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## **Social Movements as Producers and Receivers of Knowledge: The Case of “Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own”**

**Abstract:** In this paper I am seeking to resolve a theoretical dilemma. The main argument is that the relationship between social movements and knowledge is a “two-way street”, in which knowledge both gets diffused from critical communities and gets produced by the social movements. In order to resolve this tension one should, I argue, make an analytical separation between different levels of abstraction of knowledge. The macro (conceptual) level is, according to my approach, to be understood as taken over from critical communities. The micro level as contextual intervention into macro conceptualization of reality, whereas the meso level is to be viewed as knowledge produced by social movements when conceptual and presumed / contextual knowledge gets combined. It is at the meso level, in other words, that we can see what applied theory looks like after being exposed to a given context. Knowledge occurring at this level represents the outcome of work done by what Jameson and Eyerman call “movement intellectuals” or what Antoni Gramsci calls “organic intellectuals”. This is how one may theoretically resolve the above-indicated tension and prevent excluding one approach at the expense of the other.

**Keywords:** Don’t Let Belgrade D(d)own; municipalism; social movements; critical knowledge.

### **Introduction**

The two main positions concerning the relationship between social movements and knowledge may be presented through two important works of Thomas Rochon (1991) and Eyerman and Jameson (1998). In Rochon’s *Culture Moves*, movements are somewhat objectified and presented as playing the role of practitioners, or conductors of previously developed theoretical insights by the so called “critical communities”. In Eyerman and Jameson the authors emphasize that movements are “producers of knowledge” and see their activities as “cognitive practice”. They oppose the tendency of understanding movements as passive with respect to knowledge and cognition in general. The general complaint comes from another two authors who take Eyerman’s and Jameson’s side, arguing that “[...] the voices, ideas, perspectives and theories

produced by those engaged in social struggles are often ignored, rendered invisible, or overwritten with accounts by professionalized or academic experts.”<sup>1</sup>

In this paper I seek to resolve this theoretical dilemma. The main argument is that the relationship between social movements and knowledge is a “two-way street”, in which knowledge both gets diffused from critical communities and gets produced by the social movements. In order to resolve this tension one should, I argue, make an analytical separation between different levels of abstraction of knowledge. Macro (conceptual) level is, according to my approach, to be understood as taken over from critical communities, micro level as contextual intervention into macro conceptualization of reality whereas meso level is to be viewed as knowledge produced by social movements when conceptual and presumed / contextual knowledge gets combined. It is at the meso level, in other words, that we can see what applied theory looks like after being exposed to a given context. Knowledge occurring at this level represents the outcome of work done by what Jameson and Eyerman call “movement intellectuals” or what Antoni Gramsci calls “organic intellectuals”. This is how one may theoretically resolve the above indicated tension and prevent excluding one approach at the expense of the other.

**Table 2.1: Epistemic discourses**

Level of abstraction	Micro	Macro	Meso
Type of knowledge	Presumed, contextual, common sense	Generic knowledge	Applied concepts
Source	Everyday events	Critical communities	Organic intellectuals

### Case Selection

The case of the “Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own” movement showed how a seemingly single-issue-oriented discourse may use a given (single) issue as a paradigm for a larger-scale (systemic) critique. At the same time, the documents issued by the movement show the interplay between different levels of abstraction of epistemic discourse. The “Belgrade Waterfront” project<sup>2</sup> with its damaging consequences, served both as the focal point of intersection of many dimensions of the post-socialist condition and this served well for connecting the macro (conceptual) and micro (contextual) level of

<sup>1</sup> Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor, “Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production,” in: *Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production*, ed. by Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

<sup>2</sup> The project is worth three billion dollars and the investor is “Eagle Hills”, the well-known company from United Arab Emirates.

discursive performance. The intersection between the two led to the construction of the authentic (“organic”) critique developed at the meso level of discourse.<sup>3</sup>

The “methodology” of activism was thus inductive and the direction of struggle could be perceived as bottom-up. The activists often stressed the importance of everyday life and everyday actions, using different strategies, both institutional and non-institutional.<sup>4</sup> The movement’s aim was not only to react to what was seen as illegal and harmful to citizens’ interests in general, but also to promote an idea that all major urban projects should involve the participation and opinions of all affected citizens.<sup>5</sup> While putting an emphasis on struggles at the local level, the movement nonetheless sought to establish a network with other local initiatives (both in Serbia and the rest of Europe)<sup>6</sup> and thereby build a strategy and agenda for national engagement of a network of local initiatives.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis on “everyday life” was supplemented by the macro-level conceptualizations which, in turn, were combined with the specific context. On the one hand, concrete struggles were not followed by big ideological narratives. Discourses, on the other hand (as expressed usually in written form in documents, articles and interviews), were both micro and macro, so that concrete struggles could have been connected to other struggles via conceptual apparatus. Thereby, the bottom-up strategy actually reached its full potential, which includes all three levels of discourse. As one of the activists explained, *the key was to try to change things at the local level and thereby show that it’s possible to make people’s lives better by everyday action. Only then, he argued, when concrete things change, one can go to higher levels.*

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The role of political and social movements in spreading, adapting and “translating” ideas originating in critical communities, according to Rochon, is essential for widening the spectrum of audience and increasing the number of recipients of innovation in thinking about a specific issue or issues. The role of social / political movements, he argues, is to bring contesting ideas to the attention of social and political

<sup>3</sup> In a statement given for the only documentary made about the NDB, one of the activists explains: “From the beginning the issue of Belgrade Waterfront was the topic from which other topics should unroll. This is to show what democracy means for us and how to get there. We have to start from the small things.” See: “Inicijativa”, video file 23:35, Vice Production, 2016, <https://video.vice.com/rs/video/inicijativa/58ef418b572f8bf-c021989a6>, acc. on June 11, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Iva Čukić, “Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd/Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own,” in: *Spaces of Commoning: Urban Commons in the Ex-Yu Region*, ed. by Iva Čukić and Jovana Timotijević (Belgrade: Ministry of Space / Institute for Urban Politics Belgrade, 2020), 75.

<sup>5</sup> Irena Fiket, Marjan Ivković, Gazela Pudar Draško, Jelena Vasiljević, “The Discourse of Anti-Instrumentalism: Exploring a Conceptual Model Through the Case Study of the We Won’t Let Belgrade D(r)own Initiative,” *Partecipazione e conflitto. The Open Journal for Sociopolitical Studies* 12, 3 (2019): 909.

<sup>6</sup> The movement cooperates with other local initiatives in Belgrade and throughout Serbia, but also with other movements in Europe, such as Barcelona en Comu. In 2019, NDB created the “Civic Front” together with other local initiatives from all around the country.

<sup>7</sup> This has already happened officially. The NDB formed the “Civic Front” together with the Local Front from Kraljevo, and the United Movement of Free Tenants from the city of Niš. In November 2020, NDB made semi-formal contact with “Together for Serbia” and “Civic Democratic Forum”, the two marginal political forces in the country.

institutions. The author suggests three possible models of cultural change which, at the same time, illustrate three possible ways in which newly developed ideas in critical communities are communicated to the wider audience by movements:

Value conversion  
Value creation  
Value connection

*Value conversion* signifies struggle over meaning which takes place in a domain of “zero sum” game. Rochon gives the example of the Civil Rights Movement and takes the issue of racial discrimination in order to explain value conversion. In a nutshell, if there are white people and there are black people and if the hegemonic meaning prescribed to this dichotomy between races is that white people are superior to black people, then there is a need for converting this meaning and establishing a new one: no one is superior to others because of their racial background. The second model of *value creation* includes cases of cultural change through introducing a new issue to the public – or in Rochon’s words, by “turning private issues into public ones”<sup>8</sup>. The mechanism is explained through the example of the movement against sexual harassment in the United States, where what used to belong to the private sphere (or being absent from discussions in the public sphere), now becomes a relevant (and unacceptable) by the standards of the public sphere. Finally, the third model of *value connection* (also called by the author the “applied philosophy”) represents the hybrid of the two previously indicated models. It “involves destroying old values and creating new ones by altering the context in which idea is evaluated”<sup>9</sup>. All three models of cultural change may, as emphasized before, also be applied to the widely understood process of striving towards social change that could come as a result of both applied and newly (movement) produced knowledge.

The methodology of this paper includes epistemic discourse analysis. Generally speaking, discourse is here understood as “the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice”.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, the *epistemic discourse* tackles the “ways in which knowledge is presupposed, expressed, formulated, organized and managed in language use, communication and interaction.”<sup>11</sup> I am looking at discourses from the perspective of *knowledge management* which represents management of complex schemata of *social interrelations* through which conceptual knowledge (ideas, categories, concepts, prototypes, domains, and scripts) become constitutive of movements’ discourses and hence – form the dominant conceptual stream within those discourses.<sup>12</sup> Conceptual knowledge should be seen through the lenses of interaction between the exposure to theoretical influences and direct experience or, better said - between

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Rochon, *Culture Moves: Ideas, activism, and Changing Values* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 69.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Theory* (London: Verso, 1985), 105.

<sup>11</sup> A. Teun Van Dijk, *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9.

<sup>12</sup> More on “conceptual knowledge” see in *ibid.* 86.

knowledge based on experience and generic knowledge. The above mentioned analytical separation between macro (conceptual), micro (contextual) and meso (movement produced) knowledge serves me for assessing the way in which conceptual knowledge is acquired, as well as the way in which it interacts with a specific context and leads to the production of knowledge by social movements at the meso level.

The selection of documents is made in accordance to the main research interest. The choice of documents was hence highly determined by the detectability of conceptual positioning of the movement which allowed me to assess the way in which the concept interacted with the context and later led to the production of new knowledge at the meso level. Occasionally, I use quotes from the interviewed activists, but the purpose of interviews is not methodological, but rather serves the purpose of enriching the narrative of this text.

### **The Fresh Air of Municipalism in Belgrade “About us: NDB’s Manifesto”**

“Don’t let Belgrade d(r)own” (NDB) is a movement which, according to its manifesto, gathers activists, individuals and organizations interested in issues related to cultural and urban policies, as well as sustainable city development, fair use of resources and the involvement of citizens in the urban development of their environment. The conceptual content of these general lines shows preoccupation with issues that had never played a major role in public discourses of neither Yugoslav nor post-Yugoslav societies. The NDB chose the road of introducing new issues and presenting them as publically relevant. This is evident from looking at the section “About us” on their website.

The initial set of concepts through which this movement communicates its agenda with the public include urban planning, culture, sustainable development (above all urban development), and the commons (common resources). The importance of the “involvement of citizens” is made clear from the beginning, more as a means for tackling these issues than as an end. It is democratic participation, in other words, that sheds light on the political character of these issues. By linking democratic participation or “involvement of citizens” with urban planning and “fair use of commons”, the movement states its commitment to the politicization of topics which had been left out of political debates until recently. Thereby they launched the process of what Rochon calls “value creation”.

The proceeding part of the “About us” section is concerned with the project proclaimed to be a symbol of systemic fallacies in Serbia. The “Belgrade Waterfront” has been spotlighted as a paradigm through which the “degradation” and “robbery” of Belgrade are clearly detectable. The activists describe themselves as a “group of people of different profiles, occupations and beliefs, gathered around the common aim” of “stopping degradation and robbery”. The way they express this endeavor in the following paragraph is an example of Rochon’s “value connection”. One can, namely, notice

that certain concerns (about common resources, lack of participation and hence democratic practices) are connected to the “private interests of non-transparent actors” and “shady deals between investors and politicians”. The former is connected to the “appropriation of the city”, the latter with making “collateral damage” out of public goods and funds.

It is known from linguistics that metaphors serve to link more abstract concepts to more concrete ones, to everyday experiences.<sup>13</sup> “Collateral damage” here plays a role of indicating the waste of public goods (and public funds) for the sake of fulfilling private interests. It follows that the “appropriation of the city” is a consequence of the fact that public affairs are driven by private interests. Another metaphor appears by the end of the text, where the authors stress the following: “This city is our home. We are responsible for each of its parts, processes, and problems, both for the present and for the future.” A metaphor describing Belgrade as “our home” brings up the list of general concepts behind which the collective body of this movement is formed (common resources, common space, and sustainable development) and “translates” them into something that might easily be understood. Responsibility for “parts of our home” leads to the need for democratic participation.

### **The Speech from the Protest Event**

On the night between the April 25 and 26, 2016, a couple of buildings in the city center of Belgrade, in the neighborhood called “Savamala”, were knocked down by bulldozers. This event was closely related to the Belgrade Waterfront project, since it took place in the area where the project was supposed to be realized. This is why it triggered mass mobilization, initiated by the NDB group. The speech I am hereby analyzing took place in 2017, at the protest event labeled “Following the Footsteps of the Phantoms”, exactly one year after the demolition in “Savamala”. One of the core group members of NDB started his speech with the set of knowledge claims that is presumably shared by both the movement activists and the protesters. The speech starts from the micro discursive level, from the demolition in “Savamala” that specifically triggered the mass mobilization. Wreckers are called “phantoms”, which clearly refers to the fact that the people who knocked the buildings down wore masks. The speaker proceeds with normative claims (about the criminals and their accomplices, masterminds and ideologists), based on common sense about the series of unlawful elements of the event in “Savamala”, including the already published interview with the former wife of the mayor of Belgrade, who publically confirmed that he knew about the demolition in advance.

From the micro level of discourse which reveals the content of common sense and the presumed (shared) knowledge, the speaker shifts to the abstract (macro) level of discourse, while still keeping an eye on the contextual (micro) level. He proclaims:

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<sup>13</sup> See more in: *ibid.* 294.

“We lost our state. The institutions are privatized and instrumentalized.” The state is occupied, its institutions are coopted by the ruling structures and their purpose is to fulfill the private interests of individuals. The state as a concept and its concrete institutions should serve the interests of its constituency, its people. Instead, the activists claim, *the state serves for fulfilling personal interests and interests of a small group of privileged people.*

The meaning inscribed here tackles the issue of democratic subjectivity and provides an answer to the question: “Who is the liberator of the state?” The answer is: “Us”! The answer to the question what is “us” comes right after, it is “us” – *education workers, scientific workers, police officers, soldiers, the unemployed, pensioners, the youth, the elderly* etc. In this case “us” does not imply any particular social class, but “the people”. In this respect, it is a classical populist subject that is being searched for. This is even more evident from the closing sentences of the speech, where the activist declares that “the top of a small group [of politicians] has been changing, but most of them belong to the top since the beginning”. Even though the term “establishment”, typical of populist discourses is not used, we may anticipate without any concept-stretching that “the top of the small group being against society and the state” is euphemism for “the establishment”.

The last relevant observation from this segment of the speech comes from the part in which the speaker stresses: “The accomplices and the profiteers came first and they divided the country among themselves. Then they started competing in who’s going to privatize more state and social enterprises. Once they had sold out all that, they started selling out the land itself piece by piece, public goods, communal enterprises, public space – all that under the excuse of investments.” In the first sentence, the activist refers to the early stage of post-socialism, the stage of primitive accumulation of capital in Serbia. Due to the lack of capital and absence of a capitalist class (which was supposed to be the carrier of economic transformation from real socialism to capitalism), the new ruling class had to be created from scratch. The solution was found in the practice of conversion of political power into economically privileged status. The old political *nomenklatura*, hence former high officials of the Communist party, thereby became the main protagonist of the new economic logic. So when the speaker talks about the *profiteers* who *came first and divided the country among themselves*, he explicitly refers to the class which profited the most from the dissolution of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Apart from the former *nomenklatura*, which secured a better “starting position” for itself through the privatization of public enterprises (mainly in the 1990s and early 2000s), the new ruling (economic) class was also made up of the so-called “war profiteers”. Those were the people who got rich during the war through robbery and illegal businesses, such as smuggling (cigarettes, for instance). In the post-war period, until nowadays, those people came to be labeled as *tycoons*. The activist refers to privatization as the central process of transition, on the one hand, and the most powerful

means for converting political influence into economic benefit, on the other.<sup>14</sup> “They sold out everything” the activist stresses, and thereby deprived people of common goods, pauperized the ever-greater majority and brought it to the edge of extinction. Even though power was moving from one clique to another, he continues, most of those who have been among the usurpers of public goods “still belong to the top”. They are, in his words, a group of “veterans of a dirty battle of power against the state and against society itself.” The battle on the side of power, he further emphasizes, takes place under “the excuse of investments”, which have become sufficient reason, at least narratively, for every further step in the process of transformation of social, political and economic reality.

The speaker then proceeds with communicating some contextual, micro-level knowledge which represents the “running start” for continuing the speech where he again shifts to more abstract conceptualizations. “We have the power” and “The citizens of this country are its authority” are statements by which the gathered people are reminded that their democratic rights are at the same time an obligation to take the power back into their hands. Terms such as “usurpers” or “occupiers” tackle the meso level of discourse. Namely, the speaker brings together the presumed knowledge on the one hand, and the macro level illustrated through “the power of the people”, on the other. From there, he implies that those who “trick people”, cut legally acquired pensions, resort to blackmails do not represent the people who transferred their sovereignty to them. Instead, they aim at fulfilling their personal interests. The “occupiers” and “usurpers”, both metaphorically and directly, serve as labels for the people who are marked as those “doing private business” while holding public offices (an example is Belgrade Mayor Siniša Mali).

The speaker soon points out that the struggle *takes place in every place where injustice stays*.<sup>15</sup> This seemingly abstract claim gets contextualized immediately in the following sentence where all the “places of injustice” are listed (flea markets, forced evictions etc.). He engages in an interplay between common sense (expressed through metaphors such as “we’ve been watching the same movie”) and the abstract level (“a different distribution of power is inevitable”) and consequently, adds up the meso level at which he implies that caring about *issues concerning the city we’re living, studying and working in* indeed means “doing politics”.

In Rochon’s terms, what discursively happens here is a classic example of *value conversion*, whereby “doing politics” becomes liberated from the negative connotation acquired in the past decades. Strangely enough, all social actors who have been seeking to change the rules of the political game (in the entire former Yugoslav region, generally speaking) have been accused by the very same mainstream political parties

<sup>14</sup> For more on the process of the post-socialist economic transformation see: Mladen Lazić, *Čekajući kapitalizam* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2011); for the overview of the phenomena related to the process of privatization specifically, see: Filip Balunović, *Pet fenomena privatizacije u Srbiji*. In: *Bilans stanja: Doprios analizi restauracije kapitalizma u Srbiji* (Beograd: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Which reminds us of the famous proclamation by Martin Luther King: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”.

that degraded politics of harboring “political intentions”. The aim of such accusation is no other than the degradation of their endeavors. In other words, what they (the political elites) say is that doing politics is bad, as long as someone else, apart from them, wants to do politics. The answer by the movement is clear: doing politics is not reserved only for those who have been doing it for decades in order to fulfill personal interests. To the contrary, the message is that politics we have is not the kind of politics we want. That is why the speaker says “we want different politics”. The added knowledge here deconstructs the narrative coming from the “political class” and its insistence on the professionalization of politics. Instead, the speaker argues that “doing politics” means caring for the city and the conditions people are living, studying and working in.

In the concluding words the activist uses metaphors. The one of “darkness and light” which stands for “us” and “them”, gets concretized and contextualized and appears as a call for struggle “against the darkness of the unavailable health care and education”; “against the darkness of the sale of PKB”<sup>16</sup>, etc. The strongest message comes in the end, in the form of a slogan with which most of NDB’s public talks finish. When a speaker asks: “Whose city”; the answer that comes from the protestors is: “Our city”. It is the “crowd” itself that closes the circle of communication and it is the people who shout the motto. It is the people who sum up what had previously been communicated to them by the speakers. It is the people themselves, in other words, who are reclaiming sovereignty.

### **Local Community: Local, or Community?**

The column written by one of the core activists, published on April 28, 2014 in the daily newspaper *Danas* (“Today”),<sup>17</sup> sheds light on the way in which the movement refers to the entire socialist heritage, more in conceptual than in political/ideological terms. The article addresses the *concept of self-management*, in the context of self-managing local communities, which was among the main pillars of Yugoslav socialism.

The writer starts with the reflection on the presidential elections held in 2012 and initially opens up the Pandora’s Box of the relationship between voting and democracy. Voting is here perceived as an act of consent, a pure legitimizer of the already set political agenda. Imposition from above, rather than participation from below, appears as crucial in politics. Such practice is the main object of criticism in the article. Embracing a (conceptual) perspective of thinking of our everyday problems, the author claims, might lead us towards accepting an “inductive instead of deductive method of politics”. In this case, the inductive method represents euphemism for the democratic participation that precedes elections, which means that voting should not be the only, or even the most important act of democratic participation. “Deciding

<sup>16</sup> “PKB” is short from “Agricultural Combine Belgrade”.

<sup>17</sup> Dobrica Veselinović, *Mesna zajednica: Mesna ili zajednica?* (Beograd: Dnevni list “Danas” 2014).

about our destiny for the next five years in thirty seconds” (of voting) thus becomes a unique paradox of democracy, which reduces itself to elections.

From the macro perspective, the author shifts to the meso level of discourse. On the basis of this sort of conceptual discussion, combined with the example of the micro knowledge related to the presidential elections held in 2012 in Serbia, he suggests a possible solution to the indicated paradox of “electoral democracy”. The suggested direction of thinking goes straight to the socialist (Yugoslav) past, and includes the reinvention of the concept of self-managing local community (Serbian: *mesna zajednica*). The writer assumes that some people are familiar with this concept, but at the same time assumes that not so many, especially among youngsters, are familiar with its essence. This is why he engages in a further explanation in which he reminds the readers that “local communities represent the specific mode of self-management”, typical of the time of Yugoslav socialism. The way in which the concept is recalled and discursively used, nonetheless, points to the degree of carefulness. By picking a concept rather than the entire ideology of Yugoslav socialism, the movement leaves the space open for attaching different meanings to the usage of self-management. This concept is not recalled (only) because of its socialist connotation, but (also) because it is complementary with the overall discursive performance of the movement. All the paradoxes of (electoral) post-socialist democracy, including discontents with the lack of inclusion and participation in social and (especially) political processes (of decision-making), are indeed likely to be remedied by a solution that encourages participation. This comes as a logical common sense, rather than as an open claim about the superiority of socialism over post-socialism. The revival of self-management from the past does not play the role of a call for going back to the past. Rather, it calls for looking into the future while remembering. Taking from the past what seems to be plausible for resolving current social and political problems and tensions and applying “old” concepts to the present (local) context, represents a unique endeavor of “organic intellectualism” which uses macro level of discourse in order to accommodate it to the specific context and produce new knowledge at the meso level.

The article also contains a section reserved for scientific discourse, in which the author communicates the results of the research conducted by the Center for Free Elections and Democracy. Its purpose is precisely to show the validity of the old socialist concept in present times, since the results show the “low level of trust and inclusion of the citizens” at the local level. From here, the activist further argues in favor of a top-down approach which is supposed to bring change at the “level of the desirability of shifting the delegation of responsibility to the lower levels of decision-making.” In the following sentence, the author argues that an *even bigger change* may come from the bottom up, in the form of change of the *consciousness of citizens and taking over the sense of real responsibility for their own lives*. Thereby he “admits” that, initially, incentives for a real change may come from the top, but emphasizes that a much more essential dimension of the desirable change must be set from the bottom up.

This is pretty much in accordance with the overall discourse of the movement. Further on, the article emphasizes the necessity of a wider transformation of the relationship among the people themselves, as well as power relations in general. Considering that these issues cannot be easily resolved, what is necessary is a wide social consensus about potential solutions suggested in this article. Clearly, the author is calling for consensus with respect to the suggested conceptual and practical solutions, mostly embodied in the concept of self-management of local communities. Before that, nonetheless, consensus is supposed to be reached at the level of diagnosis, hence at the macro (conceptual) level.

The concluding words, again, link the three pillars of knowledge conveyed by this article: presidential elections and their banality with respect to resolving the everyday (deeply rooted) problems (the micro level of discursive communication); change in the approach towards governance and transformation of the relationship between the citizens and the state (the macro level of discursive communication); and the emphasis on issues concerning local communities, the critique of the professionalization of politics, the call for self-management and the bottom-up approach (meso level of discursive communication).

## Conclusion

In this paper dealing with the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement, I sought to illustrate in an empirical study, the way in which the analytical separation between the three levels of discourse function. It was shown how different macro concepts – from the concepts such as power, state, citizenship or governance – could be combined with the commonsensical micro level (contextual) knowledge such as presidential elections or demolition in the “Savamala” district in Belgrade. The example of NDB's discursive performance illustrates the possibility of carrying out cognitive activity at the meso level, when the “organic intellectuals” construct new knowledge by putting general concepts into specific (local) contexts and coming up with new knowledge. This is done through value conversion, value connection or value creation. The last-mentioned example of applying the concept of the Yugoslav self-management to the present context and new municipal politics could even be considered as a case of value conversion – since the concept, together with the entire experience of the Yugoslav era, has been mostly discredited and demonized in the post-socialist period.

The main insight from this article hence covers the field of social movement studies and the subfield of social movements and knowledge. I showed that the dispute over whether social movements produce knowledge or just use (and accommodate) ideas - is resolvable. By dividing discourses into micro, meso and macro levels of abstraction I argued that both “inherited” and originally produced knowledge by social movements are important for their discourses. The higher relevance of generic knowledge originating in critical communities over, for instance, commonsense

knowledge at the micro level or knowledge produced by “organic intellectuals” at the meso level – or vice versa – is a matter researchers’ interest and the specific goal of a research. Thereby, the tension between social movements as active producers of knowledge and social movements as passive recipients of knowledge may be eliminated. Social movements are both producers and recipients of knowledge. The emphasis on one type of knowledge instead of the other would depend on the level of abstraction one is looking at.

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