



UDC 316.45+159.964.3+615.851  
Manuscript received: 15.03.2017.  
Accepted for publishing: 04.05.2017.  
Review article

Serbian Political Thought  
No. 1/2017,  
Year IX, Vol. 15  
pp. 93-110

Jasna Veljković<sup>1</sup>

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences,  
Department for Social Policy and Social Work, Belgrade

Vera Despotović

Singidunum University, Faculty of Media and Communications,  
Department for Social Work, Belgrade

## The Sociodrama Narrative: Political Aspects

### Abstract

This paper examines the political discourse of sociodrama by considering some basic postulates of sociodrama methods introduced by Moreno (Jacob Levy Moreno).<sup>2</sup> The aim of the paper is to explore sociodrama method by analysing its practical application within different contexts of contemporary society. In this paper, we will define sociodrama as an experiential procedure used to research intergroup relations and relations among different parties in a dispute or conflict of interest. After we describe the basic theoretical postulates of Moreno's psychodrama, we will focus on crises and conflicts affecting contemporary society, particularly those occurring within large groups. The main objective of sociodrama in this context would be to gain a greater understanding between social groups leading to the resolution of inter-group conflict and the achievement of balance between conflicting parties.

**Key words:** socio drama, political socio drama, psychodrama, society, inter group relations

---

1 Assistant professor  
jasna.veljkovic@fpn.bg.ac.rs

2 Moreno, J. L. (1889-1974) was the father of psychodrama, sociodrama and sociometry, one of the founders of the sociological approach to psychiatry, the creator of group psychiatry.

## Introduction

Current world events are rife with threats to the survival of humankind. Tension in the relations between great powers has reached a critical junction. In recent years, there has been a dramatic surge in forced migration due to frequent local armed conflicts in different regions and their spillover potential. Current media reports are saturated with issues such as oppression, war, calamities, terrorist attacks involving severe casualties and also with the consequences of all these issues on the individual, the recorded increased in suicide rates, street but also family violence, social and political unrest. The world's political and economic crises are "mirrored" on society, social groups and on the individual. One of the most prominent figures in contemporary group psychotherapy, psychodramatist and sociodramatist Peter Felix Kellermann dedicated the bulk of his work to the use of sociodrama in addressing collective trauma in war-affected ethnic groups. He wrote: "The main traumatic events such as wars, terrorist attacks and natural disasters transcend the realm of individual suffering and enter individual and collective sphere... In the long run a collective trauma demands group context to be properly researched and resolved" (Kellermann 2007: 9). But the fact is that, when we talk about victims, we refer to the actual casualties, whether of wars, terrorist attacks or natural disasters, forgetting that in one way or another, we are all victims of such events that quietly permeate our lives, becoming part of ourselves and bearing upon our actions.

It is not only the present that confronts us with them, but the "ghosts" of the past are still very much alive, if we think of World War II and the victims of Holocaust, leaving a clear mark even on the third generation. Sorbonne University professor Shutzenberger, Moreno's student and associate, wrote about the results of her longitudinal research on the transgenerational transmission of war trauma (Shutzenberger 1998). She conducted her research on more than ten thousand descendants of both Holocaust victims and Nazi criminals. Her findings indicate that clear signs of trauma transmission are registered even in third-generation descendants. Her theory of transgenerational transmission of trauma is not only accepted in clinical psychology and psychotherapy, but also applied in sociodrama, especially in Kellermann's peacebuilding

work. Kellermann wrote that “in old tribal communities in some African countries adjacent to war zones, inter-tribe aggression rises dramatically” (Kellermann 2006:10).

Group psychotherapy in small and large groups is a long process that sometimes takes years.

Every treatment is a process, which over time leads to some improvement but not to healing. The treatment consists in many changes, big and small.

Already at the beginning of the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Moreno wrote that: “modern society is ill and needs treatment” (Moreno 1953: 25), which he termed sociatry, by analogy with psychiatry. His proposed sociatry method of treating the mentally ill society was sociodrama. The group at risk of developing a collective mental illness which Moreno proposed to treat was the entire humankind. He believed that “talk and think, common methods used in most therapeutic approaches, were not sufficient to produce a change in people” (Moreno 1943:26).

When large groups are involved in political and social crisis, it is difficult to allocate human and financial resources needed to treat the effects of stress in these people. Moreno proposed the “training of spontaneity”, asking the protagonists to provide new, instead of their old and timeworn response to a new situation in order to overcome difficulties in adapting to a new situation. The aim was to educate them to stop repeating mistakes and bad habits that failed to produce good results in their lives. Spontaneity and creativity are also essential preconditions for the initiation of psychodrama and sociodrama. According to Sternberg and Garcia, “psychodrama and sociodrama are very convenient methods for alleviating and decoding posttraumatic stress syndrome. Since both methods are intertwined and concentrated on group, especially sociodrama dealing with a large group, reparation is achievable with many people, so it is not necessary to apply individual therapy” (Sternberg *et.al.* 2000: 23).

In the following section, we will review the historical background of sociodrama through social and political circumstances in which it emerged and evolved.

## Sociodrama – historical context

According to Garcia, “Sociodrama and psychodrama are branches of the same tree that appeared together with the launch of the Theatre of spontaneity – the theatre of improvised action created by Moreno in Vienna in the period 1922-1925” (Garcia 2011: 33). Moreno spearheaded great initiatives for a variety of social actions targeting the disenfranchised and discriminated categories not only for the purpose of helping these groups but also of confronting them with the situation they had accepted. It is well known that as early as 1913, Moreno began to work with prostitutes in Vienna who, at the time, had no legal rights or access to social or healthcare insurance; later, he succeeded in providing them with legal aid that addressed their human rights from the legal perspective and he also empowered these women to advocate for health care. At the beginning of his group work with prostitutes, he motivated them to discuss the difficulties they encountered in the profession they had chosen. He noticed that prostitutes as a group, although of substantially different personal profiles, had much in common. This common feature gathered them around their common aim. This was the first time he realised that “any role we play has a private but also collective component and any member of a group is potentially a therapeutic agent to other members” (Moreno 1943: 435). According to Rene Marineau (Marineau 1989: 23), the Mittendorf refugee camp was created after the First World War for Italian refugees near Vienna, where Moreno was appointed chief physician. The people in the camp, more than 10.000 of them, not only suffered from the consequences of trauma of being away from their country, but also of being separated from their close ones who were not with them in the same camp. Moreno’s task was to address the issues of violence that was widespread among the refugees. He suggested reorganising accommodation in the camp according to refugees’ choice, so people were accommodated in cottages based on their own preferences, compatibilities or incompatibilities. Simultaneously, this was the beginning of Moreno’s ideas on sociometry which later became and remained a recognised scientific discipline focusing on people’s choices and the nature of these choices. Although heavily involved in various social actions emerging in the aftermath of the First World War in Austria, Moreno started to develop socio-political theatre which he named „Theatre of Spontaneity“<sup>3</sup>. He organized a group of professional actors who had pre-

3 Moreno believed that spontaneity and creativity are the propelling forces in human progress, beyond and independent of libido and socioeconomic motives that are

viously completed training on spontaneity designed through research of political problems characteristic for the era. The audience in these performances was not a passive viewer, but was invited to explore current social, cultural and political developments together with the actors on the stage. Moreno “conducted” these performances through interaction with the audience and actors and issues raised were explored through spontaneous action. This is in fact how sociodrama was born. Austria, or at that time the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, started the First World War and emerged from it as a loser with many visible consequences for its people. These consequences, especially those related to people’s life but also their coping skills, were examined by applying completely new sociodrama methods. Sociodrama actually implied playing out different social situations by applying various action techniques and accordingly helping a large group to explore the context they lived in.

The main difference between psychodrama and sociodrama is their focus: the focus of sociodrama is a group or society, while the focus of psychodrama is an individual and his/her personal story. Psychodrama also sprouted from the “Theatre of Spontaneity” but Moreno developed it later when he moved to the US. Under the threat of Nazism spreading through Europe, Moreno realised that he and his family, as members of the Jewish community were in danger and emigrated to the US in 1925. There, in the Hudson suburb of New York, he established his Center for Rehabilitation naming it “Beacon House”<sup>4</sup> The main methods of treatment he used there were: psychodrama and sociodrama. After he settled in New York, he was intensively engaged in socio-psychological therapeutic treatments of delinquent girls. In these treatments, for the first time in his work he integrated sociometry, psychodrama and socio drama. According to Marineau, these girls were living in the space designated for this purpose within the Centre during the programme, but they were accommodated in the rooms by their own sociometric preferences (Marineau 1989: 23). The responsibility for choices they made were only theirs. Also, they were asked to choose persons they would like the most to work with (working obligation), persons they would like to learn with (teaching) and persons they would like to associate

---

frequently intertwined with spontaneity-creativity, but denied that spontaneity and creativity are merely a function and derivative of libido or socioeconomic motives.

4 In 1936 Moreno founded the Beacon Hill Sanitarium, later renamed the Moreno Sanitarium and then the Moreno Institute, in Beacon, about 60 miles (96 kilometers) north of New York City, dedicated to the therapeutic use of psychodrama. He remained physician in charge of the Institute until his retirement in 1968.

with (socialization). He tape-recorded psychodrama and sociodrama sessions with the young female delinquents and this became the first documentary material (film) about the direct implementation of these methods for the purpose of rehabilitation and re-socialization of beneficiaries.

Moreno believed that people generally had great potential for developing spontaneity and creativity as the “co-creators of our reality”, and that all our human relations from the beginning until the end of our lives were interdependent and hence had an influence on each other. As a result of this life philosophy, he conceptualised many theories of which his theory of spontaneity and creativity, along with his theory of roles are the most important ones for sociodrama and psychodrama.

### **Theory of spontaneity and creativity**

Moreno believed that “people are genuinely spontaneous and creative beings, so, spontaneity and creativity are present in our everyday lives” (1966:36). In his view, spontaneity is: a new response to an old situation, or an adequate response to a new situation. In either case, the outcome of the situation or interaction must be positive and satisfactory for all those in the situation, that is, everyone must have his/her needs met in a manner that is not harmful or diminishing to anyone else.

He also understood spontaneity as a catalyst of new ideas and actions. He emphasized that many people had great ideas that were never transformed into actions due to lack of spontaneity as the driving force for action. In his theory of spontaneity, he emphasized the importance of the “warm-up process” for the action that follows. When people are dissatisfied with their present situation in any aspect of their lives, the logical step would be taking action that would even partially lead to changing their reality and reducing the feeling of discontent or even hopelessness. By observing people in extreme situations, Moreno realized that they were much more successful in their responses “if such situations were preceded by even minimal warm-up” for action that followed (1962:38). In emergencies, we often have no time to think and our thinking is often impaired or blocked, which often results in our inadequate response to the situation in question. Trauma and pressure block the spontaneity and creativity. People subjected to long-term isolation such as imprisonment etc., when freed, experience difficulties in

returning to the world because they feel blocked and tend to develop inhibition of spontaneity and creativity. According to Marcia Carp, there is an anecdote about the way he described what spontaneity is to a group of Berkley University students. A student stood up and asked him: "Dr Moreno, what is the difference between you and Freud? Moreno looked at the pictures of many bearded faces in front of him and said: Freud had a close-cut beard clipped by barber; my beard was free flowing and spontaneous" (1994:39). His response was adequate for that moment, it created laughter and allowed others to enter equally into a playful and spontaneous moment. Moreno was excellent at warming up an audience of any size, small or large. He spoke from the moment. His authenticity captivated those listening to him. Learning where the original flow of freedom becomes blocked is an excellent start in building new responses to old situations.

Moreno's basic theoretical view is that spontaneity and creativity are crucial for human choice-making (sociometry) of where we wish to participate (role theory). On the basis of his theories, Moreno constructed methods for the healing of humanity: sociometry, training of spontaneity, sociodrama and psychodrama.

## **Role theory**

Basic Moreno's postulate was that people were psychologically composed of the roles they played. He saw roles as "specific behaviours recognised by society in a certain way" (1955: 295). We are delivered to the world with our biological roles and potential for psychological and social roles. The first social roles are constructed in communication between a child and parents; these are reciprocal and it is fortunate if the people we choose also choose us. Psychodrama roles are internal and psychological roles. Within interaction we partially externalize our psychological roles depending on our social communication and persons we communicate with. How we will play a certain role strongly depends on the cultural and sub-cultural context we live in and on the expectations of that context from us. It is important to be familiar with the expectations of a certain group from our role in which we are in interaction with such group. It is critical to understand the conflicts of roles and behaviours of people when such role is suddenly taken away. This happens with roles of oppressed nations in wars when many roles suddenly disappear.

We underline the importance of reciprocity in roles because we need partners for every social action. If we are in a highly valued role and lose the reciprocity of a partner, we are unable to play such given role, meaning that we are at a loss. Such situations are characteristic for traumatic events like wars, revolutions and natural catastrophes when we lose people without whom we cannot operate. People we lost we cannot compensate, territories we lost are also not possible to recover but what is possible is to find an appropriate way to cope with such problems and to create new roles and new satisfying relations.

## Sociodrama

According to Zoran Đurić *et al.*, “Sociodrama is psychodrama action directed at solving some problem of an entire group. Sociodrama characters are not personalized” (Đurić *et al.* 2006: 26). Moreno’s concept of role is key to sociodrama (Blatner 2000: 52). A handy definition of role is any complex of attitudes and behaviors that could be portrayed dramatically. By thinking about socio-cultural situations in terms of the roles being played, their components, how well they are played, what different expectations might be for the different participants, many aspects of individual and social psychology can be illuminated.

For example: a group of social care workers can play out situations in which they should provide social assistance to certain group of people in need. In sociodrama they practice different models of delivering such aid that can be substantially different than initially conceived. Such situations are played out in order to research different levels of feelings arising from anticipated events. “Sociodrama is a live social laboratory where it is possible to examine, as in a chemical laboratory by microscope, people’s relations” (Veljković 2016: 129).

Kellerman thought that sociodrama could be used in a hypothetical situation when “a group of two confronted tribes who established basic peace after the war between them accept to explore what they need in order to create initial trust with each other (Kellerman 2000: 16).

Groups can also explore different solutions for possible social problems, like how to express anger and rage toward the other group members in an acceptable and non-aggressive manner. Groups can also act out the projection of future relations with other groups. Some groups can conclude that the problem in their relations with another

group presently has no possible solution but in sociodrama, is possible for both groups to share their present feelings about it. In sociodrama, a smallest common denominator is searched, something that could connect them and bring them to a basic level of understanding and mutual recognition.

In early 1990s, the aim of one peace-making project was to achieve understanding between two nations in conflict who were living at the same territory. In order to achieve the set goal, a group of mental health professionals ran sociodrama groups in Pristina cooperating with Albanian colleagues from Kosovo and Metohija. The leaders of these groups were Serbian and Albanian psychotherapists, and these groups were conducted by co-therapeutic pairs different by sex and ethnicity. In this context, the social, political and therapeutic meaning was clear: to send a message that communication between the two nations is possible. Our obvious good professional and human communication, interdependence in work, common decision making and benevolence were at the same time very important things. The leaders of a group are always a model of identification for participants. The objective of our work was to establish peaceful and non-violent communication and better understanding between Serbian and Albanian women. Those women were living in the same territory and they were neighbours. Some of them brought their small children to the sessions as they had no one other to look after them. The rationale was that women's voices could influence the male family members and thus indirectly influence better general understanding in political negotiations between the two sides. Very quickly, women of different ethnicities discovered the common denominator which was self-evident: the role of mother, the role of someone who cares for another being and its wellbeing, the role of guardian of the home gate. A very important point in bringing up children is to allow them to grow in peace and free from fear. Through sociodrama action work these women recognised very similar feelings connecting them: commitment to children, concern as an experience of uncertainty of the future. Our work, although it initially showed good results, was not pursued further due to the lack of good will of those who could finance this kind of projects. After each sociodrama, the group has the chance to discuss the exercise and to say what they learned through this form of group work. As in psychodrama, sociodrama is spontaneous, there is no pre-written script. It utilizes many actions in order to deepen the group's learning through action. Therefore, sociodrama focuses on the

collective aspects of the roles we play out, because it challenges and corrects our socio-cultural roles and our feelings related to those roles or to roles forcibly imposed by the other group and we do not experience it as such in the group that we belong to. One whole group, its part or its members can play out roles of political leaders and the other group can perform the reflection of experiences of the group's role play. If sociodrama groups are therapeutic and target groups which had experienced trauma, then it is very important to secure the group members' anonymity. Since sociodrama sessions are always conducted with a large group, the group becomes a safe place where people are voicing and sharing common emotions. Unlike individuals, groups are able to deal with challenging social and political topics because such themes affect their personal lives and do not require exposing the private domain, or at least not to a significantly revealing extent.

### **An insight into sociodrama scenes**

It is common knowledge that the end of twentieth and beginning of twenty-first century were challenging for the world in general, and for Serbia in particular. Aggressive conflicts between different ethnic groups and natural disasters made a mark on the lives of many at the turn of the millennium. After NATO bombing of Serbia, ex-Yugoslav Association for psychodrama and sociodrama staged a workshop on the issue of war in Serbia. The workshop was entitled: "The war in Yugoslavia-searching for answers?" (Đjurić, et. al. 2004). More than forty of our psychodrama trainers and their trainees participated. The main sociodramatic roles explored by the large group in this event were the roles of ex-Yugoslav and US leaders, the Serbian people, NATO officer, powerful media, money and power and a powerful woman. In the role of Yugoslavia's ex-president, the group played unlimited power. In the role of the Serbian people, the group acted helpless. During the play, the role of the people become collective. People would enter the stage without restraint and take on the role of the People "Unlike those stereotype roles – Leader, NATO, Media, Money –the role of the People developed from the typical female submission to the power of an aggressive male-leader, authentic emotions, recognition of the emotions like murderous rage, helplessness, feeling that they have been manipulated and that they are miserable" (Đurić *et. al.* 2004: 69).

Since 2000, sociodrama in the world started to be used extensively in order to help the survivors of such a tragedies. At numerous conferences of the International Association for Group Therapy, sociodrama sessions were organised with titles and programme customized to the current world events. In 2000, the World's Congress of Group Psychotherapy was held in Jerusalem and needless to say, the choice of venue was not accidental, given the city's history as the battleground between two ethnicities and two different cultures living on the same territory. The main topic of the Congress was: "From conflict to generative dialogue". Every evening at the end of the main programme, large group sessions were held. The objective of these groups was to reflect the group process that was happening among the Congress participants. Two parallel large groups were conducted simultaneously but in different venues. The first group was facilitated by a prominent sociodramatist from England, and the second by a group analyst from Australia. Only the final sessions will be presented here, when the two groups were put to work together in order to achieve integration at the end of the Congress. A sociodrama expert from Israel analysed the dynamics of relations in these two large groups. It appeared that a huge silent wall divided the Congress participants. The wall was built up from strong emotions harboured by the participants and unresolved tensions that had existed between different sub-groups of psychotherapists. In the socio-drama group conducted by Carp a wall scene was discussed by having the participants stand in the middle of the room and create a wall with their bodies. As the group facilitator later commented, it was a relief for some, and frustration for others. Practice shows that a wall in a large group can be experienced either as a barrier or as protection. This wall could have been representative of our inner world and the walls within it. Initially, the wall was represented by the members of both sexes, but it is interesting that male members soon left it and stepped aside. The women stayed. The male participants were standing by and watching what was going on. And then suddenly, one by one, the male participant stood up and walked into the centre. The wall was transformed into a protective shield, with female guardians, while males were protected in the middle of circle. The question was: who protected whom? To make this group process clearer to the readers, it is important to say the group included nationals of thirty eight countries and members of several religious groups (Armenians, Christians, both Catholics and Orthodox, Muslims, Jews, non-believers, sceptics) and those categories divided this group. After the acknowledgement of different levels of religiousness, what appeared

was the socio-political layer as an aspect of conflict between some nations.

We must keep in mind the Congress venue - Jerusalem, the city that stands at the crossroads of two opposing religions, the city that is always balancing between war and peace, Eros and Thanatos. And the wall from our story appeared in the city where the Western Wall (the Wailing Wall) stands as a centuries-old cultural monument. One month later, armed conflict escalated in Israel and it resulted in many innocent victims on both sides. This is repeated in circles.

Those who participated at the last World Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Zagreb in 1986, before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, also described a very strong experience of unspoken tensions at the Congress. Let's keep in mind that large groups are always a reflection of the social microcosm we live in, or society we come from but also of the world or the planet we inhabit on the whole. If we learn to respect diversity and set clear limits between us and others (not such limits that inhibit communication, but those that facilitate it and protect both sides, then we will progress in cooperating with the other side. This is actually the main goal of sociodrama. It is clear that harboured tensions continued to exist after the end of this congress for we all know subsequent developments.

In September 2015, the International Congress of Group Psychotherapy was organised in Rovinj, Croatia. The title of the Congress was: "Despair and desire in times of crisis". It was interesting that over one thousand psychotherapists from all over the world enrolled and that three to four hundred colleagues participated in the congress. Seven hundred participants paid the enrollment fee, booked their flights and cancelled at the last moment. In the 62-year long tradition of IAGP Congress, this never happened. At the time, the world was faced with immense problems of the migrant crisis. We held the sociodrama workshop entitled: "Economic and political crisis-ultimatum for new roles" (Veljković 2015).

The purpose of this sociodrama workshop was to explore the impacts of the economic and political crisis on us and our inner world, as well as on our behaviour; are we forced to resign from ourselves and our value systems in order to adapt to new roles set before us; what happens with us and within us if we do so; what happens if we are not able to adopt new roles that are often crucial for our survival in the today's new social order?

Workshop was attended by colleagues of four nationalities: Spanish, Greek, Italian and Serb. The official language of the event was English. All these nations are said to be Southerners as they are closer to the southern hemisphere. One of the common features of the nations from these regions is a lively and sometimes wild temperament. At the sociodrama workshop something unexpected occurred. Bion said that: "Daring to be aware of the facts of the universe we exist in is called courage" (1987: 19). It seems to us that his thesis was confirmed.

At the beginning of the sociodrama group, the facilitator delivered a picture presentation as a kind of "warm up"<sup>5</sup>. The presentation was compiled from Internet news reports and current international newspaper reports and pictures from regions that the news was reported from. We started with the news like: "Washington Post" reports that the present financial crisis is the greatest since the Great Depression of 1930s. The same paper reported deep concerns over the political, financial and security situation in Tunisia. Daily News carried statements of leading economists that dollar was heading for collapse ... then the media linked economic collapse with the possibility of a large-scale world war. Greek media reported about the persistence of the crisis in Greece, long lines in front of banks and a daily withdrawal limit of 50 Euros; news from Bangkok was that the dead bodies of victims killed in the August 17 blast in downtown Bangkok were finally identified. Further news was that Germany, France and Great Britain were under EU pressure due to a sudden influx of migrants; news from Serbia was that streams of migrants flowed every day from Macedonia into Serbia crossing the border at Gevgelia, including brutal scenes among them when boarding overcrowded trains to Belgrade; Belgrade parks were crowded with sleepy and weary migrants. Then migrants from the war-affected countries were shown again. The cities these people lived in did not exist anymore. Fleeing from destruction and violence in their homelands migrants desperately sought a way to reach the promised lands of the EU but it turned out that these countries were not happy to have them. We showed a scanned letter of an intellectual from Damascus who describes his city before the war and revolution as a bustling place which pulsing with life round the clock. Now his city is destroyed and death lurks everywhere. Finally, we showed the pictures from *Love Pride in Berlin held a few days* before the congress. This was the only news with no

5 The purpose of warming up is to enhance spontaneity and emotional awareness in the group. In choosing the warm-up approach it is important for the facilitator to consider what is known about the intra- or within the group issues.

threat of violence and war. The images were accompanied by the music of the famous rock band Pink Floyd, and their song "Money".

After this audio-visual warm-up, group members were asked to choose the action manner in which they will present group experience of the presentation. At first, the group remained passive for a while. Then people started getting up and communicating, first non-verbally and then verbally. They were discussing how to start. One woman pulled the curtains on the windows (it was a sunny September morning, the room was full of light, and suddenly darkness happened); other members placed chairs on the both sides making a curved tunnel resembling the labyrinth with no exit. The roof of the tunnel was made of large sheets of flip chart paper. At the facilitator's request, the group gave a name to what they made: "Black hole". It was a fantastic metaphor. The "Black hole" concept is known to astronomers and physicists. Galactic black holes are among the most fascinating objects that exist in our Universe; they have no beginning or end and are a kind of abyss. The group presentation produced a strong feeling of anxiety. The group worked on a regressive and nonverbal level. Everyone went into the tunnel and squatted next to each other. They were silent. They group did not leave the "Black hole" for a long time. They passively suffered the impossibility to move and the lack of fresh air (the people kneeled or squatted in the narrow isle between two lines of chairs). It was hot and humid. Some started to cough nervously. I had an idea that entire group was stuck in a "bad uterus" and that an obstetrician was needed to let them out. On the other hand if we aim for the reflection of reality than we should allow the group to be inside as long as it needs.

In the treatment of psychotic and borderline personality disorders, Bion wished to metaphorically demonstrate the degree of their suffering. He described them as individuals with a "never ending conflict", and compared such conflict with falling into the "Black hole" (2005: 15). In our physical reality, the fall of an object is not endless as it eventually touches the ground. If someone fell into the cosmic "Black hole" they would never land and would be falling endlessly. The group facilitator asked the members to verbalize the emotions that appeared. This intervention brought them out of the tunnel. They stood up one by one, shaking off the dust as if they wanted to dispose of who knows what; probably not pleasant feelings. They clearly identified three overwhelming emotions: despair, sadness and rage. A chair was placed to represent each of these emotions. Each group member presented the emotions

on these chairs. Finally, the entire group made a sculpture of chairs by turning them upside down. Sadness and despair were below. Rage was at the top of these two chairs. When they placed the chairs the group let out a long blast that sounded like a sick howl in the beginning then as a long loud echoing moan.

At the very end of our sociodrama workshop, each participant discussed and shared feelings and impressions at the personal, local and global level; general feeling was that of immense concern for the future of mankind. Group cohesion at the workshop was high. After the workshop, a psychotherapist from Greece suggested to share the content with both large groups held as the wrap-up of the day: psycho-drama and group-analytic group. The exercise provoked very strong emotions in both large groups.

## **Political sociodrama**

According to Kellermann (2000:201), political sociodrama “encourages its participants to explore which social problems limit their functioning at their full potential.” Kellermann is the most prominent contemporary representative of political psychodrama and has been involved in sociodrama work with warring and opposed groups for decades in order to bring them to an agreement. In his work we explore the different ways people internalize the roles of aggressor and victim. It includes encounter with the other side. The purpose is always to gain a better understanding and to recognize the moral, social and personal implications of a deep conflict between two opposing groups, who have aggressive feelings toward each other. This kind of approach is rooted in the assumption that people can be only partially responsible for their own failure to adapt to society which can be too stressful and demanding for them. The concepts of trauma, stress and crisis always imply the nature of relations between an individual and the external environment where certain disorder exists between the demands of the environment and the individual’s ability to respond. This further means that “many reactions of people in the societies exposing their members to situations of prolonged stress and trauma are normal reactions to abnormal social and political circumstances. In such circumstances, the purpose of sociodrama would be to establish what is disturbing in such social circumstances and what society could do to offer to people what they need”

(2007: 83). Political sociodrama can be organised during each political gathering: protests or even demonstrations during election campaigns, in schools working with adolescent populations, in university campuses, and everywhere else where big groups of people congregate. In his Theatre of spontaneity, in April 1921, when a group of citizens thought out loud who will be the next ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and what to expect, Moreno put a chair on the scene and said:” This is the throne. Don` t say it, do it, show it! Come up to the stage, assume the role of Emperor and show what you should do in this difficult social and political situation - as if you were the Emperor of Austria” (1965:35). He called people to explore components of the role of leader.

People often think that they know what they would do if they were in a position of authority. But if they are asked to play out the roles of others, to think as the other, to feel or to make decisions, it is different. Sociodrama suggests a super ordinate goal of exploration and combines it with the metaphor of a socio-cultural laboratory, as a way to find out what works and what doesn` t.

## **Conclusion**

We live in the world full of social and political conflicts between different large groups. This demands an analysis of group processes and work with groups. In moments of great instabilities and uncertainties, we have difficulties to provide meaning, to design what happens around us. In most cases we are aware of own inability to understand the ongoing process. Today`s globalised world put different groups with substantially different structures in interaction without providing tools necessary for the understanding of differences between them. The consequences are strong confrontations between groups (ethnic, social, political) leading too often to escalation of violence between them, which inevitably leads to wars. Socio drama is a tool that can be of great help to different groups in understanding each other and not underestimating each other. It is necessary for opposing groups to understand cultural and other differences and to move a step forward and perceive possible outcomes of mutual misunderstanding. Global society needs healing and to this end, is necessary to engage trained professionals who will work with groups. Sociodrama has different possible applications with a clear political discourse within it. It surely has different modalities of

application depending on the historical-cultural context, cultural forms and kinds of social groups of the country where it is performed. The topic of sociodrama is always defined: social, historical or cultural trauma, meaning, for example: actual or possible war, terrorism, social and political unrest or conflict between warring ethnic groups, as well as hidden conflicts producing violence for no apparent reason.

There is no aggression between social groups without reason. It is usually preceded by long periods of heavy silence. The preventive function of sociodrama in preventing conflict escalation and violence is crucial. One of the things the two conflicting groups frequently have in common is silence, even if the motives are different for each respective sides. Socio-educative function of sociodrama, from the work of Moreno until the present times, when applied in work with specific groups and in education of different social groups, is very clear because in sociodrama we learn how groups must communicate and recognize the needs of others. Sociodrama breaks the dangerous silence between the groups of people and explores different values, ideology, confidence, homophobia, problems in communication within the institutions of society. Finally, sociodrama contributes to the development and improvement of links between social groups. Today's modern society is in need of reconstruction; this process must start transparently with the reparation of damages and fractures inside and between social groups and the institutions of society. Therefore, political discourse on use of sociodrama is important for the "work through" process in such reconstruction.

## **Bibliography:**

- Bion, W. R. (1987) *Second Thoughts*. London: Maresfield.
- Bion, W. R. (2005) „Seminar One“. In: Bion, F. (ed.) *The Tavistock Seminars – Wilfred R. Bion*. London: Routledge.
- Blatner, A. (2000) *Foundations of Psychodrama: history, theory and performance*. New York: Springer.
- Carp, M. (1994) “The river of freedom”. In: Holmes, P., Carp, M. and Watson, M. (eds.) *Psychodrama since Moreno- Innovations on Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge. pp: 39-61.
- Garcia, A. (2011) “Exploring the boundaries between the psychodrama and sociodrama”. In: Weiner, R., Adderly, D. and Kirk, K. (eds.) *Sociodrama in a Changing World*. London: Lulu.com. pp. 33-45.
- Đurić, Z., Veljković, J. and Tomić, M. (2006) *Psychodrama – A Beginner's Guide*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Đurić, Z., Veljkovic, J. (2004) "Commentary on Sociodrama and Psychodrama", in: *Journal of Psychodrama*, 1/1: pp. 55-64.
- Kellermann, P.F. (2007) *Sociodrama and Collective Trauma*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kellermann, P.F. (2000) "The long-term psychological effects and treatment of Holocaust trauma", in: *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 6(3): pp. 197-218.
- Moreno, J. L. (1924) *Das Steigreif Theatre*. Vienna: Potsdam-Kiepenheuer.
- Moreno, J. L. (1943) "The Concept of Sociodrama: A New Approach to the Problem of Intercultural Relations", in: *Sociometry*, 6(4): pp. 434- 439.
- Moreno, J. L. (1953) *Who shall survive?*. New York: Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L., Moreno, Z. (1975) *Psychodrama, vol. 3*, New York: Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1955) "Psychodrama". In: McCary, J. L. (ed.) *Six approaches to Psychotherapy*. New York: Dryden. pp. 95-103.
- Moreno, J.L. (1966) "The Roots of Psychodrama", in: *Group Psychotherapy*, 19: pp. 3-4.
- Marineau, R. (1989) *Jacob Levy Moreno, 1989-1974, father of Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group psychotherapy*. London: Routledge.
- Sternberg, P. and Garcia, A. (2000) *Sociodrama: Who's in your shoes?*. Westport: Praeger.
- Shutzenberger, A. A. (1998) *The Ancestors Syndrome: Transgenerational Psychotherapy and the Hidden Links in the Family Tree*. London: Routledge.
- Veljković, J. (2016) "Primena sociodrame u akademskom obrazovanju", in: *Godišnjak Fakulteta političkih nauka*, godina X/16, pp.: 123-137.
- Veljković, J. (2015) "Economic and political crisis- ultimatum for new roles". Proceedings of the Abstracts of the 19<sup>th</sup> IAGP Congress, 2015, September 1-5, Rovinj, Croatia. Available at: <https://eventegg.com/iagp-2015-rovinj/> [Accessed on September 19, 2015].