

The Art of Balkanization

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Researches on the recently invented territory of Western Balkan¹ are focused on its uncertain existence within its framework formulated from the outside by EU with no conceptualizing of the commons from inside. Furthermore, ambitions to apply European standards in each state have, paradoxically, created a rejection on the name mentioning. Western Balkan has been locally unknown term but instantly loaded with too many negative connotations of Balkan's stereotype, signified for centuries as European subconscious. While Europe has been taken as civilized, reasonable and tolerant, Balkan has been the place of wilderness, irrationality and everlasting conflicts. This stereotype that has been strongly supported by both sides has formed a belief that Balkan could not be developed and sustained without interventions from Europe. However, contemporary Europe suffers a hard time trying to identify its own concept of unity and has no more creative energy for the others. Instead of awaiting instructions that are not coming from the top this situation offers great chance to Western Balkan to develop its own potentials. And then, like in an imaginable psycho geographical therapy, these potentials as formulated by European subconscious, could help Europe to find its new consciousness.

Looking for the missing concept of Western Balkan is taking thoughts on the layers of territorial organizations that are reflecting, as material facts, the history of the societies that were creating them as well as contemporary relations. Constructed environment is staying as physical witnesses of the referential ideologies that fades away and current ambition that is loudly stepping ahead. Constructions are containers of the living memories and posters of newly proclaimed values. The Highway of Brotherhood and Unity² is such construction made in massive voluntary campaigns by the peoples of all nationalities that constituted socialist Yugoslavia to connect the major cities of its republics and named according to the most important state parole. It was not accidental that this ideological name signified the connecting line among different nations. The collapse of Yugoslavia stripped down the ideals of national unification. Upgraded Highway of Post Brotherhood and Non Unity is merely functions as a linear mechanism through the territory without concept. Wandering along the

¹ Minimal commons is a possibility that was not often practiced, mainly because it is not bringing too much promises and overall projections in advance. It is a simple stadium of coexistence in which taking out any particle or statement means breaking of decision making process which would acknowledge incapacity to undertake anything together. In such moment, the individual resistance to the paralysis of the system creates capacity for establishing minimal commons which is a bit of time and space where there's nothing left to lose but a lot to add.

² Modern institutions that were representing the most progressive image of a society running toward bright future, were taking abstraction as field of expression. Abstract values were signifying presence of unknown wellness that would be achieved if society is following the rules established by its institutions. Same rules were addressing the individuals more directly through basic figuration that was accepted by everyone. Strategy of dual signification was creating spatial dichotomy between modern institutions and traditional private spaces. Being too abstract to be accepted by everyone, dichotomy did not have capacity to generate order, but chaos.

highway of lost ideals is building a conviction that experiences and finds collected on the road may help in creating missing concept of Western Balkan and, simultaneously, alternative vision European future.

In the decades of transitional process following the collapse of the socialist centrally conducted planning system and rising of arrogant neo liberal development, millions of individual uncontrolled buildings activities have taken place along the highway. The wild, volatile spread of informal building structures has transformed the environment in all states representing the new form of urbanization quite different from informal settlements in other places. As the result of crisis in the nineties, Western Balkan experienced an abrupt change becoming complex and unstable ground on which the rules for the building production and the logic of urban vitality are constantly being reinvented. The trigger for the transformation was given by grey economy blast, amidst an atmosphere of war traumas, media obsession and politicization. In this context, as a compensation for the collapsing institutions, the unleashed individual action started to produce innovation in literally every urban domain - from commerce, to housing production and public services. A new, non-regulated layer appeared, flooding the public spaces and superimposing as a serial of mutants on top of the existing constructions. Their organization is heterarchical; newness is produced through conflict and negotiation between institutions and individuals. The complexity that arises from that process is maintaining the character of a self-organizing system and its heterogeneous and vivid spatial organization. The autonomous potential of self-organizing system is providing fertile ground for establishing critical alternative confronting utopian modernization of socialist state as well as progressive globalization of neo liberal state.

Self-organization³ is the model of sustaining society that is abandoning the ideal of collective unification under the pressure of hostile fragmentation. Since the beginning of XX century in response to independence movement in the Balkans, the

³ constitution of self organized community

that is something that is going somewhere

no one is involved by defaults, but everyone can be if wants

if you invite others to join you, do not expect them to follow you

be a friend and let others be your friends

anyone can leave as soon as can get bored

common flows are ambient for personal gone

make a present or a suggestion and leave them behind

go to unknown city where everything that happens is making you a better person

forget bombs remember skills

process of geopolitical fragmentation in English language has been attached to the term - Balkanization. Balkanization has expanded today to connote any kind of dissolution across the world in order to sustain totality or itself. It is signifying variety of scenarios involving fragmentation, such as “the balkanization of Europe,” coming out of an extreme voices that takes care about the unity of society and equality of individuals. Furthermore, if globalization represents the increasing unification of peoples and places through converging processes of economic, political, and cultural changes, then Balkanization is a counter action to the integrating and homogenizing effects of globalization. That truly shifts the meaning from originally negative connotation of Balkanization into constructing potential. Emerging through self-organizing development of Western Balkan, the positive connotation of Balkanization define itself as art of surviving crises by creating the relational system of diversified parties⁴.

bring your sheets and take them after

don't ask for date, day or hour

sleep whenever you want as much as you can

take confidence before you make decisions

⁴ Influenced by resourceful building energy, the art of Balkanization is recognizing variety of complementary concepts of representation, such as:

fragmentation - reduction of authority and the growth of self organized bottom-up initiatives

concurrency - spatial implications of the various simultaneous states of existence

hybrid - invention resulting from the fusion of multiplicity

convertible border - potential of distorting limitations into space of exchange

temporary hierarchy - ability to take over particular initiative for the limited time

raw end - unintentional result of the most literal application of basic constructing tools

expandability – capacity of hosting body to adapt to the uncoordinated external partitions

under construction – continual delay due to undetermined constructing process

leftovers – free spaces in between fulfilled desires

Art of Balkanization is providing a network for the knowledge exchange on concepts emerged from the condition of Western Balkan to influence discussions on programs envisioning better Europe. Both Western Balkan and Europe are currently in a dilemma with the pace of the development and question exactly what it means to be a part of the new European organism⁵. The danger is that Europe may simply assume the mantle of a rigidly administrated meta-state apparatus impressed with its own order and comfort, unable to compete with the dynamic evolution and flexibility of Western Balkan. At the same time, Western Balkan is still bound by the political, social and economical problems of the transitional decades and exists disconnected to the general European movement. Both seem to lack a convincing vision of future.

Earlier European visions of future were founded on the utopian ideal of liberation. On the famous painting by De La Croix celebrating French Revolution, liberation is figured as strong, hypersexual women surrounded by poets, workers and outlaws. This reminiscence of fruitful Goddess with her brothers in arms has been established and carried out through centuries. Generations were raised to equalize liberating act to sexual experience. Indeed, time of revolution was time of sexual freedom, so different than ordinary life time with organized social boundaries.

Providing fundamental human reasons, ideal of liberation has been giving dignity to all revolutionary bloodsheds. As soon as the revolution would fulfilled its local goal and life came back to regulated routine, ideal of liberation, being impossible to control and unpractical in organizing society, has been repressed by liberators themselves. Packed back into subconscious, as any sexual desire, this ideal has becoming constant trigger for the new uprisings. Such triggering mechanism is used to promote spectacles for the society of competitors, where Goddess of Liberation is downsized to no more than commercial statuette⁶. Ideal of liberation is simplified for ideological purposes, assigned for media communication, misused in political

⁵ The European continent has been described as incapable to establish its own consistency, with no consensus on key values, with no energy to resolve the main problems and also without sense that anyone could threaten it. Europe is becoming the realm of relativism characterized by erosion of community, uncontrolled peoples movements, economical non efficiency, political corruption, media obsession and expensive maintenance. European society that is oriented toward having more free time has in fact less capacity to fulfill the high demands. European exchange of vitality for hedonism is rewinding the memories to Yugoslavia that has gone for the same reasons. However, self destructing hedonism did not disappear together with the old state, perhaps because it was it's the main constituency. It has been approved today as common attitude of the individuals all over Western Balkan. We are all agreed that it's better to live for the moment of absolute satisfaction then spend life in building conditions to maintain certainty of comfort. For self destructed hedonists only the death is certain, but the doom day that will come before the death no one can predict, which also means that it does not depend on anyone's done. Whatever you do to make yourself satisfied will not affect its unexpected arrival. For that reason, to reaching the absolute momentum of satisfaction anyone can take more than can handle.

⁶ Both socialsit and neoliberal minds have demonstrating significant capacity in diagnosing recent collaps of economic system. At the same time they have demonstrating singnificant incapacity in creating concepts for finding the way out. Even if they would have alternative visions, political system is already so corrupted that would not have been able to realize

fighters and proliferated in massive consumption. The art of Balkanization is avoiding frustrations coming from the incompleteness of liberating act and repression of ruling elite by bringing ideal of liberation into the scope of everyday practice. This leads towards more sufficient understanding of individual freedom that could be created in any life full moment⁷.

Ideals of universal humanism - liberation, equality and brotherhood were imprinted into constitutions of each modern state. Displaced from their original context, they were becoming empty barges that could be loaded with any meaning. Confronted within boundless European context, art of Balkanization, coming from the territory that was unwillingly imposed after the fall of Yugoslavia, is giving insights to the alternatives to, both socialist and neo liberalist, interpretation of liberty, equality and brotherhood. Instead of lost liberty, art of Balkanization found sufficiency of everyday practice, instead of lost equality found diversified network, instead of lost brotherhood found selforganizing movement. Sufficiency, networking and selforganization are creating the new provisional horizon for social and environmental development in the future⁸.

them. Even if political elite would have been innocent, media is already so manipulated that would not have capacity to forward the straight message. Even if the communication devices would have been justified, society is already so diversified that would not constitute critical mass for the new beginning. The scaring fact learned from the big crises in the history, is that the only way out that intellectual minds, political elites, global media and diversified humanity could successfully undertake at this stadium of civilization is creating the war machine. War designers know, although denying, that the war spectacle is the most sufficient exit for leaving problems unsolved and the strongest trigger for "dead end" society to enter into another cycle of growth. War lords have no obstacles in creating enemy to set up the agreement on launching the fire.

⁷ More efficient way to avoid big problems is by creating many smaller problems. Smaller problems are accidents that are taking attention from unsolvable to handling ones. Occupied by handling small problems we are avoiding the big and unsolvable. We should start respecting small problems. We should start inventing them to get our lives easier. Having more small problems will take us away from the big problems state to a no problems state. We should celebrate the small problems. It is better to have an engine break with the old car for a while then to have car crash with new one in the next minute.

⁸ Future potential is not determined by national origins, professional expertise, ideological program, or creative desire but these give enough reasons for envisioning. It does not presume permanency but a series of temporary events. Once they are on, future potential develops its own dynamic through unpredicted multitude of interactions. Its continuity is not self-generating but depending on recognition of present and past potentials. Through mutual recognitions and reexaminations, future potential stays always on question. Continual questioning makes the flow in which each event could be connected to any other. Being on flow while staying oneself, may uncover the reason for being together. The common flow becomes the form of expression of the future potential which is a form of adventure.