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(POST-)YUGOSLAV ANTI-WAR ENGAGEMENT: A RESEARCH TOPIC AWAITING ATTENTION

Abstract: *(Post-)Yugoslav anti-war contention has remained an under-theorised topic almost twenty years after the end of the wars of Yugoslav succession. Rather than focusing on the "ontogenesis" of individual pacifist enterprises, this paper examines the reasons for which (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activisms have been marginalised in recent East European sociological scholarship. I argue that a thorough appreciation of these phenomena requires a Yugoslav/regional approach which has not been favoured by post-Yugoslav social science scholars. This article also offers a critical reading of the existing attempts to theorise (post-) Yugoslav anti-war activisms. It criticises their failure to draw upon the rich conceptual apparatus of social movement theories developed within Western political sociology over the last couple of decades. In spite of the fact that the concept of "social movement" may be contested in the context of post-Yugoslav anti-war engagement on the basis of its quantitative marginality, this should not deter (post-)Yugoslav social scientists from applying and refining Anglo-Saxon social movement theories in a culturally sensitive manner. Specific dynamics of anti-war activism occurring within an armed conflict has not been sufficiently studied. This is an important knowledge lacuna where regional sociologists could offer a substantive contribution.*
Key words: *Yugoslavia, anti-war activism, social movement theories.*

(Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Engagement:
A Research Topic Awaiting Attention

The extremely violent character of the wars of Yugoslav succession has by now stimulated an impressive amount of attention across the social sciences (e.g., Popov 1991; Ramet 1992; Woodward 1995). However, widespread insistence on various distortions of nationalist sentiment, to a greater or lesser extent present in all former Yugoslav republics mutually strengthening each other, has obscured a rich dynamics of anti-war engagement which unfolded immediately prior to and throughout the Yugoslav armed conflicts. Almost two decades after the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995), there is very little

that we know about the processes through which the imminence of an armed conflict awakened dormant social networks and strengthened the existing activist circles or created new ones. Even less is known about a plethora of ideological predilections which were the engines behind civic engagement, driving both internal and external tensions and fragmentations. There are also no sociological accounts that are sufficiently appreciative of the relevance of Yugoslav anti-war organising for the complex geometry of the present day civic linkages and resistances in the post-Yugoslav space. This undoubtedly represents a set of serious, although not surprising, knowledge lacunae in the burgeoning amount of social scientific research pertaining to the multifaceted process of Yugoslavia's dissolution.

The first section of this paper takes a detailed look at the reasons for which (post-) Yugoslav anti-war activisms[1] have been marginalised in recent East European sociological scholarship. I show that a substantive portion of sociological research on the region favours elite-oriented accounts nested within the nation-state framework. Such research perspectives naturally cannot appreciate the complexity of grassroots social phenomena operating regionally and trans-nationally. In the second section of the paper I review some of the existing attempts to theoretically engage with the problematics of (post-) Yugoslav anti-war contention. I criticise their failure to apply the abundant conceptual apparatus of Anglo-Saxon social movement scholarship in a context-sensitive manner. I, finally, outline a possible theoretically-oriented research perspective. I also offer methodological remarks pertaining to the two years of my fieldwork with anti-war activists in Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

(Post-)Yugoslav anti- activism: a marginal(ised) phenomenon

A conspicuous paucity of studies engaging with (post-)Yugoslav anti-war and pacifist initiatives[2] can be accounted for by a

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[1] The word *(post-)Yugoslav* is here used to indicate that the civic engagement to which I am referring was initiated during Yugoslavia's existence and it continued after the country's dissolution. I use the word *activisms* (instead of *activism*) to underscore a variety of ideological and strategic options within the area of (post-) Yugoslav anti-war contention.

[2] It might be theoretically productive to differentiate between anti-war and peace activisms because these two terms are related, overlapping and sometimes

number of inter-related reasons. The dearth of interest in the topic has to do with the ways in which scholars on the region perceive the nature and the causes of the Yugoslav destructive nationalisms and the country's ultimate demise. The majority of studies on the former Yugoslavia, and especially those chronologically closer to the armed conflict (e.g., Kaplan 1993; Glenny 1993; Magas 1993), are based on the paradigm that multi-national societies are by definition conflictual and characterised by a tendency towards ethnically homogeneous nation-states (Dević 1997). Such approaches perceive ethnic identity as a fixed category superimposed over a whole range of other possible personal affiliations. They, thus, leave insufficient space for trans-republic, pan-Yugoslav or supra-national peace-oriented civic engagement. There are, of course, scholars – foreign, domestic and diasporic – who have provided more balanced explanations by complementing and qualifying the nationalist argument with an analysis of long term social developments and the country's cultural life (e.g., Dević 1997; Dragović-Soso 2002; Fridman 2006, 2011; Gordy 1999; Jansen 2005; Sekelj 1992).

Moreover, a good portion of recent research uncritically 'normalises' the current post-Yugoslav situation, perceiving the newly generated and largely still incompletely consolidated nation-states as 'natural' results of long-term historical processes. To produce such a representation, scholars generally gloss over decades of rich and dynamic political developments that were taking place within the (to a lesser or greater extent) pluralist rather than monolithic framework of Yugoslav socialism. This is done in spite of the fact that the principal political cleavages with the Yugoslav socialist regime were of social rather than ethnic nature (Tomić and Atanacković 2009). Extremely disruptive social phenomena, like wars and forced

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interchangeably used. *Anti-war activism* refers, first, to a general resistance to an armed conflict and, second, to a type of civic engagement with a pronounced personal and local dimension. Anti-war activists in the latter sense frequently experience private war-related grievances which stimulate resistance to a particular war happening here and now. They need not be against war *as such*, but might reject a particular war out of ideological convictions or personal grievances. Anti-war attitude can be, then, plausibly articulated from a nationalist perspective. *Peace activism*, on the other hand, is informed by a broader, globally-oriented set of beliefs and values according to which war or any other kind of military means must not be used for conflict resolution. It is propelled by community-oriented practices and often stems from a clear, mostly left-leaning, political stance.

migrations, leave in their wake an ideological void. The new authorities generally strive to fill it by denial, while concurrently generating media representations which portray them solely as victims.

There are numerous efforts to interfere with and distort historical factuality which are also taking place on a personal level in terms of eclipses and revisions of collective histories and personal biographies. Kuljić (2010: 240) maintains that once the armed conflict on the Yugoslav territory was over, "a civic war of remembrance" was initiated. Social science research itself can become complicit in the processes of forging memories and it may fail to escape or even start to perpetuate dominant discourses which it might have set out to critique. Jansen (2002: 17) posits that "even some of the better journalistic accounts (and the worst ethnographic ones) offer a rather homogenous and structured picture which unintentionally replicates some of the pitfalls of the dominant post-Yugoslav nationalism". A specifically social scientific "partitioning" of the Yugoslav space in which it has now become more "natural" to focus on only one of the newly created nation-states represents in itself a consequence of the war. The Britain based historian of Yugoslavia, Jasna Dragović-Soso (2008: 29) recognises this when claiming that in the existing literature

> [At times] Yugoslavia's national groups have been treated in an overly 'homogeneous' way (as the Serbs, the Croats, the Slovenes, etc) at the expense of highlighting the diversity of experiences and attitudes existing within each of them. Whether on an elite or a grassroots level, accounts of the process of Yugoslavia's dissolution have often neglected the *interactive* nature of the various particularist nationalisms or of the policies and decisions of the different federal, republic, and province leaderships.

This practice privileges elite-oriented explanations while obscuring local histories and grassroots mobilisations. At the same time it marginalises a whole corpus of historical legacies which, in turn, delegitimise Yugoslav socialist experience and destabilise some of its fundamental values (like anti-fascism).

Another reason for a lack of interest in (post-)Yugoslav antiwar and pacifist activisms is that activist groups were indeed small and often disunited and repressed (Pešić 1992). Anti-war efforts

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cannot be but marginal and brief once the war has already started. Civic challenges and especially those in highly volatile political environments are intrinsically episodic. Also, such efforts were far away from the focus of the world media which reported about the war in an ignorant, stereotypical and sensationalist fashion, flattening historical controversies and reducing their complexity to simple binary oppositions. On the other hand, a lot of traditional Western sociological scholarship devoted to democratisation and civic engagement usually skims over short-lived attempts and focuses on permanent organisations or, at least, those that manage to better withstand regime pressures (Kaldor 2003).

Moreover, a substantive portion of post-Yugoslav sociological scholarship operates within the framework of individual nation-states. Focusing on the newly formed and currently existing state formations and on processes unfolding within them is not problematic in and out of itself. The situation, however, becomes more challenging when research in the area of Yugoslav studies acquires an important historical dimension. In that case, social science studies can hardly do justice to any topic without taking into account interactions and parallel streamings across the republics. Jasna Dragović-Soso (2008: 17) demonstrates that

> Existing analyses of Yugoslavia's dissolution have not paid adequate attention to the pro-Yugoslav alternatives that existed in the political sphere of all the republics as well as on the federal level. Considering that sociological data point to the existence of considerable grassroots support for some kind of Yugoslavia, why were the pro-Yugoslav forces so unsuccessful at politically mobilising that support in the late 1980s? […] what is missing, however, is a more thorough analysis of the forging and the internal dynamics of the Yugoslav alternative itself, made up as it was of a myriad of intellectuals and civic groups and, from 1989, political parties.

When often essentialised and reified nationalist identities acquire central status, not much space is left for (anti-nationalist) pacifist initiatives regardless of their form or scope (Breuilly 1993). However, the mere fact that such actions were undertaken debunks the idea that all political mobilisation stems from ethnicity and

allegedly universal desire of the people to live in separate and ethnically homogeneous states. If not having a pronouncedly centripetal (federalist) character, a good part of these undertakings were very much concerned with maintaining contact and perceiving Yugoslav territory as a unique cultural space. In the words of Miladin Životić (1991/1997: 85), the Serbian philosopher and one of the most well-known Yugoslav peace activists:

> Our wish is to save, if not Yugoslavia – although I think that is possible as well – at least some forms of cooperation and understanding which will enable that there is no war on our territories.

After 15 years since the Dayton Agreement (1995) which brought peace to the region without, however, resolving (and even strengthening) Bosnia's deeply entrenched ethnic divisions, the time seems now ripe for a reversal of the 'nation-state' paradigm. The deafening nationalist clamour has subsided and some of the deepest wounds are slowly healing through a better cooperation among the ex-republics buttressed by the European Union. It is now the task of post-Yugoslav critical historiography, sociology and political science to offer empirically founded readings of the events surrounding Yugoslavia's demise by taking into account half a century of the Yugoslav socialist experience.

I argue that (post-)Yugoslav anti-war and pacifist activisms cannot be fully appreciated within a purely national context. This assertion is not so much related to the typical methodological praise of comparative research design yielding more insightful material. It has, rather, to do with the fact that anti-war initiatives taking place throughout the country, and especially in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia – the three countries involved in a protracted (in contrast to the short ten-day war in Slovenia) armed conflict – witnessed many instances of cooperation, resistances and interactions that also shaped their subsequent nationally-bounded developmental trajectories. War is by nature an interactive phenomenon in spite of the fact that power distributions of those involved in it, as in the Yugoslav case, could be appreciably asymmetrical. Yugoslav anti-war and pacifist civic engagement can be properly recovered only through a *trans-national* approach which treats Bosnia-Herzegovi-

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na, Serbia and Croatia as a triadic nexus comprising an abundance of antagonistic war perceptions and ideological vantage points.

There are recent social scientific studies and legal enterprises appreciative of the entirety of the Yugoslav space (Andreas 2004; Judah 2009). With the increased political stabilisation of the region, powerfully propelled by the European Union to which all former republics impatiently aspire (Slovenia already joined in 2004), the complexity of the Yugoslav conflict and its legacy acquire a new theoretical and practical relevance. The international transitional justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, generate a substantive amount of testimonies, reports and other research material that throw new light on the relevant political developments and fuel scientific debates (Cohen & Dragović-Soso 2008).

An almost negligible amount of reflection and scholarship has been generated by the most engaged activist generation due to a lack of determination to analyse collective undertakings. During my fieldwork I realised that there is a certain kind of fear of 'privatising' the movement through writing. Many activists are concerned about the possibility of involuntarily 'appropriating' and benefiting upon achievements of distinctly collective efforts. One of the central questions in the post-war dynamics of civic engagement in the Yugoslav space has to do with who has the right to 'authentically' speak about and on behalf of pacifist undertakings. Who is the 'real' claimant of the considerable activist capital that has accrued over the last two decades and whose value increases with the worsening of social conditions and ever more potent professionalisation pressures? This practice, occurring in an atmosphere in which social scientists have themselves become devalued or abused for particular political purposes, has left an important void in post-Yugoslav sociological scholarship.

Nevertheless, women activist groups throughout the region have been continually documenting their engagement as well as numerous instances of feminist international solidarity (e.g., Kesić, Janković and Bijelić 2003; Zajović et al. 2007; Vušković and Trifunović 2007). One must not fail to mention a sustained scholarly effort of Croatian anthropologists and ethnographers to analyse war-related everyday experiences in the 1990s Croatia (e.g.,

Povrzanović Frykman, 2003). Also, Božičević (2010) has recently edited a volume which considers positive peacebuilding practices in the post-war Croatia. This collection of short essays written by Croatian peace activists themselves focuses on peace-building activities organised by local actors and often financially supported by foreign foundations. The volume does not appreciate wider/regional dynamics in the sphere of pacifist civic organising. The authors actually urge for more efforts to document and analyse peace-building work both in Croatia and in the post-Yugoslav space.

Moreover, over the two years of fieldwork in the region I felt that among the respondents/activists across the Yugoslav space there was a sense of saturation with interviews done by young and usually poorly informed and, therefore, insufficiently sensitive researchers. Among some respondents there was a feeling that young scholars use the both emotion- and value-laden activist knowledge for personal career advancement in places that are removed from local political tensions and straitened financial circumstances. Anti-war engagement in impoverished and authoritarian milieus which found themselves in an armed conflict is an acutely challenging and energy consuming activity. More than fifteen years after the end of the wars of Yugoslav succession, many protagonists may still abstain from a more reflexive engagement with their civic contention due to the feelings of psychological exhaustion, burnout or disappointment/disillusionment that such actions can provoke. The irritation which can sometimes be encountered among the activists resembles the one caused by a myriad of foreign 'experts'/consultants who visit the region for a short period of time, frequently led by self-promotion goals.[3]

Among the most serious challenges facing a student of this kind of (post-)Yugoslav civic engagement is finding his/her way

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[3] It is interesting to note that some of the former republics are (almost exclusive) focal points of researchers positioned in or coming from the Western academia: Croatia (Stubbs 2006, and more recently, Baker 2010), Serbia (Fridman 2006, 2011; Gordy 1999), Bosnia (Bugarel 2004; Dujizings et al. 2007; Fagan 2008; Helms 2007). It can be doubted that to any pre-war Yugoslav sociologist it would have appeared problematic to engage in sociological exploration pertaining to his/her entire country. A vast majority of social scientific scholarship published before and during the country's dissolution was clearly Yugoslav in its geographical scope (e.g., Banac 1984; Cohen 1989; Denitch 1994, Golubović 1988; Korošić 1988; Ramet 1992; Seroka and Pavlović 1992; Singleton 1976; Tomasevich 1955).

through a dense forest of scattered, misnamed, empty or over-stretched conceptual labels which are sometimes eagerly sticking to social phenomena and political orientations to which they do not normally belong. These labels are in a constant flux as activists, especially those located in nationally delimited extra-institutional spaces move in a circle in which they in turn adopt some of them as their supposedly authentic claimants while simultaneously denying them to others. Given that, as Alberto Melucci (1995: 61) argued, collective action should be perceived as a "system of tensions", the task of a social scientist exploring (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activisms is not to petrify the flow, to immobilise the concepts and arrange them in the "right way". Research objective should be, rather, to map this variety of options and provide a snapshot which is necessarily reflective of both the particular historical moment in which it is done and the specific choices made by the researcher him/herself. One needs to admit that this scholarship, crucified between appreciative thick description and social scientific analysis which goes beyond sheer empirical material, may resemble an attempt to project a three-dimensional object on a bi-dimensional plane – a process in which some important aspects of the studied phenomenon are invariably lost. Stubbs (2010: 16) nicely captures this challenge when claiming that

> trying to describe and analyse grassroots peacebuilding in the post-Yugoslav space from 1991 is a little like representing a diverse and changing landscape through a series of black and white photographs. Some of the core features, even the beauty, may be captured but often at the expense of the richness, complexity and certainly, the range of colours. Such photographs can never be more than a selective memory, telling perhaps as much about the photographer as the landscape. There is a risk of ignoring or rendering peripheral that which others may see as crucial.

Research interviews within the area of (post-)Yugoslav civic engagement are most productive and mutually beneficial in those instances in which both the researcher and the activist share the idea that critical scientific exploration is an extension of the activist's socially responsible civic efforts. The operation of activist groups were often characterised by numerous tensions, multiplications and

fragmentations which positioned the participants at the very extremes of the political spectrum. Given their "unique structural situation" (Kriesi 1992: 194), social scientists are forced to 'mediate' among conflicting parties, including those who might perceive the social sciences as an enterprise which legitimises social reality and the authorities' interventions in it. The need to preserve a critical voice even in the wake of emotionally binding repeated conversations invoking deeply cherished memories and values, makes one painfully aware of Douglas's (1976) argument that field research may also be a traitorous activity.

Finally, many activist groups are no longer present in their countries public life: they have been in the meantime substituted by a plethora of organisations which represent autonomous legal bodies. Such organisations are mostly devoted to human rights-related issues and they operate within the overarching paradigm of *dealing with the past* through a range of both judicial and non-judicial approaches known as transitional justice. Due to relatively poor documentation and theorisation, those who nowadays work in these highly professionalised non-governmental organisations might not even be aware of the earliest activist origins of their institutions. This reflects the post-war both scholarly and policy orientation towards redressing the consequences of the war and illuminating the factors for reconciliation and peace maintenance. Given the social, political and economic devastation provoked by the Yugoslav armed conflicts, the researchers' spotlight has been ever since the end of the war directed towards the –more urgent and practical – *post-war* aspects of Yugoslavia's painful disintegration. This practice has obscured the equally important initial stages of anti-war actor constitution, recruitment into and persistence within high-risk civic engagement.

State of the art in (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activism research

In one of the very first theoretical engagements with the problematics of anti-war movements in the former Yugoslavia, Vesna Pešić (1992: 65), a prominent anti-war activist, claims that anti-war movements are "radical defenders of civil society [...] and, as such, they are eminently democratic". Pešić notes that the first peace groups appeared in 1991 in Yugoslav urban centres with the

view of maintaining communication with and offering help to each other in spite of ideological differences among them. She posits that support of the general public was relatively weak due to a lack of civic/pacifist culture in which anti-war stance is a matter of spontaneous citizen reactions, such as draft-dodging. According to the author, open and politically-focused anti-war activism requires an enormous amount of civic courage which is difficult to accrue during the war and it may even lack in more democratic environments. Pešić concludes that, however insubstantial, anti-war movements did manage to establish themselves as a cultural phenomenon that political authorities must take into consideration.

Moreover, Ana Dević (1997) was among the first to document anti-war initiatives that took place on the Yugoslav territory prior to and during the 1990s armed conflict (see also Šušak (1996) for Serbia). Her contribution describes the emergence of anti-war campaigns in former Yugoslavia. She provides an enumeration of collective actions and protests in all Yugoslav republics and provinces. Dević (1997) criticises the widespread insistence on essentialised national identities and analyses structural preconditions of ethno-nationalism as a top-to-bottom project of the desperate communist functionaries concerned about their weakening legitimacy. She posits that a genuinely non-ethno-nationalistic, urban, cosmopolitan and predominantly pan-Yugoslav identity provided the basis for pacifist activism towards the end of the 1980s in the disintegrating Yugoslavia.

In addition, Dević claims that Yugoslav anti-war activism is characterised by two important changes that took place not long after its emergence. First, all peace initiatives passed through two phases since they appeared in 1991. The initial stage, from 1991 to 1992, consisted of a variety of street demonstrations and artistic protests against the political elites who were implicitly or openly promoting war as a possible solution to their irreconcilably divergent political interests. Throughout the second stage, street demonstrations subsided while some of the anti-war groups transformed into what Dević calls *proto-NGOs* that were predominantly conceived as documentation centres gathering data on war crimes, human right violations or offering humanitarian/legal aid and counselling to refugees. It is at this stage that there was a substantive influx of financial support originating from the States and Western Europe.

Another change which Dević notices is the fact that the thematic and organisational evolution of peace initiatives coincided with the passage from undertakings fostering coordination of protest activities among different Yugoslav republics to those confined within the borders of the newly formed nation-states. She claims that the central reason for this is the failure of telecommunications and post services towards the end of 1991. Unable to meet on Yugoslav territory, many anti-war groups (financially supported by Western foundations) organised gatherings outside of their original countries.

Although important in the field of Yugoslav pacifist studies, this paper is problematic for its conspicuous lack of a broader theoretical framework. The empirical data do not entirely cohere into a cogent analysis. Dević offers "helpful hints from theory" (p. 148) and rightly shows that anti-war activism mobilised the most urban segments of Yugoslav society. However, the empirical and the theoretical components of the paper remain strikingly asunder and the author does not demonstrate how the social movement theories to which she points can account for the unmaking of Yugoslav civic identities. One could have some reservations about the overly unified way in which Dević treats the various movements and initiatives that she reviews. She hardly ever departs from the central divisive axis separating ethno-nationalist authorities from anti-war activists. Although they converged on the same pacifist platform, anti-war activists engendered a resistance field characterised by an internal discursive struggle. The important moments in the developmental trajectory of anti-war activism, such as the shift from one protest strategy – street demonstrations – to documentation and legal aid as well as the fragmentation of activism along national lines – remain under-theorised. Such a conversion was surely not a smooth and non-residual process. It is much more likely that it was based on unevenly distributed amounts of social, cultural and financial capital that the activists accrued before and during their engagement. This important paper, therefore, points to the tip of the political iceberg and glosses over rich and intricate dynamics that was there within the sphere of anti-war activism, some of which could be held responsible for its weakness to bring about a more relevant social change.

Stef Jansen's (2005) *Antinacionalizam* represents the most serious academic engagement to date with the efforts to resist

destructive nationalisms in former Yugoslavia. He starts out by analysing Yugoslav feminist activism as a first initiative to illuminate gender, position it in front of class and thwart the propagation of overly patriarchal and militarist ideology. Jansen proceeds to problematise national identity as the fundamental discursive element in the (post-)Yugoslav political life. He also explores other resistance discourses through which citizens articulated their dissatisfaction with the situation imposed on them. This study is significant because it constitutes one of the first systematic and empirically buttressed academic attempts to go counter to the above-mentioned paradigms emphasising national identity and claiming its undisputed salience in the region. Jansen demonstrates that Yugoslav anti-nationalism played an important role for many people in their everyday lives. It stimulated diverse articulations of individuality and alternative identity and thus remained the only anchor in times of political, moral and economic instability. This book also shows that the kind of anti-nationalism that Jansen studies in the two most important Yugoslav urban centres, namely Belgrade and Zagreb, tends to be frequently restricted to "urbocentric exclusivity" (p. 267). This attitude finds its referential points in a certain popular culture and lifestyle that relegates as primitive almost everything that does not live up to the unwritten code of Yugoslav urban etiquette.

Given that Jansen limits his analysis to Croatia and Serbia or, more precisely, to Zagreb and Belgrade, the anti-nationalism he describes misses an important link in the convoluted nexus of the Yugoslav conflict – Bosnia. One wonders whether there is any kind of anti-nationalism that can be considered *universally Yugoslav*. More importantly, though, Jansen (except for the introductory part in which he pays attention to more institutionalised feminist initiatives) is coming from a purely anthropological perspective. He is, thus, interested in personal articulations of anti-nationalism in everyday life. He does not study more formally organised anti-war campaigns, their protagonists, strategies or reasons for their failure. Ultimately, Jansen focuses on the second half of the 1990s and he does not address the anti-war initiatives prior to the outburst of the armed conflict in greater detail. He also does not devote any attention to the direct descendents of these undertaking in the form of non-governmental organisations throughout the region.

Orli Fridman (2006, 2011) comes closest to an exhaustive exploration of, in this case, only Serbian anti-war activism. Fridman's doctoral dissertation, based on around 65 interviews conducted in Serbia in 2004, offers a lengthy analysis of the ways in which Serbian anti-war and social activists gave meaning to their pacifist engagement throughout the 1990s. Fridman's study, which also comprised participant observation, focuses on Serbian feminist activism, particularly on the agile group of *Women in Black* both during and immediately after the wars of Yugoslav succession. It discusses the strategies which Serbian activists employed to break the shell of denial and stir public debate around the country's criminal past. Fridman examines the contribution of Serbia's alternative scene to generate change. She follows the trajectory of the concept of conscientious objection from its subdued and purely discursive presence in the public sphere to its articulation as a political act and enforcement through legal regulation. The analysis finishes with an embryonic comparison between alternative voices in Serbia and Israel.

Fridman's study approaches the problematics of Serbian anti-war activism from a particularly pertinent angle which actually lies at the heart of pacifist collective enterprises. It has to do with the social dynamics that surrounds the ways in which war-torn and post-war societies deal with conflict, memory and denial. Every war inevitably leaves in its wake a discursive battlefield in which the options of differing ideological potency for the past appropriation and representation compete for supremacy. Fridman demonstrates how societies that have just come out of an armed conflict adopt a collective culture of denial and how this process tends to be accompanied by the concurrent emergence of alternative voices which question imposed conflict interpretations and insist on accountability for war crimes. Fridman perceives her informants as individuals and groups who chose to know and who opted for not being merely objects of the state imposed policies, but responsible witnesses characterised by the capacity to think improve their society. She shows that Serbia's fledgling anti-war efforts could not stop the war from taking place. However, the civil society, as she calls the sphere of extra-institutional activism without conceptually specifying it, was born out of anti-war activism and grew strong enough not only to create an alternative discourse and push it into the public arena, but to even affect the dominant one.

Fridman's analysis goes a step deeper into the internal dynamics of alternative activism in the 1990s and especially post-1990s Serbia. It accentuates an important differentiation between *anti-war* and *anti-Milošević* resistance. This is a distinction that begins to unpack the ideological corpus of Serbian alternative activism. Fridman argues that it became quite visible shortly after Milošević's ascendancy to power towards the end of the 1980s. Anti-war resistance in this regard seems to be a conceptually broader entity as it necessarily encompasses opposition to the Milošević regime and a whole set of values which it embodies. On the other hand, however, declaring anti-Milošević sentiments still does not say much about the way in which people perceived, opposed or justified, the wars of Yugoslav succession. This divisive line, as Fridman rightly shows, became particularly prominent towards the end of the 1990s with the complete exhaustion of Serbia's economic resources and its appalling international standing. A student movement called *Otpor!* (Resistance) managed to channel the consequent growing of popular dissatisfaction with the authoritarian leadership into a widespread protest that eventually toppled the regime.

As she herself acknowledges, Fridman belongs to the generation of scholars who committed themselves to the study of Yugoslavia's painful demise, its wars and a whole array of complex moral issues raised by them. This work has a rather post-conflict touch to it as it does not address the processes, hurdles and controversies that informed the formation of Serbian anti-war groups. Their emergence seems to be, in other words, taken for granted as an almost instinctive response to political repression. Fridman does not show how they stem from, alternately strengthen or weaken or – in any case – transform the civic experience inherited from their predecessors.

This study has a wide empirical grasp in terms of both content and time. It follows Serbian anti-war activists within a temporal framework that spans more than a decade (1991-2004). The thesis examines issues that range from those revolving around denial, memory, victimisation and conflict resolution, through conscientious objection and the generational gap in contemporary Serbia, to a discussion about the preconditions for the emergence of civil society and a comparison between Serbia and Israel. This thesis is not conceptually sophisticated as Fridman uses the concepts of civil

society, civil opposition, civil initiatives, alternative voices and alternative scene interchangeably without specifying or problematising them. Given the absence of a firmer theoretical structure, these differing insights do not coalesce into a coherent and theoretically informed analysis. The most important shortcoming of Fridman's work is that she focuses only on Serbian and does not appreciate the wider, Yugoslav, context in which anti-war activism is positioned.

Moreover, the Croatian sociologist Srđan Dvornik (2009) has recently published a book entitled *Actors without society.* The author, himself a prominent pacifist activist in the *Anti-war Campaign of Croatia* as well as a member of the *Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative,* sets out to analyse the developmental trajectory of civil societies[4] in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the wake of the Yugoslav armed conflicts. Dvornik concludes that Eastern European transitions are far away from being linear processes inevitably leading to a pre-determined objective. Civil actors in such highly volatile political environments, as in the (post-)Yugoslav case, should not be seen as exponents of broader social movements, but as creators and promoters of political alternatives resisting and disabling regime's omnipresence. One would need, in this regard, to examine in more detail the responsibility of the by now well-established "civil society actors" for monopolising the civic scene, funds and resources and thus weakening both their own critical voice as well as other largely non-capital-based grassroots initiatives. This study devotes an excessive amount of attention to an exhaustive examination and regurgitation of the most widely used socio-political concepts like revolution, transition, democracy and it remains insufficiently empirical.

Tomić and Atanacković (2009) have recently edited a valuable volume written by a younger generation of post-Yugoslav

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[4] I have shown elsewhere (Bilić, 2011) that *civil society* can no longer be meaningfully used for understanding the complex geometry of social, political and personal interactions, cooperations and resistances within the post-Yugoslav civic spheres characterised by appreciable power asymmetries. Its definitional volatility and logical incoherence allow *civil society* to incorporate ideologically and historically extremely divergent phenomena. Due to its conceptual elasticity, *civil society* is a cognitively easily available device and a de-politicised theoretical paradigm convenient for masking power networks frequently conditioned by foreign political agendas.

scholars determined to recover a range of social movements in Yugo-slavia. They demonstrate that Yugoslavia was a politically dynamic society with more pronounced social rather than ethnic cleavages. Various chapters follow Yugoslav social movements from 1968, tak-ing into account theatre, music and feminism, to labour movements throughout the 1980s and student protests in Milošević's Serbia in the 1990s. This volume represents a highly needed contribution to the post-Yugoslav studies. Surprisingly enough, however, it does not pay absolutely any attention to the (post-)Yugoslav anti-war collective enterprises, if we exclude a rather brief reference to the *Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative*.

The above brief review shows that (post-)Yugoslav anti-war and peace activism has not by now been systematically approached from a clearly articulated theoretical perspective. In those instances in which empirical work has been done it either does not have a suf-ficiently wide geographical scope for appreciating the phenomenon in the entirety of its perpetuating forces, co-operations, resistances and tensions or it does not establish almost any theoretical connec-tions with the rich conceptual legacy of contemporary political so-ciology. In the rare cases in which social movement approach has been invoked as an appropriate theoretical perspective, it is either not shown how it can be relevant for the civic engagement in the highly contentious (post-)Yugoslav political setting or it is not at all applied to the sphere of anti-war and peace activism. Therefore, the formation of (post-)Yugoslav anti-war and pacifist activist net-works, their strategic options for survival and engagement as well as the value orientations informing these options in the post-Yugoslav context are still calling for an critical sociological analysis.

Social movement theory in the context of (post-)Yugoslav anti-war contention

It has often been the case in my fieldwork that respondents dispute the use of the term *movement* when referring to (post-)Yugo-slav anti-war contention. They do this on the grounds of the quantita-tive marginality of such undertakings. However, this practice should not by any means deter one from taking recourse to the conceptual

apparatus which has developed within the Anglo-Saxon field of social *movement* studies. Whether the actions which this scholarship would explore could be classified as social *movements* is actually a question of subsidiary importance for the theoretical models that it purports to examine and apply. While some of the relevant events and actions could definitely be coded as social movements, one needs to appreciate the nominal nature of analytical distinctions and the complexity of the relational field in which they unfolded. Every social phenomenon or process discussed here has taken place in a meta-frame of political transition from state socialism to market economy which has significantly impoverished the region. Ethnic war, state dissolution and formation, class conflict, forced migrations, transition, regime demonstrations, student protests, anti-war undertakings, numerous international organisations and actors as well as their conflicting influences represent an intricate system of events and processes resisting clear-cut categorisations. It is for this reason that scholars interested in these phenomena might prefer to use the concept of *contention*. *Contention* is a more appropriate term for at least two reasons: first, it covers different ways of contesting the state and expressing rejection of war; second, *social movement* conjures up an image of a great number of participants which many Yugoslav pacifist initiatives did not have.

Moreover, the vast majority of intellectual means – concepts and theories – that we have at our disposal for understanding contentious politics have been developed in the context of Western democracies whose structural similarities enable relatively unproblematic comparisons (Kitschelt 1986). Although this scholarship has enormously enriched our knowledge of political contention, one naturally wonders about the extent to which it is applicable to a variety of un- or semi-democratic political environments in which a great amount of contentious events takes place around the world. In his widely acclaimed book *Power in Movement,* Tarrow (1998: 19) observes that "political process models were seldom systematically applied outside the liberal democracies of the West". This lacuna has been noticed by other researchers as well and it has been recently given more attention within the *dynamics of contention* research programme (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2004). The increasingly popular research agenda, which effectively summarises

and advances the by now accrued knowledge on social movement operation, has recently oriented itself more towards high-risk factors influencing activism outside of its most frequently documented milieus (Alimi 2009).

Analytical comparisons and contention theorising across countries and cultures is rendered possible by the fact that people all over the world – in both national and increasingly trans-national arrangements – are coming together in public space urging for a change. Their numbers, discontents, aspirations and methods vary as a function of the nature of the political setting in which they protest. They are shaped by the political traditions of the environment in which collective engagement takes place. Whereas in some countries people may publically dispute decisions that do not substantively impact on their lives, in others they go into the streets to defend fundamental values such as peace and freedom. Whatever their motivation, the underlying processes of coming together, marshalling resources, choosing among strategic options, forging group cohesion, pressurising authorities as well as decaying and disintegrating are basically the same. Gordy (1999) maintains that nationalist-authoritarian countries are neither so unique nor isolated in today's world to resist comparisons with contemporary liberal democracies which also have their control mechanisms and marginalised alternative elements. This argument shows that it is not impossible or problematic to transfer contention concepts developed within Western academia to a culturally and politically different setting. What we need is a critical and context-sensitive conceptual refinement of these theoretical means appreciative of geographical and historical specificities of the environment to which they are introduced.

The preponderance of Anglo-Saxon social movement scholarship which rarely departs from its own cultural context has led to a specific bias in anti-war and pacifist engagement research. Pacifist/anti-war activism which takes places in Western democracies (Chatfield & Kleidman, 1992; Klandermans, 1991, 1997) is necessarily removed from war-torn areas. This kind of engagement usually has to do with activists' efforts to pressurise governments to withdraw from military involvement in far-away places which are not under their sovereign jurisdiction. Protestors there operate within relatively stable legal systems which, while prescribing sanctions for law

infringements, assure the right to non-violent publically expressed political contention. Given that political authorities are the primary addressees of such grievances, I call this form of engagement *indirect anti-war activism.*

Post-Yugoslav sociology could contribute to sociological knowledge on a broader scale by offering an account of anti-war contention recruitment taking place in an environment in which an armed conflict actually occurred. In volatile political climates and in the states of emergency during war, there is a further restriction of human rights and freedoms (which in such milieus might not be fully respected even in times of peace). This makes the dynamics of political contention undertaken by anti-war activists in such places considerably different to that of their Western counterparts (McAdam 1986, 1988). Given that their actions and political grievances do not address solely their governments, but also the general public and those directly affected by the war (soldiers, recruits, conscientious objectors, refugees etc), I call this kind of engagement *direct anti-war activism.* Drawing upon and testing a social movement models stemming from the Anglo-Saxon political context, this scholarship could promote a potentially fruitful cross-fertilisation between non-Western activism and Western conceptual apparatus for studying civic engagement.

Conclusion

This paper argues that (post-)Yugoslav anti-war contention has remained a blind spot in recent East European/post-Yugoslav sociological research even two decades after the end of the wars of Yugoslav succession. This surprising state of affairs is related to the preponderance of often monofocal nationalism studies which rarely depart from the traditional 'nation-state' research frameworks that cannot sufficiently appreciate the trans-national complexity of anti-war civic organising. Given that the existing attempts to theorise (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activisms have largely neglected the rich conceptual apparatus of Anglo-Saxon social movement theories, this paper outlines a potentially productive research agenda. A systematic and context-sensitive application of the conceptual instrumentarium of social movement/political contention theories would unearth, ac-

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knowledge and start explaining a range of anti-war collective undertakings before and during the Yugoslav wars. Its original contribution would reside in illuminating the, up to know, poorly investigated factors that propel people to take part in anti-war contention in those places in which a military conflict is actually unfolding.

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(POST)JUGOSLOVENSKI ANTIRATNI ANGAŽMAN: TEMA KOJA ČEKA ISTRAŽIVANJE

Rezime

(Post)jugoslovenski antiratni angažman je ostao nedovoljno teorijski obrađena tema i posle skoro dvadeset godina od kraja ratova za jugoslovensko nasleđe. U ovom radu se ne fokusiram na „ontogenezu" individualnih mirovnih poduhvata, već ispitujem razloge zbog kojih su (post)jugoslovenski antiratni aktivizmi marginalizovani u skorašnjoj istočnoevropskoj sociološkoj literaturi. Tvrdim da razumevanje ovih fenomena zahteva jugoslovenski/regionalni pristup kojem do sada nije bila posvećena adekvatna pažnja. Ovaj rad takođe donosi i jedno kritičko čitanje postojećih napora da se teorijski pristupi (post) jugoslovenskim antiratnim aktivizmima. Kritikujem propust istraživača da se posluže bogatim konceptualnim aparatom razvijenim u proteklih nekoliko decenija u okviru zapadne političke sociologije. Iako koncept „društvenog pokreta" može biti diskutabilan u kontekstu (post)jugoslovenskog antiratnog angažmana u smislu njegove kvantitativne marginalnosti, to ne bi trebalo da spreči primenu anglosaksonskih teorija društvenih pokreta na kulturološki senzitivan način. Specifična dinamika antiratnog organizovanja za vreme i na prostoru ratnog konflikta nije u dovoljnoj meri istražena, pa bi ovdašnji istraživači na tom polju mogli dati bitan doprinos.

Ključne reči: Jugoslavija, antiratni aktivizam, teorije društvenih pokreta.