Southeast European Integration Perspectives 7

Resisting the Evil

[Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Contention

Bearbeitet von
Bojan Bilic, Vesna Jankovic

Recht > Europarecht , Internationales Recht, Recht des Auslands > Recht des Auslands

Bojan Bilić | Vesna Janković (Eds.)

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Nomos

Southeast European Integration Perspectives

Edited by

Wolfgang Petritsch,
former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina
and Special Envoy of the EU for Kosovo

Christophe Solioz,
Secretary-General of the Center for
European Integration Strategies

Bojan Bilić | Vesna Janković (Eds.)

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The Authors:
Bojan Aleksov | Bojan Bilić | Milica Dragojević | Marko Hren | Vesna Janković |
Biljana Kašić | Gëzim Krasniqi | Larisa Kurtović | Lepa Mlađenović | Srđa Pavlović |
Mojca Planšak | Ljubica Spaskovska | Nebojša Šavija-Valha | Zala Volčič

Nomos

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Wolfgang Petritsch and Christophe Solioz

Europeanisation at the Crossroads: A Foreword

South East Europe is routinely presented as undergoing multifaceted (post-) war transition, transformation and (re)integration processes since the early 1980s. While sooner or later the "European dream" — meaning European Union (EU) membership — is supposed to become a reality for all Yugoslavia's successor states plus Albania, significant changes have transformed Europe over the last decades, fundamentally reshaping both European integration and Europeanisation.[1]

Key political transformations are related to the EU's "Big Bang" enlargement of 2004–2007; new regional cooperation schemes;[2] all-encompassing economic, political and cultural globalisation; and the eruption of the global and generalised — thus not only financial — crisis affecting "advanced" societies.[3] In addition, social changes concerning migration, generational shifts, citizen participation in a multi-level polity and an emerging European public sphere are also at stake. Europeanisation dynamics, thus, engage a wide range of transformations of statehood and of modernity, affecting both states and their respective societies.

Europeanisation, including and going beyond the functional EU integration, refers to a multi-dimensional process of social transformation involving simultaneously the integration of societies, the transnationalisation of states and globalisation.[4] In our view, transnational approaches (the EU as being constructed from within) and globalisation approaches (the EU as shaped by global processes) are intertwined. Furthermore, while Europeanisation is mostly viewed, especially in South East Europe, as "limited" to the EU social and system integration,[5] we understand Europe at a pan-continental level —

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1   See the frontrunner of the SEIP series edited by Hannes Swoboda and Christophe Solioz, *Conflict and Renewal: Europe Transformed* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007).

2   See the volume edited by Wolfgang Petritsch and Christophe Solioz, *Regional Cooperation in South East Europe and Beyond: Challenges and Prospects* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008).

3   See Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Crisis of Western Societies," *The Castoriadis Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 253–66.

4   See Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization* (London: Routledge, 2005).

5   See David Lockwood, "Social Integration and System Integration," in George K. Zollschan and Walter Hirsch (eds.), *Explorations in Social Change* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), pp. 244–56. Social integration refers to "relationships between the *actors*",

encompassing the EU and its neighbourhoods (to the East and the South), including those countries seeking membership, and extending to the respective limits of the Council of Europe and of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

We are not referring to a one-way process. As the "reconstructed past" illustrates, South East Europe is an integral part of a common European history in permanent reconstruction. All of the countries have conflicting memories and are, to this very day, involved in a complex process of, firstly, coming to terms with their own past; secondly, acknowledging each other's conflicting memories; and, thirdly, trying to (re)construct a common European memory as a part of transnational memory spaces.[6] The prerequisite for this is each collectivity's capacity to interrogate its own past as the result of its own actions. Only this would enable a move from a culture of culpability to a culture of political and historical responsibility.

Such a comprehensive approach cannot ignore the necessity to clarify the countries' specific socio-historical context and transformations which impact upon their respective socio-political fields and cultural frameworks. This requires a deep multidisciplinary knowledge, on the one hand, and a decisively new slant driven by free inquiry and unlimited interrogation, a truly critical approach, on the other. Critical, from *krinô*, meaning "judging," "separating," "distinguishing"; permanently calling into question the established institutions and the orientations of social life; examining how societies are organised and what role individuals are to play therein, and what are the prospects for change. The series *Southeast European Integration Perspectives* (SEIP) intends to provide a space for such an elucidation process.

We started to publish various country-specific books focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina and on Croatia with the Nomos publishing house, firstly within the framework of the series *Democracy, Security, Peace*.[7] These volumes argue for a more nuanced understanding of these countries. Wide-ranging contributions analyse how the interpretation of national sovereignty has evolved in these post-communist states, critically assess the democratisation and transition processes, investigate the prospects for civic engagement, and discuss the pervasive effects of external assistance as well as the considerable economic challenges.

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and system integration to "relations between the *parts* of a social system" (p. 245), meaning both "*groups*" and "*structural* elements" (p. 249, note 6) — italics from the original.

6   See SEIP volume No 3 edited by Wolfgang Petritsch and Vedran Džihić, *Conflict and Memory: Bridging Past and Future in (South East) Europe* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).

7   On Bosnia and Herzegovina: *Ownership Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Contributions on the International Dimensions of Democratization in the Balkans* (edited by Christophe Solioz and Svebor Dizdarevic, 2003); *Dayton and Beyond: Perspectives on the Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (edited by Christophe Solioz and Tobias K. Vogel, 2004); *Turning Points in Post-War Bosnia: Ownership Process and European Integration* (by Christophe Solioz, 2005); on Croatia: *Next Steps in Croatia's Transition Process: Problems and Possibilities* (edited by Srđan Dvornik and Christophe Solioz, 2007).

The first SEIP volume, *Serbia Matters*, assesses the country's state of affairs in the early years of the 21st century and presents pertinent analyses and compelling arguments as to why Serbia's accession to the EU matters as much for Belgrade as it does for other South East European countries.[8] Against the background of the EU's current "enlargement fatigue," the open bilateral issues blocking the enlargement process and the deepening global economic crisis, both the EU and Serbia can only regret not having done more earlier. Beyond Serbia's tactical manoeuvring, hard choices — notably regarding Kosovo — have still to be made: real, hard-headed, strategic thinking is required in Belgrade.

The second SEIP volume presents a comprehensive analysis of major trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), brokered in Dayton, until 2009.[9] The discussion of the contradictory development of the Bosnian "national question" and the rise of "ethno-nationalism" is followed by a critical assessment of relevant political, socio-economic and societal developments. The volume further looks at the reasons for the continuous obstructions imposed by ethno-politics, presents a convincing explanation for the weak democratisation performance of the international community and dissects the factors jeopardising the country's Europeanisation.

Along with the country-specific books, other SEIP volumes explore the "social imaginary significations"[10] focusing on the importance of cultural dynamics. Damir Arsenijević's *Forgotten Future* documents and critically evaluates contemporary poetry within the field of cultural production in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the late 1980s.[11] Developing a new thinking about poetry in the framework of a political critique of culture, the author focuses on alternative cultural practices which have articulated a more equitable organisation of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society. As pointed out by the author, the book recognises, names, and builds a tradition of the transformative potential which, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was abandoned by liberal conformists, as the majority silently accepted the exclusionary logic of ethno-nationalism. Undoing all false de-politicising options and strengthening new

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8   SEIP volume No 1 edited by Wolfgang Petritsch, Goran Svilanović and Christophe Solioz, *Serbia Matters: Domestic Reforms and European Integration* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009).

9   SEIP volume No 2 by Vedran Džihić, *Ethnopolitik in Bosnien-Herzegowina: Staat und Gesellschaft in Krise* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).

10 Following Cornelius Castoriadis, an "imaginary signification" is a representation which is neither "real", thus available to perception, nor "rational" in the sense of being deductible via the rules of thought. In the author's view, societies are not created through a natural rationalism or through historical progressive determinism but are instituted through creation, through imagination(s). See Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 6; and the author's seminal work (originally published in 1975): *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

11 SEIP volume No 4 by Damir Arsenijević, *Forgotten Future: The Politics of Poetry in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).

solidarity, the book signposts a way towards a politics of hope based on citizens' responsibility and action for change.

Ivan Čolović's essays in political anthropology analyse culture in South East Europe as a catalyst for hatred and war.[12] *The Balkans: The Terror of Culture* scrutinises the role that intellectuals and the "culture" they promoted played in inciting the wars. The mainstay of the revival of the epic tradition, the myth of the founding heroes and the alleged organic unity between the nation and the soil is the representation of culture as a means by which national territory is occupied and maintained. The author pays particular attention to the post-war patriotic discourse and its use of culture to determine the rhetorical strategies through which it preserves the ability to trigger conflicts.

The volume edited by Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz, *Towards Open Regionalism in South East Europe*,[13] investigates regional cooperation as a multi-directional process and multi-level polity forging new realities in a "region in the making". Taking diverse themes such as: the economy, crime, borders, culture, and civil society, the essays explore some of the facets of "open regionalism", consisting of multi-actor, multi-level and multi-scalar processes producing a complex geometry of interlocking networks. The book situates "new regionalism"[14] in South East Europe in the historical context of the legacies of Yugoslavia and the wars of the Yugoslav succession. Contemporary processes of Europeanisation are also examined as complex, contingent and radically un-finished. This volume seeks to move beyond the constraints of objectivist notions of regionalism as consisting of sets of relations between sovereign nation-states, to address complex constructions of (new) meaning and place — infusing "integration" with new dimensions and values.

The first common denominator of these volumes is the investigation into one of the core "imaginary significations": the idea of the nation-state and its conservative and nationalist drift which widens the gap between the EU as a post-modern political construct and a Europe facing the rise of nationalism and xenophobia. If not the inevitability of the nation-state form *per se*, the volumes question its changing role and focus on the necessity of taking into account other forms of collective identifications and action as being simultaneously engaged at various levels. The transnationalisation of economies continues to deepen, thus reducing the role of the nation-state, while EU membership requirements include a transfer of sovereignty to European institutions. Meanwhile, the intensifying euro crisis in recent years — leading to

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12   SEIP volume No 5 by Ivan Čolović, *The Terror of Culture: Essays in Political Anthropology* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011).

13   SEIP volume No 6 edited by Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz, *Towards Open regionalism in South East Europe* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012).

14   See Fredrik Söderbaum and Timothy M. Shaw (eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); and James W. Scott (ed.), *De-coding New Regionalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

an unavoidable closer European political integration — will trigger an additional transfer of sovereignty. This will further shrink the space for political decisions at a national level. Against this background, networked regionalisation — as an alternative, flexible political architecture with its own innovative dynamics — becomes increasingly relevant. While nation-states are newly positioned in the framework of the enlarged EU, regional cooperation schemes receive a new meaning and significance.[15]

The other key issue discussed is the complex interaction between foreign intervention and local dynamics. "Policy makers", typically foreign actors in a hegemonic position, develop mostly one-dimensional intervention strategies. Ignoring the "social imaginary signification" which stamps a society, disregarding the necessity of entering into a real partnership with the "policy takers", applying a "law and order" approach based on strict conditionality, often prove to be counterproductive and generate a dependency syndrome. This should be seen as a systemic problem affecting not only development aid, but also characterising the EU's crisis strategies. Against the background of the catastrophic recession hitting Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the imposed "diagnosis and therapy" — determined by Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse and paymaster — have been far too one-dimensional and unilateral. Whenever mentioned, "partnership" and "ownership" become catchy, but essentially empty words. The other side of the coin is that local stakeholders often do not take ownership, not because the external actors will not let them, but because they do not agree among themselves about what their future as a state and society should look like.[16] "Blaming the outsiders" becomes a cheap political strategy. Hence the relevance, on the one hand, of local responsibility in forging a true dialogue in order to foster a consensus for change and, on the other hand, to engage in a real partnership with foreign agencies.

The third common thread running through these volumes is the state-civil society relationship in the context of a war-to-peace transition process. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) — more specifically, citizen initiatives aimed at social transformative action and, thus, related to state-building — are viewed as forces for change entitled to influence politics and, therefore, as strong enough to counterbalance the state. However, what is often presented as "civil society" is little more than a collection of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that developed not as an expression of broader citizen movements, but as the result of specific circumstances that included substantial international support. After more than twenty years of civil society activism and NGO development in South East Europe, strategies for strengthening

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15 See Matio Telò (ed.), *European Union and New Regionalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001 — second edition 2007).

16 See Tihomir Loza, "Afterword," in Christophe Solioz, *Turning Points in Post-War Bosnia: Ownership Process and European Integration* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005 — second edition 2007), pp. 153–5.

civil society and social activism have produced mixed results. The expectation that the emergence of a civil society would bring about political change, exert pressure and have an impact at the political level has not (yet) been fulfilled. Overall, however, can we consider that civil society is a promising laboratory for the reinvention of participatory democracy and social emancipation? Furthermore, is civil society in the (post-)Yugoslav sphere, therefore, at a dead end? If so, why? Because civil society is not relevant in war-torn societies, or because it is "Europe-biased"? These are only a few questions in a research field which, in the past, has lacked academic precision[17] and the new SEIP volumes — introduced below — deal with them.

Western societies had, in history, only a very limited capacity of exerting an emancipatory influence upon the rest of the world. Also the EU's belated intervention in South East Europe — beyond any doubt, a necessity — has shown mixed results. On the one hand, democratisation experts seem to have forgotten Robespierre's appeal "Peoples don't like armed missionaries"[18] and, furthermore, that the productive/economic system, the liberal regime and the ideal type of the "European citizen" are not exportable as such.[19] On the other hand, a more realistic option fostering local responsibility and ownership enhancing strategies has been dramatically lacking or, if present, was not fully implemented — as illustrated by the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Why so?

Beyond the intrinsic difficulties of understanding a "different" society, this gap may best be explained by a misleading conception of history: "(...) the denial and the covering up of the instituting dimension of society through the imputation of the origin of the institution and of its significations to an extra-social source".[20] As a matter of fact, the institution of society is neither sacred nor natural: "social historical forms are not 'determined' by natural or historical 'laws'. Society is self-creation".[21] Accordingly, political life is an instituting process: "the activity and struggle around the change of the institutions, the explicit (even if partial) self-institution of the *polis* as a permanent process".[22] To face this truly political dimension brings us to consider each

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17   See Christophe Solioz, "Civil Society: any Way out from the Dead End?" *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 14 (2011) 4, pp. 493–504.

18   The apparent source, *Sur la guerre (1ère intervention)* (a Jacobin Club speech delivered on 2 January 1792), states: "*Personne n'aime les missionnaires armés*" (No one likes [or loves] armed missionaries) — though Robespierre himself does refer, in the previous sentence, specifically to *un peuple étranger* (a foreign people).

19   See Cornelius Castoriadis, "Third World, Third Worldism, Democracy," *The Rising Tide of Insignificancy* (New York: notbored.org, 2003), pp. 52–3.

20   Cornelius Castoriadis, "Power, Politics, Autonomy," *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 153. Extrasocial meaning: gods, God, founding heroes or ancestors, Nature, Reason or History as ultimate "principle".

21   Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy," *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, p. 84.

22   Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy," p. 105.

society as always already constituted and as inhabited by a capacity for self-alteration.[23]

Such understanding convinced us at an early stage, firstly, to privilege resolutely a view "from within"; secondly, to search for locally-anchored democratic alternatives aimed at the reinstitution of society; and, thirdly, to systematically involve leading policy-oriented scholars, practitioners and socially engaged artists from the region. Of course, what matters is *how* the "social imaginary significations" are reconstituted. Acknowledging that each understanding is socio-historically instituted, convinced that the elucidation of society's (also imaginary) institutions enables a society to self-constitute itself, we see the necessity of providing local actors with the opportunity to question the *status quo* and, through their self-reflective activity, contribute to change.[24]

Against this background, we are delighted to introduce to our SEIP series two intertwined volumes focusing on anti-war contention as a potential "alternative history" of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The first one, *Resisting the Evil*, illuminates the insufficiently studied topic of (post-)Yugoslav anti-war engagement through a series of both activist and scholarly accounts written by authors coming from all of the republics and provinces of the former Yugoslavia.[25] Employing a distinctly transnational approach and contextualising painful biographical narratives, this volume positions resistance to the wars of the Yugoslav succession at the centre of a variety of intersecting power relations and ideological vantage points. Rather than opting for any kind of one-dimensional interpretation of the complex phenomena that it studies, this book shows that a multi-scalar recovery of marginalised voices and experiences opens up a possibility for — or even requires — new forms of scholarship which transcend the mainstream insistence on "detached" and "objective" analysis.

Next, *We Were Gasping for Air*, Bojan Bilić's revised doctoral thesis, goes beyond the widely exploited paradigms of nationalism and civil society to provide a closer link between the empirical data on (post-)Yugoslav anti-war enterprises, on the one hand, and the Western conceptual apparatus for studying collective engagement, on the other.[26] While focusing primarily on Serbia and Croatia, this book follows the stages of the (post-)Yugoslav anti-war protest cycle and positions the inter- and intra-republican cooperations and contestations in the context of Yugoslavia's almost half-century long socialist experience. By grounding his work in the influential tradition of

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23 See Cornelius Castoriadis, "Power, Politics, Autonomy," pp. 144–5.
24 See Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Social-Historical: Mode of Being, Problems of Knowledge," *Figures of the Thinkable* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 225–6.
25 SEIP volume No 7 edited by Bojan Bilić and Vesna Janković, *Resisting the Evil: [Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Contention* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012).
26 SEIP volume No 8 by Bojan Bilić, *We Were Gasping for Air: [Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012).

political process theorising, the author claims that (post-)Yugoslav anti-war undertakings appropriated and built on the already existing social networks created through student, feminist and environmentalist engagement. He shows that anti-war activism is also a field characterised by power struggles and tracks the tensions that have accompanied its professionalisation and institutionalisation in the post-Yugoslav space.

Both volumes achieve greater significance against the background of the increased gap between the two central drivers of modern times: the project of autonomy[27] and the project of unlimited expansion of rational mastery. This imbalance increased in the late 1980s with the destruction of Marxism-Leninism and the implosion of the bureaucratic regimes in the "Eastern Bloc". To put it bluntly: this collapse buried beneath its ruins, the radical emancipatory politics itself and left the adoption of the liberal-capitalist model as seemingly without alternative.[28] The radical inadequacy of the programmes supposed to embody the project of autonomy — the liberal republic or Marxist-Leninist socialism — may well explain an omnipresent political apathy and generalised conformism.[29] However, the endeavour towards autonomy and emancipation has not vanished. These volumes attest to and investigate attempts to surpass collective pseudo-memory and an exacerbated national consciousness as well as the encountered difficulties and contradictions.

With these and forthcoming volumes, we intend to shed new light on some segments of the ongoing transformation and Europeanisation processes in Southeast Europe. Combining cutting-edge policy research and interdisciplinary approaches, the *Southeast European Integration Perspectives* series intends to promote innovative and provocative thinking about a region in the making. This stands for the creative power of knowledge in a changing world and of citizens in changing the world.

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27   Following Castoriadis, the beginnings of autonomy as a social-historically effective project refers to the Greek *polis*. As summarised by David Ames Curtis: "The project of autonomy is expressed in the simultaneous creation of philosophy and politics as the reflective questioning of instituted traditions and the attempt to alter these traditions and institutions through conscious collective action." David Ames Curtis, "Foreword," in Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, p. 7.
28   See Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Pulverization of Marxism-Leninism," *World in Fragment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 68.
29   See Cornelius Castoriadis, "L'époque du conformisme généralisé," *Le Monde morcelé: Les carrefours du labyrinthe* III (Paris: Seuil, 1990), pp. 23–24.

Bojan Bilić and Vesna Janković

Recovering (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention: A Zagreb Walk through Stories, Analyses and Activisms

"Come, I will show you where the Anti-War Campaign [Antiratna kampanja Hrvatske (ARK)] had its office," says Vesna, as we cross the Ban Jelačić Square and slowly head towards Dolac. We stroll between cafes full of young people on both sides of Tkalčićeva Street, before stopping for a moment in front of number 38.

"You know, some people say we should put a plaque next to the entrance to commemorate ARK. Of course, many of us laugh at such an idea."

"Hmm, yes, but there is nothing which would show that the Campaign was here," I say, half-jokingly.

Vesna remains silent. Instead of a reply, she gives me a long look, wondering if I can really appreciate the suspicion of many ARK activists towards institutions and institutionalisation. Then, she goes on:

"You realised that I had many problems with my chapter — it was torturing me for months. I had a feeling that the text was constantly slipping out from my hands..."

"Well, when reading your emails, I understood that working on that chapter was difficult for you and I tried not to probe too much into that. But, I could not always pinpoint what was so difficult about it."

Vesna pauses for a while and after taking a deep breath, says:

"Both your thesis[1] and this book project of ours have moved something in me. They set in motion whole layers of experience that I tried to hide in myself. I thought I had put everything in a box years ago and I wanted to keep that box shut... So, working on this was a bit like opening that box... like scratching an old wound."

I nod, thinking about what I could say, but Vesna — sensing my slight discomfort — continues: "Another problem was that I did not really know you. When you left my study after your first interview with me, I was thinking: 'Oh god, what is he gonna do with all of that?'"

"I feared I might have left you with such thoughts, but on that day, I had already done two or three interviews, running from one side of Zagreb to the other."

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[1] Bojan Bilić, *We Were Gasping for Air: [Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012).

"Still, my impression was that you were on the right track. You left me thinking... I liked that you wanted to approach anti-war contention transnationally and go beyond the nation-state model which has become so pervasive in the regional social sciences.[2] After our meeting, memories were coming back like torrents and I realised that it was actually only once you left that I had a clearer idea about what I could have told you..."

"Well, you know, that is something that often happens with interviews."

"It does... but, then again, we did share many of these things in our emails."

"I was really grateful for that because, along with so many other interviews that I did, this correspondence kept me aware of the fact that what I was writing about for many people was a matter of fundamental importance, it delved into what they considered themselves to be..."

"Of course."

"So... while reading your emails, I always had an impression that you had a lot to say. That is why it was even more difficult for me to understand why you were complaining about how much time it took you to put thoughts on paper."

"Hmm, I am not sure about all of these 'things to say,' to begin with. And, then, my concerns also had to do with theory... what kind of theory should I choose? Where should I put all of that empirical material? How should I organise it so that it is meaningful for other people?"

"I understand, but I was telling you not to worry so much about that. I have a feeling that many post-Yugoslav scholars stand in awe in front of 'theory'. As if theory is somehow naturally given, as if it should not stem from our own social reality, from our efforts to (re)act upon it and enter in interaction with it also through reading and writing."

"You think?"

"Yes. 'Theory' always seems to be coming from somewhere else... most often, from 'the West,' of course. Many non-Western academics, then, take it as a mould in which to push their own societies. They engage in ivory tower debates on conceptual matters while many local issues and experiences directly relevant to the people around them and to them themselves remain unacknowledged and unexamined."

"That may well be the case."

"Yeah, the Bulgarian scholar Alexander Kiossev calls this 'the self-colonising metaphor': one absorbs the values of colonial Europe and accepts Western cultural supremacy as something that is self-evident.[3] There is no way you can be smart today without using the word 'discourse' in every sentence."

2　On the use of the term *contention*, see Bilić, *We Were Gasping for Air*, pp. 61–3.

3　Alexander Kiossev, "The Self-Colonizing Metaphor" (2011). Available at: <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/s/self-colonization/the-self-colonizing-metaphor-alexander-kiossev.html> (Accessed 5 August 2012).

Vesna chuckles and nods as I continue:

"You know, at conferences in England where I was presenting, people were raising concerns about what a study of 'small anti-war groups' in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, could teach us, what it could contribute to our knowledge of activism and social movements."

"Really?"

"Yes, I was also surprised and baffled by that because I felt that, given that I was coming from and researching what would certainly be considered 'periphery' in Western academia, I had to justify my choices much more than an American or British scholar working on their own local topic would have to. Why would studying anti-war engagement in a war that accompanied dissolution of one country towards the end of the 20th century, claimed thousands of victims and produced a huge material damage, be any less legitimate than, for example, studying the Townsend movement and the politics of old-age pensions in the 1930s' California?"[4]

"I remember you sent me that article by Blagojević and Yair where they argue that the way in which what they call 'the World System of Science' is organised, does not allow free access to multiple perspectives of the social."[5]

"Yes, in that paper they show that social scientists in the, so-called, European 'semi-peripheral' countries forgo intellectual, political and even ethical compromises to secure acceptance in the world sociology."

"What I found particularly interesting and disconcerting is the fact that these scientists struggle for inclusion in the international scientific community, but along the way, they are usually forced to abandon or modify their original interests — which made them social scientists in the first place — to suit and apply the ideas generated in the supposed 'centre.'"

"Unfortunately, many of them do that. What I liked about Blagojević and Yair's paper is the argument that hierarchical divisions of scientific labour, which reflect broader — severely asymmetrical — power arrangements in the global system of financial and intellectual capital, cannot but end up impoverishing our cognitive potentialities and perspectives for understanding the complexity of the social."

"Sure. I think that an authentic de-colonising effort is intimately bound with local engagement and local knowledge production. We have to produce knowledge about ourselves and our experiences and make that knowledge available in our own language(s) if we are to be free. People can only be equal as human beings if their stories about themselves join the universal

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4   Edwin Amenta, Drew Halfmann, and Michael P. Young, "The Strategies and Contexts of Political Protest: Political Mediation and the Impact of the Townsend Movement in California," *Mobilization*, 4 (1999) 1, pp. 1–24.

5   Marina Blagojević and Gad Yair, "The Catch 22 Syndrome of Social Scientists in the Semiperiphery: Exploratory Sociological Observations," *Sociologija*, 52 (2010) 4, pp. 337–58, here p. 337.