‘Titostalgia’ is my neologism, describing nostalgic sentiments, activities and products in post-Yugoslav societies that are connected to the late president of Yugoslavia Josip Broz, alias ‘Tito’ (1892–1980). Much like any other nostalgia, it comprises both the (materialized) discourses of certain groups, institutions and individuals, and a mentality pattern. In my nomenclature, the former is “the culture of nostalgia,” and the latter a “nostalgic culture.” Both terms also indicate how I understand and investigate these phenomena: not solely, to put it roughly and schematically, by applying a ‘top down’ or ‘bottom-up’ approach, but primarily by studying it in its dialectic relatedness, interaction, conditionality and interdependence. Such an approach enabled me to avoid frequent reductionist fallacies. The ‘culture of nostalgia’ is, hence, one part of the phenomenon. It rests on pre-formulated and then publicly spread tirades, practices, and productions of certain influential groups within a given society and their media, produced with a specific purpose or goal in mind. Its promoters are, for instance, inventive trendsetters in the realm of consumer culture, political parties, companies, advertisers, artists, spin doctors, subcultural groups, or, last but not least, certain nostalgia enthusiasts.\footnote{See, for example, Boyer’s (2006) provocative consideration of how ‘Ostalgie,’ denoting the nostalgic reminiscence among the Eastern Germans of today for the GDR (German Democratic Republic), is more a projection (and production!) of the west Germans about what their East German compatriots miss today. Consequently, Boyer replaced replaced ‘Ostalgie’ with ‘Westalgie.’} What we deal with here is a kind of nostalgia engineering, management, or marketing – a ready-made nostalgia, prêt-à-porter, polished and designed for the ‘local market’ as well as for ‘export.’

The other part of the phenomenon, ‘nostalgic culture,’ which is the topic of this contribution, is a mental state, or a social and cultural notion, a popular conviction, a ‘mental map’ and an attitude towards certain periods in the past that are the object of this nostalgia (that are ‘nostalgicized’). In simple words, it is a heartfelt nostalgia. Nostalgic products in narratives, mass culture, advertising, and politics can reflect, albeit inadvertently, ‘genuine’ nostalgia for the past, and vice versa. People may be
nostalgic, but that sentiment is not necessarily adequately reflected in prevailing discourses. ‘Titostalgia’ reveals a good example of this: although Broz was virtually excluded from the public discourses or in many cases even systematically defamed and denounced, people in post-Yugoslav countries have continually held him in relatively high esteem. To sum up, my demarcation of the ‘culture of nostalgia’ and a ‘nostalgic culture’ serves as an analytical tool. Both signify ideal types that facilitate an understanding of the complex phenomenon. In real terms, both are inseparably interlinked and cannot exist apart.\(^2\)

In this sense, the catalogue of the ‘culture of titostalgia’ must be compared with, read, and interpreted against ‘titostalgic culture,’ i.e. images, opinions, and assessments expressed by people from the former Yugoslavia in everyday life accounts, symbolized in street culture, and documented in opinion polls and surveys. Only then does it become clear that the ‘revaluated’ Broz is not solely a commercial trademark occupying a market niche, a pop star, a fad, or a media trick, but a significant point on the mental map of post-Yugoslav societies.

Let us first look at how the Old Man (Stari)\(^3\) became to be an ever-present part of contemporary everyday culture and communication. In the spirit of the post-modernist maxim anything goes and consumer-driven, all-inclusive practices, his image is found in many private apartments in assorted forms,\(^4\) public premises and offices. Petrović (2010) describes how Broz’s portraits remained in a decaying cable factory in Jagodina, Serbia, although not out of an attitude of indifference, but rather as result of a conscious political strategy, namely to recall the years when the company, its employees and the entire region were in better shape. Likewise, you can find a large calendar with Broz’s image in a barbershop in Mostar, where it is tucked behind the mirror. The shop also displays postcards depicting Broz in his Partisan days. Such images were regularly issued by veterans associations on important anniversaries. Very often Tito’s images are exposed next to artifacts belonging to entirely different cultures, such as contemporary consumer culture, religious culture, pop culture, national culture, or everyday culture of the past. One such unlikely mélange, placed in the reception room of a Ljubljana-based company shows a picture

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\(^2\) This text is based on the chapter from my book Titostalgia – A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz, published by MediaWatch (Peace Institute) in Ljubljana in English and Slovenian in 2008 (reprinted in 2009). A Serbian translation was published in January 2010 with Biblioteka XX vek in Belgrade.

\(^3\) This was one of Tito’s many nicknames.

\(^4\) Including those of left-wingers and Broz-sympathizers living abroad.