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Museums and Geographies of (National) Power *

The paper raises a discussion about the relation of museums and (national) politics, primarily about the concept of "apoliticism" of museum work, the idea that is spread among many museum workers as reality. I analyze the process of appearing of big museums in Europe and Serbia, as well as the aims of their work, in order to show that museums – from the very beginning of their appearing – function as means for consolidating national borders (outer and inner), teaching about patriotism. I also analyze the influence of German romanticism, that created the illusion of "apoliticism" of the culture in general, as well as of museums.

The change of attitude towards the state-as-nation in contemporary European community means also the change of museologic activities that should take part in the constitution of Europeism/European identity as meta-nation. That change has not still come to museums in Serbia, which points to the fact that society has not changed yet in the direction of appropriating of European values.

Key words:

museum, politics, nation, state, power

How does one hate a country, or love one? (...) I know people, I know towns, farms, hills and rivers and rocks, I know how the sun at sunset in autumn falls on the side of a certain plowland in the hills; but what is the sense of giving a boundary to all that, of giving it a name and ceasing to love where the name ceases to apply?

Ursula Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

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According to definitions, museums are places that gather old and valuable things, objects that are considered to be the „essence“ and emanation of the past of the people that made them, used them, or even found them in their surroundings (objects from the nature in natural history museums). Furthermore, according to the assumption that exists for already two centuries, museums have appeared on the grounds of rational modern science/sciences that are “objective” (because sciences are assumed to be objective¹) – they keep/represent extracts of “true” reality, past or present. That should mean:

- that objects and mutual relationship between them are defined and unchanged (because they exist in objective/true reality): that is particular material form of the objects brought to the same level with its meaning (form=meaning) and
- that the relationship between single objects exists independently from the reading/interpretation that is ascribed to them by museum workers, or museum visitors; from this further follows that
- ideological presumptions and differences in the discourses might not influence the values that are kept/represented in the museums, and that these values are unchangeable and given forever (in the same way as objects=material artifacts).

However, like all the collections that existed before the museums of the modern time, these are also shaped by the discursive vision of the world that directly results from the concept of the world organization (in physical/natural sense) and social power distribution.²

The Borders of the Nation

All big national museums appeared at the same time when national states appeared, following the ideology they were grounded on. The British Museum was founded in 1753, and the Central art museum in Louvre in 1793 (Maroević 1998: 48, 50). Also in other countries the establishing of big, state museums, followed the foundation and consolidation of the states. The Royal museum of paintings and sculpture (Spain), known later as The National museum of paintings and sculpture,³ and finally as The National Museum Prado, was opened for the audience in 1819.³ At the time of its creation, it had to aims:

- to show artistic work that belonged to the Spanish crown, showing thus the richness and power of the royal family equaled with the state and

¹ About the concept of objectivity and the model of scientific realism see: Sindelić (1986).

² About the collections that had existed before the formation of museums in the contemporary meaning of the word and about their relation to the concepts of world perception and the structures of social power is written a lot. See for example: Hooper-Greenhill Eilean (1992) and Bennett (1995).

³ Museo Nacional del Prado: <http://www.museodelprado.es/en/ingles/collection/description/>

- to show to the rest of Europe that Spanish (national) art is as worthy as any other national school of arts.
- The Rijksmuseum (the Netherlands) was founded in 1800, also as an art gallery. At the time of its foundation, it was located in The Hague and it mainly contained paintings. In the year of 1808 it was moved to Amsterdam. Since 1885 it has been in the same building as today, merged with the Dutch National History and Art Museum.⁴

During the 19th century, Germany was still divided into several states and in 1852 in Nuremberg was founded the “national” and at the same time the “museum of German speaking area” showing “the achievements of culture, arts and history, from its beginnings until nowadays”. This represented one of the segments of the struggle for unification of all people speaking German language. Soon after the German unification (although not complete), and the proclamation of Wilhelm I, king of Prussia, for the first German Emperor, with the emperor's decree, this museum officially became The National Museum of German Arts and Culture.

It is obvious that the states that had defined borders during the establishing of the new system, used to organize their museums as the confirmation of the power of already existing nation-as-state. This stands in accordance with Rousseau's concept of political nationalism (Llobera 1994: 151-155) based on the “social contract” in which individuals voluntarily partake, thus creating a common state. Seemingly, in this way, it is possible to keep freedom as one of the fundamental principles on which modern countries are grounded (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*): there is the assumption that there is no obligation to accept the contract, i.e. that there is the freedom of choice of the society/country with which one may make a contract.

The National museum in Germany which had been founded before the final formation of the unified national state was a part of the project of its formation and at the same time of the consolidation of its borders on the grounds of the cultural collectiveness (that is primarily reflected in the common language).⁵ In this case the nation is defined as culture, the borders of which coincide with the borders of language. Cultural nationalism, that is based on Herder's definition of nation-as-culture (Llobera 1994: 165, 169, 174) refers to *assumed/inborn* affiliation to the collectivity and has nothing to do with free will, which means that free will is achieved exclusively inside the given framework of affiliation to culture-as-nation. Education, as well as museums (as part of the project of teaching culture) were understood as a part of the process of “humanization”, creating the precondition for better and more fulfilled life, while political culture meant active participation in public life (Barnard 2004: 155).

⁴ Rijksmuseum: http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/aria/aria_encyclopedia/00046827?lang=en

⁵ According to the Herder's concept of borders of nation-as-culture had to be equaled with the state borders. Herder explicitly claimed that any kind of mixture of nations inside one country is extremely unproductive. (Llobera 1994: 169).

This was the reason why in Germany, as well as in central and East-European countries that were formed under the strong influence of the German romanticism and its concept of nation and nation state, there was a strong conviction that culture and politics are completely separated.⁶ This further eliminates the question of social responsibility for any kind of work in culture (and thus in museums), because responsibility results from the decisions brought by free will, being related to political participation in public life.⁷ Culture is not politics, and free will exists only in the framework of affiliation to the nation. Therefore the cultural act is not compatible with the responsibility for the political act.

The similar process went on in Serbia. She, although still a vassal country of the Ottoman Empire, founded The National Museum in 1844 as a symbol of its independence, and at the same time as a sign of appropriation of European values. Some decades later, at the end of the 19th century, after the foundation of The Natural History Museum (1895), a declaration was published (in 1896) as a part of the activity of collecting the money for the construction of the museum building. In this declaration with title *Poklič za Muzej srpke zemlje (Call for the Museum of Serbian Country)* (Vasić 1970: 15) it is said among other things:

“Serbian country is hilly and flat, fertile and infertile. It is dear and lovely to all Serbs, and attractive for foreigners. Still, there are no mirrors or places where her picture might be considered, learned or loved... `Every state and every committed nation builds in its country real temples in which all natural treasure of its country is shown to its people, while the youth are taught to know their country completely and to love it. Only Serbs do not have such a place.” (Vasić 1970: 15)

It is obvious from this declaration that the main aim of museum practice should be teaching visitors about the nature of their *own* country (i.e. *own* nature) in the frame of identity construction and strengthening of patriotic feelings. What remained unincorporated within the borders of the newly established national state (in Serbia, similarly as in Germany), according to Herder's concept of nation/national and its borders, was included by speaking-as-cultural domain, and – what seemed more appropriate for the Balkans – by religious-as-national one.⁸

⁶ Thomas Mann, for example, more than a century later explicitly said that he believed that “German humanity basically resists politicization.” He explained: “I don't want the trafficking of Parliament and the leading parties to infect the whole body of the nation with the virus of politics. . . . I want impartiality, order, and propriety. If that is philistine, then I want to be a philistine. If it is German, then I want in God's name to be called a German.” (Heilbrunn 2001).

⁷ For this reason Lenny Riefenstahl was able to insist that her films (*Der Sieg des Glaubens*/Victory of Faith from 1933, *Triumph des Willens*/Triumph of the Will from 1934, *Olympia* from 1938) were not designed as a means of propaganda of nation-socialism and that “she looked at the world with the pure, disinterested eye of an artist, and cared only about the noble task of giving vivid cinematic form to contemporary events.” <http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/riefenstahl.html>

⁸ Germany tried to construct similar concept of equaling religious and national identity, especially during the year before March revolution in 1848. Still during Wartburg in 1917, Martin Luther was celebrated as a proto-German nationalist, which connected Lutheranism and German nation-

The Ethnographic museum was also established on the same premises, at the end of the 19th century and began to work at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a clear product of (German) romantic searching/establishing the origin of nation, ethnic and cultural groups (Gavrilović 2007: 64-66, 78-80) as a cornerstone for the definition of the relationship between the space that “belongs” to the nation/group and *vice versa*, which in the 19th and at the beginning of 20th century was one of the basis for establishing of the real political borders between the newly established Central and South European national countries, wherefore its formation and further work was an integral part of the state (read: political) project, although that was never said, or recognized as such.⁹

Inner Borders

Thus the borders of interest for collecting and, at the same time, representing of culture and even nature, were established in the frame of the assumed borders of the newly formed nation (those borders that were framing the county, or in the case of Germany and the countries that were appearing during the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century under the ideological influences of German romanticism – the borders of the regions where the unaffiliated members of the nation lived and which the state wanted to include). Museological acquisition and representation of culture and nature fitted to the national borders, which was in complete harmony with the state politics, and in the frame of that, with public education.

The concept of public education (and museums as its informal part) was introduced during the 19th century in all modern/civil states. It was to include all strata of society,¹⁰ and thus support the concept of general equality. The aim of education was not only to offer equal opportunities to everyone and to raise general level of education so as to render a country more operative and prosperous, but above all the to spread and establish widely and firmly the “patriotic spirit”, as it was defined by Rousseau’s support for public education (Llobera 1994: 163). Such public/patriotic education included, above all, precise knowledge of borders of

alism engaging religious feelings for German nationality construction. The concept was (partly) abandoned after German unification, when all south districts with predominantly Catholic population entered the borders of the country, although strong political pressure for country secularization followed (*Kulturkampf*, 1872-1878), which the minority population such as Polish, Danish (...) felt as being discriminatory because the pressure was primarily aimed at reducing the influence and power of the Catholic Church. After 1878 the Protestants and Catholics unified in the confrontation against social-democratic movement. However, divisions on religious grounds existed for a long time, which is evidenced in the novels by Heinrich Böll (*The Clown*, 1963).

⁹ It is still like that even today, see: Simić (2006).

¹⁰ Public education still excluded women and all men with the special needs, as well as some other segments of the society. The discussion upon this issue opens the following question: who (in various periods) is *considered* to be a citizen (who *should be* equal). This interesting theme goes beyond this text.

“homeland”/“native country”.¹¹ As Nora nicely points out in relation to France, and learning geography of their own country, children started the journey, which “was a compendium of what every child should know about France (= own country, Lj. G.), a story about identity and a journey of initiation“. (Nora 1996: 16). But, while French, Dutch and British concept of nation defined these borders of nation-as-state, in German concept and those that developed out of it – the concept of European nations from Middle and South Europe, these borders were defined by culture, i.e. by language, and in the case of Balkan nations, primarily, by religion.

However, even in the frame of British museological tradition from the beginning of the 20th century, appeared tendencies of dealing with “British traditions” that is, representing the nation, because it turned out that the principle of including museums in the establishing of clear patriotic spirit and national unity was very successful. Thus in 1904 started the project of establishing the “national” museum, which would show “the British spirit”, and not only what British imperia possessed, which was common for the museums of anthropology of the day. The new concept of British national culture became thus a “popular fantasy” favorite with both sides of political (power) spectrum and persistently, during the first decades of the 20th century, it was applied in the local museums. The concept of “traditional culture“ was introduced in the education of youth in 1905 in order “to instill a correct patriotic spirit“ (Coombes 2004: 241).

However, museums did not address the whole population, not even within the nation (the same case is even today), while education, as one of the main aims of museological work from its very beginning, did not refer to all members of society. National minorities, although physically implemented into the geographic area defined as the national area, were not included in the story about the nation and its values. Museums addressed minorities only to show the power and the dominance of the majority nation, to teach minorities about the culture of majority, which should be, according to the assumption of the nation state, appropriated by them. This was a part of the process of assimilation of minorities (at least their educated/higher strata), i.e. a part of the process of national unification of residents.

In this way museums, completely harmonized with other segments of the public speech, created the image of geographic borders (real and/or desired/projected) that included the “national” area, representing to themselves and to the others (foreigners and those who do not belong to that nation) its goods/values:

- *to themselves* with the aim of homogenization,

¹¹ The construction of patriotic spirit was necessary also for possible/potential military-as-patriotic engagement, which required sacrifice of life for the needs of the national state. The declaration by Thomas Abbt, *Vom Tode für's Vaterland* (On dying for the fatherland) was published in 1761, before the most important Herder's works – the basis for German romanticism and the concept of nation were published. Although French revolutionary parole *Liberté! Égalité! Fraternité!* Finishes also with *ou la mort* (until death), which was later usually forgotten. This, at least in the time of revolution, referred to the fight for idea, and not the fight for (geographic-as-national) border.

- *to the others inside themselves* (national minorities) with the aim of introducing them in the culture-as-nation, which means assimilation and
- *real other*, which means foreigners, with the aim of confirmation of the same or higher values in relation to theirs (= other) national cultures.

This border creation had never been considered to be politics, because the borders, the same as nation, were already defined by culture, and were considered to exist by themselves.

Consequences

The concept of apolitical culture eliminates the idea of responsibility of culture towards nation, that appears unquestionable, because belonging to the nation is also considered to be unquestionable and not a part of political process. That further implies that the split inside the nation is not allowed; moreover, it is impossible (these kind of attitude is recognizable even today in the constant calling for “unity of Serbs“ exactly in the frame of political projects) and implies that everyone who does not agree with this is a traitor, because of questioning the frames/borders of the nation. In addition to that, all the others who are not members of the nation (who are minorities) are under suspicion of not being good citizens, which means potential traitors, which further generates constant resistance towards giving more collective rights and positive discrimination of national minorities.

Different treatment of the nation (nation-as-state) lead to completely different consequences, even related to the development of museums. The politization of muzeological activity, as well as politization of culture in general, is completely obvious in the countries where the nation is equaled with the state. In these countries, there are numerous and serious debates about the political engagement of museums in specialized magazines as well as in wider public space. They appear, sometimes, in completely unexpected situations, being provoked – as it seems, at least from the perspective of the successors of German romanticism, by incredible reasons.

One of the recent examples happened during the president campaign in the USA in 2007, when one of the crucial questions was financing the Woodstock Museum.¹² However, it turned out that this was not related only to showing respect to the concert from almost forty years ago.¹³ Actually, it was the result of the clash between two diametrically different worldviews and their value systems. The vote pro or con the Woodstock Museum actually meant the vote pro or con the war, religious, racial and gender equality, general tolerance and all other important ques-

¹² According to American museologic tradition, museums were by rule not financed from the public income. Only the Smithsonian Institute and its belonging museums are state-founded institutions. However, these are also financed from private donations. And in this case, the sum that was expected from the taxpayers was only a small part comparing to the means provided from other sources.

¹³ Concert was held in September 1969.

tions that seem to be answered by contemporary western societies, but are actually still highly debated. What do we learn from the clash about the Woodstock Museum?

It is very often repeated in Serbia that divided opinions about the politics, economy or value system, undermine and slow down the development of the country and that we should be undivided because that is “for Serbia’s good”. However, the American example shows exactly the opposite. Since the political changes in the year 2000, it is often emphasized that there are two Serbias.¹⁴ Similarly, there are (at least) two Americas. One consists of those who (physically or only spiritually/ideologically) were present in Woodstock – i.e. those who were ashamed of the war in Vietnam and had enough civil courage to publicly confront it: to refuse to go to war, to involve in demonstrations, to sing about freedom and equality – racial, gender, religious, national. The Woodstock Museum should represent the ideas of these people. The second America consists of people who were in Vietnam War and who believe that with this they helped their country and its ideas.¹⁵ For them, the Woodstock was the gathering of non-patriots, of traitors.¹⁶ However in the time of Woodstock it was difficult to imagine that an Afro-American woman could be Secretary of State for foreign affairs, even in the democratic administration.¹⁷ Today that is possible even in the republican.¹⁸ Also it was difficult to imagine that the governor of one of the biggest states might be a naturalized citizen,¹⁹ or that woman and Afro-American might be president candidates.²⁰ So, although, publicly, the clash has already gone on for forty years, the things are changing, and the crucial questions are not the same any more. Some things for which the generation, whose engagement symbolizes Woodstock concert, has been fighting, have become so

¹⁴ About these problems see more in: Малешевих (2003: 238-441), Прелић (2006: 38-47).

¹⁵ John McCain, the most extinguished republican candidate in the president campaign during 2007 was war veteran and hero who spent five years in Vietnam captivity.

¹⁶ Already in 1969 *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula Le Guin was published. This novel received several awards, it was translated into number of languages, and it was sold out in millions of copies. There is an unambiguously liberal answer on the question how to define patriots and traitors, the question that was clearly put in the USA during the Vietnam war: “I do not know what makes a man a traitor. No man considers himself a traitor: this makes it hard to find out“. However, “patriots” in America, as in any other country do not read non-mainstream literature (although *The Left Hand of Darkness* has not been treated as a genre novel for a long time), but rather elitist (according to their national discourse) art.

¹⁷ Martin Luther King, one of the greatest fighters for the rights of Afro-Americans was killed in the April 1968.

¹⁸ Condoleezza Rice is Secretary of State in the Republican administration of George W. Bush since 2005. She is the second woman (after Madeleine Albright) and the second representative of Afro-Americans (Colin Powell), but the first to be the certain indicator of overcoming two basic discriminations: by gender and by race.

¹⁹ Arnold Schwarzenegger, incumbent Republican governor of California was born in 1947, in Austria. He came to the USA in 1968 and became its citizen in 1983, keeping his Austrian citizenship.

²⁰ Democratic candidates for nomination for president during 2007/2008 were Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

generally accepted that now it is even forgotten that only four decades ago, this seemed unreachable. Thus, for example, we recognize the whole cycle in Woodstock's example: a spectacle organized in the name of (one)/against (some other) politics, transforms into memory/remembering used for the construction of history, wherefore the historical reconstruction of events returns to the everyday life (and by that to politics), through the process of musealization.

Protagonists of different ideas/politics keep different memories about the event, having diametrically different opinions about its historical value/importance, which prolongs the dialog that started during the 1960s (Stearns 2007), not only about contemporary values, but also about key historical events with “national” importance. In this way, constant, continuous negotiations move borders not only in relations between culture, “real life”, and politics, but also in relations between different social groups inside the nation, widening the field of their influence, far beyond the national borders.

The other interesting – and completely reversed – example is the reflection on WW II from the discourse of Shintoistic deification of all soldiers that gave their lives for Japan/motherland in The *Yasukuni Shrine* museum (the museum of military and war) in Tokyo. All Japanese soldiers from WW II, including those who had been designated war criminals, were represented as national heroes in this museum. This, after reopening of the museum in the impressive new building in 2002 (Green 2002) provoked a lot of disapproval, especially in the countries that were occupied by Japan. This also led to political disagreements with China, Korea and Philippines, although this was not the state museum. However, on the 15th of August 2002, the day of the victory over Japan, this museum was visited by the mayor of Tokyo. Also a bit earlier, in May 2002, it was visited by the Japanese prime minister, which points to the conclusion that the state is not completely distanced from this kind of history interpretation.

What provokes the most criticism among non-Japanese visitors of this museum, apart from distorted image of WW II, is the fact that the exhibition provokes xenophobia and hatred towards all the others who are not Japanese, so among the comments in the impression book it is possible to read: “Kill all Koreans and Asians“ (Silva 2003).

Europe without Borders: Multicultural Museum

Since the European Union formation, museum employees all around Europe have started to search for the place for museums within the new political movement. From the year of 2000, European Museum Forum has been focused on the idea that museums might also have an important role in the presentation of Europe and European culture and heritage, supporting cooperation and integrations inside European Union²¹ (*Museums as crossroads*: 2), exactly because they keep

²¹ The numerous workshops were organized, as for example: *The Spirit of Europe 2000*. and/or *Access to the European Heritage in Museums 2001*.

(preserve) different cultural traditions promoting cultural differences. In this way, what once used to be the basis for making national borders between countries, should in contemporary political project become the key for mutual understanding and construction of ties, not only political and economical, but also cultural – between European regions and nations who were confronted for centuries.

European platform for museums as institutions intended for self-education of individuals, as well as of the members of the collective/community (cultural, usually understood as national) regards that museums are public institutions that might shape values that correspond to the aims of the European Union – both in the sense of relationship between nation/culture that enter its domain, as well as in the support for achieving human rights (of individuals or of the members of local and national communities). The defined aims of museological activity are following:

- cultural diversity/social integration.
- helping people in creating multiple identities.
- support for overcoming cultural inequality.
- introducing local characteristics into the European dialog.

Because of all that is mentioned, museums are expected to have entire activity related to the needs of (potential) *European* audience – all activities, from acquisitions to the themes that museum deals with, should correspond to the general European values, promoting common similarities and explaining the reasons for existing differences, making also the basis for establishing mutual understanding. The most important mission of every museum – the existence and research of collection – is in the contemporary moment understood only as a means; their protection is considered to be only the assumption, while education becomes the most important aim of the museum (*Museums as places of lifelong learning*: 6). In that sense the museological activity broadens, because it is considered that museums should make conditions for knowledge both for experts and for laymen.

On the other hand, united Europe changes not only the concept and frames of museologic activity, but also the idea about the audience and how this audience (should) experience itself, but also how museums should understand this. As it is said in the declaration of the Committee for culture and education: if we are all Europeans, then everyone of us – in any European museum – is not a foreign tourist any more, but a citizen of Europe who meets its local characteristics in some other region (*Museums as crossroads*: 4). That eliminates the borders, this time equally – of countries and cultures and in the project of construction Europeism/European identity as meta-nationality. In the same document it is considered that museums, if they do not change, might disappear in the same way in which the borders disappear between national countries in Europe. However, this is not highly possible, because new ways of museologic work are searched for, and they should enable understanding and sharing European culture and heritage, instead of using it for teaching bor-

ders inside of it. This may be done through the new reading of the same cultural heritage that was used for making the borders that used to exist.²²

Once transformed, European museums should, according to the assumption, consider the fact that multiculturalism represents meeting of any two individualities, because reading/interpretation/applying of cultural pattern from which they originate may never be identical. This is so even when the culture is considered to be nationally framed: two Germans or two Serbs do not have to share the same attitude towards their own cultural inheritance, nor to move inside the same frames of their own (personal or collective) contemporary culture. Therefore it is considered that multicultural approach to museums should be sensitive to different and complex relations between different communities that might be the issue of museologic work or to whom the museum is addresses. This might make any museum a unique example of reflection of the needs and parameters of the community (collective, but also of individuals that constitute it) that it represents and to whom it serves (collections, exhibitions, actions).

Thus, museums should become places that are comfortable both for tourists and local visitors, because they are obliged to treat everyone as worth/important visitor/user, offering accumulated knowledge focused on general phenomena in understandable form – digital and multilingual, which would put local characteristics in relation to the general European heritage, becoming thus close and understandable to people who live different lives in different parts of Europe, have different experiences and originate from different cultural surroundings (not exclusively, but also nationally perceived). The other possibility is establishing of European corners/rooms in which objects of general European character would be exhibited; also the borders between inter-regional projects would be flexible connecting global and local views of the objects of representation, being thus the bridges that connect two different communities.

Thus museums become a part of the process of constructing the united Europe, as a new political project, used for overcoming exactly those borders and ideas for which museums were important in the construction of “national spirit”/ “national spirits”. Namely, it is believed that only in this way museums might survive under the new political circumstances. Even when some statements – such as the declaration of the magazine *Museum Aktuell*, which says that it is the magazine for museology of German speaking area²³ – resemble extremely national-as-cultural approach from the end of 18th century, they do have now (or at least should have) completely new connotation. In spite of the unification of Germany, the German speaking area still exists in several European countries. Although they speak German language, which does connect them, people have different experiences and

²² One of the ways to overcome national borders is the approach that was applied for the first time in the Museum of Modern Arts in New York, where pieces of artistic work were exhibited according to their style and not according to national borders/schools, which points to the world as an integral system. (Kramer 2001).

²³ *Die Zeitschrift für Ausstellungspraxis und Museologie im deutschsprachigen Raum*, <http://www.museum-aktuell.de/>

construct different life strategies, not only in museologic activity, but in the culture in general and in everyday behavior practice. This area is not bordered any more – neither geographically, nor politically or culturally and it is surrounded and mingled with different traditions, experiences and knowledge that have to be treated equally.

Serbian Perspectives

Unfortunately museums (and museum workers) in our country are still far from the new flows of ideas. Almost by rule they still organize exhibitions that are politically appropriate²⁴ (for example the exhibition about Kosovo myth from the 1990s or the endless exhibitions of icons and/or icon copies and frescoes that are still very common), or they are “apolitical”.²⁵ In both cases museum workers often believe that they do not deal with politics and that reality they show in exhibition is really “objective”, although there is no such a thing, nor it ever was.

The change of discourse, accepting of idea that every action of museum as an open political act is not so important for museums/galleries, but for the whole society that they mirror. At the same time, without an open dialog, with the state/society/media about different political possibilities in which all participants are aware of their responsibility for the society in general, museums will stay some kind of necessary trouble the purpose of which is unclear. This does not refer only to the museums, but also to the general culture, especially elite one, and also for the arts, especially modern one – that is not understandable for the wide audience which is not even a potential one.

Without constant putting question about everything that creates “eternal truths”, including the question of nation, its borders and relation with the Other, the awareness of the part of the dominant elites, and the majority of so-called nation, will stay in the undisturbed and firmly bordered collective/dictated field of blood and soil, with all consequences that go with it. And the gap between our and other societies will be even deeper.

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²⁴ This especially refers to the way of treating the nation, which all up to nowadays did not exceed the frames of romantic concept applied in the time of appearing of museums in Serbia. That is clearly argued in the text by Marina Simić (2006).

²⁵ This even means keeping of old paradigms in frame of the science which deals with museums (Gavrilović 2007: 64-73), which, according to the assumption of the museum workers/creators of the exhibitions, avoids the conflict with the surroundings, because it represents and shows to the audience what they have already learned to see in the frame of museum exhibition.

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Љиљана Гавриловић

Музеји и географије (националне) моћи

Кључне речи:

музеј, политика, нација,
држава, моћ

У раду се расправља о односу музеја и (националне) политике, пре свега о концепту „аполитичности“ музејске делатности, на који се музејски радници често позивају. Анализира се процес настанка великих музеја у Европи и у Србији, као и циљеви њиховог рада, чиме се показује да музеји од свог настанка делају у функцији учвршћивања националних граница (спољних и унутрашњих) и учења патриотизма, дакле – са јасним политичким циљевима. С друге стране, анализира се утицај немачког романтизма, под чијим се упливом формира српска национална држава и све њене институције, укључујући и музеје, и на основу чијих се премиса гради илузија о аполитичности културе у целини, па тако и музејске делатности.

Промена односа према држави-као-нацији у савременој европској заједници подразумева и промену музејске делатности, која треба да учествује у пројекту изградње европејства/европског идентитета као метанационалности. Музеји постају део изградње уједињене Европе као новог политичког пројекта. Њима би требало да се превазилазе управо оне границе које су их чиниле битним носиоцима „националног духа“/„националних духова“, јер се верује да ће само тако моћи да опстану у новим политичким условима.

Та промена још увек није обухватила музеје у Србији, што указује на чињеницу да се ни друштво није трансформисало у правцу усвајања европских вредности. Истовремено, разумевање (и усвајање) чињенице да је свака музејска акција уједно и јасан политички чин није толико важно за саме музеје/галерије, колико је важно за читаво друштво чије су они огледало. Без јасног дијалога са државом/друштвом/медијима о различитим могућим политикама, у коме су сви актери свесни своје одговорности за друштво у целини, музеји ће и даље остајати нешто што постоји као нужно зло, а да се не зна чему заправо служи. То, чак, не важи само за музеје, већ важи и за укупну културу.

Без сталног постављања питања о свему што изгледа као заувек дате истине, укључујући питања о нацији, њеним границама и односима са „другима“, свест дѣла владајућих елита, а и већине тзв. народа, остајаће и

даље негде у ненарушеном и чврсто ограниченом колективном/диктираном пољу крви и тла, са свим последицама које уз то иду. А јаз између нашег друштва и осталих савремених друштава биће све дубљи.