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Lost in Time? The Socialist Modernist Monuments of the Former Yugoslavia and Their Shifting Conceptualization

Abstract: This paper explores the “lost language” of monuments erected in the former Yugoslavia from the 1960s to the 1980s—more precisely, the 25 national monuments captured by the lens of photographer Jan Kempnaers over the span of three years (2006–2009), and published in the monograph *Spomenik* [Monument] (2010). By combining the approach of cognitive linguistics and cultural studies, in particular that of Forceville (“Identification”, “Metaphor”, “Agendas”), Kövecses (*Culture, Context*), Ortiz, and Kirn and Burghardt, this paper aims to explore the conceptual metaphors embedded in these monuments as part of a specific symbolic landscape, immanent to the countries of the former Yugoslavia at a historical point of their four-decades-long political, social, and cultural merger, as well as the current possibilities and limitations of the visual/multimodal decodification of the memorials.

Keywords: socialist modernist monuments, conceptual metaphor, visual and multimodal metaphor, cultural studies, *Spomenik*

1. Introduction

The tenet of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 153) that metaphor is “primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language”, and as such can exist in non-exclusively verbal realms, has been taken and explored in various visual and multimodal directions. Carroll, Kövecses (*Culture, Context*), Forceville (“Metaphor”, “Agendas”), Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, Ortiz, Pérez Sobrino, Coëgnarts and others have pointed to the presence of significant conceptual metaphors in various cultural artefacts, such as national monuments, visual arts, advertising and film, which can provide a better understanding of the cultural currents that help shape metaphor manifestations. As physical representa-

tives of a shared culture and due to their visual and multimodal possibilities, monuments in particular can provide a fertile ground for conceptual metaphor research and cultural understanding of a nation (e.g., see the analysis of the Statue of Liberty in Kövecses, *Culture* 172).

Monuments as intentional human creations are often the first visual introduction to a specific culture, nation, and consequently, even ideology. Furthermore, they capture the dominant human thought in the period of their creation and serve as a historical reminder and a message from the previous generations to their successors. With the frequent, if not always easily perceptible, changes in the course of history, the expressions in the form of monuments often change their original meaning, and, as Irvine (1) notes, their messages become unstable when regimes rise and fall and borders move. Such was the case with the memorials erected in the countries of the former Yugoslavia from the 1960s to the 1980s, the creation of which represented a modernist period in the post-war art and memorial making, which aimed to commemorate the collective war trauma experienced during World War II.

Kosmaj, Kozara, Tjentište and other colossal remnants from the socialist era, scattered across the Balkan region, speak of a time period rendered obsolete by the contemporary political and cultural environment of the turbulent Balkans. Their specific architecture of brutalism, strong ideological symbols and abstract form unified aspirations of the politics of remembrance, which attempted to gather the nations of this region after World War II under a joint, commemorative umbrella. During the war in the same region in the 1990s, the monuments suffered either partial or complete destruction, or were left to decay in oblivion.

The visual language developed and articulated in the form of these memorials shows a drastically different kind of national ideology as opposed to the strongly differentiated ideologies of the countries existing on the same territory today. With the loss of the joint, although artificial, Yugoslav identity, and return to the nations divided again by state borders, these monuments represent a “lost language”, no longer intelligible to the users involved in the contemporary open-space discourse of this region. Recently, however, there has been a renewed interest in artistic and academic circles in these brutalist giants, starting with the work of visual memorialization of the modernist Yugoslavian monuments by Jan Kempenaers and his publication *Spomenik* [Monument] (2010). Using the publication as corpus, this paper represents an attempt at deciphering the transformative elements of this discourse and distinguishing the different phases of conceptualization of these monuments. By exploring the prevalent conceptual metaphors embedded in these monuments as part of a specific visual landscape, as well as the shifting cultural perceptions around them, we point to the possibility of emerging stages in their conceptualized existence, beyond the destruction and oblivion that arose from the political and structural transformation of the territory.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical anchorage of this paper is found in Forceville (“Identification”, “Metaphor”, “Agendas”), Kövecses (*Culture, Context*), Carroll, Ortiz, and Kirn and Burghardt, combining the efforts of cognitive linguistics and cultural studies in order to decipher the visual metaphoricality of the socialist modernist monuments of the former Yugoslavia. This combined analytical approach goes in line with the dual nature of metaphors (shaped by embodiment and culture, but also by the communicative context; Kövecses, *Culture* 292).

The pillar of the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor, championed by Lakoff and Johnson, is that metaphor is not limited to the realm of language, but is actually crucial to our thought process and action. If metaphor characterizes thought, and is therefore not exclusive to language, Forceville (“Identification” 1) argues that it should then possess the ability of assuming non-verbal and multimodal manifestations as well, confirmed by Kövecses (*Culture* 163), who sees metaphor as having a preeminent role in the study of cultures. Conceptual metaphors provide a way of understanding a certain culture (Chun and Yu), which possesses a specific *cultural identity*, which is, in turn, connected to *ethnic identity* (Bugarski 70). A major element of a cultural identity is conceptual metaphor, which can be universally shared, but also show regional variations (Kövecses, *Culture* 93).

Another type of variation concerns the number of modalities employed in a figurative mechanism. Monomodality and multimodality refer to the number of modes in which the metaphor domains are expressed. If target and source are exclusively or predominantly rendered in one mode (e.g., music), we are dealing with a monomodal metaphor, while a multimodal metaphor usually encompasses different modes, such as pictorial signs and written language (Forceville, “Agendas” 23–24). Lastly, when researching figurative mechanisms in specific non-verbal communication, such as monument making, it would be useful to note the quality of perceptual immediacy of visual metaphor (as opposed to their purely verbal counterparts), as well as their greater cross-cultural access and a stronger emotional appeal (Forceville, “Metaphor” 463).

3. Cultural background

The socialist modernist monuments were built on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (official title: the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), which consisted of six republics, two autonomous provinces, and more than 20 million people, who lived under one flag, with different, scattered identities, various collective heritages, plural memories and diverse traditions of their cultures (Luthar and Pušnik 9). Authors note that a single political concept and guiding principle, “bratstvo i jedin-

stvo” (brotherhood and unity), a slogan rooted in the Partisan movement of World War II, was designed in an attempt to prevent the dominance of any single ethnic group (Luthar and Pušnik 5). Especially after World War II, Yugoslavia became a laboratory for making different ethnicities and religions work within the same nation via education, media, theatre, film and architecture (Mačkić).

Many of the modernist monuments/memorials commemorating the events of World War II went derelict or were destroyed during the war and the dissolution of the Yugoslavian republic in the early 1990s, which is in strong opposition to the original meaning bestowed upon them. They were conceived as reminders of a difficult yet glorious past, and symbolic bearers of a different (socialist) future (Irvine 3; Kirn and Burghardt 17).

The destruction of human artefacts retroactively bestows them with antagonistic importance for the dominant political currents. However, some of these monuments were left abandoned in the changing landscape, which transformed the type and quality of their communication with the external world. Are these monuments still what we would call *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 7) if the memorial consciousness they once embodied fundamentally loses its crucial identity elements? Assmann calls into mind specific “figures of memory” (129) that serve to maintain cultural memory through formation, such as monuments, and institutional communication, such as practice and observance. The socialist modernist monuments in this region have either lost both, as some of them were destroyed, or have been stripped of historical and observational connectors that enabled communication. The past, previously serving as a network of fixed points for cultural memory (Assmann 133), was now neither remembered nor naturally forgotten, but purposefully shunned.

In his foreword to Kempenaers’s visual narrative in *Spomenik*, Neutelings summarizes the present quality of the monuments:

They have become submerged in a new age, rendered unintelligible to the current generation. Their symbolism has been lost in translation as the visual language has changed, their signals muffled by a shifted worldview. The monuments have been the objects of blind fury, and now of indifference. What remains is pure sculpture in a desolate landscape.

Indeed, what once were the meccas of revolutionary socialism and places of ideological worship for young and old during the previous era, have now mostly become derelict places of deliberately erased times. Mačkić calls these monuments “tombstones” of the former Yugoslavia.

The beginning of the 21st century brought unexpected attention to the socialist modernist monuments through artistic and academic lenses in the region, as well as abroad. The impetus for this exploration seems to have come from the aforementioned art project by Belgian photographer Jan Kempenaers, created in the period from 2006 to 2009 and subsequently published in *Spomenik* (2010), which has garnered local as well as international artistic and academic attention (Car; Surtees;

Škoro; Tulić; Irvine), and provided the corpus for this research.¹ Most recently, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) in New York provided a thorough examination of these memorials and other architectural works in “Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980”, an exhibition seeking to explore the Yugoslav relics in terms of their size, shape, and meaning as proper museum pieces, albeit located at a significant distance from New York itself. The exhibition closed in 2019 and a catalogue edition was produced in the same year. The amount of exploratory articles and artistic exhibitions² dedicated to this topic in recent years enables the existence and exploration of the hypothesis of a continuous redefinition of these memorials. As such, this renewed interest offers a suitable backbone for the analysis of their figurative properties (section 4), which aims to provide a better understanding of the Yugoslav remnants and their evolving meaning.

4. Analysis

The 25 modernist monuments visualized in the work of Belgian photographer Jan Kempenaers (2010) represent the main subjects of the cognitive linguistic analysis in this paper. Seen as archaisms of the contemporary open-space discourse of the region, the *Spomenik* monuments create a specific linguistic landscape which correlates with the obsolete Yugoslav post-war identity. The visual interpretation is enhanced by the cultural and historical insight of Kirn and Burghardt, as well as Car and Škoro.

The three main characteristics of these monuments are their size (height and volume), their abstract forms, and the choice of material. The analysis is presented accordingly.

4.1. Size as importance

The conceptual metaphor found in all 25 monuments is **IMPORTANCE IS SIZE/VOLUME**, as a variation of the metaphor **SIGNIFICANT IS BIG** (Lakoff and Johnson 50). The origin of this metaphor, as noted by Ortiz (1574), lies in the correlation between size/volume of an object and the value we give that object when interacting with it. Even though the memorials do not reach the heights of some other monuments built during the same era (in Bulgaria, e.g.), they are significantly larger and taller than human beings. Their size also differentiates them from other monuments erected in the region after World War II and points to the importance of the events and people commemorated by and communicated through these sculptures. The

¹ The work is also available at <https://www.jankempenaers.info/works/1/>.

² Several studies, exhibitions and symposia were also presented in recent years on the same topic (see Jauković; Pupovac and Škrbić Alempijević; Janev).

nations of the former Yugoslavia were trying to create a therapeutic agent in the form of memorials, and the size of the effect had to be equal (or higher) to the size of the suffering endured during the war. Hence the quality of monumental forms and vertical expressions in some of the memorials as intensifying elements of the passive position of the observer, although none of the monuments have a tendency to fully subordinate the subject, which was typical of fascist and Stalinist monumentalism (Kirn and Burghardt 14). The size, therefore, had only one purpose—to show the strength of remembrance to the ones who were equal to people, but performed massive achievements. Some of the most prominent bearers of this metaphor are the monuments in Tjentište (see Fig. 1), Podgarić (see Fig. 2), and Kozara.



Figure 1: *The Battle of Sutjeska* monument in Tjentište

Source: *Battle of Sutjeska Memorial Monument*, photograph by Tracychapmanfan5, 12 July 2022, CC BY 4.0. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Sutjeska_Memorial_Monument.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

The significance of heroes and enemy-defying events of World War II has been reflected in specific elements of the monuments as well. The Kadinjača monument in its centre shows a wall that has been punched through by an invisible force in the middle, showing the metaphor PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES, enabled by the metonymy EFFECT FOR CAUSE (see Fig. 3). The determination of the



Figure 2: The monument in Podgarić

Source: *Spomenik ustanka naroda Moslavine*, photograph by mariabelch, 4 Aug. 2018, CC BY 4.0. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spomenik_ustanka_naroda_Moslavine.jpg. 16 Oct 2022.

Partisans has “broken” through the wall which represents the obstacle/the enemy. The focus of the meaning is on the result of the force, not the wall itself, and as such, the amount of the force needed to be visualized with the size of the effect.

Kosovska Mitrovica, on the other hand, shows a specific metaphor which we could possibly verbalize as *COMMEMORATING THE MINE WORKERS IS LIFTING A MINE CART*, motivated by *VALUE IS UP*, a variation of the metaphor *MORE IS UP*. By physically lifting the mine cart higher than a human being can lift it, the monument shows that the value of the miners’ sacrifice in World War II is in a very high place, commemorating it with the size of the memorial as well (see Fig. 4). The monument also instantiates the metonymy *WORK TOOL FOR WORKER*, since the mine cart represents the fallen miners in this region during World War II.

4.2. Abstract forms

Even though the monuments belong to the modernist credo of industrialization and the new world of the 20th century, Kirn and Burghardt (9) argue that they cannot be called only modernist since they possess a special and specific typology: monu-



Figure 3: The monument in Kadinjača

Source: *Kadinjaca 026*, photograph by Vanilica, 28 May 2017, CC BY 4.0. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kadinja%C4%8Da_026.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.



Figure 4: The monument in Kosovska Mitrovica

Source: *Kosovska Mitrovica Monument*, photograph by Tiia Monto, 24 Aug. 2011, CC BY 3.0 (image cropped). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kosovska_Mitrovica_monument.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

mental, symbolic (in the shape of fists, stars, hands, wings, flowers, and rocks), daring (sometimes even structurally challenging), fantastic, and otherworldly. The “heavy brutalist style” separates these monuments from others built in the same time period, and abstract form was favoured over anthropomorphic representation as a way of promoting cultural “togetherness” over individual accomplishment (Irvine 3). As such, stars, triangles, rockets, wings, and other symbols are one of the defining elements of the analyzed monuments, which imbue them with encompassing possibilities of (almost) universal recognition.

Several monuments show biomorphic features: Jasenovac (see Fig. 5), Makljen and Nikšić (flower shape), and Sisak (tree-like sculpture, see Fig. 6). Flowers evoke the notions of youth, love, innocence, (re)birth and beauty and are often used for decorative purposes. The juxtaposition with the negative connotations of war and the tragic loss of life necessitated a multimodal approach in the case of Jasenovac, where the multimodal metaphor INNOCENCE IS FLOWER (metonymic correlation



Figure 5: The *Stone Flower* of Jasenovac

Source: *Jasenovac SK*, photograph by Stjepko Krehula, 7 May 2016, CC BY 4.0. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jasenovac_SK.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

between the traits of the commemorated people and flowers) is activated via two modes: visual form and written language. The memorial, built to commemorate the victims of a concentration camp, was named *Kameni cvijet* (*The Stone Flower*), and a bronze plaque with verses from the poem “Jama” [The Pit] by Croatian poet Ivan Goran Kovačić adorned the space in front of the memorial museum, and has since been moved to the graveyard part of the complex. The poetic imagery of the innocence of the slain victims in the poem provides the target domain of the metaphor, while the source domain is emphasized with the memorial title, lest it be confused with the shape of a cup or a similar form. In the case of Makljen, a slightly different metaphor is activated—GRATITUDE IS FLOWER (giving thanks to the fallen soldiers via beauty)—since the people commemorated by the monument were the Partisan forces, and therefore perceived as having a different role in the war than the unarmed people taken to the concentration camp in Jasenovac. The sculpture, visited by tens of thousands of people before the war in the 1990s, was believed by many to represent Tito’s clenched fist, but the author Boško Kućanski stated that the intention was to achieve a floral form of alien proportions, since one lays



Figure 6: The tree monument in Sisak

Source: *Spomen park Brezovica*, photograph by Flammard, 22 June 2011, CC BY 3.0 (image cropped). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spomen_park_Brezovica.JPG. 16 Oct. 2022.

flowers on the paths of heroes (Car). Again, the size of the symbolic property was the driving force for the metaphoric conceptualization.

The (sun)flower in Nikšić provides another example of a multimodal metaphor where the domains are rendered in two modes. The flower construction rises from the ground at an angle, pierced on the back by a column of the same size. Built in honour of the people killed by the occupation forces in 1942, the memorial bears a plaque with the following inscription: “Generations will admire your heroic acts for centuries to come” (Car; Škoro, translation I.N.). Conveying the message of perseverance through hardship and pride in their bravery, the metaphor can be verbalized as *STANDING TALL DESPITE BEING WOUNDED IS BEING BRAVE*. As in the previous example, a metonymic link between a group of people and a flower enables the metaphoric construal.

The design for the Sisak memorial was taken from the existing environment—an old elm tree that stood in the same spot (Škoro)—showing that the people who were there cannot be destroyed and will be there for generations to come, rooted like a tree to the ground. Hence, the metaphor can be verbalized as *A PERSON IS*

A TREE. The Sisak monument is an example of how the physical environment can influence the metaphors people use in a certain location, and create a variation of the (visual) language, as argued by Kövecses (*Culture* 232).

Almost all monuments (with the slight exceptions of Niš, Ostra, and Tjentište in part) present a stark absence of features closely related to the human body. Despite this fact, and since embodiment incorporates many elements of the appearance and functions of our bodies and their interaction with the outside world, some of the metaphors present in the monuments have emerged from this phenomenon. Still, this noticeable difference from other monuments (e.g., Sinj) goes in line with the notion that cognition, including metaphorical cognition, is not only grounded in the body, but also the situations in which people find themselves, the discourses they lead at any time in their interaction, and the conceptual knowledge accumulated about the world (Kövecses, *Context* 200).

Niš memorial (see Fig. 7) depicts fists raised high as a sign of resistance against the enemy. We can discern two major metaphors in Niš: EPISODIC EVENTS ARE OBJECTS, as the fists symbolize the resistance and final victory (Car), and ACTION IS MOTION, as fists are protruding from the soil and being raised to the sky. The



Figure 7: The monument in Niš

Source: *Three fists Niš*, photograph by Tiia Monto, 28 Aug. 2011, CC BY 3.0. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Three_fists_Nis.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.



Figure 8: The monument in Ostra

Source: *Ostra kod Čačka, Spomenik hrabrosti*, photograph by BrankaVV, 4 Mar. 2017, CC BY 3.0 (image cropped). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ostra_kod_%C4%8Ca%C4%8Dka,_Spomenik_hrabrosti.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

second metaphor is actually motivated by the metonymy *PART FOR WHOLE*, since hands clenched in fists are the most used extremity or body part in a fight (we do not, e.g., first want to attack with our head when we want to hit someone). The same metonymy underlines the second (partial) exception from the absence of anthropomorphism in Ostra (see Fig. 8), where the faces of fallen soldiers, done in crude fashion, are symbolically embedded within the memorial. The monument was built with a sharp angle, the end of which (with the faces) points to the sky, thus appearing to be moving upwards (the conceptual metaphor *FORM IS MOTION*).

Most of the modernist monuments were built on the locations of historic battles of World War II, and because of it, these monuments are in open spaces, relatively far from town or city centres, still forming “an invisible network of symbolic places” (Kirn and Burghardt 10, translation I.N.). In the case of Tjentište, placed at the location of the Battle of Sutjeska, a turning point in World War II, its symbolic quality evokes the image of a river breaking through the mountainous stone, representing the Partisan forces (Kirn and Burghardt 12). Kirn and Burghardt note that the viewer’s perception is changed during the walk through the monument, as the two sides of the canyon appear to first represent wings, and then transform into fingers/two hands towering over the people in between (12). This is a symbolic depiction of the Axis forces surrounding the Partisans in the battle of Sutjeska. The metaphor *CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SURROUNDINGS*, which stems from the correlation between the physical environment and the circumstances that surround us (Ortiz 1573), is present in the form of the central viewpoint. As Mačkić notes, each monument is located at a completely unique place within their context, where the visitor first has to put effort into getting to the monument (e.g., they have to climb a long path upwards), and once there, the visitor has the experience of disconnection from the world. Symbols connected to the specific location and events that happened at the spot located were used in the monument building, and enhanced by the individual narrative that the visitor may employ in order to comprehend the message of the monument. Thus, the location is not only historically charged, but also plays an important part in meaning construction. We can observe a similar symbolic decodification to Tjentište in Kosmaj (see Fig. 9), whose star-like shape or tentacles symbolize people’s resistance in the fight against the occupying forces and local traitors, according to Car. Kirn and Burghardt (11) point to the unique shape of a five-pointed star from a distance, but as the visitor approaches the monument, it is revealed that the elements are not connected and that the star form is almost unrecognizable, revealing its fundamental structural challenge towards gravity.

Another monument with the metaphor *CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SURROUNDINGS* is Grmeč (see Fig. 10), where the shape juxtaposes the hardness of the concrete and the wavy embrace of the monument structure, evoking the image of a safe haven or a shelter for the people inside. Thus, the monument is also a visual manifestation of the metaphor *RELATIONSHIPS ARE ENCLOSURES*. The monument was built on a free territory in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has never been occupied by the



Figure 9: The monument in Kosmaj

Source: *Kosmaj 3*, photograph by MikelandjeloS, 17 July 2016, CC BY 4.0. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kosmaj_3.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

enemy forces during World War II (Car), and the safety of the place is visually represented in the shape of the monument.

Based on the analysis of the form, the monuments are devoid of the cult of personality often found in Eastern Europe. As Neutelings remarks,

they are not busts of great leaders, they bear no symbols like stars or sickles, do not depict workers or farmers' wives brought to life in muscular marble. The objects reveal an iconography of festive decorations: flowers, streamers, lanterns. Their stance is neutral, referring to nothing but themselves.

There are two reasons for this apparent lack of anthropomorphism.

First, the split from the Soviet Union in 1948 dictated a change in all aspects of society, including its cultural presentation. Thus, according to Tulić (2), the pattern established according to the USSR had to be remodelled into an acceptable form of collective remembrance. The traditional characteristics of the Soviet-influenced formula, such as socialist realism depicted with human figures towering over people, was negated and moved away from, as they were, as Tulić argues, a “painful reminder of the Soviet domination” (2).



Figure 10: The monument on Grmeč mountain

Source: *Spomenik na Korcanici—panoramio*, photograph by 87Edvin, 18 May 2012, CC BY 4.0 (image cropped). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spomenik_na_Korcanici_-_panoramio.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

Second, World War II brought a complex situation to multicultural Yugoslavia, where the war of liberation against Nazi Germany and their allies was further enhanced by a civil war with oppositions between ethnic population groups, some of which were on opposite sides, which had to join a collective under the flag of socialist Yugoslavia after the war ended—hence the ambiguous nature of the monuments which had to represent neutrality and show neither a heroic nor a patriotic stance to both victims and perpetrators of the “inside” war in order to be accepted (Neutelings). The lack of human form was addressed by Kempenaers in an interview for *The Guardian* (Surtees): “Tito couldn’t erect figures or busts in honour of generals because he didn’t want to be seen to be favouring any ethnic group ... so instead they made these things that didn’t refer to people.” Kirn and Burghardt (16) note the presence of critical voices who objected to the abstract form because it enabled easy adjustment to a new context—a visitor could not decide who were the victims and who were the aggressors in the visual narrative.

4.3. The choice of material

The analyzed monuments were made from a typical brutalist set of materials. Concrete, metal constructions, steel/aluminum plates, and glass dominate the forms and present a stark contrast to their surroundings. The choice of construction material for the monuments also possesses certain metaphorical property. The quality conveys a hard, unrelenting surface, rock/metallic texture, and a general opposition to the material found in nature. The brutalist focus on material that represents strength suggests the visual manifestation of the metaphor METAL/CONCRETE IS STRENGTH. Not only were size and volume employed as meaning bearers, but the physicality of the monuments also had to convey the message of strength that overcomes the protruding, seemingly stronger and unstoppable enemy forces. Additionally, colour and reflective quality of certain materials were used as well, for example—panels reflecting the sky, granite and concrete as light-coloured material, etc.



Figure 11: The monument in Petrova Gora

Source: *Petrova gora—panoramio (1)*, photograph by Sandor Bordas, 19 Aug. 2010, CC BY 3.0. Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:19.08.2010._Petrova_Gora_-_panoramio_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:19.08.2010._Petrova_Gora_-_panoramio_(1).jpg). 16 Oct. 2022.



Figure 12: The monument in Kruševo

Source: *Makedonium 2014 1*, photograph by CMB, 19 Sept. 2014, CC BY 3.0 (image cropped). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Makedonium_2014_1.jpg. 16 Oct. 2022.

Glass and glass-like features are present in monuments such as Podgarić, Petrova Gora (see Fig. 11), Kruševo (see Fig. 12), and Kolašin, which serve to mirror daylight. The present metaphor is GOOD IS BRIGHT/BAD IS DARK (Ortiz 1571). The natural illumination inside the monuments (or lack thereof) seems to confirm this metaphor. An example can be found in Kozara (see Fig. 13), a monument commemorating victims of a fascist siege helped by domestic forces, where a visitor can stand in a dark space inside the cylinders for the monument, which symbolizes the siege, while the circular form of the monument further evokes the claustrophobic experience of being surrounded (Kirn and Burghardt 11). We have previously noted that the main subjects of the memorials were always the people who were on the oppressed side, along with basic ideas and representations (geometrical shapes, astronomical objects, wings, flowers, trees, etc.), and that no physical entity has been given to the oppressor.³ Thus, by attributing light to the people for whom

³ Except in the case of Kozara and Tjentište; however, the function of the cement columns in Kozara is placed inside where they obstruct the exits and sunlight, in which we see the employment of the CONTAINER image schema, while the fingers in Tjentište have a transformative quality: from rocks to wings to fingers, having been formed as objects of the battle narrative.



Figure 13: The monument on Kozara mountain

Source: *Monument to the Revolution*, photograph by fotos1992, 14 June 2021, Pixabay license (image cropped). Retrieved from <https://pixabay.com/photos/monument-to-the-revolution-mrakovica-6403373/>. 16 Oct. 2022.

these monuments were built, the sculptors and architects have avoided a clear-cut delineation, impossible to depict due to internal conflicts during World War II, and characterized all the future joint nations as the “side of good” as opposed to the main aggressor, the external forces.

5. Points for further discussion

The purpose of the socialist modernist monuments analyzed in this paper was to physically commemorate the struggle that World War II brought to the people of the former Yugoslavia in a manner that would match its magnitude and consequences. Even though the original conceptualization of these monuments was carefully curated to appeal to all supranational metaphoric interpretations of the past, its survival was impossible after the profound political and structural change in the 1990s. The obligatory redefining, reconstruction and often destruction of these historic reminders stem from their conceptualization as visual “extensions” of ideology because they emphasize general ideological places—characters or events in the repository of socialist values—thus becoming ideological waste for the present cultural politics (Potkonjak and Pletenac 19). The metaphors needed to be deconstructed by either destroying the monument itself, or by forcefully removing it from the dominant ideological narrative, making them no longer legible. Car documents various destruction practices, including desecration of monuments, removal of panels with names of commemorated fallen soldiers, addition of religious iconography and other forceful transformative elements that necessarily change the perceptual possibilities provided by these monuments. Although there were some multimodal examples (e.g., Jasenovac), overall, it was limited compared to its visual counterparts. Thus, an attempt at a more extensive, *in situ* research, would provide a broader dimension to the analysis, in line with the possibilities of multimodal discourse (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 5). The difficulty in the interpretation stems from the absence of a solid representation between the intended past and photographic documentation by Kempenaers, used as corpus. In addition, the destroyed monuments of Košute, Kamenska and Makljen raise the question of whether the change in perspective (the necessity of using the historical context and not solely the present state) simultaneously represents a significant shift in meaning bestowal of the monuments. Neutelings rightfully asks: Can a former monument ever function as a pure sculpture (or a photograph of it), as an autonomous work of art and separated from its original meaning?

Nevertheless, Kirn and Burghardt (19) see these memorials as one of the centres of the necessary reinterpretation of the shared Yugoslavian past for the post-Yugoslavian societies in order to come to terms with their joint European future. Noting a newfound readiness to reassess the value of socialist monuments, Janev (165–66), argues that “the realization that not everything was evil during the socialist period calls for a more cautious approach that would filter the universal humanistic achievements and measure them separately from the abuses of power in one-party regimes”, adding that the revalorization of the socialist heritage would allow for a balanced understanding of the socialist past.

The new appraisal could rest on transforming the referential values of the employed conceptual metaphors towards a new, culturally oriented base, for ex-

ample: the importance of a vision for a better world, which, according to Janev (167), these monuments already possess to expand the horizon beyond the nationalist scope. In fact, some of the monuments are already experiencing a tentative cultural renaissance.⁴

Therefore, we are able to discern certain chronological and thematic phases of conceptualization of these monuments: (1) politics of remembrance (construction, revelation and commemoration in practice, 1960s–1990), (2) politics of oblivion (deconstruction, destruction and oblivion, 1991–2009), and (3) exercises in reimagining (reconstruction of meaning and academic-artistic attention, 2010–present).

However, Jauković already noted the dangers of hijacked revisionist interpretation of the site in a recent youth re-enactment heritage piece in Tjentište, which brings to the forefront the importance of understanding all the complexities Bosnia and Herzegovina faces in its internal structures (97–98), as well as the awareness of revisionist attempts in regards to the war in the 1990s.⁵ The entire territory where the monuments are located remains a place of fragile interaction.

Still, the colossal aspirations embedded in the memorials, with the presence of powerful figurative mechanisms, call for a recognition beyond political and ideological systems, which could lift these sculptures above the burden of the second phase of conceptualization, and possibly lead to a broader, nuanced acceptance, or at the very minimum, a reintroduction into the historical identity discourse.

6. Concluding remarks

This paper analyzed monuments erected in the former Yugoslavia during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s from the point of view of cognitive linguistics—more precisely, the phenomenon of conceptual metaphor, and with the help of cultural studies. What sets these monuments apart from other sculptures built in the same time period is their locality, size and symbolism. The focus of the paper was directed towards 25 national monuments captured by the lens of photographer Jan Kempenaers over the span of three years (2006–2009), and published in the monograph *Spomenik* (2010).

⁴ Podgarić and Tjentište, for example, have been employed as visual tokens of a biomechanic future in an electronic music video, reconceptualized as memorials of an alien civilization, while Tjentište is also the location of a music festival.

⁵ We have noted another attempt at a controversial meaning reconstruction of one of the analyzed monuments: the visual of the monument on Kozara mountain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, is being used in a documentary film with reportedly revisionist politics towards the committed Serb crimes in the aggression on Bosnia in the 1990s (*Al Jazeera* Staff). A visual of the monument from above can be seen in a screenshot of the trailer accompanying the petition against the distribution of the film (Institute for Research on Genocide in Canada). The ideological justification and value appropriation of the monument in this example seem to be in sharp contrast with its historically established anti-fascist message.

The subjects of the present analysis are remnants of a time period which has now been rendered obsolete by the contemporary political and cultural environment of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Kosmaj, Kozara, Tjentište and other modernist monuments analyzed in this paper offer truly monumental manifestations of conceptual metaphors, which were used to show how the people in this region perceived the huge burden left after World War II, as well as a physical manifestation of their joint aspirations for the (socialist) future. IMPORTANCE IS SIZE/VOLUME and GOOD IS LIGHT/BAD IS DARK are examples of nearly universal conceptual metaphors whose culture-specific manifestations marked an entire period in the socialist culture of the 1960s–1980s in this region. The recent interest in artistic and academic circles points to a fluid reconceptualization of some of the memorials, while others represent symbols of the still dominant politics of oblivion.

Due to various limitations of this paper, we have not explored the possible existence of metaphorical variants among the analyzed manifestations based on their locality, which could provide an interesting insight into the cultural differences in the region. Future research could also benefit from a more extensive exploration of their multimodality, as well as the ever-evolving cultural processes and meaning bestowal in such complex visual narrative as the multiple voices of *Spomenik*.

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