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## **Sarajevo: Politics and Cultures of Remembrance and Ignorance**

**Abstract:** This text critically reflects on cultural events organized to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in Sarajevo and Bosnia & Herzegovina. It elaborates on disputes which showed that culture is in the centre of identity politics and struggles (which can also take a fascist nationalist form, accept the colonizer's perspective, etc.), on how commemorations 'swallowed' the past and present, but primarily contextualizes, historicizes and politicizes Sarajevo 2014 and its politics of visibility. This case is approached as an example and symptomatic of the effects of the current state of capitalism, coloniality, racialization and subjugation, as central to Europe today.

**Keywords:** dehistoricization, depoliticisation, politics of visibility, cultures of remembrance and ignorance, fascistoid politics, auto-colonialism, coloniality, necropolitics

As the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire by Gavrilo Princip (a Young Bosnian Serb) in Sarajevo 1914 is widely acknowledged to have sparked the outbreak of the First World War, the commemorative year 2014 was an occasion for some EU countries to carry out a kind of central manifestation to mark the centenary – exactly in Sarajevo. Furthermore, as in the local community the figure of the assassin is the subject of disputes, revisiting this event resulted in rival memorializations.

This text analyses how the centenary was commemorated and what it tells us. It argues that practices and forms of knowledge production and of visibility linked to these memorial events are serving processes of decontextualization, dehistoricization and depoliticization, and that Sarajevo 2014 was the stage for new/old politics and

cultures of ignorance and erasure, serving *necropolitics*,<sup>1</sup> the ongoing *coloniality*<sup>2</sup> and growing fascist elements of politics that are at the core of global neoliberal governmentality in both the local context and across Europe today.

### **Contextualizing Memorialisation in Relation to Local Specificities and Shifts in International Politics and Sovereignty: Necropolitical Regime, Life Differentiations and Tactics of Dehistoricization**

Practices discussed in this text are directly related to the politics of visibility, and as such to the work of the contemporary sovereign. However, a discussion on sovereignty and culture requests their contextualization in relation to the current forms of *capitalism*, *biopower* and/or *necropower*, their regimes, practices and power differences.<sup>3</sup> In order to understand these politics and cultures of remembrance we have to start with relating these commemorative events to global and local phenomena.

The sovereign right to differentiate lives and to take life, or more precisely to kill a “bare life” (Giorgio Agamben),<sup>4</sup> is of primary concern for neoliberal governmentality today. As Michel Foucault’s concept of *biopolitics*<sup>5</sup> was not sufficient for understanding life differentiations, current changes and the logic of global capitalist neoliberal governability, Achille Mbembe and Marina Gržinić proposed a shift to *necropolitics*, *necropower* and *necrocapitalism* as a measure of re-politicization of the biopolitical. This is because necropolitical practices of regulation of life [*bios*] from the perspective of death [*necro*] are at the core of global capitalist neoliberal governmentality. Furthermore, today they are executed under the veil of *humanitarianism*, which intensifies to enable the establishment of hierarchies on a global scale; it differentiates and maintains the colonial asymmetry of positions.

These global phenomena are linked to shifts in international politics and sovereignty after the 1990s and especially 2001, which have, as Santiago López Petit and Marina Gržinić elaborated, transformed the former imperial capitalist and colonial

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<sup>1</sup> With term *necropolitics* Achille Mbembe conceptualizes the “contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” that are related to the state of exception, technologies of destruction and war machinery of the global capitalist neoliberal world. Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003): 40. As Marina Gržinić adds, racialization, exploitation, abandonment and the production of “deathscapes”, for the production of capital’s surplus value, are implemented not only in the Third and Second, but in the First capitalist world as well. Marina Gržinić, “From Biopolitics to Necropolitics and the Institution of Contemporary Art,” *Pavilion – Journal for Politics and Culture* 14 (2010): 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Coloniality* – the living legacy of colonialism that has survived formal colonialism and became integrated in succeeding political and social orders. See Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, 3 (2000): 533.

<sup>3</sup> See: Marina Gržinić, “Subjectivisation, Biopolitics and Necropolitics: Where Do We Stand?,” *Reartikulacija* 6 (2009); Marina Gržinić, “From Biopolitics to Necropolitics.”

<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> *Biopolitics* – referring to a way of organizing, managing and regulating the *population* considered as a biological entity, species-being.

*nation-State* into the *war-State*.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, as Gržinić wrote, “the post socialist countries or neoliberal turbo fascist countries remained just nation-states without an international sovereignty [...]” but with “a power to control and systematically push terror as evacuation of history, etc., inside its border, that means only culturally, socially-institutionally, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

In the context of Bosnia & Herzegovina and other ex-Yugoslav countries, these transformations and orderings have been supported with brutal and systematic *de-historicization* (Marina Gržinić, Boris Buden, Rastko Močnik)<sup>8</sup> and the “ideology of *transitology*” presented as a process of “normalization” (Boris Buden),<sup>9</sup> which are actually in the function of *neo-colonialism* (occurring under the mask of democratisation). They are engaged in keeping us between a deleted past and a future we cannot achieve. In other words, the fantasy of the transitional has been, as Šefik Tatlić noted, “filling out the empty space of its fundamental impossibility.”<sup>10</sup>

Within the narrative of transition, the fate of ex-socialist/ex-communist, but also ex-colonial, societies is that they are always perceived as ‘backward’, sometimes even as a ‘failed state’ (i.e. Bosnia & Herzegovina), in terms of politics and also culture. They are given the role of a ‘loser’ desperately trying to catch up with the West. Their retro-gradation is unavoidable. The same applies to the so-called ‘path to Europe’ and becoming a EU member.

Elaborating on the conditions of ex-Yugoslav countries in general and Bosnia in particular, Tatlić stresses that to this “transitional social reality” in which ethnical divisions were not means to achieve some (national) goal but rather the goal itself, what has been juxtaposed is an increasingly intense state regulation of the socio-political field as run by neoliberal structures, where both are institutionalized in a ‘grotesque form’ of the newly-established countries of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>11</sup> As Tatlić writes, contrary to dominant opinions, that form is not the result of the domination of one of its two poles. Rather ‘crisis’ is generated in their meeting point, and in the way in which these two poles co-exist, co-work and objectivize the flexible accumulation of capital.<sup>12</sup>

For the shifts in international politics and sovereignty, and the ideology of *transitology*, a crucial role has been played by simultaneous and systematic *dehistoricization*. As Gržinić argues, this process, which she described as the “evacuation of memory” and the “erasure of history”, is to be perceived as a symptom of neoliberal global

<sup>6</sup> Including both the so-called first capitalist world and the United States.

<sup>7</sup> Gržinić is referring to Petit’s work. Marina Gržinić, “The Emergence of the Political Subject,” *Emancipation of Resistance*, 2013, Kontrapunkt, Skopje, March, 5-7, 2013, <https://emancipationofresistance.wordpress.com/grzinic/>, accessed March 15, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> See *Ibid*; Boris Buden, “The post-Yugoslavian Condition of Institutional Critique: An Introduction,” *Transversal*, 2007, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0208/buden/en>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Šefik Tatlić, “Predgovor,” in Marina Gržinić, *Estetika kibersvijeta i učinci derealizacije* (Zagreb, Sarajevo: Multimedijalni institut, Košnica, 2005), 15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

capitalism. This includes her reading of “Europe as a construction without memory” – “a neutral space where memory is evacuated.”<sup>13</sup>

These tendencies are evident in all the countries of ex-Yugoslavia and in the erasure of all things that do not fit the brutal scenario prepared by the ethno-nationalist and neoliberal structures, which presupposes the need for a ‘white canvas’ for a story to be convincing. Finally, the transition has failed (as it was never supposed to succeed) and in that we forgot from where we started or what was before. By ‘evacuating memory’ neoliberal capitalist governmentality prepared the ground for the humanitarian action of ‘normalization’ and transnational capital. An illustrative example of the effects of this ‘normalization’ and of the misery it creates, through the marriage of neoliberal capitalism and ethno-nationalism, is precisely described in one of the slogans of the protests held in February 2014 in Bosnia: “We are hungry in all three languages” (i.e. Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian).

As several authors, including Gržinić, Tatlić and Buden, stressed, ex-Yugoslavia was and is a kind of a “necropolitical laboratory of the EU” (Gržinić, Tatlić), and in the 1990s was actually the “bloody messenger of the new *nomos* of the Earth”.<sup>14</sup> It was a symptom of a bigger transformation of international order. Therefore, it is important to take a look at current processes within this region and to rethink what role politics and cultures of remembrance play in it.

### Who Does Gavrilo Belong to?

The French “Mission du Centenaire”, joined by Germany, the UK, Austria, Spain, Belgium, Italy, and The City of Sarajevo, established a special foundation named “Sarajevo, Heart of Europe” to organize various cultural, sports and educational programs to commemorate a century of European history in Sarajevo. As the initiators explained, in 2014 it was Europe’s duty “to speak up and deliver a message of solidarity, peace and reconciliation”, to speak about the future, from Sarajevo. “Sarajevo, Heart of Europe”, organized as a multidisciplinary festival to mark “the end to the century of war”, included a huge number of exhibitions, movies, large-scale performances, and more that was produced to transmit these messages, or to reflect on the past and the possible future.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from events organized within this framework, there were a number of other cultural interventions that reflected on the assassination and shared past. This includes movies produced by reputable directors, a number of local and international exhibitions (of art, design, archival records, etc.), and various Austro-Bosnian initiatives that dealt with these topics. It seems as if everyone had to comment on the assassination, war and the centenary. Actually, this was also an opportunity for a number of artists and cultural institutions (local and international) to find some

<sup>13</sup> Gržinić, “The Emergence of the Political Subject.”

<sup>14</sup> Buden, “The post-Yugoslavian Condition of Institutional Critique.”

<sup>15</sup> Full program: [centenaire.org/sites/default/files/references-files/dp\\_sarajevo\\_en\\_version\\_bd.pdf](http://centenaire.org/sites/default/files/references-files/dp_sarajevo_en_version_bd.pdf), accessed March 15, 2017.

financial support for their work (mostly European, but also local funds) and present it in Sarajevo.

Among all these cultural projects, two central commemorative events (funded by the EU), were held in Sarajevo on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014: the “Concert by Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra” at Vijećnica, and a spectacle titled “A Century of Peace, After the Century of Wars” at Latin Bridge. Furthermore, on the same day, in another part of the country, at Andrićgrad in Višegrad, there was another spectacle titled “Rebel Angels”, organized by representatives of that BH entity. I will now focus on these three events.

### **Celebration of the “Superiority of European Values” at Vijećnica in Sarajevo**

A major European commemorative event was held in the restored Vijećnica (the former City Hall and National Library) that was built during the Austro-Hungarian rule and in which Ferdinand attended a reception shortly before his assassination. Vijećnica was destroyed during the siege of Sarajevo in 1992 and was renovated in stages over the past fifteen years (funded by donations from several European countries and the European Commission). On June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Vijećnica was again symbolically opened, this time to gather the diplomatic core and the ruling elite as part of the central manifestation to mark this centenary.

The program of the concert by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at Vijećnica was ‘European’, as what was played were pieces by famous Austrian, German and French composers, followed by the anthems of the EU and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The program, conducted by music director Franz Wesler-Möst (US/Austria), was to hark back to the days of the Empire, including Haydn, Schubert, Berg and Brahms. The direct enjoyment of the concert was reserved for elites (more international, less local), while the local population was positioned at a ‘safe distance’, on the other bank of the river, to watch it on a screen installed in a parking lot. The concert was also broadcasted by the European Broadcast Union directly to a European audience.

Although the nature of all the events in Sarajevo were confusing (as it was not clear if we were celebrating or mourning something, or figuring out how to deal with this past), the message from Vijećnica, a symbol of the Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia, was clear. What was celebrated and promoted at Vijećnica is the cultural and civilizational superiority and survival of distinctive European values, which seem to be reserved for some ‘forms-of-life’ and Europeans. A discourse of European values is something that is employed in the racialization of the Other, and has been a foundation of the project that serves to erase the history of European colonial dominance in the world, and the links of racism, fascism and capitalism within it.

It should also be stressed here that among a huge number of people in the Federation of B&H, there is a perception that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was here in a civilizing mission, and that the EU continues that mission today. There is a kind of a

mourning linked to the fantasy that we would be much better – i.e. Austrian, European – if we had stayed under this rule. Between the lines of the colonial narrative underlying the ‘civilizing mission’ of this central European event there was also a promise that one day maybe, this region would be joining Europe and would be recognized as part of this elite club. However, as we might conclude from these events, this integrating, civilizing process of local ‘savages’ is not to proceed through a critical re-articulation of the past and present, but rather through capital (which is supposed to civilize us).

### **Celebration of Peace and Love at Latin Bridge in Sarajevo**

The evening open-air spectacle called “A Century of Peace After The Century of Wars”<sup>16</sup> was held at the bridge next to the place where Princip assassinated Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sofia on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914. From 1918-1992 the bridge was named “Princip’s Bridge”, but in 1993 the government returned the name “Latin Bridge”. At the site of the assassination there is a museum, today called “Sarajevo Museum 1878–1918”, displaying Sarajevo during the Austro-Hungarian period. Today, the museum’s online presentation is also stressing a ‘civilizing mission’ that the occupier has played in the local development.<sup>17</sup> Similar to the bridge, prior to this name, the museum was called the “Muzej Mlada Bosna” (named by the organization to which Princip belonged) and its narrative was different. Also, in front of the museum, from 1956 to the recent past, there were steps engraved directly on the place from which Princip shot his gun, and a plate with an inscription in Serbo-Croatian (using Cyrillic script) – “From this place, on 28 June 1914, Gavrilo Princip, expressed with his shot the people’s revolt against tyranny and their centuries-old struggle for freedom.” At the beginning of the last war in B&H the engraved steps were removed, and today, at this site, there is only a new bilingual plate presented clear of ideological messages, which states – “From this place on 28 June 1914 Gavrilo Princip assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sofia” (written in Bosnian and English using Latin scripts).

In 2014, the EU invested one million euros in this huge epic spectacle for local folk, to be held at this specific (now cleaned) site. That show had to be spectacular, but with a clear message: that the worst is behind us and we are now to celebrate peace and love. This multidisciplinary show, directed by Haris Pašović, brought together more than 200 artists from nine countries. On the common theme of war songs that spanned the century, it addressed the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through three acts: 1) before the war; 2) during the war; 3) an ode to life. The lyrics and images were a total mix of everything – from local and international poets, French and Turkish songs, Greek mythology, the Russian Cossack Choir, Dalmatian Klapa, to figures of a black angel, Auschwitz camp detainees, up to a film of the birth of twin babies – all to send a

<sup>16</sup> Documentation at <http://eastwest.ba/a-century-of-peace-after-the-century-of-wars/>, accessed March 30, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://muzejsarajeva.ba/en/depandance/the-sarajevo-museum>, accessed March 30, 2017.



message that tolerance and life are beautiful, while war is grotesque and awful. At the end, this empty spectacle was concluded pathetically with songs and reunions of the Serbian and Bosnian pop-folk stars Šaban Šaulić (singing a song “*Vjerujem u ljubav*” [I believe in love]) and Dino Merlin (singing “*Jel Saraj'vo gdje je nekad bilo*” [Is Sarajevo where it once was]), accompanied by the rise of a huge shining heart over the bridge where the spectacle took place.

### **“Rebel Angels” at Andrićgrad and the New Visibility of Višegrad**

Representatives of Republika Srpska refused to participate in the spectacles in Sarajevo and organized their own manifestation in Andrićgrad. Andrićgrad is an ongoing construction project in Višegrad (Republika Srpska) by the well-known film director Emir Kusturica.<sup>18</sup> It should be stressed that Višegrad was the scene of some of the worst atrocities in the war by Serb forces driving out Muslim Bosniaks, and is also in the centre of disputes because of the unwillingness of the local government to memorialize the victims of war crimes committed in and around this city in the 1990s.

Construction on Andrićgrad began on Vidovdan (St. Vitrus Day), on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Dedicated to Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić, and imagined as a kind of ethno-village and cultural centre, Andrićgrad is presented as a new promotional project of Republika Srpska. As explained on the official web site, it is a vision how Andrićgrad might have looked if it had not been bypassed by the Renaissance and other historical periods. It is thus a new image of this ‘deathscape’, cleaned of recent war crimes and the past. Andrićgrad was officially opened on the day of commemoration on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 with the concert of the Academic Chorus of the Russian Army “Aleksandrov” and a grandiose spectacle titled “Rebel Angels” directed by Kusturica. This spectacle, which gathered 300 artists and extras on the streets of Andrićgrad, had a completely different plot than the one in Sarajevo. Directed in three acts, it represents the Sarajevo assassination with contemporary connotations. In the first act Princip and members of Mlada Bosna with angel wings and GPS are brought to Franz Ferdinand. The second act represented the trial, while the third act was devoted to the commemoration of Serbian victims in the First World War.<sup>19</sup>

Also, prior to the evening spectacle in Andrićgrad, on the same day, a huge mosaic “Mlada Bosna” was revealed on the wall of the local cinema. Inspired by a verse that is attributed to Princip – “Our shadows will be wandering through Vienna, strolling through the court, frightening the lords” – the mosaic is representing Princip and members of Mlada Bosna as Vidovdan’s heroes, and is dedicated to the idea of self-sacrifice. The composition is, in the words of an author, an attempt of the visualization of that sentence, “with [...] upgrade through showing the myth of kidnapping of Europa, which in this case can symbolize autistic, sweet beauty of the Vienna

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.andricgrad.com/en/>, accessed March 30, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Documentation: “Pobunjeni anđeli,” RTRS, June 29, 2014. <http://lat.rtrs.info/vijesti/vijest.php?id=115647>, accessed March 30, 2017.

palace, built on the sufferings of the oppressed peoples [...] In the background there is a Belvedere palace, around which the shadow of those who do not forget and who will not be forgotten are flying.”<sup>20</sup> This was to accompany another monumental mosaic (at the same location) showing a colourful pastoral site in which we recognize some well-known figures such as Kusturica, politician Milorad Dodik and others pulling the rope, as well as the poet Branko Ćopić, the tennis player Novak Đoković, etc. One mosaic is placed next to another, figures of Vidovdan’s heroes to selected contemporaries, a vision of the past to a vision of the present.

The official ceremony which, as the organizers described, included the Celebration of St. Vitus, the patron saint of the Army of Republika Srpska, and 100 years since the beginning of the First World War, actually began in the morning hours with a sacred liturgy during which Serbian Patriarch Irinej consecrated the St. Tsar Lazar Church and Kosovo martyrs at Andrićgrad. The whole program of the commemoration of Vidovdan’s heroes/the opening of Andrićgrad was held in the presence of governmental representatives from Republika Srpska and Serbia. It should be emphasized that, together with Bosnian Serb representatives, the representatives of Serbia decided to boycott the European commemoration in Sarajevo, and decided to be part of the commemoration and new visibility of Višegrad. They refused to come to Vijećnica, not only because of the scenario, but primarily, as they explained, since they were ‘humiliated’ by the new bilingual plates that were installed at its entrance (stating: “On this place Serbian criminals in the night of 25<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> August 1992 set on fire National and University’s Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over 2 millions of books, periodicals and document vanished in the flame. Do not Forget. Remember and Warn!”). Thus, the problem was in the management and the politics of visibility. It should also be stressed here that, although Višegrad and Sarajevo seem to be sending different messages, the nationalist discourse which is promoted in Republika Srpska actually supports the same capitalist order which is promoted in Sarajevo.

However, as evident from these contrasting events, the Sarajevo assassination is now the subject of antagonistic and disputed perceptions in Bosnia and the region. It is a similar situation with other historical events and their legacies that predominate in the sphere of public remembrance and which have different interpretations (such as the 1992–1995 war and the Second World War). Actually, the lack of consensus around historical events is the reason for a lack of any common culture of remembrance in B&H.

Although narratives about Princip’s role were less disputed before the 1990s, today, among the local community they are replaced with shifting and oppositional views. “Who is Gavrilo?” “Who does he belong to?” “Is he Bosnian, Serbian, European?” “Is he a hero struggling for freedom or a terrorist?” The answer depends on who you ask. For local ethno-nationalists Princip’s figure is an opportunity for historical revisionism, and raising national consciousness. For Europe it is clear – Gavrilo is a terrorist, but that is not something to be problematized if we are to promote ‘the love of capitalism’.

<sup>20</sup> Bisenija Tereščenko at <http://mozaik-art.com/radovi/> See mosaics at: <http://mozaik-art.com/radovi-mlada-bosna/> and <http://mozaik-art.com/adricgrad-konopac/>, accessed March 30, 2017.



The question of Gavriilo and the ambiguity between other historical events show that culture is in the centre of identity politics and struggles. Huge ethno-nationalist efforts in these states are invested to control national narratives and the culture of remembrance. Continuous historical revisionism by right wing regimes have been closely related to the fascist remaking of our societies and to racist ethno-national identifications, which are here institutionalized and accepted as relevant political categories for more than two decades. This includes renaming streets and schools, reorganizing museums, building new acceptable school curriculums and content (from a pro-fascist perspective), removing old monuments and building new ones, defining new national holidays, rehabilitating fascist collaborators from the Second World War, or war criminals from the wars in the 1990s, and enabling and normalizing their political reintegration.

We should remind ourselves that the concept of 'culture of remembrance' was also related to the idea of 'truth and reconciliation' and 'memorialization' as an integral aspect of the (un)reachable 'transitional justice' in the process of the so-called 'normalization' of transitional post-conflict societies. However, today, new politics of ignorance actually aspire to liberate our societies from history, in order to clear the pathway for capital. This tendency is linked to the new idea that reconciliation in our society is achievable if we forget the past and focus on so-called economic development. Prior to that, these local fascist politics have invested huge efforts to equalize responsibilities of fascist and antifascist movements, of fascism and communism, of different sides in war crimes in the 1990s, to suggest that there is no difference between them, so that we should forget all of this and turn to economic growth.

The International Monetary Fund today sends tranches of loans and regularly collaborates with local politicians who are awarding and politically integrating convicted war criminals, and rehabilitating fascist ideologies throughout the same institutions. Who needs concepts of transitional justice or truth anymore? That chapter is closed, as our societies are now integrated in global capitalism and new settings in which the master-slave relations are well-secured. Furthermore, in the shift from *national-* to *war-State*, sovereignty has changed. Bosnia & Herzegovina is a country in which sovereign power of the so-called international community is institutionalized in the figure and the office of the High Representative and the Peace Implementation Council, who have the right and possibility to intervene or not act, to govern as they wish, no matter the will of people, but rather for the benefit of global neoliberal capitalism.

### **Politics of In/Visibility at the Meeting Point of the Rotten Heart of Europe – Contemporary Fascism – Auto-Colonialism**

It should be stressed that during the central event in Vijećnica, on the opposite side of the river, there was a small informal group of local protesters wearing Gavriilo Princip's mask. It was actually the only group who expressed any kind of disagreement with the present situation, with ongoing coloniality, and the process of auto-colonialism. Under the motto "If Gavriilo would have been alive today, he would be protesting with us", and

banners such as “We are under occupation again – by nationalism, capitalism, the EU and international community”, they have tried to allude to the situation in Bosnia which inspired social protests a few months earlier. This counter-event did not gain any significant attention; it was ignored, but it actually reminded people that some very important things had to be silenced, erased and swept under the carpet, in order to transmit the desired messages through the official ceremonies in both Sarajevo and Višegrad.

Although it would be necessary to critically reflect on similarities and differences between 1914 and 2014, on changing sovereignty, and new/old orderings, such critical reflections were evacuated and the stage was given to regime spectacles. While Europe was sending messages that the worst is behind us, messages of love, solidarity and peace from Sarajevo, the Mediterranean was becoming the hugest mass grave for refugees and migrants trying to reach Europe, to benefit from European values. Europe has been normalizing their dying. Moreover, racists and fascist politics have united Europe around the war on migrants in order to protect its ‘purity’, its capital and the current order of things. There are many more analogies between historical and contemporary fascism than Europe is willing to recognize at this moment. As historical fascism was closely related to capitalism in the previous century (as much as the colonial past), contemporary fascist politics are directly related to the current state of capitalism and its coloniality of power (due to the major tasks of growing and securing capitalism from inner or outer enemies).

Any discussion on the crisis of Europe, on past and present racism, fascist politics and coloniality was evacuated from but also back to Sarajevo. This is simply a continuation of the tradition in which huge efforts are invested to present racist politics, conflicts, and fundamentalism as categories that do not belong to European heritage. A common European past was not to be recalled in some European metropolis, but in Sarajevo, the capital of the ‘failed state’ and of the wild Balkans. Sarajevo was an appropriate choice, if to avoid a critical reflection on other responsibilities and legacies that have been crucial for the beginning of the First, and as some name it, the Third World War today. Also, it was a perfect site if we are to close our eyes in front of the racism, fascism, legacies of colonialism and to displace the *rotten-heart-of-Europe* to what is called the ‘Former East’, hiding in that way the effects of the *state of emergency* and of the *war-State*.

In summer 2014, as some kind of a colonial periphery, Sarajevo was proclaimed the ‘Heart of Europe’ (although it was refused to be proclaimed the European Capital of Culture). The metaphor of the heart was employed to suggest that this is politically the most important place in Europe, where decisions are made (as a heart is keeping this living organism alive). However, as we know, if the heart suffers damage from disease or an injury, it is life-threatening to the whole organism. What is obviously in crisis are values based on the racist presumption of European cultural superiority. Racism is at the heart of Europe and its policies. Because of that, this time the heart had to be displaced at a safe distance, far enough from the European centre and mind, as it becomes obvious that its rotten heart is to be perceived as a matter of the current crisis. Sarajevo could easily be blamed for a dying Europe.

These spectacles were here to obscure not only European silence and local disputes over the past, but primarily the misery of the present. A few months before, in

February 2014, Bosnia & Herzegovina, including Sarajevo, was at the centre of world attention because of a wave of the largest social uprising in the post-war period. Furthermore, in mid-May 2014, two months before the spectacles in Sarajevo and Višegrad, huge floods devastated a major part of the country, and once again confirmed that its citizens are totally abandoned, and that what we have on stage is pure *necropolitics*. All of that had to be erased, as well as any image which would question this system that its citizens are trying to survive.

However, disputes about Princip point to the inability of a critical re-evaluation of the past in order to learn any lesson about the present and future from it. Although with a completely different plot, commemorations in both Sarajevo and Višegrad revealed the abyss between past and present. They swallowed the past and present. The commemorations also highlighted that culture is in the centre of identity politics and struggles (which can also take a fascist nationalist form, and/or accept the colonizer's perspective though auto-colonization).

Here, at the meeting point of the Rotten Heart of Europe, with contemporary fascism and auto-colonialism, these practices and forms of knowledge production and of visibility were serving processes of decontextualization, dehistoricization and depoliticization which are at the core of the current neoliberal governmentality across Europe today.

If we are to try to imagine any possible alternative to the existing order of things, we would need practices and visibilities which would politicize all of that which these cultures of remembrance have silenced, evacuated, made invisible and unknown.

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**Photo 1: Site of assassination;** Plates at the site of assassination. / Left: Image taken 1987 (plaque and footprints), photo: Wikimedia commons; Right: Image taken June 28, 2014 (new plaque with a wreath by “The Black-Yellow Alliance”, a monarchist movement in Austria that calls for the reintroduction of a hereditary monarchy in Central Europe and advocates a union of Austria, Hungary, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia, united under a common emperor), photo by: Adla Isanović



**Photo 2: Protests in Sarajevo on June 28, 2014;** Small protest opposite of Vijećnica, Sarajevo, June 28, 2014. Photo by: Adla Isanović

Article received: June 2, 2017  
Article accepted: June 8, 2017  
Original scholarly paper