrification, the dedication to scientific progress, and the agricultural reforms initiated by the communists were all intended to demonstrate the benefits of the new political system in order to persuade the

3 Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura: Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945–1952* (Agitprop Culture: The Agitation and Propaganda Phase of Cultural Policies in Serbia 1945–1952), Izdavačka radna organizacija 'Rad' (Publishing Organisation 'Work'), Belgrade, 1988, p 27

4 Ibid, pp 20–21

5 Branka Doknić cites the statistics regarding illiteracy in Yugoslavia in 1940 thus: while the national average for both men and women was around fifty per cent, in Bosnia and Herzegovina nearly eighty-four per cent of women were completely illiterate: Branka Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963* (Cultural Policies in Yugoslavia 1946–1963), Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2013, p 53.

6 Ivan Hofman, 'Komitet za kulturu i umetnost pri Vladi FNRJ (Ustanova i njena arhivska građa)' (The Committee for Culture and Arts under the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia [The Institution and its Archives]), *Arhiva, Časopis Arhiva Jugoslavije* (Archive, Journal of the Yugoslav Archives) 2, 2001, p 43

7 Agitprop passed through three phases between 1944 and 1948, and in addition to reinforcing the dominant position of the party through acts of persuasion and coercion the Soviet-styled cultural model was set up as the model to be emulated, both in form and content, by artists of literature, fine arts, theatre, etc, until the clash between Tito and Stalin in 1948. See Carol S Lilly, 'Problems of Persuasion: Communist Agitation and Propaganda in Post-war Yugoslavia, 1944–1948', *Slavic Review*, vol 53, issue 2, summer 1994, pp 395–413.

8 Dimić, *Agitprop kultura*, op cit, p 37

9 Ibid, p 36

10 Ibid

11 Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije: Socijalistička Jugoslavija 1945–1988* (History of Yugoslavia: Socialist Yugoslavia 1945–1988), volume III, Nolit, Belgrade, 1988, pp 120–161

12 Ibid, p 127

13 Dimić, *Agitprop kultura*, op cit, p 85

14 Vladimir Kulić, 'New Belgrade and Socialist

population that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) was taking the right path.<sup>5</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the war, culture was under the tight scrutiny and directive of the Committee for Culture and Art (established 8 February 1946).<sup>6</sup> During World War II, agitprop, that is the agitation and propaganda apparatus, was incorporated in a loose form within the committees of the LCY, and the propaganda was spread through a network of large organisations (unions, youth organisations, women's organisations, etc).<sup>7</sup> Although established early on in the war, the propaganda machine was reorganised in March 1945.<sup>8</sup> Its main goal was to 'concentrate all political, cultural, educational and scientific life directly or indirectly' in the hands of the LCY by 'channelling the cultural aspirations of the population and preventing any attempt by the enemies of the LCY to steer culture toward their own goals',<sup>9</sup> which often translated into censorship.<sup>10</sup> In his *Istorija Jugoslavije 1955–1988*, Branko Petranović maps out the reorganisation of the agitprop machine, the mechanisms and tools used to implement control in all spheres of life, and the systemic efforts put in place to increase literacy, reopen the universities, and educate teachers – who were then dispatched to underdeveloped areas.<sup>11</sup>

Yugoslavia's cultural policy was at that point defined by 'the victory of the revolution, the fundamental ideas of the LCY, a change in the system of social relations and issues of the bourgeois legacy in the field of education and culture'.<sup>12</sup> Making culture more accessible to the working class was one of the main goals of the LCY's cultural policies. The party implemented various activities aimed at providing cultural education through the organisation of exhibitions in factories, reading workshops, and so on.<sup>13</sup>

With the peace and economic recovery of the mid 1950s and onwards, industrial development also brought significant demographic changes, with more people moving to the cities to pursue education and to search for work. The demographic changes that Yugoslavia underwent were followed by the urban development of major cities in terms of increased housing infrastructures (Novi Beograd, Novi Zagreb, Grbavica and Alipašino polje in Sarajevo, etc), producing new communities of people from mixed backgrounds in terms of their social and ethnic origins, and placing urban planning at the heart of Yugoslavia's socialist modernisation.<sup>14</sup>

On the economic plane, Yugoslavia experienced major changes in the immediate aftermath of World War II. In his *Reminiscences*, Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979) indicates that the new government used tools defined by the socialist revolution in order to implement its revolutionary goals, namely, confiscation, agrarian reform, nationalisation, sequestration and other forms of expropriation. By the end of 1945, fifty-five per cent of industry was managed by the state.<sup>15</sup> However, following resolutions of the Informbiro in June 1948 and November 1949, financial support from the countries of the Eastern block was stopped and the LCY had to turn to the West for aid, which was crucial in the reconstruction and defence of the country.<sup>16</sup> The Tito–Stalin split also created the need for an alternative model of Yugoslav socialism, different from the one propagated by the USSR: self-management.<sup>17</sup>

As a type of new social organisation, self-management was based on various forms of communist partisan guerrilla tactics during World

Yugoslavia's Three Globalisations', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, vol 2, issue 2, 2013, pp 125–153; DOI: 10.5117/HCM2014.2. KULI; Vladimir Kulić, 'National, Supranational, International: New Belgrade and the Symbolic Construction of a Socialist Capital', *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, vol 41, issue 1, 2013, pp 35–63

15 Edvard Kardelj, *Sećanja: Borba za priznanje i nezavisnost nove Jugoslavije 1944–1957* (Reminiscences: The Struggle for Recognition and Independence – The New Yugoslavia, 1944–1957), Državna založba Slovenije/Radnička štampa (State Publishing House of Slovenia/Workers Press), Ljubljana and Belgrade, 1980, p 185

16 Ibid, op cit, p 193

17 Branislav Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia 1945–91*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2016, pp 7–8

18 Ibid, p 7

19 Ibid, p 8

20 Ibid, p 5

21 The cultural Cold War was a programme of psychological warfare conducted by the US government at the dawn of the Cold War, deployed in the non-violent ideological conflict between the US and the USSR for global supremacy in the aftermath of World War II. See Patrick Iber, 'The Cultural Cold War', Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of American History, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.760>. The Campaign of Truth, based on National Security Council Paper no 68 (April 1950) by the Truman

War II and interwar avant-garde artistic associations.<sup>18</sup> In his book *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia 1945–1991*, Branislav Jakovljević emphasises that the relation between aesthetics and social practice formed an integral part in the work of some of the major communist representatives of the new Yugoslavia, and therefore significantly shaped their understanding of self-management as a form of social organisation.<sup>19</sup> Jakovljević's statement that 'art as a social product is inseparable from art as a social relation'<sup>20</sup> is crucial in the interpretation of the consequences that the legacy of the cultural Cold War and self-management in Yugoslavia had on the cultural scene in Sarajevo during the siege, something that will be examined in the next section.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the efforts put in place by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav society remained socially divided into classes with persisting inequalities that increased as the economic situation worsened amid the economic reforms in the mid 1960s. One of several attempts at economic reforms, Yugoslavia's Second Five Year Plan (1957–1961) aimed, among other things, at increasing living standards, salaries and eventually consumption.<sup>22</sup> Positive results were achieved briefly, but already by the early 1960s problems had appeared, mostly due to higher spending, the deficit, inflation and increasing foreign debt. With economic liberalisation and the looser intervention of the state into the functioning of companies, the boards of directors and labour councils started taking a more prominent role in the decision-making process, particularly regarding the redistribution of surplus.<sup>23</sup> The liberalisation increased salary inequalities across different sectors and a significant gap started appearing between miners and factory workers on the one hand and white-collar staff on the other, with the salaries of the latter being from two to ten times greater.<sup>24</sup>

Several reasons are suggested for the failure of the economic reforms that the LCY initiated in the mid 1960s. One proposed explanation was that education and the employment market were not synchronised and as a result the majority of the unemployed were unqualified. Even those who already occupied a position were often unqualified for the work and therefore performed poorly, which impacted on the companies that employed them.<sup>25</sup> The laying off of workers, either because of the decline of certain sectors or because of the workers' poor performance, was a political issue for the LCY.<sup>26</sup> Yugoslavia's rapid demographic changes, with the migrations from rural to urban areas mentioned earlier, did not keep pace with economic reforms and unqualified workers began concentrating in urban areas. In addition to unemployment and inflation, a housing crisis emerged. Susan L Woodward's analysis of the issue of unemployment in Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1990 sheds light on a problem that can be seen as the economic preamble to the later violent explosion of nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

In *Samo jednom se ljubi: Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije 1945–1972, uz hipoteze o početku, kraju i suštini* (You Love Only Once: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia 1945–1972, with Hypotheses on its Beginning, End and Essence), Darko Suvin gives a short description of Yugoslav social classes. He roughly divides the groups into: 1) peasants; 2) low-skilled workers in permanent employment; 3) proletarians or low-skilled workers without permanent employment, which from the mid



administration, paved the path to the undermining of communism. It is interesting to note that the paper proposed targeted propaganda campaigns in different regions, and Yugoslavia was treated as a 'crucial periphery'. See Walter L Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and Cold War 1945–1961*, St Martin's Griffin, New York, 1998, pp 14–15. Cold War historian Frances Stonor Saunders defines psychological warfare as 'the planned use by a nation of propaganda and activities other than combat which communicate ideas and information intended to influence the opinions, attitudes, emotions and behaviour of foreign groups in ways that will support the achievement of national aims'. Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, The New Press, New York, 2000, p 3. More recently, Bojana Videkanić argues in her *Non-Aligned Modernism* that Socialist Yugoslavia's art and culture did not fit neatly into Western aesthetic standards because of its intrinsic socio-political heterogeneity (p 15). Namely, she argues that a 'synthesis of influences from indigenous Yugoslav artistic traditions, nascent aesthetic traditions and networks of the Global South' (p 6), were made additionally more complex by the Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War. Videkanić (pp 11–13) divides modernism in Yugoslavia in roughly three stages: the socialist realist stage (approx 1945–1954), socialist modernism (1955–1970), and late modernism and its rejection (post 1970). See Bojana Videkanić, *Non-Aligned Modernism: Socialist Post-Colonial Aesthetics in Yugoslavia, 1945–1985*, McGill Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2020.

1950s was a growing in numbers (according to Suvin, it was composed in part by peasants and manual workers to which were added housewives from low-income households and members of other marginal groups who are not represented in statistical surveys of the *Statistički godišnjak Jugoslavije*); 4) the governing class; 5) the middle class; and 6) the *compradors* or employees and agents of foreign firms from the mid 1970s as the (emerging) bourgeoisie.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, while the growing number of low-skilled unemployed male workers gradually left Yugoslavia to work in Western Europe, and were themselves exposed to consumerism, the incomes of other groups and the quality of life increased in the 1950s.<sup>29</sup> With it, the opportunity to consume goods that were not previously readily available also increased among ordinary Yugoslavs.<sup>30</sup> The exhibition 'Socijalizam i modernost: umjetnost, kultura, politika 1950–1974' (Socialism and Modernity: Art, Culture, Politics 1950–1974) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 2011, provided a glimpse of some aspects of the changes that had occurred in Yugoslav society.<sup>31</sup> Ranging from architecture, design and modern art to popular culture, the exhibition covered a wide range of aspects of the entwinement between socialism and modernism. As Dean Duda puts it, it is difficult to clearly discern to what extent popular culture in socialism was a by-product of socialism as a social project of reform and to what extent it was a phenomenon engendered by popular culture itself.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, Yugoslav socialism's modernisation project and popular culture contain some specifics that are worth analysing because they combine external cultural influences and internal sociopolitical factors that have had ramifications beyond socialism, in post-socialist, post-conflict, (post-)Yugoslavia.

During the Cold War, the introduction and consumption of goods from both East and West (French, British, Italian, US and Soviet movies, etc), placed Yugoslavia in a privileged position with access to both 'realms'. Branislav Dimitrijević argues that 'the epoch of "post-communist transition" in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) had in fact already been started by a series of economic reforms from the mid 1950s and later through other forms of socio-economic liberalisation'.<sup>33</sup> As Dimitrijević writes:

To address the emergence and development of consumer culture in Yugoslavia implies observing the very complex relations of official ideology, political pragmatism, the economic system, cultural influences, and other major social changes in a specific historical period that was marked by the accelerated process of modernisation and the first signs of globalisation.<sup>34</sup>

From a cultural point of view, Vučetić explains that the LCY's decision to support the introduction of Western products and cultural models was pragmatic as it created an illusion of freedom.<sup>35</sup> Yugoslavia's young people were exposed to Disney characters as early as 1951 and Yugoslavia started to produce its own form of popular culture for its youth,<sup>36</sup> as shown by Reana Senjković in her analysis of the girls' magazine *Tina*.<sup>37</sup> The idea of a Yugoslav particularism that is based on the entwinement of socialist self-management and elements of a market

- 22 Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić, 'Harbingers of Crisis: Labour Strikes in Yugoslavia (1958–1974)', *Istorija 20. veka* (History of the 20th Century), god. 37, no 1, 2019, p 162
- 23 Ibid, p 163
- 24 Dušan Bilandžić, *Historija SFRJ: Glavni procesi 1918–1985* (History of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Key Processes 1918–1985), Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1985, p 340, quoted in Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić, 'Harbingers of Crisis', op cit, p 164
- 25 Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić, 'Prilog proučavanju životnog standarda i društvenog položaja radnika uoči privredne reforme 1965' (A Contribution to the Study of the Standard of Living and Social Status of Workers Ahead of the 1965 Economic Reform), *Istorija 20. veka* (History of the 20th Century), god. 38, no 1, 2020, p 251
- 26 Ibid, pp 254–257
- 27 Woodward's interpretation of the political economy in place in Yugoslavia identifies two models that she refers to as the *Slovenia model* and the *Foča model* (named after the Bosnian town). In brief, the *Slovenia model* is a 'liberal approach to economic growth within a socialist economy... It emphasized world-market standards of productivity, price competition and commercial orientation with its pressures for technological modernization' (p 264). In contrast 'the *Foča model* focused instead on the production of raw materials, energy, infrastructure, producers' goods, and food for home consumption' (p 264). Woodward indicates that the two models were implemented in combination during the years 1952–1957. It is important to remember that Bosnia and Herzegovina was already economically

economy materialised in the propagation and consumption of goods that were not available on such a scale in other communist countries. Dimitrijević mentions that the beginning of Coca-Cola production in Yugoslavia in 1967 is often cited today with a note of nostalgia as an illustration of socialist Yugoslavia's openness and progressive character.<sup>38</sup>

Yet popular-culture goods (like Coca-Cola) were not the only products to be introduced.<sup>39</sup> The cultural Cold War resulted in policies created by the US State Department that aimed for an affirmative presentation of American (high) culture such as avant-garde theatre and abstract expressionism, which were promoted worldwide and were accessible to Yugoslav audiences from the 1950s.<sup>40</sup> The US policies that promoted US art and culture as being more sophisticated than the consumerism embodied by Donald Duck and Coca-Cola were simultaneously used by the LCY to produce an image of Yugoslavia as an open, progressive socialist country in line with other countries of the developed world.<sup>41</sup> In a detailed analysis of the dualist or 'schizophrenic' character of Yugoslav society, caught between consumerism, freedom of thought and expression in art and culture, and systemically applied political control, Radina Vučetić describes the broader phenomenon of the Coca-colonisation of Yugoslavia by putting it in the context of US Cold War cultural propaganda that was intentionally produced to spread beyond the Iron Curtain. Vučetić explains that 'the term Coca-colonization refers to globalization and cultural colonization, by which we mean the export of Western (primarily American) goods and the invasion of Western (primarily American) cultural values, which threaten local cultures'.<sup>42</sup> As she demonstrates, this political and economic inclination and the shifts between East and West that occurred more markedly after the 1950s were reflected in the daily lives of Yugoslavs, and particularly of young people. The tension in which Yugoslavia was caught was not always rosy, as cases of censorship show, such as the Atelje 212 staging of *Kape dole* (Hats Off) by Aleksandar Popović in 1968.<sup>43</sup> The messages of freedom of expression that were promoted by US Cold War cultural propaganda and embraced to a certain degree by the LCY and disseminated throughout Yugoslavia, often contrasted with cases of censorship targeting local dissidents, notably Milovan Djilas, former head of the agitprop apparatus, who clashed with the governing communist elites over what he perceived as their *embourgeoisement*.<sup>44</sup>

Given the focus of this article on Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is interesting to note that Vučetić cites two examples of the introduction of Western culture in Yugoslavia through theatre: the musical *Hair* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Both are also remembered today as important symbols of Sarajevo's cultural resistance to the siege. In the summer of 1968 members of Atelje 212 performed at the Lincoln Center in New York and had the opportunity to see some of the Broadway shows at the time. During their visit the idea of bringing *Hair* to Belgrade emerged.<sup>45</sup> The Belgrade premiere of *Hair* was staged in 1969.<sup>46</sup> The musical's restaging in 1993 in besieged Sarajevo carried an additional connotation, which is interesting considering the history of its introduction from the US to Yugoslavia: the appropriation and transformation of its anti-war message to the context of the siege of Sarajevo, and to the consequent construction of the trope of cultural resistance. *Waiting for Godot*, on the other hand, experienced a slightly different path.

underdeveloped within Socialist Yugoslavia itself. See Susan Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 194–1990*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995.

- 28 See '2.2. Kratak pregled koji rekonstruira (između ostalog) klasnu statistiku' (2.2. A Short Overview that Reconstructs [among other things] Class Statistics), in Darko Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi: Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije 1945–1972, uz hipoteze o početku, kraju i suštini* (You Love Only Once: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia 1945–1972, with Hypotheses on its Beginning, End and Essence), Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung, Belgrade, 2014, pp 111–113. An expanded English version of the book is available under the title *Splendour, Misery, and Potentialities: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia*, foreword Fredric Jameson, Brill, Leiden and Boston, Massachusetts, 2016. Another aspect of class division in a supposedly classless society was the issue of housing. Through an analysis of housing inequalities in Belgrade in the 1970s and 1980s, Rory Archer shows another contradiction of Yugoslav socialism, in which social and educational capital played a key role in the navigations of the system of social benefits (and housing). Built upon the idea of a meritocratic redistribution, which was supposed to benefit those that most needed access to social housing, the system most profited those with higher educational and professional attainments. See Rory Archer, "'Paid for by the Workers, Occupied by the Bureaucrats': Housing Inequalities in 1980s Belgrade" in R Archer, I Duda and P Stubbs, eds, *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, Routledge, London, 2016, pp 58–76.

Its first performance at the Belgrade Drama Theatre was banned in 1954 but it was finally performed in 1956 at Atelje 212 in what was the first performance of *Godot* in a socialist country, according to Vučetić.<sup>47</sup> In Sarajevo during the siege, *Waiting for Godot* was directed by Susan Sontag in 1993, and today, as a token of Sarajevo's gratitude, the square of the National Theatre bears Sontag's name.<sup>48</sup> Sontag's place in the remembrance of the siege is central in the framing of the trope of Sarajevo's Europeaness as depicted against the destruction and terror of Serb barbarism.<sup>49</sup> In the following section, I will examine how the narrative of the siege of Sarajevo and the Bosnian war integrated the European, Western-orientated, Yugoslav cosmopolitan cultural identity, and with what consequences, into besieged Sarajevo's art and culture.

## Enjoy Sara-jevo: Materiality and Self-Preservation

In the 1990s, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia entered a severe political crisis. Ethno-nationalistic ideologies assumed the place of the communist dogma that had run the country for decades. In a multiethnic, federal state, in which ethnic lines rarely coincided with the territorial borders between the six constituent republics, and which was additionally burdened by the distressing experiences of World War II, an armed clash was seemingly imminent. The federal army, that is the Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija – JNA), which had been built through the joint efforts of all the Yugoslav republics as the prime force of deterrence against foreign enemies, unconstitutionally intervened against one of them. In a relatively short period of time, this traditionally multiethnic military force was transformed into a military exponent of Greater Serbia expansionistic politics, becoming predominantly composed of ethnic Serbs.<sup>50</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina, provoked by acts of territorial aggression, entered into an open conflict with the JNA. Following Bosnia and Herzegovina's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in March 1992, its capital Sarajevo was besieged. Hundreds of thousands of its citizens, relentlessly shelled and sniped by the besieging army, were stranded for the next thousand days in a medieval-style blockade, deprived of water, gas and electricity.

In the following paragraphs I argue that in times of extreme crisis, such as the war against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the siege of Sarajevo, (re)designing and (re)interpreting something can include multiple meanings. According to Victor Papanek, design is the conscious effort to impose meaningful order.<sup>51</sup> I propose, in the light of the previously described influences, to examine how the same object/product – Coca-Cola – generated different meanings in a war setting.

The first meaning relates to the act of mere physical survival through adaptation (recycling of Coca-Cola cans for improvised vegetable gardens), and the second to the psychological (perceptive and symbolical) reinterpretation of a situation (the social environment of emergency) that encompasses an understanding of the permanent state of threat and danger and the tools that were available at the time (redesigning the Coca-Cola logo). The third meaning, perhaps the least material one, although it also relies on objects, is concerned with (past) materiality as a means to present group identity (exhibitions of objects created during





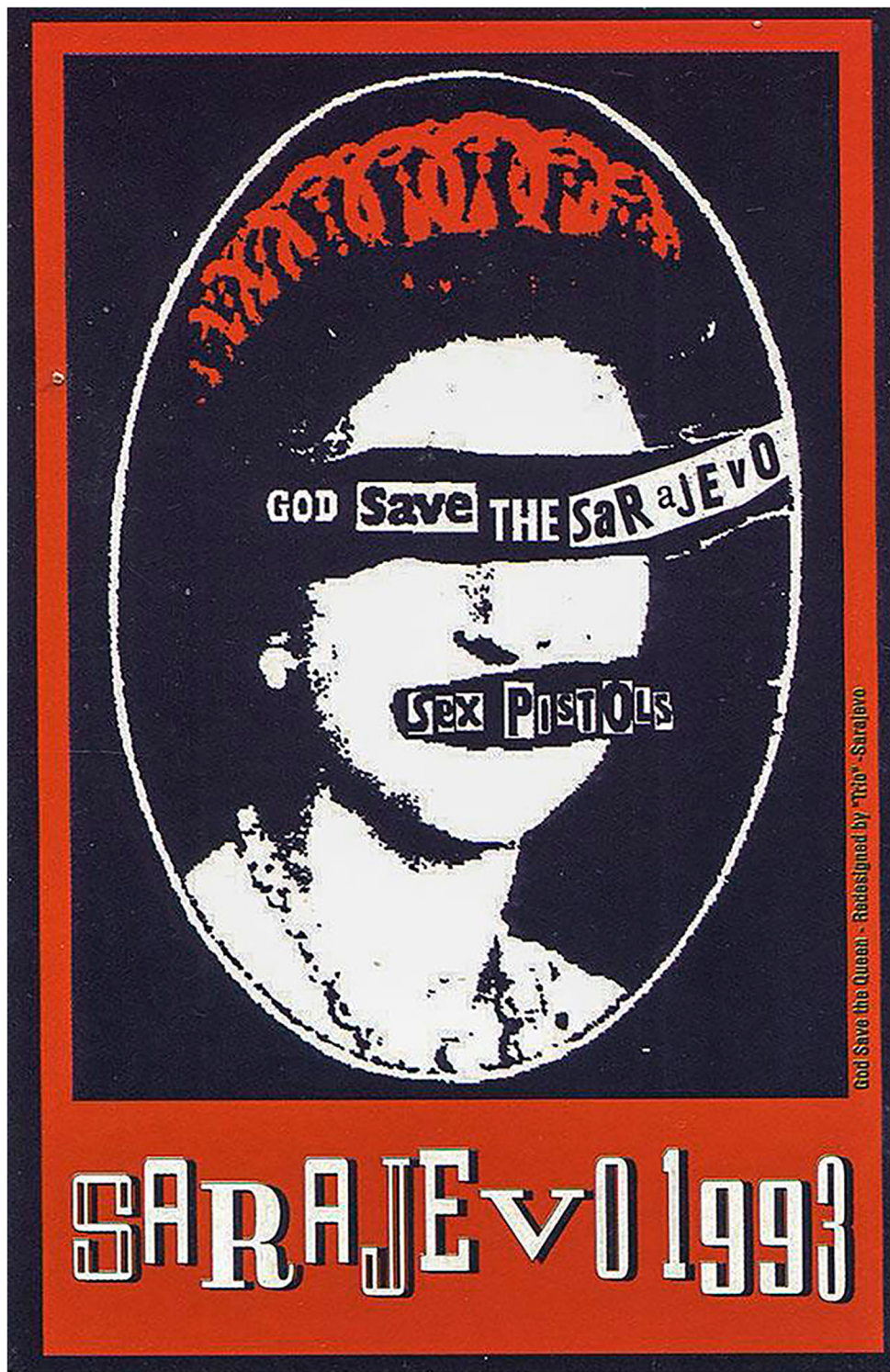
Trio Sarajevo, *Enjoy Sara-jevo*, Coca-Cola logo redesign, 1993, postcard, courtesy: Trio Sarajevo

29 On the topics of everyday life, culture and consumerism in socialist Yugoslavia, see Dijana Jelača, Maša Kolanović and Danijela Lugarić, eds, *The Cultural Life of Capitalism in Yugoslavia: (Post) Socialism and Its Other*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York and London, 2017; Patrick Hyder Petterson, *Bought & Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2011; and Breda Luthar and Maruša Pušnik, eds, *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*, New Academia Publishing, Washington, 2010.

30 In 'When Capitalism and Socialism Get Along Best' Igor Duda depicts the entanglement of consumerism and socialism through the comedy series *Naše malo mjesto* (Our Small Town), which was broadcast on Television

the siege, their conservation and the institutionalisation of the memory of the siege). I address the cultural context shaped by the conditions described above, namely the influence of US/Western cultural models, through the example of Coca-Cola – the logo and the cans – in besieged Sarajevo, and the construction of the trope of cultural resistance. Specifically, since we are not dealing here with 'normal' (ie peaceful) conditions, the designs in question deal with the concerns of physical and mental survival and political emancipation. When localised in that context, redesigned objects gain additional meanings on top of their initial 'universal' ones. As an example, the Coca-Cola logo's redesign by the designers of Trio Sarajevo (*Enjoy Sara-jevo*)<sup>52</sup> can at first be interpreted as a pastiche. But seeing the redesign as nothing more than imitation would be missing other important components of the messages that have evolved and are still being generated since the siege.<sup>53</sup>

Founding member of Trio Sarajevo, Bojan Hadžihalilović, explains that unlike the usual process undertaken by designers, who are normally asked to produce a work under the specific guidance of a client, the redesigns Trio made in 1993 and 1994 were the result of their own initiative.<sup>54</sup> Once foreign journalists started arriving in Sarajevo under siege, and as they found that the journalists' knowledge of the history of Sarajevo and its citizens was rather modest, Trio decided to do something. Since they were trained designers, they created a series of postcards, easily transportable and simple to produce. Each postcard was intended to tell a little story, with a hint of irony and humour, which Hadžihalilović equates today to a meme or a GIF, about Sarajevo and why the



Trio Sarajevo, *God Save the Queen*, *Sex Pistols* redesign, 1993, postcard, courtesy: Trio Sarajevo



Zagreb in spring 1970. Anita Buhin shows through the example of the Opatija music festival (started in 1958) and the development of Yugoslav popular music, that consumerism made its appearance alongside themes of romantic love, which is visible in the award-winning song *Moja mala djevojčica* (My Little Girl). The song is better known through the lyrics *Tata kupi mi auto, bicikl i romobil* (Dad, buy me a car, a bicycle and a scooter). See Anita Buhin, 'Opatijski festival i razvoj zabavne glazbe (1958–1962)' (The Opatija Music Festival and the Development of Popular Music [1958–1962]), *CSP*, vol 8, issue 1, 2016, pp 139–159; and Igor Duda, 'When Capitalism and Socialism Get Along Best: Tourism, Consumer Culture and the Idea of Progress in Malo misto' in Archer, Duda and Stubbs, eds, *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, op cit, pp 173–192.

31 See Tvrtko Jakovina, 'Povijesni uspjeh šizofrene države: modernizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945–1974' (The Historical Success of a Schizophrenic State: Modernisation in Yugoslavia 1945–1974), in Ljiljana Kolečnik, ed, *Socijalizam i modernost: Umjetnost, kultura, politika 1950–1974* (Socialism and Modernity: Art, Culture, Politics 1950–1974), Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Institut za povijest umjetnosti (Museum of Contemporary Art, Art History Institute), Zagreb, 2011, pp 7–54

32 Dean Duda, 'Socijalistička popularna kultura kao (ambivalentna) modernost' (Socialist Popular Culture as [Ambivalent] Modernity), in Ljiljana Kolečnik, ed, *Socijalizam i modernost: Umjetnost, kultura, politika 1950–1974* (Socialism and Modernity: Art, Culture, Politics 1950–1974), Muzej

city was important and worth defending, and, in his words, dying for. Produced by hand, in black and red, thanks to watercolours they collected from children living in their street, and on paper exchanged for the cigarettes they had been given in payment for earlier designing a new brand of cigarettes named Bosna,<sup>55</sup> the postcards, reminiscent of the Che Guevara posters of the 1960s, simple yet brutal, would eventually turn into posters.<sup>56</sup> Today the images/redesigns are abundantly present in souvenir shops, a situation that started after the end of the war and without any involvement of the designers. According to Hadžihalilović, Trio's penchant for Pop art and their willingness to merge their personal taste to a (symbolic) defence of Sarajevo was motivated by what they perceived as an urgent need to appeal to the world to stop the war, and to provide the foreign media with images of Sarajevo that were different from images of death and destruction.

From the distance of today, Hadžihalilović explains the concept of their redesign: 'We kidnaped these icons (eg, Marilyn Monroe, Mona Lisa, Superman, etc...) and brought them to Sarajevo. Somehow, we were pathetically obsessed that Sarajevo was more than a city, that it was an idea.'

He continues: 'We were the generation of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games and that mesh of different food and peoples did more than just make us exotic, it made the whole thing universal... I don't think that people understand the beauty of our complexity.' On the topic of pre-1990s, pre-war Yugoslavia and the image that framed the war as the centuries-long hatred of the Balkan tribes, Hadžihalilović relates the following:

Lord Owen said: 'don't dream dreams' when we thought that the fucking peace agreement would be signed. That vision of the wild Balkans totally eclipsed the fact that Yugoslavia was a cosmopolitan country... We acted as artists who decided to speak up, no one commissioned us to do that, no state or city. What we did was in fact propaganda, and we believed we were on the right side of history. We were motivated by how the chetniks [ie Serb paramilitaries] blocked the exhibition 'Witnesses of Existence' ['Svjedoci postojanja'] from leaving Sarajevo multiple times, and we distributed the postcards.

In that last sentence, Hadžihalilović juxtaposes Sarajevo artists' cultural productivity and proactivity with the violence of the besiegers, as the artists' natural, or organic, response to the war. The fact that one of the key cultural events, the 'Witnesses of Existence' exhibition, is given here as an example of this causal relationship is interesting, as it links a series of exhibitions named after Nusret Pašić's newspaper collages made earlier in 1989 during his residency at the Cité des Arts in Paris; Scena obala, the future Obala Art Center (the founding organisation behind the Sarajevo Film Festival) that set up different exhibitions by several contemporary artists (Nusret Pašić, Mustafa Skopljak, Edin Numankadić, Zoran Bogdanović, Peter Waldegg, Radoslav Tadić, Ante Jurić and Sanjin Jukić); and Susan Sontag, who was directly involved in facilitating the exhibition leaving Sarajevo and being shown in New York in December 1994.

The 'Witnesses of Existence' was shown between winter 1992 and summer 1993 in the devastated cinema Sutjeska, as a series of one-day,

suvremene umjetnosti,  
Institut za povijest  
umjetnosti (Museum of  
Contemporary Art, Art  
History Institute), Zagreb,  
2011, pp 287–318

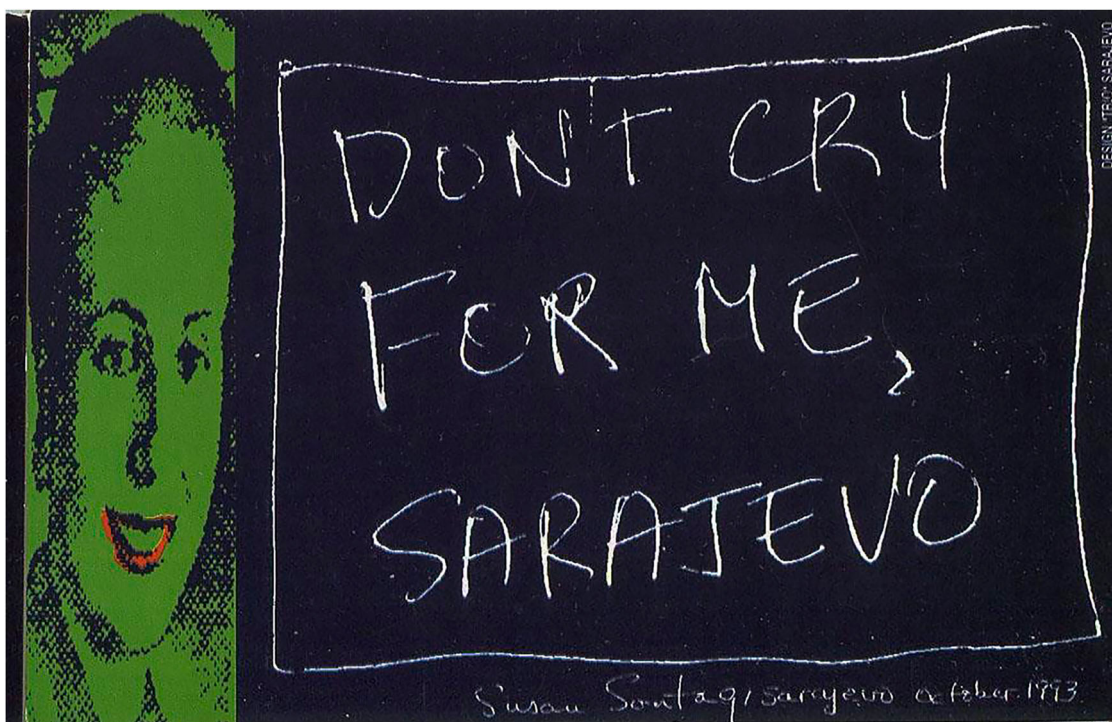
- 33 Branislav Dimitrijević,  
*Potrošeni socijalizam:  
Kultura, konzumerizam i  
društvena imaginacija u  
Jugoslaviji (1950–1974)*  
(Spent Socialism: Culture,  
Consumerism and the  
Social Imagination in  
Yugoslavia [1950–1974]),  
Edicija REČ (WORD  
Edition), Fabrika knjiga,  
Belgrade, p 16
- 34 Ibid, p 15 (author's  
translation)
- 35 Radina Vučetić, *Coca-Cola  
Socialism: Americanization  
of Yugoslav Culture in the  
Sixties*, John K Cox, trans,  
Central European  
University, Budapest, 2018,  
pp 178–179
- 36 Ibid, p 215

one-afternoon events with materials made available to the artists by the physical destruction and their everyday life experiences under war conditions.<sup>57</sup> According to Sadudin Musabegović, art had grown into an 'existential fact – like water, food or air – a fundamental means of survival in the besieged city where everything was destroyed and crushed, and only the mind flourished'.<sup>58</sup> Asja Mandić explains: 'Attendance at the exhibition openings was probably more dangerous than any civilian's individual presence in Sarajevo's public spaces because crowds attracted sniper fire and shells fired from the neighbouring hills controlled by Serbian military forces.'<sup>59</sup> Cultural resistance was therefore both the creation of art in impossible conditions, most often by means of debris and recovered objects, and its consumption by the audiences through attendance of shows and exhibitions.

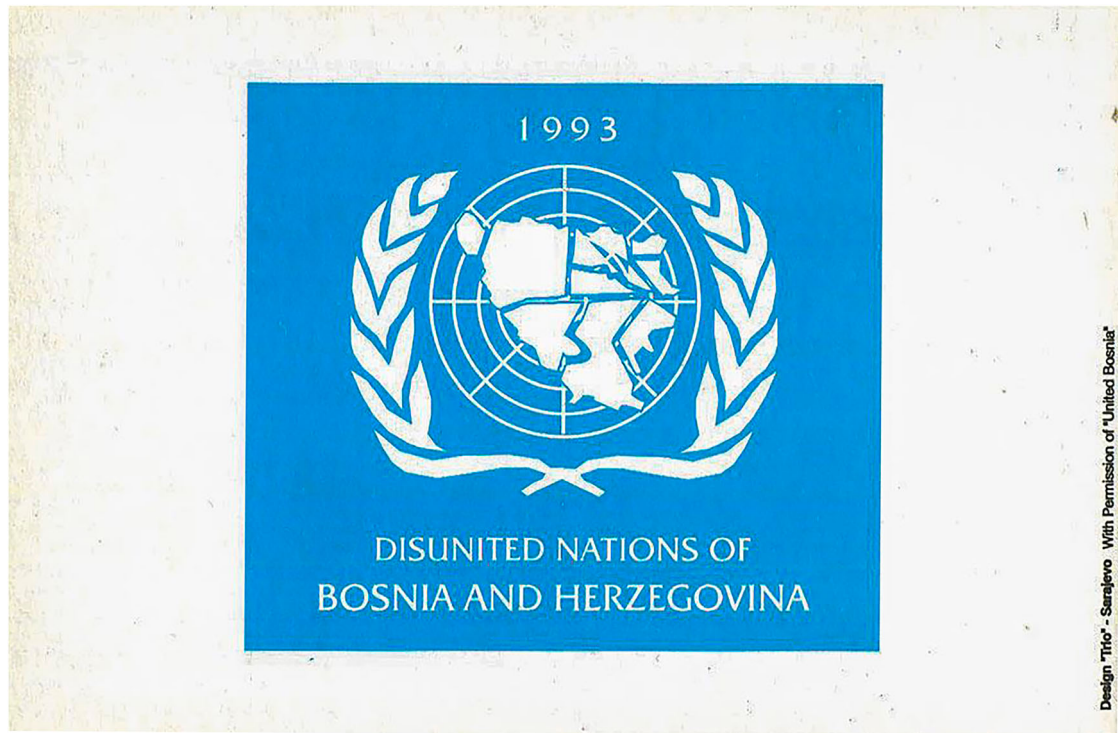
However, as is evident in the other examples I provide here, we are not necessarily consistently dealing with objects designed, or reappropriated, in the traditional understanding of the word. Rather, they can often be spontaneous redesigns, carried out by people without any training in design, and for a variety of purposes.

As Ton Otto and Rachel Smith indicate:

Design as a process of thought and planning is often depicted as a universal human capacity that sets humankind apart from nature (Cross 2006; Friedman 2002; Fry 2009)... In this general sense, designing is a universal aspect of human practice, but the way it is carried out varies considerably across different societies and cultures.<sup>60</sup>



Trio Sarajevo, *Don't cry for me, Sarajevo*, in collaboration with Susan Sontag, 1993, postcard, courtesy: Trio Sarajevo



Trio Sarajevo, *Disunited Nations of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, UN logo redesign, 1993, postcard, courtesy: Trio Sarajevo

37 Reana Senjković, *Izgubljeno u prijenosu: pop iskustvo soc culture* (Lost in Transmission: The Pop [ular] Experience of Soc [ialist] Culture), Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb, 2008; see chapter 3, 'Tina i jugoslovensko djevojaštvo' (Tina and Yugoslav Girlhood), pp 91–174

38 Dimitrijević, *Potrošeni socijalizam*, op cit, p 8

39 On the topic of Cold War cultural infiltration and psychological warfare directed from the US, see Walter L Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War 1945–1961*, St Martin's Griffin, New York, 1998. Saito Yoshiomi, *The Global Politics of Jazz in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Diplomacy and 'American Music'*, Routledge, London, 2020, examines another important aspect of the early years of the cultural

Accordingly, I propose the following three hypotheses in the analysis of the practical and symbolic appropriation of Coca-Cola products in (post-Cold War) besieged Sarajevo.

First, in exceptional circumstances that require a prompt response and adaptation, objects mediate between the environment and people, and help in re-establishing a sense of normality. These objects are necessary channels through which people can challenge fear and death.

Second, in time the objects lose their utilitarian function and gain a new, symbolic one. This transition takes place through their passage from simple tool to artefact (cultural tool). The artefacts then become channels through which it becomes possible to access the past (ie the memory of the siege).<sup>61</sup>

And third, the institutionalisation of objects, their archiving, exhibition, and the research surrounding them represent the material enactment (performance) of a symbolic collective (the community of the affected). The institutionalisation of memory is both a reaction to larger sociopolitical changes and an attempt to make sense of the present.

As formulated in my first hypothesis, in exceptional circumstances that require a prompt response and adaptation, objects mediate between the environment and people, and help in re-establishing a sense of normality. The objects enable those who produce and use them to challenge fear and death. The need to satisfy daily requirements in besieged Sarajevo gave rise to a wide variety of creative solutions spanning from the reuse of museum artefacts (weapons) to an assemblage of objects whose initial function was sometimes completely reinvented.



Cold War, namely the promotion of jazz as American music and Americanism by the State Department: see chapter 3, 'Jazz Ambassadors Revisited', pp 45–64.

- 40 Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*, op cit, p 138
- 41 The establishment of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Belgrade is one such example as it followed the model promoted by major US museums. In this particular case, MoMA in New York was the institution of reference, and before the MCA opened in Belgrade on 20 October 1965, Miodrag B Protić, the chief curator, visited MoMA in 1962; Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*, op cit, pp 146–147.
- 42 Ibid, p 233
- 43 Ibid, pp 194–198
- 44 See Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*, Frederick A Praeger, New York, 1957
- 45 Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*, op cit, p 175. For more information on the wider reception of the musical *Hair* see Aleksandar Raković, 'Mjuzikl Kosa u Ateljeu 2012 (1969–1973)' (Musical Hair in Atelier 212 (1969–1973) in *Tokovi istorije* (Currents of History) 2, 2017, pp 85–114, available at [http://tokovi.istorije.rs/lat/uploaded/2%202017/A\\_Rakovic.pdf](http://tokovi.istorije.rs/lat/uploaded/2%202017/A_Rakovic.pdf) accessed 13 September 2019.
- 46 According to Branislav Dimitrijević, the 1969 premiere coincided with the first anniversary of student protests in Belgrade, the marking of which was forbidden by the authorities, and represents 'the central signifier of the process of the culturalization of youth protest at the end of the 1960s and the transformation of hippie culture into the cultural

At the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo in April 1992, the defence of the city was pretty much fragmented compared to the well-organised and fully equipped and structured Yugoslav People's Army. The newly established independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have a properly equipped military force at its disposal.<sup>62</sup> Rather, the police and civil defence filled the void, often with various criminal groups that had decided, for the time being, to collaborate with the police to defend the city. One of the examples often cited pertaining to the real capacities of this new defence force is given in an anecdote about the use of weapons stored in the Historical Museum. Given the lack of available weaponry, museum artefacts were put to use.<sup>63</sup>

While there are several examples from besieged Sarajevo that demonstrate people's ability to adapt to the new context, one example that condenses several meanings, symbolic and utilitarian, is Coca-Cola. The Coca-Cola can, with its cylindrical form reinforced at the ends, and its manufacture from malleable, soft, tin-plated steel that could be cut with strong scissors, made it an object suitable for a number of purposes. It seems that its first identified unconventional purpose was to turn it into a mini, easily transportable, reusable beverage heater. As Coca-Cola cans perfectly fit into one another for convenient packaging and transportation, a 'heater' consisting of two cans became quite widespread. The upper can would contain liquid, and the lower one, punctured several times close to the top, would contain burning BBQ firelighter cubes – and when those ran out, some other type of fuel. These Coca-Cola heaters were used throughout Sarajevo to heat milk (first real, then powdered milk distributed from the early summer of 1992 by the UNHCR, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), domestic herb teas, and sometimes even wine, which had miraculously survived in some cupboard. Unfortunately, such heaters could not last very long, due to the thinness of the metal. In the besieged city, however, there were plenty of public dustbins filled with cans that could be used.

Dependent, at least in the first months of the siege, on the regular, but insufficient, food supplies distributed by the UNHCR and other UN and non-governmental agencies, the citizens of Sarajevo were forced to identify alternative food sources. As importing food was out of the question (because the enemy controlled all roads in and out of the city), the only possibility was to organise the production of food. Parks, school playgrounds, tennis courts, community sports centres, even the small pieces of green alongside buildings, were all turned into vegetable gardens, as well as improvised cemeteries. Peas, potatoes, onions and garlic were grown in these Sarajevo gardens. A few dedicated smokers even tried to grow tobacco and recreationally smoked plants illegal in peacetime, but Sarajevo's mountainous-continental climate was not favourable to their cultivation. In the process of growing certain crops (tomatoes and peppers, for example) it was necessary to use individual containers, where seeds were planted before being transplanted as seedlings into the garden. Coca-Cola cans, due to their size and shape, were perfectly suited for this, and many people used them to cultivate their baby tomato plants. Then the first rainy days of autumn 1992 reminded the citizens of Sarajevo of the approaching winter. In a city known for its severe and snowy winters, a city that had once hosted the XIV Winter

“mainstream”;  
Dimitrijević, *Potrošeni  
socijalizam*, op cit, p 8.

47 Vučetić, *Coca-Cola  
Socialism*, op cit, p 196

48 The square is also the main site of the annual Sarajevo Film Festival, which is another example of a cultural institution established during the siege.

49 Kristine Kotecki, ‘The Future of Europe: Susan Sontag’s Sarajevo Publications, Papers, and Production of Waiting for Godot’, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, vol 8, issue 5, 2016, pp 1–18  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2015.1131177>

50 Marko Attila Hoare, ‘How the JNA became a Great Serbian Army’, [http://yuhistorija.com/wars\\_91\\_99\\_txt01c1.html](http://yuhistorija.com/wars_91_99_txt01c1.html) accessed 3 October 2019

51 Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, second revised edition, Thames & Hudson, London, 2006, p 4

52 Trio (formed in 1985 by three young graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts Sarajevo, Dalida and Bojan Hadžihalilović, and Lejla Mulabegović) is best known for their (re) designed pop-culture posters. The founding member of Trio, Bojan Hadžihalilović, who teaches visual communications at the Academy of Fine Arts Sarajevo, later established Fabrika, a successful design agency.

53 For a valuable and detailed overview of posters and journal cover-page designs see Daoud Sarhandi and Alina Boboc, *Evil Doesn’t Live Here: Posters of the Bosnian War*, foreword by David Rohde, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2001.

54 Interview with Bojan Hadžihalilović conducted via Zoom on 24 March 2021

Olympic Games and that depended heavily on gas and electricity supplies for heating, finding alternatives was now an imperative.

Despite being too small individually for heating living spaces, Coca-Cola cans once again found a purpose. Their soft metal was perfect for the reinforcement of the movable parts of sturdier metal heaters, whose corners, doors and ash-holders were all made using tin from Coca-Cola cans. Irregularly shaped rough iron containers, made by intensive pressing, brushing and the stitching together of various metal parts, also had reddish stripes here and there which lasted for only a few days (until the colour was burned out by intensive heat).

Yet, by the first snow, there were no Coca-Cola cans left to be recycled. All those available in the blocked city had already been used and reused, and new ones were not available. Due simply to their unobtainability, the Coca-Cola cans lost their practical significance, and ‘ordinary’ cans of various foods (meat, fish, etc) delivered through the UN humanitarian aid distribution channels took their place. Coca-Cola cans became available on Sarajevo’s black market, but only to those who could afford them. In addition, the sweet beverage itself was available only to the international employees of the UN and other humanitarian agencies as they were able to leave the city (despite the blockade), as well as to a few local staff members. From being widely available and practically useful, the Coca-Cola cans became rare objects with symbolic value, emerging as a reminder of pre-war times of plenty when one’s food choices depended predominantly on personal likes and dislikes, rather than those prescribed by UN nutritionists. Artists like the Trio group who remained active in the besieged city started using the can as a pretext for their works, emphasising its pop-culture appeal and its correspondence to Sarajevo’s cosmopolitan values. In this way, going beyond its practical, utilitarian significance, Coca-Cola emerged as an object capable of reminding people of the happier times of peace. It became institutionalised in the popular memory, offering a collective opportunity for contrasting the past, wholesome and plentiful, with a depleted and socio-politically problematic present.

## The Siege of Sarajevo and Material Culture

In an attempt to understand the implications of the use of objects, it is helpful to look at studies of material culture and the manner in which people relate to, use and redesign objects as a means of social participation.<sup>64</sup> The only survey regarding this type of phenomenon conducted during the siege was done so as part of the FAMA project,<sup>65</sup> which is part of the collection of the Virtual Museum of the Siege of Sarajevo. A segment of these valuable findings is accessible on the website of the museum,<sup>66</sup> while the survey is available in English in *The Siege of Sarajevo 1992–1996*.<sup>67</sup> It is valuable to note that one FAMA survey question in particular refers to inventions, as this was identified by members of the FAMA project, themselves living under siege, as an important aspect of adaptation for survival. The questionnaire addresses other aspects such as the ‘siege economic chain’, attendance at cultural events, school/university attendance, and clothes that were most comfortable for moving in the city while being targeted by snipers, and so on. In reply to the

55 The new 'siege economic chain', as named by Suada Kapić from FAMA Sarajevo, also represents an integral part of the material culture during the siege, an example of which can be found in the exchange of goods (for example, Trio's salary in cigarettes exchanged for print paper; vegetable production on balconies and in communal spaces; humanitarian aid packages; and the selling of remaining bottles of alcohol, etc).

56 It is important to note that Trio Sarajevo was never approached by government agencies or their representatives, either for the purpose of designing, printing, distributing or later conserving the originals. Today, they are preserved by photographer Tarik Samarah and his Gallery 11/07/95, which is another example of an individual artist's initiative in the memory landscape of Sarajevo.

57 Among the first art events was the exhibition held in spring 1992 on the site of the destroyed chapel of St Vincent (organised by Ante Jurić, Predrag Čančar, Zoran Bogdanović, Azra Begić and Sadudin Musabegović), followed by 'Witnesses', then 'Ratne mape 1992–1995' (war prints by students and teachers of the Academy of Fine Arts Sarajevo). More information on the cultural scene in besieged Sarajevo can be found in Azra Begić, 'Witnesses of Existence Between Heaven and Earth', translated by Rida Ettarashany, 1993, republished in *Ars Aevi Collection, Sarajevo 1992–2006*, 6th Edition, Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art, Sarajevo, September 2006, pp 379–381. Sadudin Musabegović, 'Umjetnost u opsadi' (Art Under Siege), in *Raz/lik/art*, Međunarodni centar za mir (International Peace Centre), Sarajevo, 2005. Aida Abadžić-Hodžić,

FAMA survey question 'Did you have your own invention for survival?' FC-SCUEST-97-TA-06 responds: 'I made a makeshift power station from an electrical motor by the river, so I had electricity,' while another respondent (FC-SCUEST-97-TA-13) replies: 'I had no inventions of my own, although everything in my household was improvised.' Responses vary, and one respondent explains that his invention for survival was: 'Trust in God, come what may, and do not let the morons kill you, out of spite.'<sup>68</sup> Another says that her own invention for survival was 'taking a bath with 2 litres of water'.<sup>69</sup>

The questionnaire, along with a very rich collection of oral history documents, is part of FAMA's project 'The Siege of Sarajevo 1992–1996 Museum – The Art of Living (FAMA Collection)' that proposed 'a new way of learning and interacting about the phenomenon of the Siege of Sarajevo by focusing on the Mechanism of Survival vs. Mechanism of Terror'.<sup>70</sup> The Museum of the Siege, although planned to open in 2014/2015, was never constructed.<sup>71</sup> To unlock the place that these daily objects, and the memories associated with them, occupy today, I propose to look at how forms of this resistance are conserved and displayed through museum artefacts, such as in the exhibition 'Opkoljeno Sarajevo' (Besieged Sarajevo) at the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>72</sup>

In her text *History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony*, Aleida Assmann discusses, although in the context of the Holocaust, the permeability of borderlines between 'factual history' and 'remembered past'.<sup>73</sup> The increasing role of testimonies, and various cultural products, such as TV shows, art works, theatre plays, films, and so on, indicates not only the necessity of opening up the discussion around certain (traumatic) topics, but also the fact that we are dealing with numerous (individual) voices. This transposition to discourses other than (traditionally) historical ones can have multiple consequences for the way we understand the past and reflect on it in the present. This aspect of the engagement with objects redesigned in moments of crisis, such as that described above, can also be understood in terms of the material participation of the community of the affected.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, 'The polity (*of a community of the affected*) consists of all those who are significantly affected by the indirect harmful consequences of human action'.<sup>75</sup>

In that respect, the idea of objects gaining a second, symbolic function according to their passage from simple tools to artefacts (cultural tools) can be interpreted as a willingness to actively engage with political processes that are perceived as important and as potentially posing a threat. The artefacts become channels that enable access to the past and provide the necessary framework for the formation of a political community. It is in that context that we can observe institutionalised and non-institutionalised memories. Namely, as mentioned earlier, since we are dealing with predominantly oral history and negotiated identities in complex geopolitical settings, any discourse that engages with the memory of the siege of Sarajevo will expose painful realities, as well as those which negate the siege or minimise its effects on the population. Following that understanding, the Virtual Museum of the Siege of Sarajevo and The Survival Questionnaires/The Art of Living mentioned above, represent attempts to collect, preserve and institutionalise existing collections made of predominantly personal items and memories. The Historical Museum of B&H already possesses the (symbolic) status of a national cul-

‘Odgovornost umjetnika i/ili odgovornost likovne kritike?’ (Responsibility of Artists and/or Responsibility of Art Criticism?), *Vizura* 3/4, Collegium Artisticum, Sarajevo, 2008, pp 6–18. Asja Mandić, ‘The Formation of a Culture of Critical Resistance in Sarajevo’, *Third Text* 113, vol 25, issue 6, November 2011, pp 725–735; *Sarajevski memento* 92–95, Ministarstvo kulture i sporta kantona Sarajevo (Ministry of Culture and Sports, Sarajevo Canton), 1997.

58 Aida Abadžić-Hodžić, ‘Odgovornost umjetnika i/ili odgovornost likovne kritike?’, op cit, p 6

59 Mandić, ‘The Formation of a Culture of Critical Resistance’, op cit, p 735

60 Wendy Gunn, Ton Otto, Rachel Charlotte Smith, eds, *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013, p 1

61 See *Do you remember Sarajevo (Sjećaš li se Sarajeva?)* a film made of individual amateur recordings of everyday life during the siege by citizens of Sarajevo, collected and edited by Sead and Nihad Kreševljaković and Nedim Alikadić, 2001.

62 For more information on the topic of the Bosnian Army, see Marko Attila Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, Saqi Books and The Bosnian Institute, London, 2004.

63 In addition, new artisanal weapons were produced since the country was under an embargo that prevented weapons from being imported, at least officially.

64 Noortje Marres, *Material Participation Technology, the Environment and Everyday Publics*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012

65 Established in 1990 by Suada Kapić at first as a media company, FAMA became very active during

tural institution; however, in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina it is insufficient to attribute the status of recognised historical fact to the proposed narrative. On the contrary, as the text at the beginning of the permanent exhibition ‘Besieged Sarajevo’ – which presents to the visitor objects created during the siege and donated to the museum afterwards – states:

This exhibition is a living museum. Although arranged by the museum’s curators, it is the work of all Sarajevans. It does not need a guide. All exhibits, all documents, all sound and visual records, better than any other professional or political explanations, are familiar to and understood by Sarajevans. They are part of their three-and-a-half-year-long life filled with suffering, tragedies, humiliation, but also with a steady walk in the defence of what this land means to us. It is for this reason that the visitors who suffered the atrocities of wartime Sarajevo will remember their own hardships, facing of horrors and struggle for survival, while those beyond that atrocious encirclement, and those out in the world, will get to know the black holes of civilisation at the end of the twentieth century.

Separated from their context, in which they were already redesigned and thus reinterpreted, the objects become a museum exhibit, artefacts preserved for the sake of history and memory. The object is archived, conserved, written and spoken about, but it has lost its primarily utilitarian function. Once a certain degree of political and basic physical stability is reached, the objects are left behind, but in a symbolically sacralised form since they give rise to a second stage: the (im)material bonding with the past. Nostalgia for the past, although the past is heavy with hardship, becomes a reflection of present dissatisfaction.

In that respect, the creation of museum collections dedicated to preserving the memory of the siege, which have grown in post-conflict Sarajevo, can be inscribed in a larger context of violent changes that deeply affect the community.<sup>76</sup> Telling the story of the siege from today’s perspective and transiting from personal collections to the institutionalisation of memory via metacultural operations provide the framework necessary for expressing a particularity (geographical, historical, social, etc).<sup>77</sup> On the one hand, we have been dealing with ordinary objects (universally designed, often for mass consumption), which under specific conditions, external and internal, gain new designs and meanings; on the other, we are witnessing a similar process which aims for the institutionalisation of such memories and material culture, and consequently recognition of, the status of victim.

## Conclusion

This article has offered a glimpse at culture during the siege of Sarajevo in light of the legacies of American and Western influences exerted on Yugoslav culture during the cultural Cold War. During the siege of the city (1992–1995), the trope of cultural resistance incorporated elements of these cultural influences into the idea of Sarajevo’s ‘progressiveness, openness, and uniqueness’ and its response to the war. The Westernised, Americanised and therefore presumably modern/





Trio Sarajevo, *Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup* redesign, 1993, postcard, courtesy: Trio Sarajevo



Nebojša Šerić Shoba, *Monument to the International Community (ICAR Canned Beef)*, 2007, stone pedestal 90 x 90 x 100 cm, iron 'can', 70 x 200 cm, courtesy: Nebojša Šerić Shoba. Photo credit: Jasmina Gavrankapetanović-Redžić, July 2021

the siege and in its aftermath. FAMA conducted several important projects among which are: the Survival Art Museum (1992; 1994); the Sarajevo Survival Guide (1993); the Survival Map (1992–1996); and the Siege of Sarajevo Survival Questionnaires (1992–1996). Different projects and developed educational toolkits can be partially accessed online via [www.famacollection.org](http://www.famacollection.org).

66 See <http://www.famacollection.org/eng/fama-collection/conceptual-index/survivalquestionnaires/>, accessed 25 June 2020

67 Suada Kapić, *The Siege of Sarajevo 1992–1996*, FAMA, Sarajevo, 2000

68 Ibid, p 868

69 Ibid, p 900

70 According to the presentation document, FAMA conducted 4,637 surveys of individuals, consisting of thirty-one questions: [http://famacollection.org/The\\_Siege\\_of\\_Sarajevo\\_Museum\\_Project\\_Presentation\\_Document\\_\(march2012\).pdf](http://famacollection.org/The_Siege_of_Sarajevo_Museum_Project_Presentation_Document_(march2012).pdf), accessed 12 May 2021

71 On the topic of the difficulties in establishing a Museum of the Siege, see Jasmina Gavrankapetanović-Redžić, 'Le Musée virtuel du siège de Sarajevo (1992–1996) – Destruction des lieux de mémoire et mémoires civiques' (The Virtual Museum of the Siege of Sarajevo (1992–1996) – Destruction of Sites of

progressive character of Sarajevo is depicted in contrast to the Eastern/traditionalist/conservative enemy that attacked the city and its heterogeneity. In a sense, despite a significant percentage of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina being Muslim, their assumed European cultural identity made them worth defending against Serbian aggression, precisely because of the ruthless violence of the besiegers. As a prominent thinker who actively engaged in the debate about the necessity for a military intervention by NATO forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Susan Sontag's understanding of Sarajevo's Europeanness further cemented the city's particularism as heterogeneous with a large proportion of secular Muslims, and I would add Slav and White – European others. While Sontag's understanding of what represents European civilisation can be questioned as problematic, given that her ideological framework depicts Europe in contrast to the uncivilised others (the Balkans),<sup>78</sup> it cannot be said that the responsibility for such (self)occidentalisation emerged solely from outside of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Simultaneously, a narrative that juxtaposes European (civilised and cultured) and anti-European (barbaric and destructive) beside national identity markers also contains indicators of social stratification, since it was formed in an urban setting, in a country that, seventy years earlier, was predominantly rural and economically underdeveloped. The significant efforts invested in democratising culture and increasing literacy among the masses that had already started during World War II increased in the aftermath of that war, and took another turn with the opening towards the West from the early 1950s. The mingling of self-management socialism with a market economy and consumerism produced a Yugoslav-styled particularism in contrast to other communist countries. At the same time, economic and social problems gradually increased. Yet issues such as the growing unemployment rate among Yugoslav youth, which was only acknowledged as a problem after the student demonstrations in 1968 and 1969,<sup>79</sup> increasing class inequalities, and the state of the debt crisis, which started at the beginning of the 1980s, created a breeding ground for the nationalism that would eventually escalate into violence and genocide.

While today no Coca-Cola cans are conserved at the Historical Museum in Sarajevo, I have argued here, through the example of Coca-Cola (beverage and logo), and the connotations of freedom, individualism and consumerism that were introduced to Yugoslavia from the US and the West from the 1950s, that the trope of the cultural resistance of Sarajevo's citizens was shaped by pre-existing conditions that placed Yugoslavia in a privileged position in comparison to other communist countries, as Yugoslavia embraced 'Both East and West... and Lenin and Mick Jagger'.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, both Sarajevans and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued, although perhaps unintentionally, to reproduce the paradigm of Yugoslav modernity, cosmopolitanism, pluralism and anti-fascism. The inhumane daily life conditions in Sarajevo created the context for contrasting the trope of the Sarajevo siege in terms of cosmopolitanism and respect for differences against the besieger's hatred for heterogeneity and, consequently, the remaining traces of Yugoslavia's 'Brotherhood and Unity'. In that sense, Sarajevo artists perpetuated the idea of Yugoslav diversity and self-management, although in a different





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MEĐUNARODNOJ  
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Memory and Civic Memories), in *Archiver le temps présent: Les fabriques alternatives d'archives* (Archiving the Present Time: Creating Alternative Archives), Véronique Fillieux, Aurore François and Françoise Hiraux, eds, Collection Capsae, Presses universitaires de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2021, pp 113–132.

- 72 A list of objects of the exhibition and their photographs can be found at <http://h.etf.unsa.ba/srp/project.htm>, accessed 15 May 2021.
- 73 Aleida Assmann, 'History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony', *Poetics Today*, vol 27, issue 2, 2006, p 263, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2005-003>
- 74 Marres, *Material Participation Technology, the Environment and Everyday Publics*, op cit, pp 29–30
- 75 Ibid, p 32
- 76 Examples of institutionalised individual experiences can be found in newly founded museums, often at the initiative of citizens' groups and organisations: the War Childhood Museum (Muzej ratnog djetinjstva); Gallery 11/07/95; Videoarchive of the Kreševljaković brothers; Modul memorije (Memory Module) MESS International Theatre Festival, etc.
- 77 Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, London and New York, 2013
- 78 Kotecki, 'The Future of Europe', op cit, p 5
- 79 Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment*, op cit, p 216
- 80 Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*, op cit, p 136
- 81 Asja Mandić, 'The Formation of a Culture of Critical Resistance in Sarajevo', op cit, pp 725–735

form. The artists demonstrated not only their commitment to psychological and physical survival through their performances but used it as a means to reclaim their dignity.

On top of influences inherited from the cultural Cold War, the hardship and threats that marked the mental and physical existence of Sarajevans under siege gave birth to another aspect of their daily life: the redesign of 'ordinary' objects. First, the use of such objects was conditioned by the struggle for daily survival, through improvisation and adaptation to settings that ceased to be safe and normal. In spite of such threatening circumstances, imported cultural elements continued operating in forms such as graphic design, art installation, music and theatre, producing an additional connotation to what is often labelled as 'cultural resistance'.<sup>81</sup> Second, once peace, or at least the absence of war, was achieved, the objects and testimonies that attest to the experience of life under the siege were gradually conserved. And third, the material participation through operations of conservation of the memory of the siege of Sarajevo created a symbolic 'community of the affected' through the trope of cultural resistance.<sup>82</sup>

Just as Trio, Scena obala, FAMA, artists and ordinary citizens who organised and/or took part in the numerous cultural events during the siege continued working as they did before the war, their highly symbolic participation became both cultural resistance, and, as the war intensified, a display of proof of their European identity and of lives worth living. Cultural resistance was also a means to appeal for foreign (Western) attention and military intervention. Nebojša Šerić Šoba's *Monument to the International Community*,<sup>83</sup> an oversized beef can, placed on a marble pedestal, as well as FAMA's *Survival Guide* are sarcastic responses to the attention paid to the plight of Sarajevo's citizens by the international community and the aid received from them. As Milena Dragičević Šešić explains, Šoba's monument is a counter-monument or an 'ironic monument to a despised person'.<sup>84</sup> Created in the context of the project 'De/construction of Monuments' by Dunja Blažević, Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) in 2008, the deteriorated condition of Nebojša Šerić Šoba's *Monument to the International Community* raises the question as to the place and value attached today to art referencing the experience of the siege. FAMA's *Survival Guide* entry under Cultural Survival states:

The besieged city defends itself by culture and thus survives... Sarajevo is the city of the future and of the life in the post-cataclysm. In it on the ruins of the old civilisation a new one is sprouting, an alternative one, composed of remains of urban elements. Sarajevo lives a life of futuristic comics and science fiction movies.<sup>85</sup>

Given the decimated condition of art and culture, it seems that, paradoxically, cultural resistance in Sarajevo exists today primarily in the form of nostalgia for the siege.

82 Marres, *Material Participation Technology, the Environment and Everyday Publics*, op cit, pp 29–30

83 Nebojša Šerić Shoba, *Monument to the International Community*, <https://scca.ba/scca-projects/deconstruction-of-monument/new-monument/installment-of-the-monument/installation-of-the-monument-nebojsa-seric-soba/> accessed 15 May 2021

84 Milena Dragičević Šešić, 'Counter-Monument: Artivism Against Official Memory Practices', *KYJITYPA / CULTURE* 13, 2016, pp 7–19; UDC 304-021.388:013(497.1)

85 Maja Razović and Alexandra Wagner, eds, *Sarajevo-Survival Guide*, FAMA, Sarajevo, 1993, p 89

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