

Abstract

The research topic of the thesis relies on the notion of the condition known as “phantom pain” in medicine. Definition on the Mayo Clinic website states that “phantom pain is pain that feels like it's coming from a body part that's no longer there. Doctors once believed this post-amputation phenomenon was a psychological problem, but experts now recognize that these real sensations originate in the spinal cord and brain.” (Mayo Clinic, n.d.).

The thesis explores the idea of “phantom identity”, here conceptualised as the identity that former residents of the country that does not exist anymore – Yugoslavia – might recognize or express as theirs. The key question is if the common identity of the former common state, different to ethnic and other post-Yugoslav identities, can be found with its former nationals. Then also how does the process of identification work, and what are its elements. The work examines if there might be such a common identity, or elements of it, that manifest only (and in specific ways) when these individuals are together, usually in the context of social activities or shared emigration experience.

Finding an identity that is based on rather ethnic principles, such as language and territory, identity that is different to others and within the individuals of different ethnicities, is a provoking thought that can ultimately indicate the existence of concepts more powerful than nationalism, and within territories that are identified or self-identified as nationalist.

Keywords

Yugoslavia, social identity, post-Yugoslavs, popular culture, documents of memory, emigrants, phantom pain