Instead of introduction: war, sport and tourism

During the last two decades mentioning of the Croatia around the World was predominantly interconnected with the war in ex-Yugoslavia. Since explanation, even a brief one, of the causes of the war in ex-Yugoslavia would demand at least sizeable book¹ and because many have already been written, this article has no intention to go deep into this topic.² At the beginning of the 21st century any war, no matter of causes (real or constructed) in it’s foundation should be recognised as completely unwanted process of destroying of human lives. The war could hardly ever be a justified starting point for boosting national identity, heritage or creation of national branding. The case of Croatia is not an exception.

The more laxly but very popular topic which made Croatia recognisable around the World is surely a sport. The country with only 4.4 million of people in fact has a lot of sport successes, be it in football³ as the most popular game around the World, or in tennis, skiing, handball, water polo, basketball as well in many others individual or collective sports competitions. Today sport plays important role in any community around the World.

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¹ The last five centuries, as a minimum, must be taken into consideration.
² The only exception will be general information regarding losses and damages on museums and theirs holdings as a result of the war.
³ The red-white checkerboard shirt of the national football team is very distinguished and foremost popular souvenir.
It can unify as much as it can sometimes divide. It is capable of attracting enormous amounts of money and starting new investments. In contemporary heritage studies sport; with its numerous interrelated phenomenological researches about fans, stadiums and all others subjects plays an important role in analysis of representation, interpretation and influence of identity on our lives. After all it indeed, as museums, affects perception of an identity (especially national teams) and heritage itself. Neither here is Croatia an exception. As indirect result of successes of the national handball team during the last few years Croatia is currently building six new indoor sport arenas for the World Handball Championship in 2009. At the same time although the first intention of establishing Croatian Sport Museum dates back to 1938, it has been officially registered only five years ago, and even today operates in completely inadequate facilities.

The third niche of the introduction embraces tourism. During the last few years Croatia has captured attention of international tourist market, being regularly subject of leisure and vacation related articles in numerous newspapers and magazines, as well as taking position in some top tourist destination lists. Tourism is not a new phenomenon for Croatians. In 2004 some cities, as Opatija for example, celebrated 160 years of tourism tradition. During the last two decades of the 19th Century several cities on eastern Adriatic coast become popular spas or retreat destinations because of their pleasant climate. The next progress of tourism activities happened between the 1920’s and 1930’s. After decline caused by the Second World War development of tourism in socialist Yugoslavia was characterized by a move towards foreign markets as well as with the expansion of mass tourism which began in the 1970’s. Later progress of tourism industry could be tracked to 1991, with the beginning of the war in former Yugoslavia. Although the war in Croatia officially ended in 1995 the revival of tourism started a few years later and in 2000 it was still considerably influenced by an unstable situation in the region. In any industry a ten year gap always has multiple impacts primarily manifested as a loss of income for the local people relying on tourism as well as for national economy in general. Serious indirect consequences include being unprepared for the changes that occurred throughout the decade in trends among tourists and in global tourism industry. After a five-year period mentioned obstacles were more-less overcome and in 2005 tourism has important input into Croatian economy contributing with approximately 20% of the national GDP (in comparison with 12% in 2000). Adaptation to global trends in yet incomplete and existing Croatian tourism still predominantly relies on a month and a half of the ‘sea and sun’ summer vacation concept in the coastal regions (the Adriatic Sea). There are some, but still slow moves towards extension of the season and shy and humble attempts towards development of tourism in inland regions. Although tourism is defined as strategic orientation of Croatian economy, plus considering trends on global tourism market (cultural tourism), we could conclude that recognition of potentials of the heritage as well as utilisation of existing or new heritage institutions (foremost museums) do not have satisfactory position in the state or regional policies. As a general rule Croatia and its cultural and natural heritage are still, on any level, insufficiently and inadequately interpreted.

Museums in Croatia

The Legal framework for museums and their activities in Croatia is defined by The Museums Act dated from 1998. At the moment there are 225 museums listed in the Register of Museums, Galleries and Collections in the Republic of Croatia, as there is an overview of 1523 museum collections and 714 documentation holdings kept in those museums. The study of the Register (Franulić, 2006: 1523)

4 For very nice article about correlation of (Nordic) Museum and sport arena, in case of Sweden, see Arnestberg (1989).
5 E. g. in 2005 Croatia was proclaimed as World’s top destination by Lonely Planet and in 2006 became the winner of Top 10 Adventure Nations by National Geographic Adventure.
6 Foremost toward West Germany, Italy and Austria.
7 By the overall situation in the Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO military actions against Serbia in 1999.
8 An income from tourism was 5,998 billion Euros in 2005 compared with 2,399 billion in 2000 (the difference in percentage is result of rise of GDP in general, from 19.97 billion Euros in 2000 to 30.95 billion in 2005). All data according to the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia.
9 July and August.
10 The data according to Museum Documentation Centre web site, <www.mdc.hr/muzeji.aspx>, [29-10-2008.]
11 The statistics heavily depend on applied criteria.
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164-177) from year 200612 showed that according to the type there were 87 (or 43 %) complex/general museums, 90 (44 %) specialised museums, 20 (10 %) museums collections categorized as kind of specialized museums too and for the last six there is no data. Among specialized museums 38 (approx. 34 %) of them are art museums, 16 (15 %) are ethnographic, 9 (9 %) are archaeological, the same number as history museums, 4 (4 %) are natural history museums and 3 (3 %) are technical. The remaining 31 (28 %) belongs to category labelled other museums, where majority are memorial museums (14) and maritime museums (3). The most frequent founders of museums in Croatia are city councils (106 museums; or 53 %), following by the State (33; 16 %), boroughs (26; 13 %), counties (13; 6 %) and 19 (9 %) museums are founded by so called other categories.13 The last category includes the only (!) one private museum in Croatia. According to sphere of activity the numbers are just slightly different. A large majority of museums or 125 of them (62 %) are local, 23 (11 %) are regional and 53 (26 %) act as national. It is evident that on local and regional level there is statistical matching between percentage of founders and museum’s sphere of activity, while 10 % more museums function at national level than established by the state itself. As statistic could easily mislead, it is worth to mention here that functioning heavily depends on numerous particulars, for example administrative rules (especially in case of regional network of museums) or by fact that many museums, above all in the capital Zagreb, which essentially act on national level have chosen the city as title-holder because of its potential to be more financially abundant than the state (Franulić, 2003: 92-98).

From historical point of view the oldest museum institution in Croatia is the city of Split Archaeological Museum.14 The number of institutions progressed slowly, numbering 31 until the Second World War. The rapid grow of numbers is a legacy of four post war decades when majority of today’s Croatian museums were established, 39 of them from 1950 to 1959. Sixties, seventies, and eighties inherited around 30 new museums in every decade. The recent war had influence too and during nineties only 15 new were established, with numbers slightly improved by 16 new museums in the first seven years of 21st century. As already hinted in the introduction the casualties of the war are always multifaceted, sometimes becoming so evident simply by statistics like this. The Croatian Museum Documentation Centre15 has done recording and evaluation of direct war losses and damages on museum buildings and holdings.16 In total 70 museum buildings, galleries and collections were damaged and destroyed in the war, and 44 of them suffered damages of the holdings. At the end of 2004 when missing museum holdings were already, although only partially, returned, the determined number of war damages on museum holdings in Croatia was actually bigger than previously estimated.17 The total number of war-damaged objects rose to 51,652, where 46,191 proved to be missing and stolen, 3,178 completely destroyed and 2,283 were damaged. As a result of activity of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and the Commission for Returning Cultural Property to the Republic of Croatia, by the end of 2004 21,347 museum objects were returned out of 46,191 looted (missing/stolen) from Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This means that 24,844 objects are still missing. The number of users/visitors depends extremely on methodology and used criteria. Temporary exhibitions, workshops and similar activities that museums have around the year as well as fluctuating (constantly growing!) number of tourists may easily blur average annual numbers. In addition here serious researches about museum’s users and theirs needs started18 only very recently in Croatia. Nevertheless, the incomplete data from 200419 records almost 2 million visits a year to museums, or statistically 44 % of

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12 At that moment the Register counted 205 museums.
13 Here belong museums established by public institutions, associations, firms, etc.
14 Dated from 1820 (Maroević, 1993: 36).
15 The Museum Documentation Centre, founded in 1955, is a public institution acting as the documentation, information and communication node of the museum network.
16 The data from Museum Documentation Centre website, <www.mdc.hr/RatneStete/hr>. [29-10-2008.]
17 As result of additional research, documentation and analysis.
18 The delay with contemporary practice around the world could be partly explained by other interests (as War damages for example), but as well as with conservative perceptions where many museum professionals still consider themselves more scientists (in designed field) then museum workers, and museums as exclusively elite scientific institutions.
the population of the country. However this may be misleading again as there are few highly visited museums, such as Duke’s Palace in Dubrovnik and Archaeological Museum in Pula (both on the coast, with certainly huge number of tourist visits) as well as because of irregular blockbuster exhibitions. At the moment we are still waiting for detailed, structured and utilizable visitors’ habits survey.

In focus: inventarisation and digitisation
In most recent years priorities in museum’s work, firmly stimulated by the Ministry of Culture, has been focused on inventories and digitisation. In 2006 out of 5,653,717 museum objects (sorted within 1403 museum collections) 46 % has been fully documented, and 9 % of later existed in (some of) different types of IT data base currently used in Croatian museums. At that time 80 % of museums had internet access, and practically half of them (111 museums) had a web site (Franulić, 2006: 164-177). The biggest digitisation project currently going on, named The Croatian Cultural Heritage, is an initiative by the Ministry of Culture with three main project leaders: the National and University Library in Zagreb, the Croatian State Archives and the Museum Documentation Centre. After few years of preparation works it officially started in March 2007 and will be implemented over the next three years. It is a national project of digitisation of archival, library and museum material with intention to encourage the creation of new digital contents, improve its accessibility and visibility and promote a systematic approach to the digitisation of holdings in cultural institutions. As such the portal intends to offers search and access to different types of collections of digitised material from museums, libraries and archives, whether produced within the scope of this project or only registered and described in it. The collections are foremost organised thematically and chronologically, by type of material and location or interconnected with important personalities, things or events to which they refer.

Although the project is developing slower then expected, it must be mentioned that the project is indeed praiseworthy mostly because it, from the highest level, recognises and validates the convergence of three main domains within heritage field (museums, libraries, archives). Today this well accepted idea is something which has been developed on theoretic level within the Chair of Museology of the University of Zagreb for the last twenty five years, much more in advance then in many other places around the world. It is indeed a shame that Croatian museum’s professionals are still pretty reluctant and restrained towards many other innovative ideas coming from the Chair.

Exhibitions and new museums
The exhibitions, with annual number around 900 in total, are the main channel of museum’s communication. One of commendable museographic improvements here is raising number of different supplementary activities organised by museums, be it workshops for children, regular and specialised guided tours, concerts, events etc. Of course the intensity and quality of those is much better in the capital and bigger cities, as it is in some museums on Adriatic coast. Special events as International Museum Day and the Museum Night are now regular and attract lots of visitors, as well as considerable media attention, all of which boosts the image of institutions and sector in general. Even more attractive for general public and media are living history/heritage events, as medieval tourournaments, roman and medieval fairs, historical re-enactment etc., all starting within last few years. Some are organised by museums but more often by interested amateurs gathered around newly created civil society heritage organisations or by city / county councils. Their main drive relies on the idea of cultural tourism, although lack of professionalism is unfortunately evident very frequently. In any case this should be considered as positive trend.

Despite some unfavourable circumstances in recent history, heritage sector in Croatia in general have a reason to believe in promising future. Naturally, realisation of available potentials takes into account existence of a good will, additional professional development and, like always, a little bit of luck. At the moment the Ministry of Culture

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20 Curiously the Croatia does not have a National Museum neither any kind of it’s 21th Century doublet.

21 <http://www.kultura.hr>, [25-10-2008.]
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has 13 new museum projects in different stages of planning or realisation and in the last political mandate it opened 10 new or refurbished museums. The actual priorities of the Ministry are the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the Museum of Antique Glass and the Museum of Underwater Archaeology, both in Zadar, the Museum of Neanderthal in Krapina, the multifaceted heritage project in Eastern Slavonia and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka. Among already opened emphasises has been on the Archaeological Museum Narona in Vod, the Museum of Nikola Tesla in Smiljan, the New Lapidarium in Novigrad, the Archaeological Museum in Osijek, just to name a few. Although tones coming from the Ministry are only positive, the reality is slightly more complex. For example, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb twice already faced reschedule of the opening of the building and its museological programme produced some, mostly political, controversy. For the biggest museum investment ever in Croatia, and with highest goals such as creating new cultural destination and putting the city of Zagreb at European museum map, avoidance of international architectural competition was certainly a serious faux pas. Any comparison with Bilbao which secretly existed in its initial planning is now more or less appearing to have been completely in vain. Works on new Museum of Neanderthal, which was supposed to have the biggest diorama of the Neanderthals in the World, started in 2003 but it will open its doors, hopefully, only next year. As already indirectly mentioned, Croatia desperately needs new museums, as well as variety of new heritage centres for decent interpretation of its rich heritage, however some experts have serious doubts if the above projects the best solution considering heritage and identity interpretation and interrelated development strategies of the country, as well as questioning their museographic quality. Prevail of archaeological and art museums is evident; public tenders for museological and museographic programmes is still nonexistent practice; instead communicating ideas thematic and chronological approach towards permanent exhibitions dominate. Interactivity is still just basic and all in all, practically all new museums from museological point of view could be considered as entirely traditional museum institutions. Shame they did not happen some twenty years ago! Croatia is indeed a case where a phrase of prominent Icom-Ictop member is valid, wherever a good museum education exist, museums around as a rule do not reflect it.

Civil society initiatives or new perspective on horizon

As already presented, the war in ex-Yugoslavia did not pass benefits to our heritage sector however the independence of Croatia and new proclaimed democracy offered some new opportunities. Although some organised (though state monitored) civil actions interconnected with preservation and interpretation of local or regional identity (hardly national, since the only promoted identity during Yugoslavia time has been artificial, kind of supranational Yugoslav identity) could be found in numerous folklore associations, only by breakdown of Yugoslavia civil society started to be fully recognised as a legitimate form. The development of this, so called the third sector, has naturally been gradual - firstly thanks to numerous foreign non-governmental organisations interconnected with humanitarian aid which engaged lots of local people in theirs activities. Later on these individuals became independent and more orientated on regeneration and regional development where local heritage has been acknowledged as valuable potential. As a result, community initiative in Croatia started to be recognised as something that could play an important role in the active preservation and interpretation of identities. From museological position this could be categorized as orientation towards increasing importance of users/visitor experiences and expectations, or, in other words, that top-down initiative and traditional museum concepts are not the only medium of heritage action and communication. Even more, some successfully challenged existing museography and the most prominent is the House of Batana in the city of Rovinj.

The House of Batana

The House of Batana is located in the city of Rovinj, in the northern part of the Adriatic, on the west coast of the Istrián peninsula. The city of Rovinj has a long tradition of tourism dating...

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24 Ictop is acronym for the International Committee for the Training of Personnel at the International Council of Museums (Icom).
back to the late 19th century with strong periods of growth in the 1920’s and 1930’s as well as in the 60’s and 70’s with the expansion of mass tourism. A result of tourism, as in the case in many other locations, the city resembles many others on the Mediterranean coast. Solely focusing on tourism and desires of potential consumers, local people have slowly, throughout generations, lost their way of living, their traditions and typical element of uniqueness. As it is well-known, from the nineties onwards tourism trends have gradually shifted towards cultural tourism placing greater emphasis on the local identity and the elements of the local heritage. In the case of city of Rovinj, all this resulted in the foundation of an eco-museum with local identity as its core, which has been made possible through a joint venture of the City Council, the Town Museum, the Institute for Historical Research and, the most importantly, the local community. At one point the Institute for Historical Research conducted study in the community on the quintessence of local identity. The result was a boat called batana which shortly became the nucleus of the Batana project.

The municipality of Rovinj recognised potential and a heritage expert has been employed as the project leader with the aim of further developing and managing the project. As she explained at that time: «The central idea of the project is to mount a permanent exhibition of the Rovinj Batana, a traditional type of boat used by Rovinj fishermen, which became a symbol of the city. The batana story opens large and small windows that provide views of large and small Rovinj histories, as perceived from the Batana’s point of view» (Ratković, 2004: 71.) The main goal of the project was preservation and presentation of Rovinj’s traditions by expressing the collective experience of the local community and creating a distinctive and innovative cultural spot. Within such a conceptual framework, the House of Batana aims to enrich the tourism offerings in the region and form a recognisable city ‘brand’, making Rovinj more interesting and authentic cultural, heritage and tourist destination. During the planning and development of the House the important role was put on the local community: batana builders, batana owners, laymen researchers.
of local tradition, fishermen, local musicians etc. Savvy project leader relying on support of professionals comprising of the architect, photographer, graphic designer and designers of multimedia and interactive exhibits made the project possible and ensured its highest quality.

The museum itself is situated in a typical Rovinj house, on the harbour within the town centre, built in the late 17th Century. Two stories of the house accommodate three permanent exhibition galleries on just over 100 square meters. As project leader likes to note, the entire concept and the mounting of the permanent exhibition are based entirely on the potential of the exhibits to pass on local traditions (Ratković, 2006: 47). The museum objects are accompanied with concise, but good enough to explain wider context texts as well as with numerous visual materials, such as drawings, archival and contemporary photographs. The very intriguing part of the exhibition is the building process of batana boat. Namely, during process of creation of the museum local shipbuilder built a new boat, using traditional technique and having camera constantly on in his shipyard (actually turning it on every morning and switching off in the evenings). The result is remarkable documentary film about traditional shipbuilding skills which could be seen in the museum as fast forward version. There are many interactive exhibits around the museum used in creative way, as for example glasses of vine which reproduce local way of living. By raising the glass to their mouth visitors start displaying various levels of information, according to their interest. Throughout the museum a typical Rovinj fisherman’s style of follow the visitor. The museum database contains information about all preserved batanas in the Rovinj ports along with simple, but indeed interactive wall aimed mainly at children, where individually taken photo images of batana boats are clased. This creates a form of tangible database but also a constantly changing temporary photo exhibition. One of the most important aims of the house of Batana is to engage and educate local people and in that way facilitate discussions and influence future development of the community. Completely modelled and established with substantial help from the local community as well as with local financial support (plus some sponsors which the project later attracted) the House, less than a year after its opening, has become the main cultural centre not only during the tourist season but throughout entire year.

By focusing on less than five meters long local fisherman boat which still could be seen around the city ports museum narrates the story about Rovinj’s way of living and by that it communicates and maintains community’s collective memory. Considering all mentioned it is indeed not a surprise that the House of Batana has been short listed for the European Museum of the Year Award 2007 in Alicante (Spain). Instead of conclusion we could say that museological concept and applied museography at the House of Batana is, and should be, warmly recommended as an excellent model for all new museums and heritage interpretation centres around the Croatia.

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY


