

Survival Tactics of the 'Generation Transition' in Serbia – Culture as a Battlefield

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Introduction

Young people born in Serbia during the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did not witness the violent dissolution of the country. Yet their youth takes place in a context of **prolonged political and economic transformations**, marked by political failures and repeated crises.

This generation makes its first steps in the exercise of citizenship in a society that finds it difficult to come to terms with its recent past and while the institutions of Serbian democracy have troubles to consolidate.

This context produces a **politically uncommitted and disenchanting generation**, which is nevertheless forced to be **creative** on an everyday basis and to come up with **original survival tactics** in order to cope with **precarity**.

Material & Sources

The research aims to observe the way in which this generation rejects collective and vivid political engagement in favor of different **forms of symbolic resistance** following Michel De Certeau's theory of the reappropriation, individualization and alteration of mass cultural codes, as depicted in the book *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

To observe the survival tactics of this youngsters, the research opts for the investigation of a small unit and is therefore conducted within the everyday life of the hip-hop collective **The Bombs of the Nineties** and their entourage. The collective is taken as a proxy of this Generation which grew up during the transition and a strong influencer of the Serbian Youth.



Bombs of Nineties graffiti in the streets of Belgrade

References

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Generation T(ransition)

From the *Generation R...* to the *Generation T*

'**Generation R**' – (R stand for *Rat/War*) - born between 1971 and 1984 - Young people who complete their secondary school career in the 1990s and who as teenagers witnessed wars and crisis. The generation that "grew up in an isolated society without the possibility for independent decision making". (Jarić, 2003).

Marked by

- Isolation (economic embargo, inflation that separates them from the globalized world, hostility of the international community, strict visa system)
- Disorientation due to wars and destruction
- Lack of education and parental care, poverty, strikes.
- Strong presence of political discourse / "Political Generation"

The research observes the heirs of Generation R through a **comparative approach** and refers to it as '**Generation T**', where T stands for **Transition**

'**Generation T**' – Young people who are born during/after the collapse of Yugoslavia and grew up during the post-socialist extended transition and had to face a "**double transition**", a transition into adulthood in the context of a society itself in transformation. (Kovacheva, 2001).

Marked by

- Opening (liberalization of the visa regime, communication with the countries of the region, expansion of the Internet)
- Flexibility and social contradictions (globalization / affirmation and resurgence of nationalism; Advanced technological / economic underdevelopment. A generation forced to invent "flexible strategies to move in the world" (Kovacheva, 2001).
- Crises of wage labor (social polarization, wild privatization, non-employment)
- Rejection of party politics / "**Apolitical generation?**"

Results

The everyday life is understood as a field of **reappropriation of the conditions of existence**, while the field of **conventional political action is rejected** as inefficient. (Strong resentment against elder generation who took part in the democratic changes)

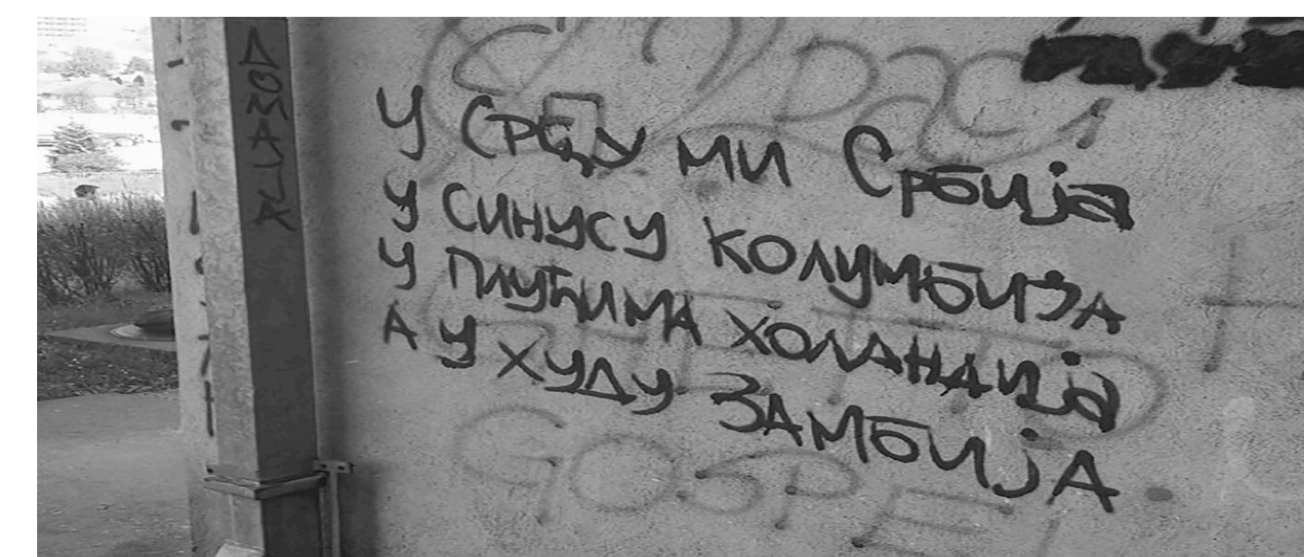
The **political elite is rejected** as corrupted and a strong **populist but cosmopolite discourse** is defended.

The subversion through **embezzlement of cultural symbols** is promoted as a political act.

The **abandonment of the ideological questioning** and insistence on the materialistic interpretation of the power relations are observable.

The **State is no longer perceived as a stable pillar** able to produce decent living conditions and social and material security.

Individualism overrides collectivism.



"In my heart Serbia,
In my sinuses Columbia,
In my lungs Holland
but in the hood Zambia"

Methodology

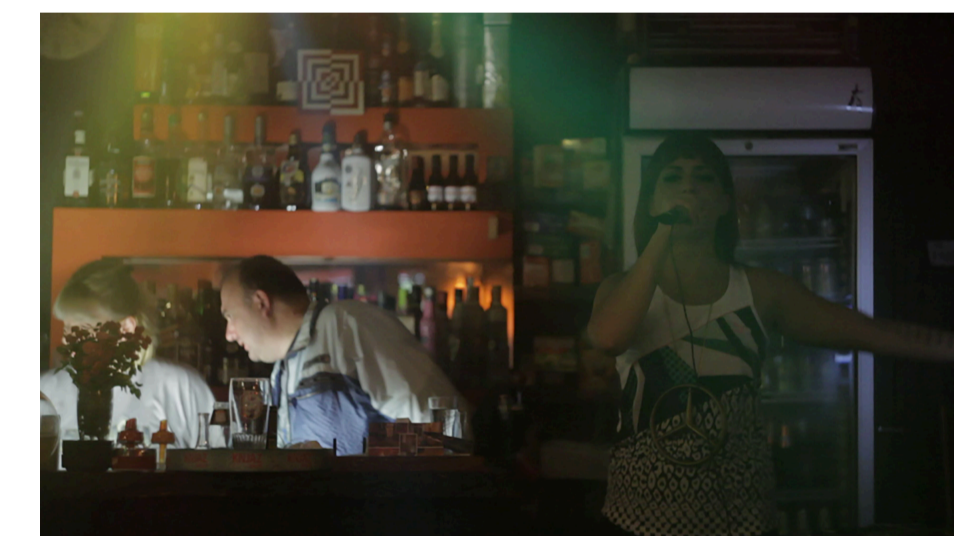
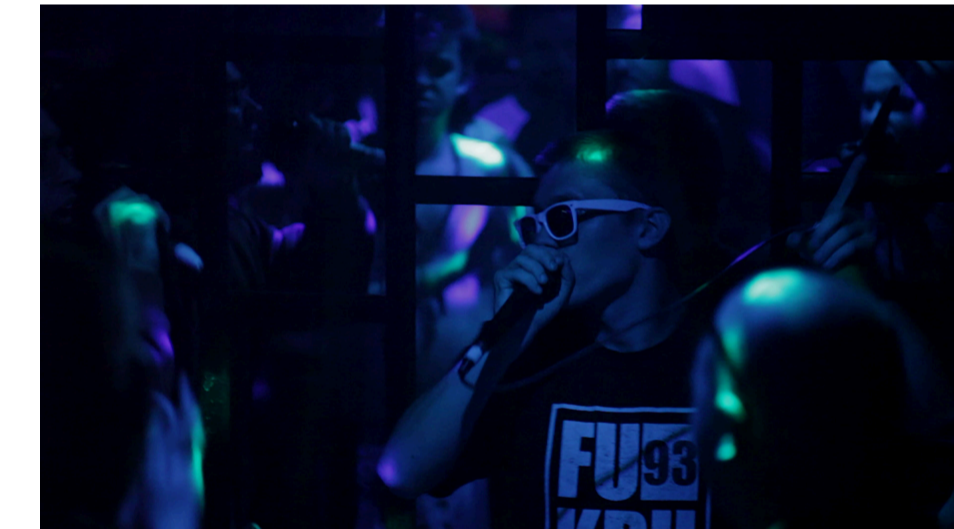
The research privileges **participant observation** that requires long-term immersion in the field to deepen the complexity and logic of social actors. The **biographical and qualitative interviews**, as well as group discussions, are also used as important research methods. The research focuses also on the observation of the 'Bombs of the Nineties' fan base and its evolution, taking particular interest in the use they make of the **social medias**. A **discourse analysis** of the group social media posts, as well as an analysis of the song lyrics is also the focus of the research.



- In 2009 I wish... I wouldn't want to leave.
- We don't give you Serbia
- This isn't the Wailing wall

Documentary film

The research led to the filming of a documentary movie : **Non working class Heroes** (currently in post-production) Authors: Astrea Pejović and Jovana Papović, Director of photography: Ivan Marković, Sound: Jakov Munižaba. Production: Epopapopeja.



Conclusions

It seems that Generation T has forsaken the ideas of democratization, liberalization of society, egalitarian values, human rights and anti-nationalism, that were the main values of the Generation R, and has opted instead for **questioning the access to material resources**.

The **distrust of the State institutions** and **precarious life conditions**, had led the members of the Generation T to favor **individual and informal means of survival**. Therefore they seem **more able to cope with the living conditions** of post-socialist Serbia.

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International Conference – Children of Transition, Children of War, *The 'Generation of Transformation' from a European Perspective*