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## **Organizational trauma – Types of organizational forgetting in the case of Belgrade theaters**

**Abstract:** Organizational memory studies (OMS) frame memory in a managerial mode, treating it as a data storage, limiting the scope from wider field of social memory studies. There is a lack of understanding about how the process of institutional forgetting works and how some memories stay a part of oral narratives and communicative social memory while they are omitted from the official memory represented by the official documents and events of remembering. Inspired by Paul Connerton's article on the typology of forgetting we explore his typology in selected case studies of three public theaters located in Belgrade, focusing on remembering policy and practices investigating if a type of forgetting typical for a state/society/nation level is possible to be applied in the context of a cultural organization. We agree with Wessel and Moulds that developing common language and terminology would be important and beneficial for cross disciplinary dialogue. In this sense, the study shows how the typology of forgetting in societies can be applied and developed in the organizational memory studies and cultural management. The focus of the research is the dynamics of remembering and forgetting explored through analysis of the interaction between changing context, official institutional memories, and social communicative memories.

**Keywords:** organizational forgetting; organizational memory; remembering; trauma; identity

### Introduction

Organizational memory plays an important role in the theories of organizational learning and forgetting. Organizations are perceived as knowledge-based units in which keeping the knowledge can bring competitive advantage (Feldman and Feldman 2006). Organizational learning theory requires that knowledge has to be stored in the organizational memory (e.g., Argote 1999, Huber 1991).

A social constructivist approach to organizational memory studies (OMS) frames memory as straightforward and easily retrievable. In the context of western corporations, supremacy is given to written records (Nissley and Casey 2002), whereas Cruz (2014) makes a case for social construction of memory and practices at an unconscious level, arguing for an approach focused on invisible and implicit.

Walsh and Ungson (1991) in their landmark text claimed that organizational memory is a mechanism in which organizations retain and make accessible organizational knowledge. According to Rowlinson et al. (2010) OMS has been limited by mechanical models treating memory as a storage bin and has managerialist preoccupation with the functional utility of memory for management decision making. This group of authors claim that the dominant model of memory as a storage bin has been rejected by psychologists because it does not take into account subjective experience of remembering and social and historical contexts of organizational memory.

As Casey and Olivera (2011) notice, although the concepts of memory and forgetting imply the passage of time, there is a lack of knowledge and theorization about specific mechanisms under which forgetting occurs in organizations. For instance, the events that threaten the identity or survival of an organization are more likely to be recalled in the organization's memory (Casey 2010) as well as events that happen recently (Casey 1997). It means that events happened years ago that were not threatening for the organization will not be remembered unless they are part of the official memory documents. Accordingly, controversial or shameful events that did not threaten organizational survival will be forgotten, although they presented trauma for certain members or groups in the organizations. These types of events we will name side events memorized in communicative memory, as memories that are not formative for the officially designed organization's identity. The individual remembrances on such events may vary, since those events caused different emotions within the group.

We agree with Connerton (2008) that forgetting is not always a failure and for some organizational management purposes, it might be beneficial to forget some of the events. Our main question is what type of events that caused trauma for the organization is forgotten, and how this policy of forgetting could be named. Further, we would explore what was the motive behind deleting those events from the organizational history and what kind of social and political context, external or internal pressure provoked the forgetting. To frame complexity of the issue, and to see how public cultural organizations like theatres selectively (do not) remember part of the institutional history from turbulent political times, we would combine concept of OMS understood in a managerial mode (Rowlinson et al. 2010), social memory studies, historical context of the events and Connerton's typology of forgetting.

We point to the importance of theorizing about (a) the processes how organizations maintain and/or discard certain traumatic moments from the history, (b) organizational memory and forgetting relation towards socially, historically, and politically created narratives, (c) insufficiency of written records and importance of oral history for organizational memory studies, and (d) the need for common terminology that could be used for cross disciplinary discussion.

We start by accepting Feldman's shift in terminology from organizational memory (an object) to organizational remembering (as practice). Since we perceive organizational remembering as an active practice, we considered that this practice is best transferred by individuals; thus, our research method will take that into account. Since the subject of our research is in the field of cultural and social memory studies, we would take into account subjective experience of remembering and specific historical contexts that influenced political and cultural dynamics of the researched period.

Marc Augé (2004) warns that there is a threat regarding integrity of personal narratives as in the digital age, they are much influenced by the cultural industries' images and fictions. In this light, we note that the stories about specific organizational controversial events analyzed by us and the historical context of that period is to some extent influenced by the narratives and images (film, media) about communist Yugoslavia. In order to analyze the types of forgetting and the rationale behind it, we combine the subjective experience of individual memories with the social and political context of the historical period.

The research takes into account three public<sup>1</sup> theaters (Atelje 212, Yugoslav Drama Theatre, Belgrade Drama Theatre [BDT]) created after World War II in Belgrade, passing through different sociopolitical changes which influenced their development: socialist self-governing period (until 1992), period of war and nationalism (1992–2000), and the period of democratic transition (2000–2014). We have selected these three public theaters because all of them were created in the same period and in the same location (Belgrade); they are all professional theaters (having a permanent troupe and a repertoire); their organizational structure is similar; and all are publicly subsidized theaters.

We used empirical and theoretical research; content analysis was applied to published and publicly available monographs for each organization as this type of material represents the *official memory politics*. The monographs are available in the National Library, Archive of Belgrade, Archive of Theatre Museum, and in the Theatres, itself. Archive documents were not considered since they are historical documents and not actively used in organizational memory politics.

In addition, we analyzed other publications, diaries, biographies, and autobiographies of relevant stakeholders of the researched period. A special issue of the journal *Scena* (1990) was devoted to the issue of censoring practices in

<sup>1</sup> Public theaters are called so because they are largely funded by the state authority.

theatres in Yugoslavia, and this was the first catalogue of censored performances, containing valuable source for the research. We also conducted a number of interviews with Board members and artistic key figures of those theaters (i.e., Jovan Ćirilov, Borka Pavićević, Ivana Dimić, Jasna Novakov and Vida Ognjenović), investigating stories regarding traumatic events in their individual memories. Most of the interviewees demanded not to be explicitly quoted in the text, thus we will just indicate data obtained by the interviews using the abbreviation: int.

All interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted in the premises of selected theaters from June 2013 to August 2014. They were semi structured, and questions focused on their memories on specific traumatic events and its narratives presented in the official and in the collective memory of the organization.

In post-socialist Serbia, on the contrary to the usual Western practices that rely on written documents and reports—archive material, the oral memories are indispensable. Since we found that most traumatic events have been presented in the official analyzed documents only partially, or have been omitted, we consider oral narratives even more relevant for the research as keeping remembrance of both traumatic and controversial side events alive.

By using oral testimonies, it was possible to locate and explain some of the traumatic events that “have never happened” according to the written documents.

### Organizational memories and remembering

Most Serbian public cultural institutions including its staff are not mobile and are usually located in the same city and even the same building from the moment of its creation. It could be relatively easy to keep organizational memory. However, as methods and policies of keeping organizational memory and remembering are rarely part of academic curricula or managerial trainings within continuous professional development in the cultural management (except in the field of librarianship – Megill 2005), theater managers in Serbia hardly had an opportunity to hear, learn, or to be trained in this field. Only the young cultural operators, second and third managerial line, who recently graduated cultural management, had the opportunity to learn but they have not yet come to the top managerial positions usually reserved for famous artists (theater directors or actors) and politicians.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, each cultural organization was developing official memory, which sometimes meant just archiving memorabilia (*the store memory*,

<sup>2</sup> That does not exclude a possibility for professional cultural manager to obtain leadership position but previously it was also to be politically “approved.”

Assmann 2006) about the past programs and sometimes more than that—building contemporary programs or even whole spectrum of activities linked to the past events in order to create *functional memory* (Assmann 2006). Thus, in the first case, the guardian of organizational memory is just archive as such, whereas in the second case, the guardian of organizational memory becomes the whole collective through their activities and practices (organizational remembering).

Narrating institutional past (Šešić i Stefanović 2013) is not a well-elaborated practice of cultural institutions in Serbia except when it comes to official memory expressed in anniversary books (i.e., monographs). As shown in the above-mentioned study, all public theaters are taking the same approach to the official memory by using celebratory narrative, avoiding controversial, shameful and negative stories. These stories are kept by individuals in the popular memory among members of the organization or in the larger cultural community. Popular memory is understood as a widely accepted “compelling story from the past, an operative ‘truth’ that related not so much of what actually happened in the past, as to what people believed – or wanted to believe – happened” (Cohen 2014, 65).

Theatres have introduced “memoryscapes” within organizations, underlining certain traditions and values by mapping memories, identifying significant, grand narratives while memories of side events are kept within individuals or groups specifically practiced within theater inner-cafés. Thus, on the official day of remembrance (i.e., founding day or day chosen by its importance), usually there is no space for remembering side events that caused any sort of conflict, controversy, or discomfort to individuals or the organization itself. It is a platform for celebration and that is why shameful memories and feelings of guilt are never expressed in those occasions. However, side events are part of communicative memory since we found that certain stories from the organizational history survived and had been orally transmitted to younger generations. However, remembering of those events varies not only in written documents but even more in oral narratives. It is quite difficult to identify all facts related to the specific event and to locate the responsibility for sending some events to official oblivion.

Both archives and collective memories are controlled by individuals who do not easily admit to making mistakes, so controversial events might be erased from both organizational archives and individual/collective memories. However, memories about those events can be kept outside the organization, even at places of cultural and representational power such as public archives and historical museums, research institutions and academia, in the popular memory of cultural elites and they could return them back to the organization at the right time, when a changed sociopolitical context will allow different types of narratives as well as new organizational remembering practice to be reintroduced.

## The organizational trauma in the Serbian cultural context

An analysis of traumatic memories is essentially related to the sociopolitical context that determined many organizational and managerial decisions in our case studies, so it would be important to contextualize Serbia after World War II.

In modern political history from the XIX century onwards, many political events in Serbia were a taboo topic—from May's overturn in 1903, Thessaloniki process in 1916 to events related to the Cominform<sup>3</sup> resolution in 1948. That was also a case of many cultural related decisions like the re-opening of Serbian Patriarchy in Belgrade (relocation from Sremski Karlovci in 1920), move of Matica srpska from Budapest to Novi Sad, and “collaboration” of cultural institutions during the first and second world wars (National Theatre, Serbian Publishing House). None of those historical facts or their impact on organizations was discussed publicly, although each one of those events had wider implications on cultural life and even for the construction of Serbian national identity. As Rowlinson et al. demanded, alternative research strategies for organizational history had to be used in order to go beyond “prosaic storytelling” (Rowlinson et al. 2014, 250) and to understand real meaning of events that shaped organization past.

Cultural institutions and researchers kept silent, since both were funded by the state. Besides that, the crucial value of organizational culture of public cultural institutions in all political systems in Belgrade was status-quo. Although official censorship in Serbia was abolished in 1903 and then reintroduced several times (briefly during Royal dictatorship, occupation, and in the socialist period), other ways of censorship and self-censorship have been present. Thus, it was usually on the margins of cultural life, outside of institutional system, that memories regarding side events were kept, surviving more as a store memory than a functional memory and being more part of communicative than of official cultural memory.

From the data collected through interviews and from relevant theater history texts (Pašić 1992; Novaković 2005; Vučetić 2016; numerous articles from journals like *Scena* and *Teatron*) we have identified three groups of traumatic events that happened in the selected public theaters.

First group of events are caused by *outside pressures*: censorship and self-censorship, by accepting political persecutions (political demands) through dismissal of institution leaders; by merging (organizational structure change), and by street-pressures (mob actions) on program content organized by informal groups.

Second group of events are caused by *internal conflicts* related to management, programs, or infrastructure, such as trauma of changing a leader by imposed decision; dismissal of prominent employee; strikes and protests that

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<sup>3</sup> Communist Information Bureau.



divided collective (that resulted in losing face, respect, and self-respect due to “internal” decisions out of fear or conformism).

Third group of events relates to accidents and natural disasters (*force majeure*); losing the building in accidents (in war conflicts, fire), trauma caused by natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.<sup>4</sup>

In the case studies which follow, we analyze organizational traumas and ways how they are treated in the organizational memory practice using Conner-ton's (2008) scale of seven types of forgetting, plus we created two additional types of forgetting (*shameful silence and confused silence*) in order to explain some of the forgetting patterns and models. Although Connerton stated that every type of classifications has different values, functions, and agents, we did a cross analysis and investigated if a type of forgetting typical for a state/society can be applied in the context of an organization.

First, we will briefly summarize the typology used in the analysis. *Repressive erasure (1)* appears in the history of totalitarian regimes, where memories to all previous respected leaders or institutions are removed—former entities are sent to oblivion and replaced by new ones. *Prescriptive forgetting (2)*, again usually an act of state, although different from erasure since it is believed that this type of forgetting is beneficial to all parties. As an illustration, Connerton suggests example of ancient Greeks who were attentive of the possible dangers of remembering wrong actions in the past. *Forgetting as a necessity for a new identity (3)* is also policy that can be applied in organizations wanting to forget the past. *Structural amnesia (4)* leads toward erasing socially and culturally degrading information; events that do not fit in the current identity or are unimportant are remembered. *Forgetting as annulment (5)* reaction to information overload, might be difficult to find in cultural organizations. They might be fighting with over-information but their role as keepers of cultural heritage prevents them from discarding things from memories. *Forgetting as planned obsolescence (6)* although much more present in creative industries than in public sector organizations, might be found in trendy cultural organizations turned always towards fashion and future. *Forgetting as humiliated silence (7)* is the most common approach to forgetting in institutions when, due to the humiliation, organization does not dare to remember.

Wessel and Moulds (2008) found that the first three models have in common an aspiration to shape the group's past in order to fit its current goals. Furthermore, authors claim that structural amnesia picks information that serves

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<sup>4</sup> Numerous traumas have been recorded in the Balkan region, especially after the two World Wars and destruction of the 90s (Sarajevo, Mostar, Vukovar) and also due to massive earthquakes (Skopje and Banjaluka). In our research, sample traumatic events related to war destructions and the bombardments of 1999 do not appear as significant in organizational memory practices in the cultural field.

for a current identity, whereas discards all the other information. They believe that humiliated silence is again concerned with shaping new identity. Wessel and Moulds classify five models which use forgetting to outline and preserve a group's identity, by selectively employing narratives from history. In contrast, annulment and planned obsolescence are types of forgetting "coping with information overload" (Wessel and Moulds 2008, 291). Here, we accept this remark, as we found that the types of forgetting coping with information overload are two types of forgetting that we have not identified in our case studies.

To these seven types, we have added two types of forgetting in organizations: *forgetting as shameful silence* (8), a category explaining the reasons why particular traumas identified by us were sent to oblivion. Those traumas are not part of humiliating experience but part of feeling the guilt and shame. We also added *forgetting as confused silence* (9) for the cases in which organization is uncertain or confused how to react to the certain controversial event and, out of perplexity, send traumatic event to oblivion. This type of forgetting is characteristic for recent events when the emotions are still elevated and differing and are threatening to endangered organizational identity and its main narrative.

## Case studies analysis

In this section, we will present case studies of three Belgrade theaters, experiencing different types of traumatic events, classifying the forms of forgetting according to modified Connertons typology.

### *Structural amnesia* (4)

At the Yugoslav Drama Theatre,<sup>5</sup> we have identified two events that have been sent to oblivion. First belongs to the outside pressures and was represented by "street censorship" related to a time of nationalistic upheavals, when a sociopolitical context was impregnated with nationalistic emotions. The play *Saint Sava* (author Siniša Kovačević), a coproduction between Yugoslav Drama Theatre and National Theatre Zenica, was interrupted during the premiere by a group of nationalists led by an orthodox bishop Žarko Gavrilović (1990). The troupe as well as the main character played by the famous young actor Žarko Laušević was forced to stop the play due to security risk. The author and the main actor were accused of smearing Serbian saints and national interests.

<sup>5</sup> Created during the post-war period in 1948, when the new socialist state wanted to form institutions to represent new values and ideas. The young Slovenian theater director, Bojan Stupica, was invited to select the best actors and to create a theater that will reflect new society (Dragićević Šešić i Stefanović 2013).



Later, in his widely popular autobiography, Laušević (2011) stated that the civil war in Yugoslavia started that evening in Yugoslav Drama Theatre.

Although, it was widely discussed and published event (Jovičević 2002, Milosavljević 1994), according to analyzed printed material containing official memory of Yugoslav Drama Theatre, there is no evidence of this event. It is also left out in the major photo-monograph published for the 60-year anniversary (JDP 2008) and containing 1281 photos. This leads to several observations. The Yugoslav Drama Theatre, created with the idea of *brotherhood and unity* as its founding ideological narrative (Dragičević Šešić i Stefanović 2013) decided to send to oblivion the traumatic event that was directly opposed to the theater's identity. In addition, as a theater that uses the narrative of *grandeur* as a main narrative, the Yugoslav Drama Theatre wanted to forget the event that was harmful to its reputation; thus, the chosen tactic was to send this event to oblivion—type of forgetting called *structural amnesia*.<sup>6</sup> However, this story stayed in a dissident communicative memory, as spoken about on numerous occasions within Other Serbia<sup>7</sup> movement (Dragičević Šešić 2016) and discussed recently in the above mentioned autobiography of the actor Žarko Laušević (Laušević 2011).<sup>8</sup>

The controversial and critical event happened as a consequence of growing nationalism, and rising tensions in the society started to be presented in the theater. This event caused embarrassment both in public and within the organization. However, we found that the event was sent to oblivion as harmful to the organization's identity. In the theater Monograph (2008), this event was sent to the oblivion. In the interviews, we found out that according to some, this was an irrelevant event, thus describing the event as a side event; whereas some of them believed it would harm theater identity if it becomes a part of official, codified memory. However, the return of Žarko Laušević to Serbia, evoke the public memory of this event (Ilić 2011). On the other side, Bosnian National theatre from Zenica have celebrated 65 years of its existence by creating the performance "Saint S, or how the performance Saint Sava has been archived" in 2015 with numerous polemical texts on its website regarding memory (oblivion) politics of Yugoslav Drama Theatre (Begagić, Miletić–Oručević i Fejzić 2015).

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<sup>6</sup> Structural amnesia is also applied in this theater for all accidents during the 90s occurring in its inner café and night club called Stupica notorious for its criminal clientele. It was closed during the theater reconstruction and never re-opened.

<sup>7</sup> Other Serbia is a common name for a numerous oppositional and dissident movements of the 90s, from the pacifist organization Women in black, to cultural programs held at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination or in Cultural Centre REX (of Radio B92), etc.

<sup>8</sup> This event was a beginning of his personal drama. After his role as Saint Sava, he started receiving life threats that forced him to start carrying a gun. Two years later, in a banal pub fight in Montenegro, he killed two men in self-defense, which immediately closed his artistic career. He spent a few years in jail and then immigrated to Canada, fearing the proclaimed family feud.

*Forgetting as a necessity for a new identity (3)*

## A) ACCIDENT

Different type of trauma happened in Yugoslav Drama Theatre on October 17, 1997, when the main theater building caught fire. The main stage, auditorium, and part of the administration offices were destroyed, whereas the archive and most artistic equipment were saved. The director Jovan Ćirilov said that he felt strong psychological shock thinking it would need a lot of time and unity of the whole collective to overpass. For six years, the theater was under reconstruction, and the performances were hosted in different theaters but most were played at the small stage not damaged in the fire. It seemed that this trauma was reinforcing unity of the ensemble, visible during days of reconstruction. Can such an event be named traumatic, although provoking a stress in the moment when happened, if it had a positive ending like the construction of a new and modern building which brought reinforced and renewed identity? The importance of this event is indirectly visible in all memory texts, using narratives of loyalty and unity that the ensemble and a larger community had expressed during and after this tragic event. Interviews have shown that this event brought together ensemble and long before retired members of the collective reinforcing organizational culture and identity. Therefore, it is not the day of the fire which is remembered but a day of establishment of the new building (in 2013 Yugoslav Drama Theatre celebrated ten years in a new building). Here we can agree with Connerton (2008) that forgetting is not always a failure. The day of fire is sent to oblivion as part of a strategy to form a new identity.

## B) ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN TRAUMA

After 12 years of existence as a city theater, the BDT in 1959, by the decision of city authorities, was merged with the Comedy Theatre. The founder wanted to cut expenses by having joint management and one ensemble. According to the personal memories published in the Monograph of BDT (2007), the first idea was to merge the drama of the National Theatre and Yugoslav Drama Theatre, but the reactions from the director of Yugoslav Drama Theatre and many of its actors were loud enough to prevent this merger. However, BDT management and ensemble, already shaken with *Waiting for Godot* censorship (described below), did not have the courage and strength to resist the proposal. This unfortunate merger that lasted for 15 years left BDT wounded. Although this event should be seen as an important mark in institutional history since it was crucial for BDT's future, it was designated as a side event. Nowadays, the event is mentioned in the official memory (i.e. webpage history section) but only as a fact without any valorization due to the generational change.

*Humiliated (7), shameful (8), or confused (9) forgetting*

## A) DISMISSAL OF INSTITUTION LEADERS

We will explore these types of trauma in the case of Atelje 212 and Belgrade Drama Theatre. In Belgrade Drama Theatre at the end of the eighties (in April 1989), Borka Pavićević became artistic director while actor Miroslav Bjelić got the executive position. She immediately starts with repertoire that should return the old glory to the theatre, inviting Zlatko Sviben to direct Krleža, Jadranka Andjelić to direct Mrožek, and None Dragović to direct Rozewicz, but the mayor project should be *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* as this was the mayor hit of BDT in the fifties. The ambitious theatre project followed including *Carmen* (directed by Lazar Stojanović), but already in March 1990, the ensemble was asking resignation and suspension of the artistic director “for non-realistic plans” (int.). In fact, the mayor issue was the repertoire and engagement of theatre directors (Bosnian, Croatian, and Montenegrin) that was absolutely contradicting nationalistic spirit of the time that was prevailing among actors in this collective, in spite of the fact that they had numerous non-Serbian actors in the ensemble. Those actors started leaving the Theatre one by one, and in 1993 Pavićević was downgraded to the dramaturgic position as stated at the BDT website, while in the interview Pavićević testified that she was actually fired. This period represents in spite of brave repertoire, the most shameful period in the history of BDT. Although some of the facts are mentioned on the web page (i.e. Haris Burina was replaced with Nikola Kojo; Borka Pavićević became dramaturg, etc.), many stories did not have further explanations, for example what really have happened to the most popular performance of the BDT at that period (*Burn this*, by L. Wilson) and why it was withdrawn from the repertoire. In her interview, actress Snežana Bogdanović said that the play *Burn this* represented the resistance to the war atmosphere in the country, fulfilled with negative energy, provoking conflicts and hatred even between close friends (Pašić Z. 1991). However, in 1993 the most popular artistic couple Snežana Bogdanović and Uliks Fehmiu, together with Haris Burina left theatre for exile. In fact, there is not enough evidence that those events could be considered as traumatic in organizational memory of BDT, since the majority of those artists who stayed in the theatre embraced nationalism and asked for and welcomed dismissal of Borka Pavićević.

There were two controversial events related to the leadership change during Atelje's history. Both were essential for the theater's identity and both represent important events. First is the moment when Mira Trailović, the founder and *spiritus movens* of Atelje 212, left the theater after working for 23 years as a Director. The second such event in Atelje 212 is from recent history. It is the case when Director Kokan Mladenović (2009–2011) had to step down since most of the troupe went into the strike, asking for his resignation.

According to some personal memories (Pašić 2006), the political authorities sent Mira Trailović to early pension, with official explanation that she cannot have three consecutive mandates.<sup>9</sup> However, the story is much more complex. In 1983, Mira Trailović was asked by Jack Lang to be the Director of The World Theatre Festival in Nancy. She accepted the challenge and spent several months in France, away from Atelje. No matter how hard she tried, her management of distance raised dissatisfaction in ensemble (Pašić 2006). The outside “recommendation” combined with internal pressures forced her to resign. In practice, it meant early pension. The analyses of this case lead to several observations: remembering Mira Trailović as a core element of the organizational memory is present in both popular and official memory. However, the controversial or critical event related to her removal is forgotten and the narratives about it are variable.

In the first mentioned case, we had a leader who was respected but losing political support; in the second, it was the opposite – Mladenović had a political support but hatred from the ensemble. According to interviews with the Board members and members of City Council for Culture, the Belgrade mayor, and the Board of Atelje 212, supported Mladenović repertoire decisions and its esthetics, giving him artistic autonomy. However, both the City Council for Culture and the Board did question his management style and approach especially regarding the public questioning of the artistic quality of its own ensemble, while criticizing the model of repertoire theatre. The cultural professionals also publicly criticized Mladenović managerial approach, underlining that he does not have the support from the collective (Radulović 2012). Having emphasized the managerial dissent, we do not neglect the fact that Mladenović was politically criticized by in that time oppositional nationalist parties for staging the performance „Zoran Đinđić“ (directed by Oliver Frlijić), and that part of the ensemble also shared those political feelings and standpoints. However, this was not the motive for his dismissal (int.), as he resigned himself after losing support from the Board and the Council for Culture.

Glory narratives of Mira Trailović and her cosmopolitan success (creating BITEF; guest-directorship of the Nancy festival) were preserved in official and popular memory, whereas the memory of her removal was forgotten during the 30 years of oblivion as a policy of *shameful silence* had imposed. However, the Trailović story in order to rise from communicative memory to cultural memory needs to be coherently built in the narrative of Atelje 212. This was partially corrected in 2013, when the main stage was named after her (int.) while in September 2016 the International conference on cultural diplomacy opened in Atelje 212 with two key notes devoted to her role.

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<sup>9</sup> In the 50 years anniversary Monograph is an interview with Mira Trailović undertaken in 1980, where she explicitly said that she would like to stay the Director of Atelje (Pašić 2006).

Regarding the second case, we have found that ensemble and the subsequent executive explicitly said in the interview that they do not want to remember the period when Kokan Mladenović was a director. For her and the most of the ensemble, it was the worst period in the history of Atelje 212, from the standpoint of human relations, in spite of relevant artistic and fundraising results that were non-compatible with previously accepted theater identity.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the present silence about this period can be named as a *confused silence*, as the team still has to recover internal relations and restore previous organizational culture. At this moment, popular memory is trying to erase narratives of this period, although it stays through historical data as part of an official memory. In this case, we found that all narratives were full of emotional statements, and the remembering of this period will depend on future leaders and their abilities to integrate this traumatic event into the organization's narrative and memory.

#### B) CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

The important group of traumatic events caused by outside pressure in all three theaters is related to censorship and self-censorship. The issue of censorship started to be mentioned after the democratic changes, which begun after 2000. However, censored performances appear only as factual data without any explanatory narrative or assessment in the published documents (Dragičević Šešić i Stefanović 2013). It is important to state that the official censorship in theaters during the socialist self-governing period was rare; it appeared more as a self-censorship practice (Vučetić 2016) done by staff that “read between the lines” of current political discourse. In the self-governing system of Yugoslavia, managers and directors had to comprehend what the party message was, and sometimes, due to the fear for their positions and the destiny of the theater, they had to remove the so-called controversial plays.

The important cases of self-censorship were *Waiting for Godot* (Samuel Beckett, Belgrade Drama Theatre,<sup>11</sup> 1954), *Ball of Thieves* (Jean Anouilh, Belgrade Drama Theatre, 1952), *Hats Down* (Aleksandar Popović, Atelje 212,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> During Yugoslavia, Atelje 212 had slight dissident aura and identity putting on stage Serbian dramaturgy questioning also socialist ideology and the state system. Kokan Mladenović profiled seasons as “Revolution,” “Next Yu” which could better fit the identity of Yugoslav Drama Theatre that was always based on Yugoslav narrative and promoted socialist values.

<sup>11</sup> Belgrade Drama Theatre (BDT) was founded in 1947 at the outskirts of Belgrade, and during first years which are considered to be its golden age, BDT staged Russian classics as well as American and English contemporary playwrights.

<sup>12</sup> Founded in 1956 by a group of Belgrade intellectuals and led by the ambitious Mira Trailović (Dragičević Šešić 2013).

1968), *Hair* (Rado Ragni, Atelje 212, 1972), and *When Pumpkins Blossomed* (Dragoslav Mihailović, Yugoslav Drama Theatre, 1969).

The first and most famous case of self-censorship was the case of *Waiting for Godot* (Pašić 1992) becoming a traumatic event for BDT but a part of a glory narrative in the organizational memory of Atelje 212. In BDT, the play was self-censored whereas in Atelje, two years later, was an unconditional success. During the control rehearsal of *Godot* in 1954, writer and influential figure in the Yugoslav cultural scene, Miroslav Krleža, commented that this play seemed like a nihilist performance. The director Dinulović read this comment as threatening for the theater and immediately organized an Artistic council that decided to preventively veto the play (Marković 2008). This unfortunate event was the beginning of the fall for BDT. It ended finding the narrative of open and innovative theater, leading to confusion over the theater's identity (Dragićević Šešić i Stefanović 2013). Two years later, in 1956, this same *Godot* premiered in a newly established Atelje 212, becoming a huge success (Vučetić 2016, 78).

The other famous case of self-censorship was the removal of *When Pumpkins Blossomed* in Yugoslav Drama Theatre (Vučetić 2016, 306; Novaković 2004). Numerous meetings of the actors, member of the communist party had followed Tito<sup>13</sup> critical statement about the drama content and consequent public criticism.<sup>14</sup> Finally, the Artistic Council in Yugoslav Drama Theatre decided to remove *Pumpkins*, and the Director, Bojan Stupica, did not oppose them (Novaković 2004), in spite of the fact that opinion of the ensemble was divided. However, as Novaković states (2004, 12), the difference between the drama and the dramatization of *The Pumpkins*, showed the weight of the theatre and of a spoken word.<sup>15</sup>

Mira Trailović's behavior was different. When accepting "recommendation" to eliminate a certain play, she used different excuses in public, not confessing the fact that the regime did try to influence the repertoire. For example, when removing the highly popular play *Hair* from the repertoire after four years, Mira Trailović explained that "the performance was played enough" (Pašić 2009). In fact, cadets in the audience felt offended by the scene in which actors destroy their military identity cards. They have sent a protest letter to a newspaper but Trailović reacted before public debate could start. For keeping the atmosphere in such moments when communist party or other authorities practiced pressure,

<sup>13</sup> Josip Broz Tito was the President and Prime Minister of Yugoslavia from 1943 until his death in 1980.

<sup>14</sup> This provoked growing interest for the book that became the most sold book in Belgrade (Novaković 2004, 16).

<sup>15</sup> The novel *When the pumpkins blossomed* was published in 1968 and it was highly popular. The author, Dragoslav Mihailovic, except some negative critics did not experience any other inconveniences (Novakovic 2004, 10).



Mira Trailović nurtured team spirit and organizational culture by suppressing the traumatic memory using different tactics. In the case when *Hats Down* premier was canceled,<sup>16</sup> due to potential irony towards communist party, Mira Trailović organized a tour in the USA (1968), what for most of the actors was a life-event and for her it was an extra opportunity to select most critical performances for next year's BITEF.<sup>17</sup> Trailović tried to create and save glory narratives so theater's identity and organizational culture would not be harmed by such events (i.e., the theater went to numerous other foreign tours, from Paris to Mexico, which was rather unusual for other theaters in Yugoslavia).

What is common for the two cases of self-censorship is that the theaters had strong directors; Atelje had powerful Mira Trailović, whereas the Yugoslav Drama Theatre had Bojan Stupica. However, in Atelje the decision laid solely on the managerial judgment of Trailović (sparing the collective from the shameful decision), whereas in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, Stupica left the decision to the collective, in spite of the fact that he was the one that took a lot of effort to take over this text from Atelje 212 to Yugoslav Drama Theatre (Novaković 2004, 10).

From today's perspective, the trauma of self-censorship can be described also as a structural amnesia type of forgetting until the democratic changes in 2000 enabled new insights on those events. Today, except the case of *Godot*, which is still part of humiliated silence in the BDT, all other theaters remember cases of self-censorship and represent a significant part of the official organizational memory.

## Conclusions and challenges

Presenting several types of traumatic events in three Belgrade theaters, we have identified different ways and approaches of memorizing, interiorizing, or forgetting these events. Different tactics of oblivion had been applied: from *structural amnesia* and *forgetting as necessity for a new identity* till *humiliating, shameful, and confused silence*. Dynamics of remembering was determined by the interaction between changing context, official institutional memories, and social communicative memories.

The traumatic events related to self-censorship during the Yugoslav socialist regime in theaters were sent to oblivion until the democratic changes hap-

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<sup>16</sup> The history of theatre is also a history of what was not performed, as stated interview with Borka Pavićević, that further claimed lack of auto reflexive text that are critical and contextual in keeping memory on traumatic events alive.

<sup>17</sup> The BITEF, Belgrade International Theatre Festival, was created in 1967 by Mira Trailović with the idea to follow latest theater tendencies. Festival happens annually and has a competitive character (Dragičević Šešić 2013).

pened (2000). They were connected to the fear, lack of courage, humiliation, and shame that were part of social and political setting of that period. Generally, *ketman* behavior was a common practice – the act of paying lip service to authority while concealing personal opposition (Milosz 1953). Moreover, official social and political narratives in Serbia and Yugoslavia at that time could not incorporate organizational narratives opposing romanticized images of Yugoslav free, tolerant, open, human, and self-governing society.

In some cases, a strong leader (Atelje 212) had the power to overcome threatening events and to present a need for self-censorship as part of the standard theater life not allowing deeper consequences hurting organizational identity. As stated above, we found that the self-censorship trauma that happened more than 50 years ago is remembered and integrated in the official communicative memory and narratives only recently. However, traumatic events from recent history, i.e., growing nationalism in the 90s, are still omitted from the official memory, although they exist in popular and communicative memory.

In a present Serbian social context, narratives of a specific trauma from the Yugoslav socialist self-governing period should be faced and confronted in order to reconsider new theater identity, values, and ethics in each concerned theater. The trauma of one theater is remembered and used as a glory of another as seen in the following examples (Dragićević Šešić i Stefanović 2013): Atelje 212 Monograph contains the story about the censorship of *Godot* in BDT; expulsion of Mira Trailović from Atelje is remembered in BITEF theater monographs; BDT by re-staging *When Pumpkins Blossomed* is memorizing the trauma of Yugoslav Drama Theatre; etc.

This study had shown to what extent organizations are selective in choosing the past which suits the present and future needs by practicing structural amnesia but also other types of forgetting. Events that are critical, controversial, and connected to different emotions (i.e., shame, guilt) are omitted from the official memory and practices of organizational remembering, although they stayed as part of popular memory and /or communicative memory. In this light, the concept of organizational memory studies as a data storage is limiting for the public cultural institutions, and we maintain that it is inevitable to take into account social memory and cultural studies in the analysis.

Furthermore, case studies revealed that persons in charge of making decisions play decisive roles when the trauma is sent to oblivion on purpose, usually when it hurts the reputation and/or new identity of an organization. Organizations tend to base their identity on the idea of ideal past, past without guilt and shame, where a trauma caused by outside repression is suppressed and forgotten. Thus, different types of forgetting are applied within. Without confronting the traumatic past, organizations will not be able to face new challenges, to open new prospects for a future, to learn and grow.

Connerton's typology served as a point of departure but we identified besides his seven, two additional types of forgetting in organizations: *shameful silence* and *confused silence*. The importance of this typology, although created around state/society memory, is also important for organizational memory in the field of cultural management. It is linked to the fact that the history of cultural organizations is part of the larger cultural history of a society. Thus, creating narratives that express only part of the story distorts social and cultural history of the country and prevents new generations to "learn lessons" and to discuss important, often controversial, ethical issues relevant for both society history and organizational history. In addition, the relevance of the OMS and social memory studies for cultural management and cultural policies are often neglected and this research tried to point out its importance.

Two types of forgetting labeled as "coping with information overload" (Wessel and Moulds, 2008) that we have not identified in our case studies will be the future challenge for theaters. Keeping in mind the increasing number of produced material which is part of one production (i.e., costumes, decor, photographs, and promotional material), theaters will be confronted with annulment and planned obsolescence in the near future. Also, a rapid development of technology will confront managers with a task of transferring all recorded files to new digital equipment in order to keep store memory and to accomplish cultural memory. Thus, this research could be developed in the future within the scope of new developed "digital humanities."

We hope that this study, by using and enlarging Connerton's seven types of forgetting applied in the cases of theaters, will provoke further cross-disciplinary discussions regarding common terminology and common challenging issues. Also, we look forward to see if the two additional types of forgetting can be possibly applied to some other areas besides cultural management studies.

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*Organizacijska trauma – tipovi organizacionog zaboravljanja u slučaju beogradskih pozorišta*

Studije organizacione memorije uokviruju pamćenje na menadžerski način, tretirajući ga kao skladište podataka i ograničavajući njegovu upotrebu u odnosu na šire polje proučavanja društvenog sećanja. Stoga, postoji izvesno nedovoljno razumevanje toga kako se odvija proces institucionalnog zaboravljanja i kako neka sećanja opstaju kao deo usmenih narativa i komunikativnog društvenog pamćenja, dok su istovremeno izostavljeni iz zvaničnog sećanja u javnim dokumentima i prigodnim proslavama godišnjica. Inspirisani tekstom Pola Konertona o tipovima zaboravljanja, primenili smo njegovu tipologiju na izabrane studije slučaja tri pozorišta u Beogradu, fokusirajući se na politiku i prakse sećanja, istražujući da li se neki tip zaboravljanja, tipičan za nivo države/društva/nacije, može primeniti i na kontekst kulturne organizacije.

Slažemo se sa zapaženjem Vesela i Mouldsa da bi bilo važno razviti zajednički jezik i terminologiju u međudisciplinarnom dijalogu. U tom smislu, ovaj tekst pokazuje kako tipologija zaboravljanja u društvima može biti primenjena i dalje razvijana unutar organizacionih studija pamćenja i kulturnog menadžmenta. Stoga je predmet našeg istraživanja dinamika pamćenja i zaboravljanja kroz analizu odnosa između promenljivog konteksta, zvaničnog institucionalnog sećanja i kolektivnog pamćenja.

*Ključne reči:* organizacijsko zaboravljanje, organizacijsko sećanje, pamćenje, trauma, identitet

*Traumatisme organisationnel – types d’oubli organisationnel  
dans le cas des théâtres de Belgrade*

Les études de mémoire organisationnelle (en anglais OMS) placent la mémoire sous un mode managérial, la traitant comme stockage de données, rétrécissant ainsi l’étendue du champ plus large des études de mémoire sociale. Il y a un manque de compréhension sur la manière dont fonctionne le processus d’oubli et comment certains souvenirs continuent à faire partie des récits oraux et de la mémoire sociale communicative alors qu’ils sont omis de la mémoire officielle que représentent les documents officiels et les commémorations. Inspirée par l’article de Paul Connerton sur la typologie d’oubli, nous explorons sa typologie dans les études de cas choisies concernant trois théâtres publics situés à Belgrade, et nous nous concentrons sur la politique et les pratiques de mémorisation en essayant de déterminer s’il est possible d’appliquer le type d’oubli propre à l’état/à la société/à la nation au contexte de l’organisation culturelle.

Nous partageons l’avis de Wessel et de Moulds que le développement d’un langage et d’une terminologie communs serait important et bénéfique pour le dialogue interdisciplinaire. En ce sens, l’étude montre comment la typologie d’oubli caractéristique des sociétés peut être appliquée et développée dans les études de mémoire organisationnelle et du management culturel. L’accent dans cette recherche est mis sur la dynamique de mémorisation et de l’oubli explorée à travers l’analyse de l’interaction entre le contexte changeant, les mémoires institutionnelles officielles, et les mémoires sociales communicatives.

*Mots clés:* oubli organisationnel, mémoire organisationnelle, mémorisation, traumatisme, identité

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