

TRÜMMER

A research project by Mathias Weinfurter, 2023

In recent years, my work has focussed on current issues of remembrance culture and politics. I am interested in various ideas of how memory can be preserved. My field of interest ranges from the ambivalent representation of historical heritage to individual desires for memory and nostalgia.

I would like to explore these connections in the former Yugoslavia. Starting from Belgrade, Serbia, as a fixed location, I plan to visit the „Spomeniks“ (monuments) created between the 1950s and 1980s. They were erected throughout Yugoslavia, mostly in rural areas, at the sites of the Second World War and the Shoah as anti-fascist memorials. The artistic design was put out to tender in public competitions. Relevant artists include Vojin Bakić, Bogdan Bogdanović, Dušan Džamonja, Iskra and Jordan Grabul and Janez Lenassi.

During the Yugoslav wars (1991 to 2001), some of the brutalist representatives of socialist Yugoslavia were deliberately destroyed by political iconoclasts or lost their social significance and remain unused to this day. Their relevance is still controversial. The Spomenik at the partisan memorial cemetery in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was only destroyed in June 2022.



Fig. 1: Ruins of the *Pjesnik* (poet) or *Pesnica* (fist) Monument by Boško Kučanski, Makljen, BiH, 2022

Through the Spomeniks, I would like to familiarise myself with the dynamics of the culture of remembrance and its artistic form in the region. From my experiences in dealing with the monuments during and after the war, I would like to gain insights that may be relevant to current events. For example, events of political iconoclasm can be observed in connection with the war in Ukraine and Syria. In Germany, memorials commemorating the Shoah and the Nazi era have increasingly been called into question by historical revisionists in recent years. The extreme right-wing politician Björn Höcke labelled the Holocaust memorial in Berlin a „monument of shame“ and called for a „180-degree turnaround in remembrance policy“. As part of a reactionary movement, he is using his rhetoric in a targeted attempt to gain control over the interpretation of historical narratives and influence social developments.

In addition to professional research, I would of course also like to do creative work. Building on projects that have already been realised, I plan to use interventions and installations to preserve memory and yet also to consider every change in the narrative through new insights or perspectives. Ultimately, I do not see memory as static, but as a dynamic process. My aim is to develop site-specific works.

I am planning to spend several weeks in Belgrade to realise this project. During this period, I will go on excursions to document the state of the Spomeniks, visit museums and archives and collect historical documents. I would also like to meet and exchange ideas with experts, such as (art) historians or descendants of the artists. Conversations with local residents in the immediate vicinity can also be particularly interesting.

Since 2021 I have already been able to work on relevant aspects of memory culture. Fascinated by the phenomenon of iconoclasm and current developments in Berlin, I developed an installation for the exhibition *Collapsing Memories* (Centrum, Berlin). A catalogue with extensive textual research was published. I also travelled to the Kerpen district over a longer period of time to document the dismantling of the village of Manheim and the construction of the Manheim-neu resettlement project. Manheim had to make way for the expansion of the lignite mining area. Various processes in dealing with local identity-forming memory were recognisable.



Fig. 2: *Spomenik Revoluciji* (Monument to the Revolution) by Dušan Džamonja, Kozara National Park, BiH, 2021

Together with Max Brück, I developed the installation *Offenbach-neu* (Kressmann-Halle, Offenbach/Main) from these impressions. For the exhibition *130 km/h* (Kunstverein Bellevue Saal, Wiesbaden) I researched the history of the first German motorway. Its inauguration was sabotaged by activists. Using installations, I made the almost forgotten sabotage, of which there is no visual record, tangible in order to contribute to filling the memory gap.

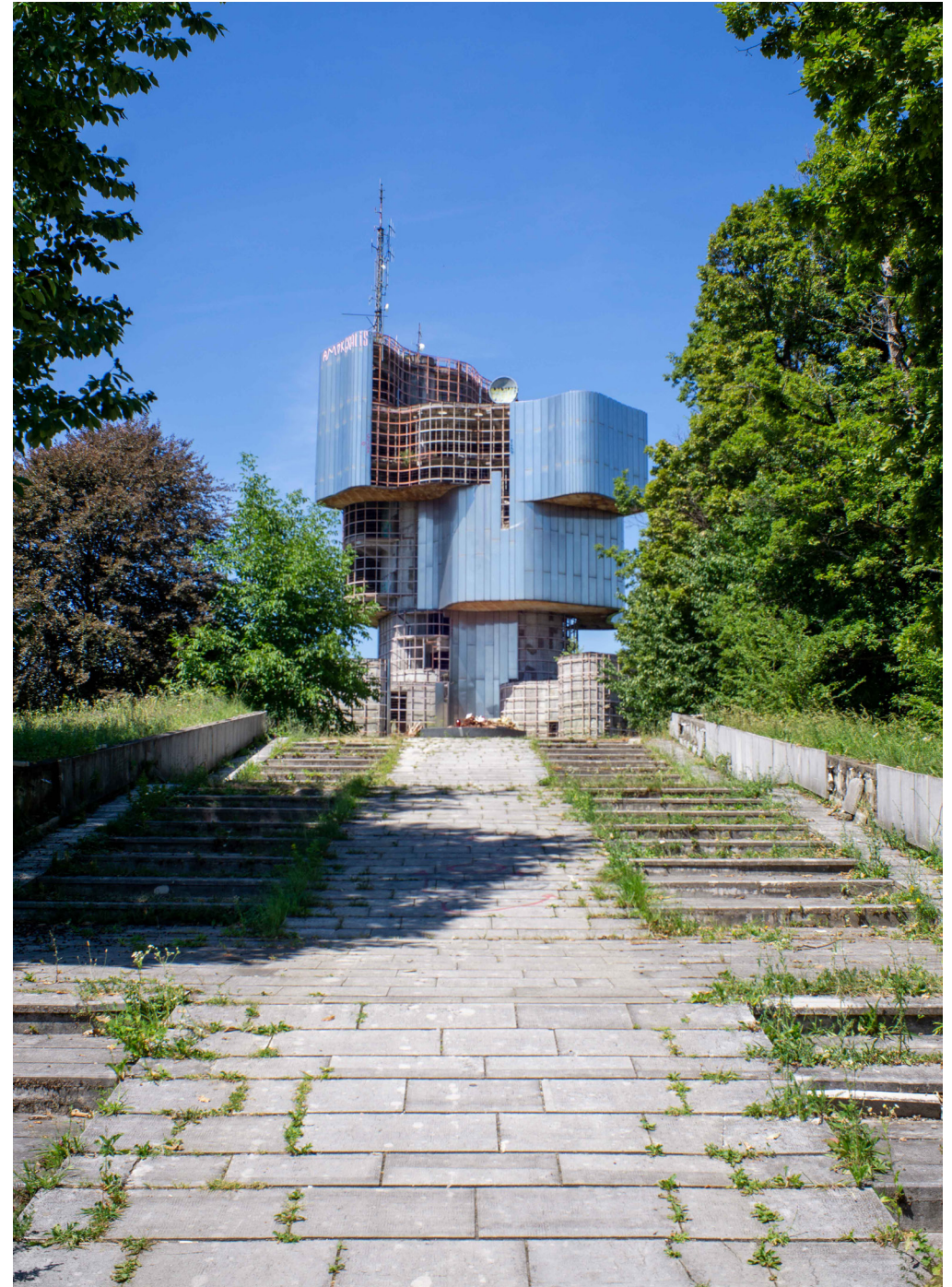


Fig. 4: Ruins of the *Spomenik ustanku naroda Banije i Korduna* (Monument to the Uprising of the Inhabitants of Kordun and Banija) by Vojin Bakić, Petrova Gora, HRV, 2022

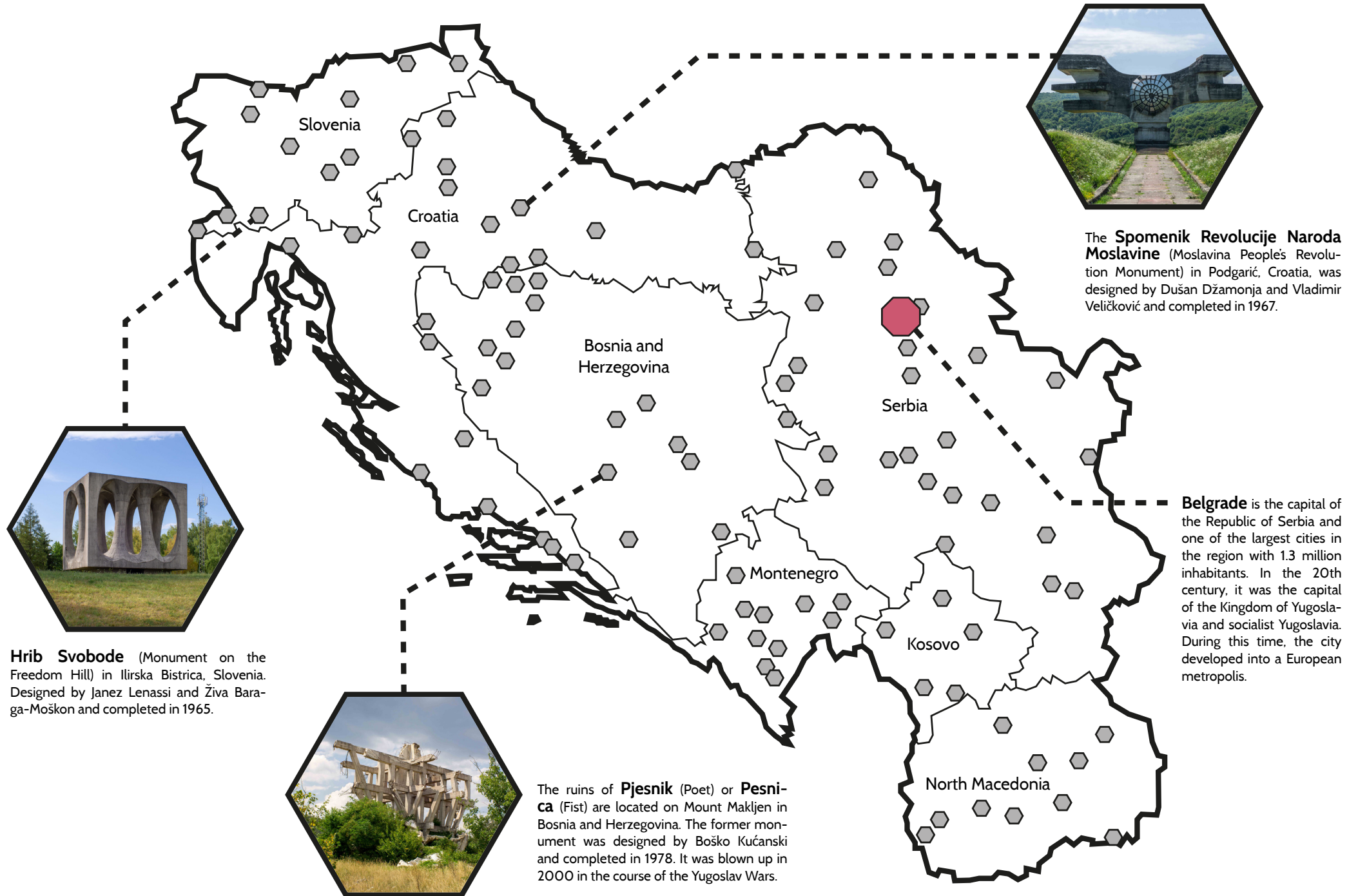


Fig. 3: Map of former Yugoslavia with marked spomeniks, 2022

„Even today, everyone can decipher the messages of these [partisan] monuments. The right-wingers compete against them with their myths and legends, which is why their hatred of Yugoslavia is not only discharged on a rhetorical level, but also very practically against these buildings, which virtually inscribe a left-wing space into their right-wing space. [...] Monuments are damaged or destroyed. Or attempts are made to devalue them by placing a memorial plaque for paramilitaries who died in the Croatian war in the 1990s with the Ustaša greeting „Za dom - spremni“ (For the homeland - ready) within sight of Bogdan Bogdanović's famous stone flower, which commemorates the dead of the Ustaša-run extermination camp, as in Jasenovac.“

– *Gal Kirn*,
political theorist and philosopher
ARCH+, 52nd edition, 2019

The **Kameni Cvijet** (Stone Flower) Spomenik in Jasenovac, Croatia was designed by Bogdan Bogdanović. It is part of the memorial complex that was erected in 1966 for those murdered in the Jasenovac concentration camp.

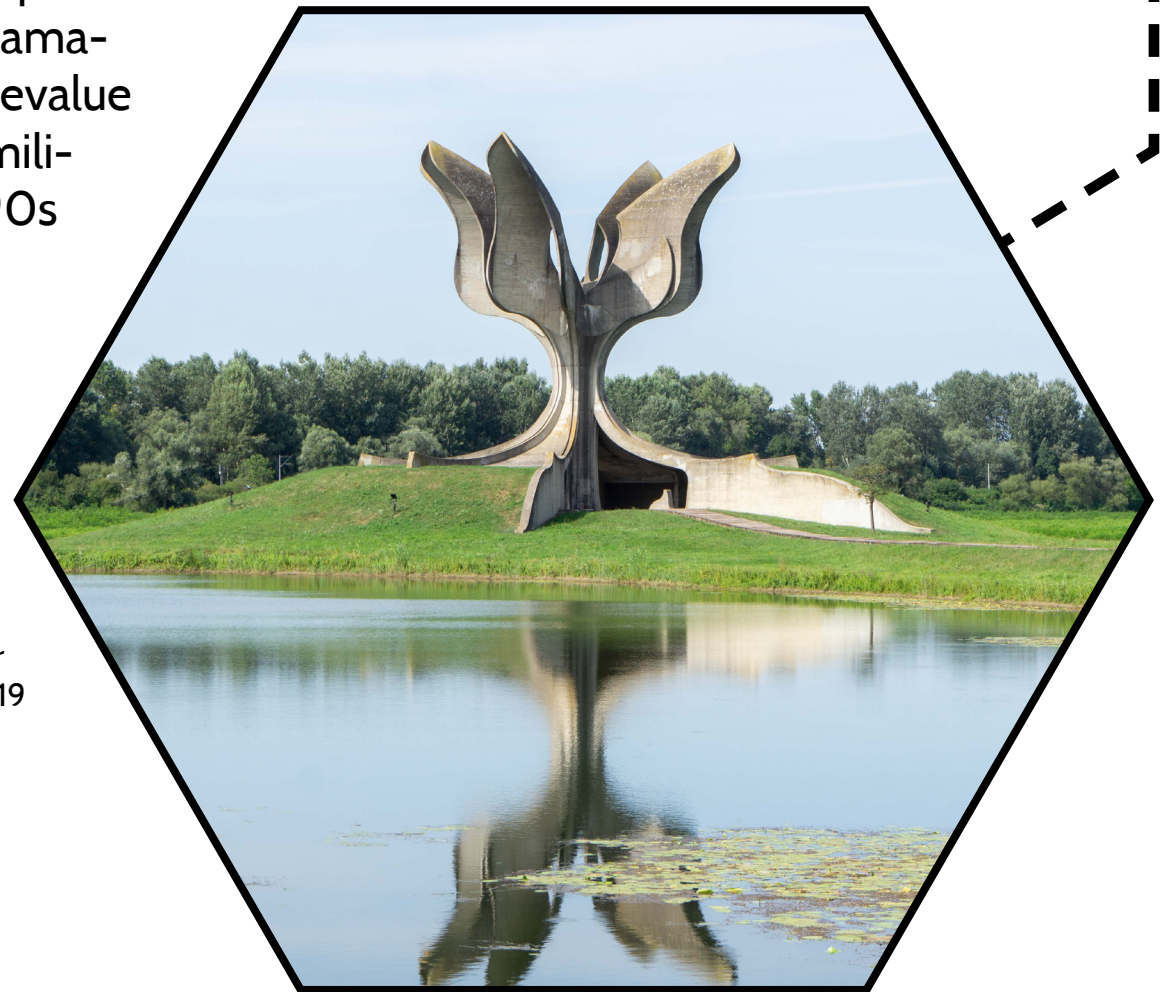




Fig. 6: Exhibition view *Offenbach-new*, with Max Brück, Kressmann-Halle, Offenbach/Main, 2021 // Fig. 7: Exhibition view *Collapsing Memories*, Centrum, Berlin, 2021 // Fig. 8: Exhibition view *130 km/h*, with Theresa Lawrenz, Kunstverein Bellevue Saal, 2022



Fig. 9: *Trümmer*, Studio Mathias Weinfurter, Cologne, GER, 2022

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