

International conference

**SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON CONTEMPORARY
POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES**

BELGRADE, 26–27 MAY 2023

Sociological Scientific Society of Serbia



International Conference
**Sociological Perspectives on
Contemporary Post-Yugoslav Societies**

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Editor

Prof. dr Smiljka Tomanović

Proofreading

Prof. dr Ivana Spasić
Dr Suzana Ignjatović

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Belgrade, 2023

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Sociological Scientific Society of Serbia
 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY
 POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES
 Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory Kraljice Natalije 45, Belgrade
 May 26–27, 2023

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Friday, 26th May

- 9.30–9.45 **Registration** (4th floor Hall)
- 9.45–10.00 **Opening of the Conference:** Smiljka Tomanović, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, the president of Sociological Scientific Society of Serbia (4th floor Hall)
- 10.00–11.00 **SESSION 1: OLD AND NEW STRUCTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (4th floor Hall)**
- Moderator:* Gazela Pudar Draško,
 Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory
- 10.00–10.15 A new model for the analysis of class structure in the hybrid societies of South-East Europe, **Predrag Cvetičanin** (Faculty of Arts, University of Niš, Serbia), **Inga Tomić Koludrović**, **Mirko Petrić** (Institute of Social Sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia), **Željka Zdravković** (University of Zadar, Croatia), **Adrian Leguina** (Loughborough University, UK)
- 10.15–10.30 Political elites and the masses between social inequality and ethnic cleavages – the cases of North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Petar Atanasov** (Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje, North Macedonia)
- 10.30–10.45 Postsocialism and/or the saga of the ideological satisfaction of ‘the past that doesn’t pass’, **Predrag Živković**, **Nataša Krivokapić** (Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić, University of Montenegro, Montenegro)
- 10.45–11.00 Discussion
- 11.00–11.30 **COFFEE BREAK**

11.30–12.30 SESSION 2: REPRODUCTION OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND CONFLICTS (4th floor Hall)

Moderator: Jelena Ćeriman,
Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory

11.30–11.45 Meritocracy versus Nepotism: The effect of Parent-child Relationships on Institutional and Economic Performance, **Miloš Bešić** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences, Serbia)

11.45–12.00 Relation Between Student Achievement and Social Status in OECD and Post-Yugoslav Countries, **Mladen Radulović, Dragana Gundogan** (Institute for Educational Research, Serbia)

12.00–12.15 Privatization and social conflicts in the field of work in (post-)socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Anđela Pepić** (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

12.15–12.30 Discussion

12.30–13.30 SESSION 3: OLD AND NEW CHALLENGES IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (4th floor Hall)

Moderator: Damir Zejnulahović,
Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory

12.30–12.45 Ethnonationalization of society – the main feature of the post-socialist transformation of the post-Yugoslav societies, **Silvano Bolčić** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)

12.45–13.00 Organised crime and the authoritarian regimes in Serbia 1990–2000 and after 2012, **Jovo Bakić** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)

13.00–13.15 The social cost of the neoliberal strategy of dependent modernization of post-socialism societies and the need to change the transition model, **Ljubiša Mitrović** (University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)

13.15–13.30 Discussion

13.30–15.00 LUNCH BREAK

15.00–16.15 SESSION 4 (parallel session): NEOLIBERAL CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS (4th floor Hall)

Moderator: Božidar Filipović, University of Belgrade, Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation

15.00–15.15 Cultural participation in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Sarina Bakić, Selma Alispahić** (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

15.15–15.30 Internet use and the spread of digital communication in (post)pandemic conditions: the case of Serbia, **Vera Backović, Irena Petrović** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)

15.30–15.45 Therapeutic ethics and the spirit of neoliberalism – reflection on contemporary research of therapy culture and self-help culture in post-Yugoslav societies, **Milan Urošević** (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade, Serbia)

15.45–16.00 Transitional model of cultural policy and its implications in crisis situations, **Milica Resanović** (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade, Serbia), **Milena Toković** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, Serbia).

16.00–16.15 Discussion

15.00–16.15 SESSION 5 (parallel session): CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (1st floor Hall)

Moderator: Smiljka Tomanović, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy

15.00–15.15 Social integration and life evaluation of youth in post-Yugoslav societies, **Bruno Šimac** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Zagreb, Croatia), **Anja Gvozdanović** (Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatia)

15.15–15.30 The Youth's Attitudes toward Work in Macedonian Society and Other Post-Yugoslav Societies, **Antoanela Petkovska, Konstantin Minoski, Ilo Trajkovski, Mihajlo Popovski** (Faculty of Philosophy, "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, North Macedonia)

- 15.30–15.45 Living apart together in Serbia: Status or stage? **Milica Vlajić, Dunja Poleti Ćosić** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 15.45–16.00 Life-strategies in Croatia during the economic crisis and beyond: from advancement to surviving, **Augustin Derado** (Institute for social sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia)
- 16.00–16.15 Discussion
- 16.15–16.45 **COFFEE BREAK**
- 16.45–17.45 **SESSION 6 (parallel session): SOCIOLOGICAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PROFESSIONS (4th floor Hall)**
- Moderator:* Srđan Prodanović,
Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory
- 16.45–17.00 Polish-Macedonian sociological exchanges before and after 1989, **Naum Trajanovski** (University of Warsaw, Poland)
- 17.00–17.15 Profession of judges in contemporary Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina: A sociological analysis, **Danilo Vuković, Valerija Dabetić** (Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, Serbia), **Marko Mrakovčić** (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law, Croatia), **Samir Forić** (University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Science, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 17.15–17.30 Journalism in a diachronic perspective: from public to commercial interest, **Helena Popović** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia), **Hajrudin Hromadžić** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia)
- 17.30–17.45 Discussion
- 16.45–17.45 **SESSION 7 (parallel session): CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (1st floor Hall)**
- Moderator:* Jovana Zafirović, Institute of Social Sciences
- 15.00–15.15 Rambo is wrong, or: emotional attachments to Europe and to one’s own nation across Europe: The role of socioeconomic and ideological predictors, **Bojan Todosijević** (Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia)

- 15.15–15.30 Views and evaluations of democracy in the post-Yugoslav societies, **Jelena Pešić, Ana Birešev, Tamara Petrović Trifunović** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 15.30–15.45 Of the people, by the people, and for the people: Assessing the demand for populism in North Macedonia, **Jovan Bliznakovski** (Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje, North Macedonia), **Vlora Rechica, Misha Popovikj** (Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje, North Macedonia)
- 17.30–17.45 Discussion
- 20.00 SOCIAL DINNER (optional)**

Saturday, 27th May

- 10.00–11.00 SESSION 8: GENDER ASPECTS OF POST-YUGOSLAV TRANSFORMATIONS (1st floor Hall)**
Moderator: Suzana Ignjatović, Institute of Social Sciences
- 10.00–10.15 Transformative potential of gender inclusive language, **Milica Antić Gaber, Roman Kuhar** (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
- 10.15–10.30 Systemic regulation of the treatment and prevention of sexual harassment and violence in academic field in Slovenia, **Jasna Podreka, Rok Smrdelj, Milica Antić Gaber** (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
- 10.30–10.45 Formal childcare as an important segment of family policies: reality and needs, **Ankica Šobot** (Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia)
- 10.30–11.00 Discussion
- 11.00–11.30 COFFEE BREAK**
- 11.30–12.30 SESSION 9 SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION OF POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (4th floor Hall)**
Moderator: Vera Backović, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy

- 11.30–11.45 City space as a democratic space? The case of the Pride Parade in Sarajevo and Belgrade, **Amila Ždralović** (Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), **Nikola Jocić** (Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade, Serbia), **Tatjana Žarković** (Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Sociology, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 11.45–12.00 Rural areas in the Western Balkans: Key yet neglected territories for EU accession?, **Marco Zoppi** (University of Bologna, Italy)
- 12.00–12.15 Global land grabbing and new extractivism: Post socialist (rural) perspective, **Mina Petrović** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 12.15–12.30 Discussion
- 12.30–14.00 LUNCH BREAK**
- 14.00–15.00 SESSION 10 (parallel session): CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (4th floor Hall)**
- Moderator:* Dunja Poleti Ćosić, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy
- 14.00–14.15 Trends in Slovenian public opinion on migration in ESS (2002–2020/21), **Živa Broder**, **Rebeka Falle Zorman** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia)
- 14.15–14.30 Examining vulnerabilities of workers from the former Yugoslavia at the intersection of migration and posting regimes, **Sanja Cukut Krilić** (Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia)
- 14.30–14.45 Vulnerable times and re-articulation of belonging among displaced Kosovo Serbs, **Marija Grujić** (European University Viadrina, Frankfurt, Germany)
- 14.45–15.00 Discussion
- 14.00–15.00 SESSION 11 (parallel session): YOUTH AND CULTURES (1st Floor Hall)**

- Moderator:* Dragan Stanojević,
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy
- 14.00–14.15 Youth, politics and subculture: an ethnographic case study on the punk scene in Zagreb, **Vanja Dergić** (Institute of Social Sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia)
- 14.15–14.30 Subcultural and post subcultural practices of young people in Zagreb, **Dino Vukušić** (Institute of Social Sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia)
- 14.30–14.45 A reshaped concept of guerrilla patriotism as a component of ultras identity, **Andrej Ivan Nuredinović** (University of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia), **Dino Vukušić** (Institute for social sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia)
- 14.45–15.00 Discussion
- 15.00–16.15 SESSION 12: RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF POST-SOCIALISM (4th floor Hall)**
- Moderator:* Nataša Jovanović,
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy
- 15.00–15.15 Religious polarization among youth in Slovenia and Croatia: A comparative analysis within ten Southeast European countries, **Miran Lavrič, Andrej Naterer** (University of Maribor, Slovenia)
- 15.15–15.30 A comparative analysis of religiosity and types of religiosity in Croatia and Serbia, **Danijela Gavrilović** (University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 15.30–15.45 Humor against hegemony: Ridiculing Serbian Orthodox church in the Internet memes, **Miloš Jovanović** (University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 15.45–16.00 ‘National’ mediievality in history textbooks in post-Yugoslav countries, **Sergej Flere** (University of Maribor, Slovenia)
- 16.00–16.15 Discussion
- 16.15–17.15 SESSION 13: DISCURSIVE FRAMING OF CULTURAL CLEAVAGES IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES (4th floor Hall)**
- Moderator:* Marjan Ivković,
Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory

- 16.15–16.30 Revisiting the discourse of Third Serbia: Us vs. Them deconstructed or recomposed?, **Tamara Petrović Trifunović, Ivana Spasić** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 16.30–16.45 Communication relations on Twitter: The case of migrant “crisis” in Slovenia, **Rok Smrdelj** (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
- 16.45–17.00 Critical analysis of media discourses on China and Chinese in Serbia, **Nebojša Đorđević** (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia)
- 17.00–17.15 Discussion
- 17.30–18.15 **PLENARY SESSION,
CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE
(1st floor Hall)**

Predrag Cvetičanin*

Faculty of Arts, University of Niš, Serbia

Inga Tomić Koludrović**

Mirko Petrić***

Institute of Social Sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia

Željka Zdravković****

University of Zadar, Croatia

Adrian Leguina*****

Loughborough University, UK

A NEW MODEL FOR THE ANALYSIS OF CLASS STRUCTURE IN THE HYBRID SOCIETIES OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

We aim to present a model to analyse the class structure of hybrid post-socialist societies in South-East Europe (SEE) and specific class mobility, using the cases of Serbia and Croatia. The hybridity of these societies results from their bearing clear marks of their socialist past and, on the other hand, from having been exposed to an intensive neoliberal transformation over the last thirty years. In such hybrid societies, social inequalities are generated by several mechanisms of similar strength: (1) exploitative market mechanisms (based on economic capital), and (2) different types of social closure mechanisms (based on political and social capital). Social agents use these mechanisms not only in the economic, but also in all other fields. We argue that their influences cannot be analytical-ly isolated or reduced to a common foundation and that occupational class analysis in these societies can have only limited explanatory power. This makes the creation of simple analytical class schemes impossible. However, we attempt to show that it is possible to analyse both the workings and the outcomes of inequality-generating mechanisms in SEE societies.

* pcveticanin@gmail.com

** inga.tomic11@gmail.com

*** mirko.petric468@gmail.com

**** zzdravko1@gmail.com

***** a.leguina@lboro.ac.uk

Petar Atanasov*

Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”, University in Skopje, North Macedonia

POLITICAL ELITES AND THE MASSES BETWEEN SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND ETHNIC CLEAVAGES – THE CASES OF NORTH MACEDONIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

For more than three decades, two major negative factors have been haunting some of the Western Balkan states – politicization of ethnicity and state/citizen identity problems. The consequences include ethnic conflicts and the dissolution of the federal state, since even Yugoslavia did not manage to thoroughly solve the national questions. Some European nations in recent history democratized more easily when the political and national units were congruent, generally depending on the political elites and their political agendas and goals. Matters can be made worse when clandestine or legitimate groups manipulate ethnic constituencies rather than being interested in their current position. A positive way out consists of integrative actions through nationwide political alliances and, if feasible, identification with and loyalty to the state institutions, independently of one’s background. Bosnia and Macedonia are internally burdened with the same kind of social (ethnic) conflicts that have a negative impact on their political integration. Today powerful ethnic-political elites rule through partocracy (clientelism), polarization (conflict), and propaganda (influencing public opinion). The domination of ignorant political elites and their transformation from loyal communists into fervent nationalists shows the real facade of this ‘historical determinism’. The two societies are losing their middle classes and the gap between rich elites and poor masses is bigger than ever. At the same time, Bosnia is faced with open political conflict and Macedonia is faced with a latent social conflict between the elites and the masses. The main aim of the presentation is to argue that the two countries should learn from each other, so that Macedonia does not develop in the direction of the Bosnian model of ethnic reification, and Bosnia learns and implements some of the liberal aspects of the Macedonian model of social integration by crossing ethnic lines. Maybe, in time, some new (multiethnic) elites may come up with better leaders and ideas.

* p.atanasov@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

Predrag Živković*

Nataša Krivokapić**

Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić, University of Montenegro

POSTSOCIALISM AND/OR THE SAGA OF THE IDEOLOGICAL SATISFACTION OF ‘THE PAST THAT DOESN’T PASS’

In an attempt to present in a comparative and sustainable sociological statement “autobiographical experiences and conditions” of post-socialist societies, i.e. those phenomenological conditions that social science recognizes as specific chronocides (Epstein), on one hand from the introverted perspective of dealing ideologically with potential opponents of the order, and on the other hand regarding extroverted patterns of “systemic loneliness” and separation from liberal-democratic societies, the authors in this essay plead the Gordian knot of imposing ideological and systemic cacophonies that are maintained in the epoch-making imposition of elections that gravitate between East and West. In the multitude of sociological and political writings about post-socialism, i.e. about the coming social transformation that arose in the wake of socialist values and systemic agendas, there has not been much talk about “apophatic esotericism”, as Gorazd Kocijančič would say, that brings with it the revelation of mythological horizons of East and West, which is a much more complex discussion that when matters are reduced to a simplified ideological struggle between two civilizational poles. The discovered horizon of research and communication will lead us to sociologically heretical conclusions. Heretical in relation to the ruling narratives about the past outcomes of overcoming post-socialism, which not only has not been overcome at all, but is the same, largely affirmed as a value model of “the past that does not pass” (Đurković), indeed, associated with the belief of the interpolation of Western modernization. This implies arguing with the canons of chronocide, reading the diary of the “right-wing economy” (Đurković), and an opposition to the historical development of Yugoslav society as a prototype of an exogenous ideological course that is constantly caught in an “intifada with its own historical jury” and a constant misunderstanding of its geopolitical belonging, are reduced to the order of “daily survival” rather than fundamentally analysing international recognition and systemic sustainability.

* sociollog@gmail.com

** natashak@t-com.me

Miloš Bešić*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences, Serbia

MERITOCRACY VERSUS NEPOTISM: THE EFFECT OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS ON INSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The general topic of this paper is meritocracy analysed through inter-generational mobility. More specifically, we will observe the effect of parents' achievement on the achievement of their children. In the literature and research, the effect of the social and cultural capital of parents on the achievement of their children is well documented. However, what is not documented is the effect of this relationship on overall economic and institutional achievement of the country in question. In this paper we assume and provide the evidence that the stronger the effect of parents on children's achievement, the weaker the economy and institutions in the country. In our view, a strong relation between parents' and children's achievement is anti-meritocratic and does not provide equal opportunities to all members of society. On the contrary, the relationship in question is a proxy for nepotism, which consequently produces negative personal selection at the structural level, and eventually has a negative effect on institutional and economic performance. Our findings suggest that in countries where institutions are strong and the economy performs well, the correlation between parent and children achievement is weaker, and *vice versa*. Particularly interesting is the finding that in the former Yugoslav countries, as well as in Southeast Europe in general, the parent-children achievement relationship is stronger than in the rest of Europe (particularly compared to the West). Procedures for testing the hypothesis will be based on an aggregate datafile integrating World Bank economic and institutional performance indicators, and aggregated country data based on the European Values Study (2017–2019). By way of method, different kinds of regression analysis, including Multi-level Modeling (MLM), will be employed. Additionally, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be used in order to identify the strength of moderation effects and to illuminate complex deterministic relationships.

* besicmilos@yahoo.com

Mladen Radulović***Dragana Gundogan****

Institute for Educational Research, Serbia

RELATION BETWEEN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIAL STATUS IN OECD AND POST-YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES***

In the contemporary global context of economic crisis, it is important to explore what effect social position has on educational practices and to investigate educational inequalities. Having in mind that post-Yugoslav societies have a shared past of being part of the same socialist country and that they all experienced the process of post-socialist transformation, we wanted to compare the significance of social status for student achievement on the PISA testing between post-Yugoslav countries and OECD countries. Besides, bearing in mind that post-Yugoslav countries have had different paths and dynamics in the process of post-socialist transformation, our goal is to compare them on the same relationship between student achievement on external testing and socioeconomic variables. Since we tend to use a comparative approach, we utilise the data of PISA testing on 15-years old students. In order to observe the tendencies, we use the data from two waves of study (2012 and 2018). For the analysis of student achievement, we rely on students' reading performance scores, while the PISA Index of economic, social and cultural status is used as a proxy for social status. The results reveal a stronger correlation between social status and student achievements in OECD countries than in post-Yugoslav ones. This finding might suggest that the socialist legacy is still protecting against an increase in educational inequalities. Furthermore, the results show differences in the correlation between the examined variables among post-Yugoslav countries, reflecting influences of the post-socialist transformation dynamic as well as of previous legacy.

* mradulovic@ipi.ac.rs

** stokanicdragana@gmail.com

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Anđela Pepić*

Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

PRIVATIZATION AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE FIELD OF WORK IN (POST-)SOCIALIST BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The transformation of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and its successor states, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), from socialism to capitalism resulted in deindustrialization, atomization of workers divided along different lines (from class to ethnicity), dissolved large industrial complexes, and impoverished and dispossessed workers. The transformation, as a part of neoliberal globalization, included liberalization, privatization and stabilization measures. This paper focuses on social conflicts in the field of work during privatization processes in (post-)socialist B&H. Large industrial complexes and leading socially owned companies were dismantled, broken into pieces and sold or bankrupted, in often dubious privatization processes. For a majority of workers of these industrial companies, previously considered as builders, 'owners' and drivers of the companies they had worked at during the socialist era, privatization resulted in job loss, impoverishment, and finally dispossession of ownership and the opportunity to work at companies they considered as 'their own'. This paper looks at the privatization and transformation of SFRY and its successor states, primarily B&H, from a workers' perspective. Based on multiple case studies, the paper analyses workers' narratives on privatization, including the role of workers and unions. Triangulating the data collected from factory newspapers, media, available archives and documents, as well as interviews conducted with (former) workers of three industrial complexes (Rudi Čajavec, Energoinvest and Aluminij), research results show a variety of narratives, including privatization as theft, workers' powerlessness in the privatization process, the politics of fear, as well as workers' disunity. It is also shown that strategies and tactics used by political, ethno-national and economic elites to pacify workers' resistance and union action during privatization have resulted in crushing workers' organised action, dividing workers and fragmenting the unions.

* andjela.pepic@unibl.org

Silvano Bolčić*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

ETHNONATIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY – THE MAIN FEATURE OF THE POST-SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION OF POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES

The process of ‘ethno-nationalization of society’ is here considered as a crucial process in the transformation of the new societies constituted after the destruction of SFR Yugoslavia. In these ‘ethno-nationalized societies,’ the society in its totality is treated as being “owned” by the dominant (‘core’) ‘ethno-nation.’ The primary role of projects and actions undertaken by the state or the society in general is to secure, enhance, and promote ‘ethno-national’ interests of the dominant ‘ethno-nation.’ The introductory part describes the essential features of ethno-nationalized society in the area of social stratification, economy, political system, culture, and basic social values. Since an ‘ethno-nationalized society’ is not just a society with nationalism as the dominant ideology, the second part of the paper pinpoints some key promoters of nationalism and ‘ethno-nationalization’ in the post-Yugoslav societies. The third part of the paper is devoted to the analysis of the main consequences of ‘ethno-nationalization of society,’ with an emphasis on regressive implications of such societal transformation on the ‘dominant ethno-nation,’ and on the given post-socialist ‘society’ in general. Particular attention is given to the tendencies of derogation of democracy and of widespread (though “silent”) societal acceptance of autocratic governance, greatly due to the peculiar “logic” of the functioning of ‘ethno-nationalized’ state institutions. *‘Ethno-nationalization of society’*, it is argued, is a *real social-structural process of the super-position of the “core” ethno-nation to the ‘society’, where ‘society’ is treated as legitimate ‘property’ of the “core” ethno-nation.* This peculiar “societal hegemony” of the “core” ethno-nation implies effective *priority of ethno-national projects and activities aimed at enhancing the needs and interests of the “core” ethno-nation,* as well as the ‘ethno-nationalization’ of cultural orientations and overall ‘social consciousness.’ Therefore, an ethno-nationalized society implies a stable *biased approach* by members of the dominant ethno-nation towards *all ‘things’* being done by leaders, members and supporters of the “core” ethno-nation that are contributing to the enhancement of the latter’s needs and interests. This seems to affect the fundamental attitude of voters when supporting undemocratic, autocratic, even corrupt governmental practices. The last part is devoted to the discussion of certain problems of

* sbolcic@yahoo.com

the societal reconstitution aimed at “de-ethno-nationalization” of the post-Yugoslav societies. A crucial change needed is a *deliberate and widespread recognition that modern societies are trans-ethnic entities*, and that ‘society’ should be ontologically ‘older’ than the ‘ethno-nation’, even when ‘society’ happens to be ‘ethno-nationally homogeneous’.

Jovo Bakić*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

ORGANISED CRIME AND THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES IN SERBIA 1990–2000 AND AFTER 2012

Serbian society had passed through far-reaching criminalisation during the wars of Yugoslav Succession 1991–99. Under the UN sanctions, informal economy provided survival for both the Milošević regime and the impoverished population. Top smugglers became part of the economic elite. The Milošević regime used organised criminal groups in order to substitute unsuccessful conscription to the regular army and to liquidate its enemies. However, some of them helped the then opposition to overthrow the regime. Therefore, the Đinđić government was dependent on organised crime. When Đinđić tried to fight it, he was assassinated. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of Đinđić's death, the "Sabre" action against organised crime was relatively efficient. In turn, since 2012 one can argue that organised crime has gradually become inseparable from the authoritarian regime. The first branch of the organized crime is related with the drug trade and football fan tribes led by drug dealers closely connected to the regime; the second one is connected to the weapon trade, which includes some funders of the ruling party; the third one is related with gang leaders, who control the northern part of Kosovo on behalf of the regime. The organised crime leaders are allowed massive money laundering and provided protection. Nationalism and alleged economic progress are used to legitimise illicit activities. The regime relies on widespread corruption, clientelism and organised crime. Therefore, Serbia is a captured state and a thoroughly criminalised society.

* jovobakic@gmail.com

Ljubiša Mitrović*

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

THE SOCIAL COST OF THE NEOLIBERAL STRATEGY OF DEPENDENT MODERNIZATION OF POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES AND THE NEED TO CHANGE THE TRANSITION MODEL

The paper points to the negative balance and social cost of the neoliberal transition strategy in post-socialist societies in Serbia and the Balkans. They are identified by analysing the results of contemporary research by sociologists, economists and political scientists, which speak of underdevelopment and peripheralization of these societies, production of inequality, decline in the quality of life and re-opening of social issues, marginalization of social position and decreasing vertical mobility for a growing number of social groups and strata, and escalating social contradictions and conflicts. In the context of implementation of such a model of transition without social responsibility, the rise of the comprador bourgeoisie and the practice of colonial/controlled democracy, autocracy and ethno-populism of the ruling elites are at work. While the processes of privatization, fragmentation and peripheralization of these societies take place at the level of social ontology, on the symbolic level the media spectacle about economic success, foreign investments and patriotism continues, with fanfare and the support of numerous “analysts”, new propagandists from the ranks of the system-aligned intelligentsia, with the aim of justifying and stabilizing the emerging society of dependent modernization at the new European and world periphery.

Starting from Bourdieu’s paradigm of the critical and committed deontological role of sociologists (where sociology is taken to be a “martial art” which must not be neutral regarding issues of vital importance for society, people and humanity in general), the author searches for a model of transition that would be in the service of sustainable development and progress of these societies, democratization and humanization of social relations and the emancipation of humans, that is, for the transition of transition. While believing that this new choice of society must not be a task and responsibility exclusively of the political elite and technocratic management, but instead enjoy the consent of the broadest social strata, the author emphasizes that the university and scientific community must have an avant-garde and most prominent role in defining a new strategy of social development and management, based on critical analysis of the results of modern global science and the best models of current practice.

* ljubisa.mitrovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Sarina Bakić*

Selma Alispahić**

Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

This article is a presentation of empirical field research related to cultural participation of citizens in ten cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina's society is characterized by deep crisis within almost all segments related to its social, economic, political and cultural life in particular. Culture represents an important factor for sustainable society's development, and cultural participation is an indicator of culture's position in people's everyday life. Bearing in mind the contemporary social context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper will address the question of why culture is positioned on the periphery of social structure and seriously instrumentalized by politics and the economy. Together with the rapid development of new media and principles of consumer society, cultural participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina follows suit and displays tendencies of standardization and confusion as to what culture really is.

* sarina.bakic@fpn.unsa.ba

** selma.alispahic@fpn.unsa.ba

Vera Backović*

Irena Petrović**

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

INTERNET USE AND THE SPREAD OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN (POST)PANDEMIC CONDITIONS: THE CASE OF SERBIA

Although the Internet and digital technologies have been the basis of a network society (Castells, 2000) for nearly thirty years, pandemic conditions represent a new phase in their use. During the Covid-19 pandemic, work, education, and communication focused on using digital technologies. While until then this had been a matter of choice, at least in the private sphere and personal communication, during the pandemic it became the predominant form of communication in all spheres of society.

Based on data from the 10th round of the European Social Survey conducted in 2022, the paper analyses the extent to which the Internet has become part of everyday life in Serbia. In the first section of the paper, differences in intensity of in-person encounters and those realized through digital technologies are examined. Then, the frequency of using the Internet in professional and personal communication and the perception of digital communication are analysed. The assumption is that the pandemic conditions have influenced a significant increase in the use of the Internet and an intensification of digital communication in working and leisure time. The paper also examines to what extent the attitude towards digital communication depends on demographic and socio-economic characteristics – gender, age, education, place of residence, economic position, occupation and work status, household size, etc. By comparing with the practice in other European countries, we seek to establish whether there are differences across and within countries.

* 1verabackovic@gmail.com

** petrovic.irena84@gmail.com

Milan Urošević*

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade,
Serbia

THERAPEUTIC ETHICS AND THE SPIRIT OF NEOLIBERALISM – REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH OF THERAPY CULTURE AND SELF-HELP CULTURE IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES

Therapy culture, in its various manifestations, is a relatively established field of study and has been so for decades in European and American social sciences and humanities. However, this field is apparently yet to develop in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, and the Balkans in general. Therefore, our presentation will take the form of a metasynthesis of existing research on therapy culture and self-help culture in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia. We will show that since this field of study is still in its infancy in the region, the research is highly empirically oriented. Therefore, we will point to the lack of a substantive theoretical conceptualization as a factor that is keeping the research of therapy culture and self-help culture in these countries from forming as a distinct field of study. In the second part of our presentation, we will present a theoretical framework based on the “governmentality approach” as a way of conceptualizing therapy culture and self-help culture and their place in post-socialist contexts. We will claim that this way therapy culture and self-help culture can be understood as creating a new “ethos” (Foucault) or a new “structure of feeling” (Williams) that contributes to the neoliberal transition of ex-Yugoslav countries.

* urosevicmilan1993@gmail.com

Milica Resanović*

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade,
Serbia

Milena Toković**

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, Serbia

THE TRANSITIONAL MODEL OF CULTURAL POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

The post-socialist transformation introduced changes not only in the political and economic realms, but in the cultural sphere as well. The transitional model of cultural policy became dominant, which meant mixed funding sources from both public and private sectors participating in creating conditions for the sustainability of cultural manifestations, with the central role of the state. The penetration of a market orientation and poor state funding in the cultural sector negatively affected cultural workers' economic position and therefore hindered the possibilities of creativity and artistic freedom. All these difficulties and challenges present among cultural workers increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic led to bans on cultural events during lockdowns, reduced number of visitors afterwards, cancellation of projects that depended on international cooperation, and financial problems for cultural workers. Despite the challenges, cultural institutions and organizations attempted to adapt to the new conditions by providing online content in order to sustain their programmes and maintain active communication with their audience. This paper focuses on the analysis of qualitative data collected in the project "The end of the season before the end of the season? Strategies in the cultural sector during the crisis" conducted by the Institute for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 20 cultural workers from cultural areas that were particularly threatened during the pandemic, we analyse the biggest challenges that organizations/cultural institutions were facing during the pandemic (event program/cultural program, human resources, issue of public/employee health safety, finances). Additionally, since setting up online events was in some cases the only way to continue the program, emphasis will be placed on the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of organizing a cultural event online, and difference between online and offline experience both in organizing cultural events during the pandemic and in the reception of cultural content.

* milica_resanovic@yahoo.com

** mstanojevic85@gmail.com

Bruno Šimac*

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Zagreb,
Croatia

Anja Gvozdanović**

Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatia

SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND LIFE EVALUATION OF YOUTH IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES

Contemporary social sciences have shifted their focus towards understanding what contributes to living a fully satisfied life among youth, putting significant emphasis on the measurement of key predictors of young people's subjective well-being. This paper examines the relationship between the social integration of youth and their life evaluation in 7 post-Yugoslav countries. Our operationalization of social integration is a derivative of the multidimensional construct introduced by Dragolov et al (2012) that is composed of three domains: 1. social relations; 2. connectedness, and 3. focus on the common good. Furthermore, this research relates social integration to life evaluation that includes young people's satisfaction with their life in general, family life, circle of friends, and education. We explore the main assumption that strong social integration leads to higher levels of life evaluation among youth. This paper is based on data from the "Youth in Southeast Europe 2018" project commissioned by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and analyzes comparative data on young people aged 18–29 coming from 7 post-Yugoslav countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia). Only one social integration construct is a significant predictor of life evaluation across all 7 countries and that is trust in people. However, significant predictors of life evaluation among youth in most countries are also the frequency of social contact and identification. Therefore, post-Yugoslav youth with a higher trust in other people, those with more frequent social contact with their friends, and those with stronger national and local identity perceive higher life evaluation. Nevertheless, it needs to be stated that there are some country differences and our social integration constructs do not have the same strength of predictability in all included countries. Our analysis shows that those young people with stronger social integration in their local communities evaluate their lives more positively.

* bsimac@ffzg.hr

** anja@idi.hr

Antoanela Petkovska*

Konstantin Minoski**

Ilo Trajkovski***

Mihajlo Popovski****

Faculty of Philosophy, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje,
North Macedonia

THE YOUTH’S ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK IN MACEDONIAN AND OTHER POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES

The claim that young people are particularly exposed to global, regional, and local societal change is generally shared within the social sciences. Understanding different attitudes toward work, expressed by youth in the particular circumstances of Macedonian and other post-Yugoslav societies, is important because it is connected to essential existential questions. Furthermore, research identifying young people’s attitudes towards and practices related to work also indicates youth’s level of inclusion in society. This paper is meant to show the results of the last wave (2017) of the longitudinal, international research project of the European Values Study – EVS, based in Tilburg, Netherlands. A team from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje participated in this research study, for the second time since the previous wave was in 2008. In Macedonia, this research was carried out in 2019. The goal of the research is to answer the following questions: How important is work for the youth as a life priority, compared to other aspects of life? How do the youth evaluate the importance of work, on individual and societal levels? What is the relationship between young people’s attitude toward work and their socio-demographic characteristics, as well as with their particular ideological-political orientations? The attitudes primarily analysed in this paper are those of the Macedonian interviewees, which are then compared to the attitudes of the interviewees from the countries of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

* antoanela@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

** konstantin@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

*** ilo@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

**** mihajlo@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

Milica Vlajić*

Dunja Poleti Ćosić**

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

LIVING APART TOGETHER IN SERBIA: STATUS OR STAGE?

The relationship in which intimate partners do not share a household (living apart together, also known as LAT) is still an underrepresented research topic in Serbia, even though this concept attracts the attention of scholars worldwide. However, sociologists and demographers cannot agree whether LAT is a historically new form of partnership relations produced and encouraged by the values of individualization in contemporary society or if it is just one (unwelcome) stage in a life trajectory among people who aspire to live in more traditional partnership forms. This dilemma was the impetus for research on the experiences and practices of women living in LAT partnerships in Serbia in a (post)pandemic context. This paper aims to answer three research questions. First, are LAT unions in Serbia a choice or an imposed alternative? Second, is there an egalitarian division of gender roles in LAT communities? And finally, did the pandemic affect LAT unions, and in which way? The findings were obtained through 20 semi-structured interviews with women who have been in current partnerships for at least a year and a half and whose partners spend at least three months continuously outside the place where the women live.

* milica.vlajic3@gmail.com

** dunja.poleti@gmail.com

Augustin Derado*

Institute for social sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia

LIFE-STRATEGIES IN CROATIA DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND BEYOND: FROM ADVANCEMENT TO SURVIVING

This paper presents the five general types of life-strategies of individuals and households in Croatia and their subtypes. Life-strategies were defined as various patterns of agents' practices (both conscious and pre-reflexive) which are central for the preservation and improvement of the agents' social conditions of existence (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Empirical research was conducted in 2015, in all the Croatian regions. The research employed qualitative interviews along with quantitative data on capitals gathered for 30 households with a wide range of socio-demographic characteristics. The analysis was based on interpretative constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu et. al, 1999; Reed, 2008) applied to a multiple case study research design.

Strategies were discerned in relation to the agents' conditions of existence – pertaining to the volume and the trajectory of their capitals (which were modified for Croatian social conditions, cf. Cvetičanin et. al, 2021); as well as the agents' sense of practice – pertaining to the various lines of action which they aspired to and/or adopted. The life-strategies in Croatia reconstructed by this work were: 1. *Life-strategies of Social Advancement*; 2. *Life-strategies of Preserving the Social Position*; 3. *Life-strategies of Compensating for the Social Position*; 4. *Life-strategies of Getting By*; and 5. *Life-strategies of Surviving*.

Among the patterns distinguished by the research it can be highlighted that while agents who advanced made various investments and repositionings in their fields of work, the structural situations of many other agents were marked primarily by the devaluation and even deactivation of their cultural capital(s). These processes pressured agents into various strategic moves, which had encompassed: new practices and investments aimed at the preservation of their positions; reflexive reevaluations of their aspirations, including the acceptance of situations marked with precarity; and finally, Don Quixote effects and adaptations to a life marked by the necessity of surviving.

* augustin.derado@gmail.com

Naum Trajanovski*

University of Warsaw, Poland

POLISH-MACEDONIAN SOCIOLOGICAL EXCHANGES BEFORE AND AFTER 1989

The present paper discusses patterns of sociological knowledge transfers in socialist and post-socialist East Central and South East Europe by focusing on the Polish-Macedonian sociological exchanges before and after 1989. It focuses on two emblematic cases: the 1964–65 social survey of the residents of Skopje, co-conducted by a team of Polish and Macedonian experts as part of the UN-sponsored project of urban reconstruction after the 1963 Skopje earthquake, and the series of the so-called Kraków-Skopje sociological seminars which are taking place from the 1970s on. The paper points out the modes of transnational sociological framings of the pressing social and political issues of the day. It also argues that the cross-national exchanges meant different things for the different actors involved, both during the state socialism in Poland and Macedonia and during the post-socialist transformations.

* trajanovskinaum@gmail.com

Danilo Vuković*

Valerija Dabetić**

Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Marko Mrakovčić***

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law, Croatia

Samir Forić****

University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Science, Bosnia and Herzegovina

THE PROFESSION OF JUDGES IN CONTEMPORARY CROATIA, SERBIA, AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

As bearers of functions of mediation and authoritative adjudication, and as one of the most important agents of social stability, namely in modern societies furnished with complex legal landscapes, judges are at the centrefold of the sociology of legal professions. In socio-legal purview, judges are understood as a proto-profession or one of the first legal professions to form through the process of functional differentiation and specialisation. Nowadays, judges are perceived as actors holding huge institutional power that is utilised either to uphold the rule of law architecture that pivots modern democratic societies or to act as agents of social change in transitional democratic societies such as those in the Western Balkans. But who are *our* judges? What is their social status and how do they perceive their own professional status and that of their fellow lawyers? How do they fare in the public trust perception and what is their own perception in that regard? What do they consider to be strengths, weaknesses and challenges in their respective judicial systems, ever-subjected to the process of reforms aimed to reaching the higher standards? The authors seek to answer these and similar questions, and provide a sociological, more precisely socio-legal, account of judges as a legal profession by utilising the data-set produced in a comparative research project titled „Lawyers and Legal Profession in Contemporary Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina“ during 2018. This research represents one of the very rare attempts to look at judges sociologically and continue the research built upon the foundations laid by Uglješa Zvekić's seminal work „Profesija sudija: sociološka analiza“ (1985).

* danilo.vukovic@ius.bg.ac.rs

** valerija.dabetic@ius.bg.ac.rs

*** marko.mrakovcic@pravni.uniri.hr

**** samir.foric@fjn.unsa.ba

Helena Popović*

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia

Hajrudin Hromadžić**

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia

JOURNALISM IN A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE: FROM PUBLIC TO COMMERCIAL INTEREST

The fast and far reaching structural changes that took place in South-east Europe in the past three decades created a peculiar setting where elements of former state socialism blended with newly established forms of liberal democracy and market economy. A specific feature common to post-socialist states is that they simultaneously experienced a belated democratisation process and the political and economic pressures of globalisation. In this presentation we will analyse journalism within the theoretical framework of sociology of the profession in a diachronic perspective, with the aim of understanding the current status of the journalist profession in Croatia and the social, political and economic structures that shape it. We look at the structural changes that occurred in the journalistic field with the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the introduction of a liberal market economy. In the context of professional journalism this meant a reconstruction of the public role of journalists, a change in the legal framework, and the establishment of new forms of media ownership, primarily privatization and commercialisation of media in accordance with Western democracy standards that translated into locally specific forms. The profit orientation of privately-owned commercial media and their financial dependence on advertisers result in precarious forms of work. Due to these changes, forms of self-censorship emerge while investigative journalism diminishes. In addition, topics of public interest are marginalized in order to make room for lifestyle and entertainment. This imposes challenges to the main features of professional journalism based on autonomy, special professional norms and ethics (source protection, newsworthiness etc.), and public service orientation.

* hpopovic@ffzg.hr

** hhromadzic@ffri.uniri.hr

Bojan Todosijević*

Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia

RAMBO IS WRONG, OR: EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO EUROPE AND TO ONE'S OWN NATION ACROSS EUROPE: THE ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC AND IDEOLOGICAL PREDICTORS

Emotional attachments to Europe and to one's own nation are often presented as contrary identifications. The reasons for this perception are various, one of the most common being that national and supranational identifications may have contradictory political implications. However, this needs not to be so. For instance, if being 'European' is an important part of a particular national identity, the two identifications might actually be positively correlated. In fact, although contemporary nationalist parties in many European countries are labelled 'Eurosceptic', their scepticism is typically directed against the European Union, not necessarily 'Europe'. Empirical evidence for this claim is scarce. It is not clear how these two attachments are related in different countries, whether the correlation varies between East and West Europe or is associated with EU membership. Factors that influence these differences are also insufficiently explored.

This paper intends to fill some of these gaps. In the first part, relationships between European and national attachments will be examined across different European countries, but with particular attention devoted to comparing EU member countries with non-members. The second part will focus on socio-economic and ideological predictors of European and national identifications – again, by examining the patterns of association in different countries and regions of Europe. For instance, it could be expected that leftist ideological identification is associated with stronger identification with Europe, but a relatively weaker national identification. On the other side, lower socio-economic status and dissatisfaction with the political system might be associated with stronger national identification. This work in progress will make use of the European Social Survey datasets (waves 9 and 10). The initial results suggest, among other relationships, that lower individual socio-economic status is not necessarily associated with stronger national identification, contrary to the popular Rambo Amadeus' claim.

* btodosijevic@idn.org.rs

Jelena Pešić***Ana Birešev******Tamara Petrović Trifunović*****

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

VIEWS AND EVALUATIONS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES

Contemporary political and sociological considerations point to the multidimensional character of democracy. Some of the possible dimensions, on the basis of which we can explore different characteristics of this phenomenon, are representativeness, competitiveness, horizontal and vertical accountability, participation, freedom, the rule of law and responsiveness (Dahl, 2008; Kriesi and Bochsler, 2013). In addition, models of democracy, especially in contemporary societies, also vary. For example, Lijphart (1999) distinguishes between majoritarian and consensual democracies. Tilly (2007) differentiates constitutional, substantive, procedural and processual models, while other authors indicate that democracies can range between federal or centralized, liberal or illiberal, direct or representative, inclusive or exclusive, etc. (Kriesi and Bochsler, 2013). One possible classification differentiates between the core, liberal concept of democracy, and additional (complementary/competing) conceptions whose presence may vary in different contexts: social (or social-democratic), direct and, more recently, populist (Hernandez, 2016; Kriesi, Saris and Moncagatta, 2016; European Social Survey, 2018).

Using 2020/2021 European Social Survey data (Round 10), we will try to determine whether there are differences in the degree of acceptance of various characteristics of liberal democracy and its complementary/competing features (socio-democratic, direct and populist) among respondents from the former Yugoslav states (Slovenia, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), both at the level of general views and evaluations of democratic performance in their countries (Ferrin and Kriesi, 2016). Also, we will explore how these societies are positioned from a broader European perspective, as well as whether we can point to some characteristic patterns of understanding and evaluation of democracy. Finally, we will examine whether the evaluations of democracy correlate to other features that are important for the overall assessment of democratic capacities of post-Yugoslav societies, such as internal and external political efficacy, institutional trust, political participation, and contentment with the current performances of different institutions (see more in: Ceka and Magalhães, 2016).

* pesicj@gmail.com

** ana.biresev@f.bg.ac.rs

*** even304@gmail.com

Jovan Bliznakovski*

Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”, University in Skopje, North Macedonia

Vlora Rechica**

Misha Popovikj***

Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje, North Macedonia

OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, AND FOR THE PEOPLE: ASSESSING THE DEMAND FOR POPULISM IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Populism represents one of the most frequent strategies of political and social mobilization worldwide. It relies on a (thin-)ideological postulate which assumes that societies are divided into two distinct and homogenous groups which are in constant conflict: the “people” and the “elite”, with the former typically depicted as “righteous” and “pure” in comparison to the latter which is seen “corrupt” and “evil” (see Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017: 6). The “call to action” by populist politicians is therefore directed against the “corrupt” elites, with a heightened understanding of politics as an “expression of the general will of the people” (Ibid.). Such positions are increasingly employed in contemporary political communication (Vreese et al. 2018) and often as an input in decision-making on public policy (especially in polities where populist politicians hold power). The region of the Western Balkans is not an exception to this trend. By now, several studies have focused on the behaviour of politicians, parties and state officials in terms of reliance on populist discourse, rhetorics and actions in the political arena and governance (e.g. Bieber, 2021; Bosilkov, 2021; Džankić and Keil, 2017).

This study is a pioneering attempt to assess the societal demand for populism in one of the Western Balkan countries – North Macedonia. It draws on the approaches developed by Akkerman et al. (2014) and Spruyt et al. (2016), implemented in the Netherlands and Belgium, respectively. The approach consists of measuring populism in society through a series of survey items that express (dis-)agreement with various elements of the “ideational definition” of populism outlined above. This strategy is implemented through a nationally representative survey, conducted by the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” (IDSCS) in June 2021. The data is

* j.bliznakovski@gmail.com

** vlora@idsos.org.mk

*** misha@idsos.org.mk

further analysed with Ordinary Least Squares regression in order to arrive at findings on the main individual-level factors that contribute to the proliferation of populist attitudes. The analysis reveals that populist attitudes are mainly connected with perceived inefficiency of the political system in terms of citizens' inclusion in the political process, belief in conspiracy theories and authoritarian attitudes, and secondarily, with mistrust towards state institutions. In general, the study points to the importance of meaningful and effective political participation as a direction through which populism can be suppressed at the societal level in North Macedonia.

Milica Antić Gaber*

Roman Kuhar**

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Slovenia's debate over non-sexist, gender-inclusive, or gender-sensitive language has been going on since the 1990s, but it intensified again in 2018 when the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana's senate decided to use female grammatical gender in its internal legal acts as neutral and inclusive for all genders. This disrupted the long-held view of male grammatical gender as neutral and inclusive, both grammatically and socially. The Faculty of Arts' goal and vision state that its scientific research is committed to humanity, freedom, solidarity, equality, especially gender equality, and justice, making the decision even more significant.

Media coverage amplified public outrage and confusion over the decision. This ruling was covered by almost all national media. In terms of content, understanding, and interpretations, media reactions and discussions on various forums ranged from condemning this move as unacceptable linguistic engineering and labelling the decision as excessive political correctness and a sign of "gender ideology" to interpretations that did not deny the existence of sexism in the language but saw the decision as a wrong solution, and a minority of favourable records, which interpreted the decision in the spirit of solidarity and elimination of discrimination. The study discusses the acceptance of the decision on the sensitive use of language in the internal regulations of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana and situates it within the context of feminist criticism of sexist language and its transformational potential at the institutional level.

* milica.anticgaber@ff.uni-lj.si

** roman.kuhar@ff.uni-lj.si

Jasna Podreka***Rok Smrdelj******Milica Antić Gaber*****

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

SYSTEMIC REGULATION OF THE TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE IN THE ACADEMIC FIELD IN SLOVENIA

The academic field is characterised by the emergence and reproduction of social norms that reflect and reinforce the existing gender order and power relations. Despite the gendered social power structure in the academic field, the subject of sexual harassment and violence in academia in Slovenia is under-researched and inadequately regulated by national legislation and institutional norms. To fill this gap, as part of the targeted research programme funded by the Slovenian Research Agency and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, we analyse the existing institutional policies and internal legal acts (regulations, protocols, guidelines, etc.) that address and regulate this area in public and private universities and their members, in public and private post-secondary education institutions, as well as in public research institutes. We found that the issue of sexual harassment and violence in the academic field in Slovenia is under-addressed and under-regulated. Internal acts and regulations are generally lacking. As a result, we pay close attention to the overall systemic regulation of this area in Slovenia, how institutions address it, its significant shortcomings, and the best practices that should serve as a model for future regulation. We found best practices especially in public universities, while this area is less regulated at public and private post-secondary education and public research institutes. We draw special attention to important systemic shifts that have occurred at the University of Ljubljana and its member, the Faculty of Arts. We also highlight the recommendations we have made to encourage policymakers and authorities in the academic field to address and regulate more consistently and systematically the issue of sexual harassment and violence in the academic field in Slovenia.

* jasna.podreka@ff.uni-lj.si

** rok.smrdelj@ff.uni-lj.si

*** milica.anticgaber@ff.uni-lj.si

Ankica Šobot*

Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia

FORMAL CHILDCARE AS AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF FAMILY POLICIES: REALITY AND NEEDS

Work-life balance (WLB) is an important issue of policies in EU countries. The approach which implies social investment as a strong support of the welfare state pays much attention to public childcare. Reconciling work and parenthood is a significant aspect of the quality of life of the individual and the family. In that, gender perspective has a specific importance. During the socialist period, a network of public childcare services was developed, but the social transformation of post-Yugoslav countries brought new challenges. Some of them concern the characteristics of the labour market, other gender roles. The paper will discuss the current state of formal childcare in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, in comparison with the EU (27) and Scandinavian countries, through an analysis of data from the EUROSTAT database. The disadvantages of formal childcare are noticed through significantly lower coverage of children under the age of three, stronger presence of other types of childcare as well as a high percentage of children being taken care of only by their parents. Looking at some indicators, the situation in Slovenia is better than in Serbia and Croatia. Formal childcare is a form of support for reconciling work and family life but it is also a contribution to the transformation of gender regimes. Positive effects imply high availability of public services, their quality, wide coverage, and affordability for different social categories.

* asobot@idn.org.rs

Ana Pajvančić-Cizelj*

Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz, Austria
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad

TRANSFORMATION OF POST-YUGOSLAV CITIES IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Due to their dynamic transformation shaped by the specific local context and a multitude of different external influences, post-Yugoslav cities are becoming an increasingly significant and inspiring topic for urban studies. Among the endogenous factors that influence their transformation, the most researched are those arising from the post-socialist heritage. The external factors have only recently gained the attention of researchers and have mostly focused on globalization and, lately, the influence of investments from the Middle East and China. Considering their geographical position and the relationships with the EU, surprisingly little attention is focused on how the European context shapes the transformation of post-Yugoslav cities. This paper addresses this question, by providing a theoretical overview of the relationship between Europeanization and urban transformation, and presenting the research on the role of European inter-urban networks in the urban transformation of the post-Yugoslav capital cities.

* ana.pajvancic@ff.uns.ac.rs

Amila Ždralović*

Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nikola Jocić**

Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Tatjana Žarković***

Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Sociology, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

CITY SPACE AS A DEMOCRATIC SPACE? THE CASE OF THE PRIDE PARADE IN SARAJEVO AND BELGRADE

Participatory democratic practices happen as a part of everyday life as the problem of power does not primarily concern sovereignty but our bodies, our existence, our everyday life (Foucault 2012, 167). Therefore, participatory democratic practices must also be spatial, and the rethinking of democratic connections must consider spatial thinking in terms of physical public space as “empty” and open (Hoskyns 2014). On the other side, public spaces are appropriated materially and symbolically (Bourdieu 1991), leading to the inevitable hierarchization of public spaces, thus giving legitimacy to the exclusion of certain groups. The tension between the demands of democracy and reality reflects the willingness to include everyone in democratic processes. The democratic transition in Eastern and Central Europe, therefore, raises the question of public spaces in urban areas, which directly affects and reflects both architectural and political issues. Citizenship is one of the most imprecise concepts in social theory and, as a research problem, it can refer to the legal status of an individual, social and class stratum, identity, and social and political activism (Vasiljević 2016). The Pride Parade insists on the civic model through visibility and activism, and it seems to become more problematic the more democracy is degraded. B&H and Serbia have shown significantly different stages of development since 1992. How this is reflected in the attitudes and practices towards the use of space for expressing resistance and visibility will be shown in the example of the Pride Parade in Belgrade and Sarajevo from the period of the first parades. Public urban space is a place where people of different social and economic classes necessarily meet and confront (Harvey 2006). Collective history is inscribed in public space (Läpple 1991, Klamt 2012), which has significant social effects on the very practices of use.

* a.zdralovic@pfsa.unsa.ba

** nikola.jocic@gef.bg.ac.rs

*** tatjana.zarkovic@ff.unsa.ba

Marco Zoppi*

University of Bologna, Italy

RURAL AREAS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: KEY, YET NEGLECTED TERRITORIES FOR EU ACCESSION?

Mainstream discourses on the accession of the so-called “Western Balkans” to the EU very often focus on political and economic matters at the state and interstate level (e.g. democratic reforms, regional cooperation and trade, reconciliation). While these aspects are relevant indeed, their predominance in public debates can lead to overlooking other issues that are also relevant in the context of EU enlargement. One example is the common challenges facing rural areas and their inhabitants across the region.

In fact, rural areas reflect trends and socio-economic dynamics that are directly relevant to social cohesion, economic performance and the labour market, all of which are subjects of the EU’s negotiating chapters. Moreover, the EU has developed a range of policies and funding mechanisms for rural areas in the EU, which experience similar problems.

This contribution focuses on the rural areas in the Western Balkans in order to highlight, from a political-sociological point of view, the key role that these areas can play for both country policies and EU accession, despite being neglected as focal points of innovative policies. This topic is particularly timely for rural areas in the Western Balkans, which are all characterized to varying degrees by progressive depopulation and, within state borders, by concentration of the population in a few large urban centres. Also, addressing the common needs of rural areas can represent a goal for renewed and strengthened regional cooperation.

The paper will provide a description of rural areas in the region by presenting data retrieved from the website of the national statistical offices, through a comparative approach. In addition, EU enlargement documents, such as the annual country reports and the negotiation chapters, will be analysed to further investigate the relationship between rural areas and EU accession.

* marco.zoppi2@unibo.it

Mina Petrović*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

GLOBAL LAND GRABBING AND NEW EXTRACTIVISM: POST SOCIALIST (RURAL) PERSPECTIVE

Starting from the context of ‘neoextractivism’, stimulated by the global demand for energy, industrial minerals and metals, agri-food products and other natural resources, the paper reviews research conducted in European post-socialist countries and Serbia related to the massive inflows of foreign direct investments as ‘resource-seeking’ capital. The analytical focus is on the mechanisms of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ practiced by transnational corporations and core capitalist countries, such as land grabbing, concessions to explore and extract the sub-soil resources, privatization/enclosure of access to natural resources such as water, etc. Contrary to the usual emphasis on urban spaces as catalysts of social transformation, we emphasize rural resources and communities, often taken as passive and politically conservative, without sufficient power to either control local development or benefit from it. Namely, the resistance of rural farmers/people to the incursions of capital in the form of FDI and multinational corporations, and to the neoliberal policy agenda of central/local governments, with the capacity to generate broader social mobilization, points to the increasing convergence of problems of urban and rural areas (centre and periphery), overlapping issues of social and environmental justice, but also to possible tensions between populist localism and emancipatory (rural) politics.

* mipetrov@f.bg.ac.rs

Živa Broder*

Rebeka Falle Zorman**

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia

TRENDS IN SLOVENIAN PUBLIC OPINION ON MIGRATION IN ESS (2002–2020/21)

The predominant response of EU countries to latest migration movements has been a policy of classification of migrants into more wanted/legitimate and less wanted/legitimate, legal/illegal, “real” refugees or “just” economic migrants. We will analyse some of the fundamental trends in the public perception of migration/refugee issues in the period from 2002 to 2020/21 based on empirical measurements of Slovenian public attitudes, captured in the European Social Survey (ESS).

The data shows that public perceptions follow public policies that classify migration through conventional categories of more or less wanted or legitimate, thereby further consolidating these dichotomies in public discourse. The synchrony of public policies and responses of public opinion is not surprising. When public policies respond to the presence of migrants/refugees with fears and moral panics, they contribute to the creation of a “crisis situation” in the public. Consequently, public opinion reacts according to the mediated conflicting ideas.

In a national case study, we observe several examples of social crises in the Slovenian context, for which we assume that the public opinion is unified in a fairly monolithic position towards migrants as “the others”. The analysis of data from the ESS (Slovenia) has shown that public opinion certainly responds to various social crises; with important difference noted in attitudes towards migrants/refugees in case of so called “migration crisis” in 2000/2001 and the “refugee crisis” in 2015 compared to the economic crisis in 2008 or health crisis in 2020/2021. Public opinion is quite synchronized with political perceptions of migration as a “crisis”, especially when migrants are present “on our land” or “on our borders”. In conclusion, we compare Slovenia with other post-Yugoslav countries participating in the ESS, trying to determine how different demographic and regional characteristics affect attitudes towards migration.

* ziva.broder@fdv.uni-lj.si

** rebeka.falle@fdv.uni-lj.si

Sanja Cukut Krilić*

Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

EXAMINING VULNERABILITIES OF WORKERS FROM THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AT THE INTERSECTION OF MIGRATION AND POSTING REGIMES

Since the end of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, continuing economic disparities, the collapse of key industries, skills and demand mismatches in the labour market and political instability have been among the key drivers of migration from the countries of the Western Balkans. Within these flows, Slovenia represents an important country of immigration due to existing historical, cultural and linguistic ties, geographical proximity and existing migrant social networks. There exists a continuous reliance on labour migration and posting of workers in Slovenia as both a receiving and a transit country to other countries of the EU. In addition to migrations, the posting of third-country nationals, particularly citizens of the countries of the Western Balkans, has also increased significantly since 2010, especially in the construction sector. Hence, the migration-posting regime intersection has become an area of increased research interest.

Drawing on statistical data, qualitative interviews with posted workers from the former Yugoslav countries and on findings of a focus group with stakeholders in the area of labour mobility and migration, gathered within three international projects on posted work, as well as the findings of a national project on mental health in the context of migration, the paper explores the risks and opportunities created by this channel of labour mobility and migration. Without neglecting the traditional actors of industrial relations, it will point to the importance of informal networks and intermediaries in migration and posting regimes. It will argue that migration and employment policies in Slovenia, as well as the Western European countries, produce hierarchies of vulnerabilities (for instance, labour rights violations, cultural, language and information barriers, economic dependencies, work-place safety issues, lack of labour rights enforcement and liability regulations) resulting from various regulatory mechanisms in sending, transit and receiving countries.

* sanja.cukut@zrc-sazu.si

Marija Grujić*

European University Viadrina, Frankfurt, Germany

VULNERABLE TIMES AND RE-ARTICULATION OF BELONGING AMONG DISPLACED KOSOVO SERBS

What is the status of (non)belonging among displaced Kosovo Serbs within the symbolic geographies of homeland nationalism? To answer this question, the presentation draws on micro-sociological perspectives on belonging and the empirical material gathered through biographical research among refugees from Kosovo who have lived in Serbia since 1999 and have an internally displaced persons (IDP) status. In particular, it introduces an intersectional methodology and critical analysis of participants' narratives about life in former Yugoslavia and the background of inequalities caused by gender, ethnicity/religion and urban/rural differences. By contrasting diverse spatialities/temporalities of concrete lived experiences of protracted displacement and post-socialist transition, the paper underlines the re-articulation of belonging in the narratives about entitlements and one's status before and after displacement. The research theorises uncertainties of IDP (non)belonging by employing Nira Yuval Davis's framework of politics of belonging and Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory, and what she describes as an aftermath of an intimate, vulnerable time. By employing these approaches, the aim is: a) to discuss the troubling effects of silences and silencing present in personal and public narratives about the ongoing Kosovo/Serbia conflict over territory and b) to ask about the possibilities of transmitting memories able to heal and recuperate symbolic, social and material losses caused by war and flight.

* marija.grujic@gmail.com

Vanja Dergić*

Institute of Social Sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia

YOUTH, POLITICS AND SUBCULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY ON THE PUNK SCENE IN ZAGREB

This presentation will provide an overview of the main results of an ethnographic case study of the punk scene in Zagreb, Croatia. The research builds on previous research on the punk scene in Croatia from the perspective of the development of democracy in the post-socialist context. The 1990s Croatian punk scene involved connections to anti-war campaigns and activism, on the basis of which the scene developed.

In the data collected from 20 in-depth interviews with actors on the local punk scene, the most often mentioned topics were personal views of politics, political participation, and gender issues. The research goal was to examine the connection between youth, politics, and subculture, exploring how young people active in Zagreb's punk scene define politics and politicism, what forms of political involvement they recognise, which activities and practices they connect with their political involvement (or lack thereof), and how youth involvement in politics on the punk scene is related to forms of youth political involvement in broader Croatian society.

This study confirms the fragmented nature of the punk scene in Zagreb, which actors on the scene frequently connect to their perceptions of their own political involvement. Additionally, our research participants believe that young people involved in the scene are more political than the average young person in society in general. The findings are similar regarding gender issues, especially the existence of gender inequality. Our research participants acknowledged gender inequality on the scene, but claimed it was less prominent than in broader Croatian society.

* vanja.dergic@pilar.hr

Dino Vukušić*

Institute of Social Sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia

SUBCULTURAL AND POST-SUBCULTURAL PRACTICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ZAGREB

This paper presents the results of doctoral research and dissertation on subcultural practices of young people in Zagreb. Through four case studies, different aspects of subcultural groups of young people are investigated and the existing theoretical concepts from the sociology of subculture are tested. We observe four groups of young people who build their identity on the basis of different elements (music, sports, activism). The starting point of the subcultural style for the first two groups is music. One group consists of members of the punk subculture, a typical subcultural style that is part of the late 1970s scene. Unlike punks, who base part of their identity on longevity and style elements they inherited, the second researched group is young people gathered around the Jeboton collective. Through their activities, playing in public places in the city, in clubs and at festivals, these young people create a distinct style through the deconstruction of established musical styles. In the third case study, we dealt with young people for whom sport, more precisely extreme sport, is the origin of the subculture. We are talking about Zagreb skaters and in-line rollers. The last case study refers to the research of squatters gathered around the BEK squat. In the theoretical framework, we have divided subcultural theory into authors whom we define as subculturalists and post-subculturalists. Using qualitative methodology, we approached the research ethnographically. We applied participant observation and interviews as methodological tools that allow the most complete insight into the world of such groups of young people. We answered the research questions constructed around three fundamental terms that divide subculturalists and post-subculturalists, namely: social class, resistance and style.

* dino.vukusic@pilar.hr

Andrej Ivan Nuredinović*

University of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia

Dino Vukušić**

Institute for social sciences “Ivo Pilar”, Croatia

A RESHAPED CONCEPT OF GUERRILLA PATRIOTISM AS A COMPONENT OF ULTRAS IDENTITY

The concept of guerrilla patriotism was first researched among Polish football ultras and hooligans (Nosal, Kossakowski, Wozniak, 2021) and could be seen as a valuable rival to the loose concept of football ultras nationalism. We argue that it is one of the most critical components of ultras identity ranging from friendship and community to solidarity and values of specific subcultures within and outside of the world of football ultras. Our research question was how this concept functions when implemented in the Croatian and Serbian ultras scenes. We conducted an ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1987) of 100 songs sung by Serbian (“Grobari” and “Delije”) and Croatian (“Torcida” and “Bad Blue Boys”) ultras groups. Inventing and singing songs in unison is an essential ritual for ultras groups and also serves as a mechanism of socialisation as well as gaining status inside the group. The NVivo analysis of the songs’ lyrics indicates that nowadays patriotism of ultras groups in Serbia and Croatia could be characterized by the proposed concept of guerrilla patriotism. However, this idea should be seen in relation to subcultural values that are vehemently present in each group. Those values are inherited as well as produced in the songs we analysed and range from subcultural shock to more communal themes used in wider society.

* anuredin@ffzg.hr

** dino.vukusic@pilar.hr

Miran Lavrič*

Andrej Naterer**

University of Maribor, Slovenia

RELIGIOUS POLARIZATION AMONG YOUTH IN SLOVENIA AND CROATIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITHIN TEN SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Over the last decade, social scientists have been noticing a sharp increase in political, ideological and religious polarization across many Western countries. In his most recent book, Ronald Inglehart (2021) has argued that, at least in the United States, rapid secularization is a major force behind these changes. In his view, secularization creates a polarization between those with traditional worldviews and those with modern worldviews, producing bitter political conflict. A similar situation has also been supported for in some other countries. For example, Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme (2014, 2016) has offered a solid empirical support for the thesis that in recent decades, secularization in many Western societies primarily reduces the shares of moderately religious individuals, while shares of the highly religious do not decline, or are even increasing. Wilkins-Laflamme connects these trends with growing ideological differences and tensions between non-religious and highly religious segments of society. More recently, Ribberink, Achterberg, and Houtman (2018) have confirmed, using a sample of Western European countries, that the degree of religious polarization is associated with a higher degree of secularization, and at the same time found that it is also associated with the relative dominance of Catholicism. The paper will present data from a survey of young people from ten countries in South-Eastern Europe, conducted in 2018. The results tend to confirm the aforementioned findings, as the highest (and at the same time increasing) degree of polarization is found among young people from Slovenia and Croatia – two countries that are both predominantly Catholic and also among the most secularized in the group of countries under consideration.

* miran.lavric@um.si

** andrej.naterer@um.si

Danijela Gavrilović*

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOSITY AND TYPES OF RELIGIOSITY IN CROATIA AND SERBIA

This paper compares the religiosity (self-declared religiosity, denomination and religious practice) of the inhabitants of Croatia and Serbia. Its primary intent is to use this aspect of social life to compare the two societies. Following the breakup of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Serbia each had their specific developmental paths, but something they had in common was a rise in the level of religiosity. Thirty years on, this heightened religiosity has found its place in the very fabric of the societies analysed. By interpreting data from various empirical studies conducted over the past fifteen years (at the *Center for Empirical Cultural Studies*), we wish to point out the similarities and differences in the increased religiosity of adherents in both countries. The analysis will also include adherent characteristics (ethnicity, educational attainment, place of residence, age), thus providing a comprehensive picture of the level and typology of religiosity in Croatia and Serbia, as well as indicating the profile of adherents in the societies being studied. At the same time, we propose to identify any trends regarding religiosity in these societies: increase or decrease in adherent numbers, levels of religious practice, changes in typology and profile of adherents.

We believe that the above will enable us to arrive at significant insights, not only with regard to religiosity, but also about the societies observed and the role played by religion therein. Although it may seem that heightened traditional, conservative religiosity is what is present in both countries, our analyses to date nevertheless tell us there are significant differences in the levels of practice, types of religiosity, and numbers of secular and spiritual respondents. These differences and similarities can serve as the springboard to answering the question: "What is the purpose of religion in post-communist societies?" (Zrinščak 2004).

* danijela.gavrilovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Miloš Jovanović*

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

HUMOR AGAINST HEGEMONY: RIDICULING SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE INTERNET MEMES

The Church in contemporary Serbian society is an organization with a considerable reputation among the citizens, who endow it with great trust. It has numerous privileges and utilizes a fair amount of resources provided by the political oligarchy. The Serbian Orthodox Church enjoys a prominent public presence, both through the formal involvement of clergy and Church representatives in the work of secular institutions and through the informal everyday practices of people which, at least on the level of rhetoric and appearance, exhibit a religious dimension. The hegemonic position of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as an (imposed) moral and spiritual leader, makes it a particularly suitable target for mocking and comic treatment using irony, satire and parody.

This analysis conceptually relies on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic struggles, Peter Berger's constructivist approach to humour and Cate Watson's theory of the comic. Using netnography as the method, the study will demonstrate the delegitimizing potential of ridicule in social struggles. The analysed data comprise internet memes that appeared as a reaction to Church-related events. Most often thematized were "blunders", "inappropriate" behaviour, "problematic" statements and attitudes of Church dignitaries, as well as the practices of the Church representatives seen as opposed to the Christian teachings and the moralities preached by the Church: material opulence, moralizing and interference in the private lives of the people, aggressive outbursts, sexual misconduct and other scandals, supporting disavowed politicians, backward customs and superstition.

* milos.jovanovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Sergej Flere*

University of Maribor, Slovenia

‘NATIONAL’ MEDIEVALITY IN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN POST-YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES

The study of school history textbooks provides insights into the official ideologies of states, particularly the official nationalist narratives. In contrast to recent history, which has been well studied in history textbooks in post-Yugoslav states, medieval history has been understudied in such a context. Medieval history can also be a good indicator of the presence and the type of nationalist narrative. In this paper, medieval history textbooks, in portions dealing with own ethnic history, are studied in some post-Yugoslav states (Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia), focusing on the treatments of the ‘own’ medieval past in textbooks prior to Yugoslav break-up and those published recently. Although it may seem as banal nationalism, indicating banal points in time, it is however, a design nationalism, given that these nations are all products of modern times. Although they may refer to true events in medieval times, their interpretation and particularly attempts to link medievality to modern times as an unbroken chain of identity, is part of a design effort. An uncritical identification of medieval ethnicity and contemporary nationhood is also present, with little exception.

* sflere6@gmail.com

Tamara Petrović Trifunović*

Ivana Spasić**

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

REVISITING THE DISCOURSE OF THIRD SERBIA: US VS. THEM DECONSTRUCTED OR RECOMPOSED?

The discourse of “two Serbias” is centred around the two (imagined) political and ideological standpoints and their carrier groups into which the Serbian public sphere has long been divided, at least according to the received interpretation. Throughout the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, First Serbia was seen as nationalist, authoritarian and primitive and its Other as civic, cosmopolitan and cultivated. Hence, to talk about “Two Serbias”, more often than not, was to criticize one or to defend the other. At one point in time, a new discourse emerged, articulated as an explicit call to overcome symbolic conflicts and cleavages in society and dismiss the binary itself – a position that may be called “Third Serbia”. The advocates of Third Serbia (coming from quite distant positions on the political spectrum) criticized the established division as artificial, unproductive, elitist and detached from the genuine concerns and interests of Serbian society. In late 2012, we published an article exploring the varieties of this discourse. We sought to examine the strategies of constructing Third Serbia and the arguments justifying it, as well as their possible implications. Ten years later, we will revisit the figure of “Third Serbia”, the discourse that followed it, as well as our previous observations and interpretations. We will try to reconstruct this discourse as it has unfolded in the public arena during the past decade, detect if new varieties appeared, identify its proponents (both old and new) and their ideological backbone while keeping historical and socio-political contexts in check.

* evena304@gmail.com

** ispasic@f.bg.ac.rs

Rok Smrdelj*

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

COMMUNICATION RELATIONS ON TWITTER: THE CASE OF MIGRANT “CRISIS” IN SLOVENIA

Since 1991, Slovenia has experienced three mass arrivals: Bosnian refugees in 1992–1993; migrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa in 1999–2001; and migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq in 2015–2016. Compared to the first and second periods, the third period features a drastically different media environment in which “new” social media coexist with “old” mass media. While the study of migration in Slovenian mass media is well covered, the Slovenian debates about migration in social media are less frequently studied. To fill this gap, this paper focuses on the debate on Twitter during the 2015–2016 migrant “crisis” in Slovenia. Based on a wide sample of posts examined using a mixed methodological approach, we find that the political elites and mass media dominate Twitter conversation. Discourse analysis of the most retweeted tweets shows that migrants are usually portrayed as a security threat to Slovenians. The findings demonstrate that, on the one hand, Twitter is a platform for “old” media actors who are also influential in the offline media environment, while, on the other hand, “new” media actors emerged on Twitter, particularly those associated with right-wing political networks that spread posts in an organized way to instrumentalize the migration debate. Our findings also reveal that understanding migration as a security issue has supplanted the ethno-nationalist framework that predominated during the first and second mass arrivals. Some authors (e.g., Bigo, 2005) argue that global events, such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, led to the general perception of migration as a security issue. Our analysis thus illustrates how discriminatory discursive practices associated with broader global shifts in general perceptions of migration have overlaid local discourses related to migrant discrimination.

* rok.smrdej@ff.uni-lj.si

Nebojša Đorđević*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSES ON CHINA AND THE CHINESE IN SERBIA

Today we feel like 2020 either happened yesterday or never at all, but it continues to shape our reality today. That year, the world faced the global pandemic of the coronavirus disease COVID-19. The virus spread from the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the first cases of COVID were reported at the end of 2019. The “race for a vaccine” soon began, but the world did not lack mutual accusations (the virus quickly became *Chinese* for some), suspicion towards China and the Chinese grew (and Sinophobia with it), and that year will define the attitude towards China and the Chinese in the years ahead. China (and the Chinese) have a specific position in Serbia, they are traders all over the country, since a few years ago they have been investors and managers of some of the key economic entities, and since the 1990s they have been the highest state partners, one of the four pillars of Serbian diplomacy. This paper aims to show how all these different roles that China plays fit into the wider social picture in Serbia. The aim of this paper is to critically analyse the discourse of newspaper texts published in 2020 in two (ideologically opposed) daily newspapers (*Danas* and *Politika*) and point out the racial dynamics of relations between Serbia and China, as well as the residents of Serbia and the Chinese who live and work here. Serbian society, having inherited the *colour blindness* of socialist Yugoslavia, still (re)produces racism in public discourse, which should be pointed out by using critical race theory. While in recent years Serbia has strengthened its *steel friendship* with China, great attention and uproar have been caused by the large investments (and acquisitions) by Chinese companies in Bor, Smederevo and Zrenjanin and the accompanying pollution that plagues these areas. Until now, we have been shopping, eating, and now we are being suffocated – by the Chinese.

* nebojsa.djordjevic811@gmail.com

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