

## Chapter 1

### Bringing Class Back In: An Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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In January 1986, Yugoslav women's magazine *Bazar* published a human interest story about a single parent family's inability to pay their electricity bill.<sup>2</sup> The article was part of an initiative from the Alliance of Trade Unions to induce the electricity provider to provide subsidised electricity to the poorest Belgraders. It told the story of Zora, a 37 year old widow and mother of four daughters living on Ruzveltova Street in Belgrade. Unable to work outside of the home due to chronic illness, her precarious situation was described as being representative of over 2,000 Belgrade residents who had had their electricity supply cut off due to a frequent failure to pay their bills. Zora was widowed when her husband, a factory worker in Valjevo, was killed in a traffic accident. Following his death the factory did not assist his widow and the pension that his children received (15,000 Dinars) was not sufficient to live on (the minimum advance payment for electricity would amount to 11,350 Dinars). As she did not yet fulfil the minimum criteria to receive a pension, Zora earned money by selling needlework informally. This did not cover basic living costs however, and during the winter of 1984-1985 the electricity was cut off. Her eldest daughter Verica was an excellent student, among the top of her class. Although she wished to continue her education by attending university, Zora feared that this would remain an 'unachievable dream'. In the presentation of the story for *Bazar*, Zora pleaded that her electricity bill be reduced. She argued that her four daughters would one day be diligent workers contributing to their society. Therefore, society should help her ensure that she could feed, educate and raise her daughters as honest persons.

In the lively Yugoslav press, stories about so called 'social cases' were a staple component presented to induce action on the part of the authorities in a context where progressive mechanisms of social welfare had failed to take root (Zora noted that no

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<sup>2</sup> Pavićević, D. i Vasiljević, S. 1986. 'Siromašnima – jeftinija struja'. *Bazar*, br. 548, 17 January, 4-5.

municipal social worker was interested in their case). The *Bazar* article was in fact not Zora's first public platform to speak about her precarious living conditions. She had appeared on a television programme some years previously in an *ad hoc* appeal to resolve her difficult housing situation. She then lived in a basement flat into which sewage was leaking. Journalists found out about it and publicised her story. According to *Bazar* by some turn of fortune she found an audience with Tito himself. 'Quickly after that I was received by comrade Tito. He listened to me and told me that I was a hero [*žena heroj*]. Three days after that conversation I got this flat'.

*Bazar's* report of Zora's story reveals some of the dilemmas and contradictions of late socialist Yugoslavia which are the subject of this edited volume. Such concerns include her worries about limited and differential access to education and housing, a concern with falling living standards and reduced social mobility, deficient social welfare and unpredictable responses by the authorities, and reflections on the individual's relation to the state and society couched in the appropriate language of Yugoslav socialism. Zora's actions, in presenting herself as a 'social case' and appealing for an *ad hoc* solution through a media outlet indicates a degree of agency; an ability to manoeuvre and navigate difficult conditions. Her story also resonates with cleavages between market forces and political control of the economy. Zora's fate was publicly invoked by trade union representatives to highlight what they viewed as the unreasonable behaviour on the part of the electricity distributor which failed to cooperate with the trade union in ensuring cheaper electricity for Belgrade's poor. Indicative of Yugoslavia's 'third way', examples of best practice from Western Europe were provided by the President of the Commission for Living and Working Conditions and Social Policy of the Alliance of Trade Unions, Milorad Vujanović. He stated that it was well known that electricity was cheaper in other socialist states but the progressive examples he

detailed were the UK, Italy and Belgium where he claimed the price of electricity was heavily reduced for the poorest citizens.

This volume examines some of the structural causes and social consequences of inequalities in Yugoslavia through case studies of interrelated milieux (such as the workplace, the home, education, migration, rural and urban locales, and amongst particular ethno-national communities). It is a collection of historical case studies with contributing authors coming from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (including sociology, anthropology, public policy, economics and ethnomusicology as well as history). It is an attempt to link scholarship from the socialist Yugoslav era to current research based on accessing newly available primary sources, and to provide a platform for further explorations of the social history of Yugoslavia. In gathering research by a diverse group of scholars interested in social class we seek to 'bring class back in' to (post-) Yugoslav historiography and create a solid base for further debate and research. The contributions that follow explore how theorisations of social class informed the politics and policies of social mobility and conversely, how societal or grassroots understandings of class may have influenced politics and policy. These processes are examined in a range of Yugoslav locales. Empirical data has been gleaned from across the country, from Slovenia through the bustling industrial suburbs of the federal capital Belgrade to the peripheries of Kosovo, Herzegovina and Dalmatia. Rather than focus on regional differentiation between republics and provinces the emphasis is placed on social differentiation and discontent *within* particular communities. The case studies have sought to include the voices of a wide spectrum of informants from factory workers and subsistence farmers to fictional television characters and pop-folk music superstars, from precarious rural and urban migrants to wealthy migrant workers and well-to-do children of local elites.

Although Yugoslavia was a socialist country formally legitimized by the nominally privileged position of the working class and Marxist-Leninist ideology, the studies in this collection attest to social stratification as a relatively deeply ingrained phenomenon. Inequality and its public perception increased over the course of the state's existence after an initial post-WWII burst of social mobility. By the 1980s Yugoslavia was increasingly divided on a socio-economic as well as national basis, with the two becoming ever more closely linked. The subsequent drama of state dissolution and the trauma of war in the 1990s impacted greatly upon scholarly debates about the nature of the Yugoslav socialist state and society (or societies). Ethno-national categories and claims are given great prominence in academia, often with good reason. Nonetheless the contributors to this volume consider that the scholarship treating Yugoslavia may be hindered by an over-reliance on the 'gate keeping concept' (Appadurai 1986: 257) of ethno-nationalism and an excessive focus on ethnonational political elites (Gordy 2014). A focus on questions of class and social inequalities does not deny the salience of ethno-nationalism but rather seeks to expose other social phenomena and identity categories and account for their intersecting and overlapping (notably the intersection of class, ethnicised identifications and gender).

This introductory chapter looks at the state of the debate regarding social inequalities and the Yugoslav system. This body of literature is informed greatly by Yugoslav social science research and area studies scholarship published between the 1970s and early 1990s. Such scholarship forms the starting point for this volume and contributing authors draw upon it heavily, complementing and contextualising it with primary sources including archives, film and print media, and oral history. As Vladisavljević (2014: 68) notes, foreign scholars who worked on Yugoslavia 'at least partly relied upon and fully acknowledged' the high quality work of Yugoslav social scientists and thus the work of Yugoslav based scientists and international area studies scholars is extremely interlinked with joint research projects and

publications occurring as early as the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> The volume picks up on and further develops themes which were of interest to scholars during the existence of socialist Yugoslavia but became somewhat marginalised with the dissolution of the state and ethnonationally framed wars during the 1990s. In addressing these themes contributors to this volume have looked to advances in their respective fields and have benefited from the use of interdisciplinary frames of enquiry and qualitative methodologies. Such an approach was rather marginal in Yugoslav social science which tended to be more quantitatively oriented and to operate within clearly delineated disciplinary borders.

### **Conceptions of social (in)equalities in Yugoslavia**

Socialist Yugoslavia was a country often in a state of flux with relatively frequent political, economic and constitutional changes during its existence. In contrast to dynamic institutional arrangements however, a number of concepts remained rather steadfast, notably including the cult of Tito, the ‘civil religion’ of brotherhood and unity, the trope of the Antifascist struggle in WWII (Perica 2002: 94-5) and socialist notions of equality which held the working class to be the profound historical subject and the League of Communists as its *avant-garde*.

Although claims to advance equality served to legitimise the regime and were omnipresent, these were not singular and as Pešić (1988) observes, they were adjusted to cohere with the prevailing political and economic organisation of the state.

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<sup>3</sup> For example a study of decision making elites in Yugoslavia (Barton, Denitch and Kadushin 1973) was conducted in the late 1960s was a joint Yugoslav-American funded and executed project with an equal proportion of American and Yugoslav authors. Bogdan Denitch (1973: 5-6) describes how there was a conscious awareness to resist academic colonialism on the part of US scientists through the maintenance of a multinational panel.

In order to attract a large number of followers and Partisans, the ideas of the socialist revolution were put on hold during World War II and the War of National-Liberation led by the Yugoslav Communist Party and Josip Broz Tito. However, with the end of the war approaching and the victory of the National-Liberation Army (Partisans) supported by the British-American Allies and the USSR, revolutionary ideas were expressed more openly. Strengthened by post-war mass enthusiasm and universal suffrage, the communists won the elections of 1945 under the umbrella of the People's Front, whose programme was based on the reconstruction of the country, a better life for workers and peasants, women's rights, increased opportunities for youth, social security, brotherhood and unity of Yugoslav peoples, as well as education, technology and science for the masses (Spehnjak 2002: 27-8). Between 1945 and 1948 the authorities eagerly applied the Soviet model of a political and economic system. However the situation changed drastically when the Yugoslav Party was expelled from the Cominform due to different interpretations of socialist development and conflict of the state leaderships.<sup>4</sup>

The key element of the de-Sovietising social reform was the introduction of workers' self-management in 1950. Similar to the post-war policy expressed in the slogan *land to the peasants*, the main message of the new agenda was *factories to the workers*. The emancipatory force of self-management was repeated in the 1958 Programme of the Yugoslav League of Communists, which confirmed anti-dogmatic views and contributed to the perception of Yugoslav socialism as a 'third way' in the world divided by the Cold War. By then the standard of living had risen considerably, Yugoslav relations with the post-Stalinist Soviet Union had been normalized and the Non-Aligned Movement was founded by

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<sup>4</sup> See Banac (1988) and Jakovina (2003) for more on this period. For a more general political history of Yugoslavia see Ramet (2006).

the statesmen of Egypt, India and Yugoslavia in Belgrade in 1961 (Mišković, Fischer-Tiné and Boškowska 2014). From the mid-1960s, reforms fostered market socialism and heralded a new wave of consumer culture (along with increasingly open borders and international cooperation in decolonisation and non-alignment). Despite a continued commitment to Marxist-Leninism the Yugoslav system was supposed to function ‘according to the laws of capitalism’ (Calic 2011: 71). Constitutional reform in 1974 and the 1976 Law on Associated Labour saw a return to increased political control over the economy, parallel to far reaching decentralisation seeking to induce the ‘withering away of the state’ (Jović 2009). In short, one might consider four broad periodisations in socialist Yugoslavia; administrative and centralised (1945-1950), self-management (1950-1965), self-management and market socialism (1965-1974) and self-management and decentralisation (1974-1991).

This volume is primarily concerned with conditions in late socialism; the latter two periodisations characterised *inter alia* by a lack of harmonisation of its economic and political systems and increasing public debate about how to rectify this according to socialist and self-managing principles. According to Branko Horvat (1984: 249, 1989: 11-12) the economic system was based on self-management and thus cooperation, while the political system this operated within was based on command and vertical subordination. Korošić (1989: 223) agreed that the combination of the two principles would necessarily lead to crisis due to the disturbed relation between self-management and the state. The growing force of the polycentric state (republics) after the 1974 constitution led to the prevalence of the command economy and state domination over the market (Horvat 1989: 43). Due to the state

domination, self-management and the variant of Yugoslav socialism it implied was considered to be under threat (Horvat 1969: 289).<sup>5</sup>

Yet the debate on political and economic organisation did not impact the official conception of the working class vis-à-vis the League of Communists. The 1958 Programme of the League remained valid until its dissolution in 1990. The document explained in detail the pre-WWII history, socialist present and expected future of Yugoslav society, most often through the purported perspective of the working class. According to the Programme, the essence of the people's power is the dictatorship of the proletariat, based on the alliance of the working class [*radnička klasa*] and other working people [*radni ljudi*] (Program 1965: 109). The working class held the leading position in the political system (ibid: 133) as the basic force of the socialist society and guarantor of socialist development (ibid: 142). However, the working class was acknowledged as not quite mature and of agricultural origins, allegedly the cause of many backward beliefs (ibid: 134). Therefore every able citizen must have access to education (ibid: 212), the school being responsible for transferring the necessary knowledge to ensure material, cultural and moral progress (ibid: 210).

Since the exploitative class had been eliminated, the other 'socio-economic powers', in addition to the working class, were cited as the peasantry [*seljaštvo*] and other poor strata [*siromašni slojevi*] which participate in society due to their labour (ibid: 133). Labour can thus be the only source of private property (ibid: 128). Intellectual workers [*intelektualni radnici*] were to merge with the working class into a new structure, such that the difference between intellectual and physical work would decrease (ibid: 135, 209). Although the leading

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<sup>5</sup> M. Korošić, Lj. Madžar and M. Todorović also use similar argumentation (see Duda 2010: 23-5).

role was to belong to the working class, the League of Communists held the position of the avant-garde power of society (ibid: 217) (but this was not to render them ‘a superior elite, separated from the people’ (ibid: 221)). The Yugoslav League of Communists was to represent the interests and aspirations of the working class and working people (ibid: 215), and thus communists were to have ‘the leading social role’, but without taking the power away from the working class and working people by misusing the state apparatus (ibid: 117). This sort of system was held to be transitional, eventually yielding the dissolution of classes and the formation of a classless society (ibid: 110). Finally, the Programme points out the common effort towards satisfying the personal and collective needs of the people (ibid: 30) and towards an increase in the standard of living but only with respect to the principle of ‘each according to his/her ability’ and ‘each according to his/her work’ (ibid: 53).

In addition to these formal conceptualisations of the working class, nations and nationalities [*narodi i narodnosti*] were also formally acknowledged in what has been termed the ‘dual sovereignty’ of class and nation (Samardžić 1990: 30–2, cited in Hayden 2000: 75).<sup>6</sup> Diverse actors sought to bring notions of social inequality to the fore. In the context of Yugoslav socialist pluralism (or as Rusinow (1978) termed it ‘laissez-faire socialism’), various institutions or institutional segments (such as the trade unions, the Party, basic

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<sup>6</sup> The mixing of these concepts can be observed in the official announcement of the Yugoslav League of Communists upon the death of Tito. Yugoslavs were firstly addressed as ‘the working class’, then ‘the working people and citizens’ and finally as ‘nations and nationalities’ of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (Proglas Centralnog Komiteta SKJ 1980, cited in Archer 2014: 136-7)

organisations of associated labour (OOUR),<sup>7</sup> the army (JNA),<sup>8</sup> local, republican and federal leaderships) made divergent and even competing claims regarding issues of inequality indicative of ‘mutually contradictory but nevertheless legitimate ‘self-managing interests’ in Yugoslav society’ (Burg 1983: 377). This volume seeks to unpack elements of these diverse claims, interests and practices, locating them in their socio-historical context.

### **Scholarship on social class and inequalities**

In the immediate post-WWII years, class inequalities were officially considered as mere aberrations, a hangover from the former bourgeois regime, which would be corrected by socialism. While limited social differentiation was deemed inevitable, attempts to address social inequalities which explicitly manifested as a *consequence* of the party-state were extremely controversial with Milovan Djilas being jailed for his indictment of party privilege in a series of articles penned for the daily newspaper *Borba* later published as *The New Class* (1957). By the late 1960s however, following the softening of the party-state and the turn towards self-management and market socialism, social stratification became a legitimate area of sociological enquiry (Archer 2014: 137-8). Numerous empirical studies were conducted during the 1970s and 1980s examining different social groups including elites (Barton, Denitch and Kadushin 1973), members of the League of Communists (Kilibarda 1984), ordinary people (Popović et al. 1977, 1987, 1991, Cvjetičanin 1989, Jančićević et al. 1990), and the self managing workplace (Arzenšek 1984 in Zukin 1985). Publications informed by these empirical studies and official surveys tackled a range of phenomena including inequalities and discontent vis-à-vis political participation (Goati 1986), housing (Vujović

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<sup>7</sup> This is usually abbreviated as OOUR from the Serbo-Croatian *Osnovna organizacija udruženog rada*.

<sup>8</sup> *Jugoslovenska narodna armija* (The Yugoslav People’s Army).

1986, 1987, Sekulić 1986b), education (Džuverović 1987, 1991), healthcare (Parmelee 1992), gender (Jančar 1985a), (un)employment (Woodward 1995b), income levels and poverty (Milanović 1990), economic inequality (Korošić 1983, Milanović 1990) and social inequalities generally (Berković 1986).

There was no clear agreement amongst Yugoslav social scientists on the extent to which Yugoslav society was ‘classlike’ and if so, in which ways. Early discussions highlighted the politicised nature of social science research, usually mirroring official conceptions of class according to the League of Communists. This was accentuated in cases where scholars and theorists were also members of the party apex (notably Edvard Kardelj and Stipe Šuvar). Heavily ideologised taxonomies of class were provided by Šuvar (1970) who claimed the existence of the working class and a counter class. Radomir Lukić (1970) claimed that there were no clear cut classes in the absence of exploitation.<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of empirical research however, stratification was most commonly structured by occupation with most studies conceiving of hierarchical groupings (e.g. Popović et al. 1977, 1987, 1991). Most of the research pointed towards a privileged upper layer, a middle class characterized by varying degrees of prestige and a lower section of workers and peasants whose way of life was characterized by insecurity and deprivation (Vujović 1995: 85–6). Such studies indicate that relative social inequalities were characteristic of Yugoslav society and that post-WWII social mobility was increasingly closed (Lazić 1987). Studies also indicated that the perception of inequalities consistently increased during the 1970s and 1980s amongst ordinary people (Archer 2014: 140).

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<sup>9</sup> See Sekulić 1986a for further discussion on taxonomies of social class. Allcock (2000: 186–206) gives a thorough overview of Yugoslav research of social differences.

As social inequality and discontent were such important fields of research for Yugoslav social scientists and a topic of discussion for various elites within Yugoslav socialism, this prompts questions regarding the purpose of revisiting such literature and engaging with questions of social class and inequality. If such developed discussions took place what is the utility in revisiting such themes?<sup>10</sup> The literature that the introductory chapter engages with and the nine empirical contributions in this volume indicate that Yugoslav social scientists, political and economic elites, the press, and other fora for public discussion, did not hide dilemmas of poverty, inequality, social differentiation. On the contrary one can witness sustained engagement and a willingness to explore a range of solutions for the mitigation of such problems. What is necessary to keep in mind however, is an epistemological sensitivity to the conditions that this knowledge was produced within and to acknowledge some of the constraints of this body of literature. The contributions in this volume provide insight into the nature of debates that took place in socialist Yugoslavia and contextualise and historicise aspects of this knowledge production.

The nature of the Yugoslav system of self-managing socialism necessarily implied certain academic opportunities as well as limits and constraints for engaging in social science research. While Yugoslavia was far more open than members of the Warsaw Pact it was nevertheless a socialist party state within which the links between officially sanctioned ideology and academia were often murky and a necessary deference to Marxism was a consistent trope. Indeed as Allcock (2000: 170) writes ‘The question of class is so close to the heart of Marxist orthodoxy that the agenda of social science has often been constrained to accommodate to a political definition of the nature of social reality and the course of its

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<sup>10</sup> The editors are grateful to the second anonymous reviewer whose insightful questions pertaining to epistemology improved this section greatly.

transformation'. While studies always paid heed to Marxist frames the society they portrayed in terms of stratified occupational categories was often rather Weberian (ibid: 189) or even Durkhemian in nature. For example there was a widespread failure to account for groups like private business owners [*privatnici*] who were frequently conceived of as either marginal artisans or small holding farmers in empirical studies whereas by the 1980s *privatnici* who were engaged in hospitality and small scale trade boasted some of the highest earnings in the country (Denitch 1990). The sensitive issue of ethnicity and its interaction with social privilege was also frequently bracketed (Allcock 2000: 197) only being seriously probed immediately prior to the dissolution of the state (for example Bahtijarević, Cifrić and Lazić 1991).

Nevertheless one might conversely observe ways in which the reflexive nature of Marxism in Yugoslavia offered opportunity for the researcher. Writing in the early 1970s Bogdan Denitch (1973: 7-8) reflected on this with regard to a large international research project investigating Yugoslav elites. He considered that the Marxist ideology of the elite predisposed them 'to grant a legitimacy to this type of research that would probably not be the case with a traditionalist [capitalist] elite.' Because members of the Yugoslav elite regarded themselves as Marxists they were also by proxy social scientists who professed a commitment to social enquiry. While one needs to carefully contextualise Yugoslav social science research, authors in this volume demonstrate that this body of research remains extremely useful for the sheer quantity of raw empirical data as well as offering insight into the dynamic ways that social phenomena were approached by scholars and framed in a broader context in official and often lively media discourses. State funded research (some of it by scholars who gained international recognition for their work (Allcock 2000: 187)) can offer perspectives as to how elites (political, managerial and intellectual) conceived of state and society. In other words, the state of the art can inform upon the 'art of the state'. By the

1980s scholars like Vujović (1986), Županov (1983) and Sekelj (1990) directly and articulately decried the chasm between theory and practice, considered to be at the core of Yugoslavia's social, economic and political crises and such discussions increasingly entered public discourse.

Its experiment with reflexive self-management and market socialism, and its liminal geopolitical position as leader of the non-aligned world rendered Yugoslavia a site of interest for North American and Western European scholars interested in the complicated workings of self-management institutions and/or the dynamics of party and state structures (see for example Zudin 1975, Rusinow 1978, Lydall 1984, 1989, Ramet 1992, Burg 1983, Cohen 1989). Irvine (1997: 4) writes that although such studies illuminated ways in which elite competition impacted upon institutional change they failed to pay attention to how societal pressures factored in such processes. Later studies saw an increasingly social turn (see *Yugoslavia in the 1980s* edited by Ramet (1985) for example). This was probably reflective of a broader scholarly interest in civil society across Eastern Europe in the wake of the pressure Solidarity was exerting upon institutions in Poland (Irvine 1997: 4).

At the same time as topics of scholarly interest broadened to include themes like feminism (Jančar 1985a), environmentalism (Jančar 1985b, 1992), sociability (Ramet 1985, Zudin 1985, Golubović 1992), social justice (Simmie and Dekleva 1992), migration (Mesić 1992), healthcare (Parmelee 1992) and housing (Gantar and Mandič 1991, Čaldarović 1991), there was ever greater convergence and collaboration between foreign area studies scholars and Yugoslav social scientists (see for example Simmie and Dekleva 1991, Allcock, Horton and Milivojević 1992). However serious interest of Yugoslav area studies scholars in the social realm was only in its infancy by the time the Yugoslav League of Communists dissolved in 1990 and as a result Irvine (1997: 4-5) considers that 'Yugoslavia is missing

from the theoretical literature on crisis and collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe', a point that Valerie Bunce (1997) reiterates in the conclusion of the same volume. This may have been mitigated somewhat in later comparative research by Bunce (1999) on institutional design, state and regime collapse, and more recent work by Bockman (2011) on the left-wing origins of neoliberalism which draws upon the Yugoslav experience.

Contributions in this volume are sensitive to the disciplinary and methodological limits of Yugoslav social science research. The proliferation of sociological studies dealing with Yugoslav social inequalities from the 1970s onwards tended to be overwhelmingly quantitative in nature, relying on poll data and statistics. There was little interdisciplinary collaboration and concerns of sociologists were largely beyond the remit of historians, ethnologists and other social scientists.<sup>11</sup> While area studies scholars conducted interviews as part of their research these were usually with members of the political, economic and cultural elites or amongst emerging civil society activists. Few scholars paid heed to 'ordinary people' in urban areas. Disciplines which are predisposed to such enquiry (like ethnology) tended to frame subjects in terms of folklore.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, contributors to this volume are sympathetic to qualitatively approaching social research 'from below'.

Unlike the social sciences, by the end of socialism Yugoslav historiography (or historiographies) did not open the complex question of social inequalities in Yugoslav socialist society nor was there a sufficient time lag to probe such phenomena. The issue was

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<sup>11</sup> Though see ethnographic work by Simić (1973) who describes social conditions associated with rural to urban migration in Belgrade in the late 1960s or Hayden (1990) who employed ethnographic methods to inform upon self-managing social courts in the 1980s specifically reflecting on his approach as informed by both law and anthropology.

<sup>12</sup> Oral history work by Magid (1991) is an important exception.

superficially mentioned in the historical overviews, but no fundamental historical research was undertaken. However, a good organisational foundation was set in the 1950s and 1960s when Party historical commissions at the republican level and Party archives grew into a network of archives and institutes of the history of the labour movement. These focused on the National Liberation War, socialist revolution and reconstruction, the working class in the 19th and 20th centuries, parties, trade unions and other organizations (for an overview of the research of trade unions in Croatia see Radelić 2012). The institutes for the history of the labour movement were transformed in the 1990s into national institutes of history (focusing on general, modern or contemporary history), and political circumstances and ideological imperatives directed the research towards topics of a political and national character rather than socio-economic and labour issues.<sup>13</sup>

Regardless of the shrinking state resources for labour history in national contexts with the end of state socialism, there has been a resurgence of studies dealing with labour on a global scale in the last two decades (Rutar 2014: 324-5). Studies have brought 20<sup>th</sup> century Southeastern European contexts into this field (e.g. Brunnbauer 2005, Raeva and Brunnbauer 2013, Nonaj 2013) including studies on Yugoslavia specifically (e.g. Rutar 2005, 2014). As Musić's contribution in this volume points out however, of the numerous studies treating Yugoslav late socialism and subsequent state dissolution, none of these deal specifically with organised labour (even though many left leaning intellectuals at that time predicted that the working class would play the role of the ultimate arbiter in the resolution of the political and economic crisis that weighed down on Yugoslavia in the 1980s (Magaš 1993: xxi)).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For developments in historiography of the 1990s in Southeast Europe see Brunnbauer (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Though see Kuzmanić (1988) on the 1987 Labin strike and work by Neca Jovanov on Yugoslav strikes and worker discontent (1979, 1989).

In the last ten years post-Yugoslav historiography opened new topics in contemporary social history, but social inequalities continue to be researched more implicitly than explicitly. Studies of popular culture, leisure and consumption have most often been at the forefront. In addition to diligent work in the archives, this body of scholarship has served to seriously bring bottom-up approaches like *Alltagsgeschichte* and oral history into play as well as borrowing methodological perspectives from disciplines like cultural studies and social anthropology. Such works have problematised issues of social inequalities in Yugoslavia indirectly to a certain extent (for example see Duda 2005, 2010, Grandits and Taylor 2010, Luthar and Pušnik 2010, Marković 2012, Patterson 2011, Vučetić 2012) but such concerns have rarely been central to the research (though Le Normand (2012: 352) uses housing in Belgrade as a ‘useful corrective to the image of a society of abundance in the 1960s’). This edited volume seeks to build on these qualitative contributions while focusing the debate on discontent, experiential articulations of social stratification and class concerns more explicitly.

Questions of nationalities which remained a perennial topic of interest amongst area studies scholars of Yugoslavia, became more topical and numerous following Tito’s death in 1980 as Yugoslavia entered a decade of sustained crisis (for example see Ramet 1992, Rusinow 1985, Allcock 1989). Such scholars were thus well placed to provide informed historical accounts of state dissolution and the outbreak of war by the mid-1990s (Cohen 1995, Ramet 1996, Woodward 1995a). In doing so they responded to a paradigm shift away from topics related to self-management and the political and economic configuration of socialist Yugoslavia to that of ethno-national conflict, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the military and political construction of new territorial units.

The demise of state socialism witnessed sustained scholarly interest in questions of nationality and ethnicity beyond Yugoslavia, a point which Brubaker (1998) considered to be

a mixed blessing. While it brought new interest and resources to the study of nationalism it also threatened to overwhelm earlier analytical gains (ibid: 272). This process was particularly pronounced in the (post) Yugoslav context. State dissolution, nationalist mobilizations and the wars of Yugoslav succession between 1991 and 1999 cast a long shadow over the previous decades of Yugoslav social science scholarship and historiography. Due to the violent nature of its collapse, Yugoslavia became a particularly paradigmatic case study of violent, ethnically framed conflict. Although journalistic accounts of state dissolution and armed violence which relied on ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ were largely debunked by scholars (Jović 2009: 18-19, Dragović Soso 2008: 2-3), ethno-nationalism remained a key frame of reference. The study of ethno-nationalism in the (post-) Yugoslav context became what Appadurai (1986: 257) terms a ‘gate keeping concept’, limiting theorising beyond these bounds and ‘defining the quintessential and dominant questions of interest in the region.’ This has been problematised and challenged by qualitative research ‘from below’, first and foremost through ethnography (for example Bougarel et al. 2007, see also Helms 2013: 37-9). Such insights do not deny the salience of ethno-nationalism but rather hold it to be contingent, crosscutting and intersecting with other concepts of identity. Scholars are increasingly sensitive to the reification of ethnic groups (Brubaker 2002) and in this spirit the contributions of this volume do not marginalise ethno-national categories but rather seek to expose other social phenomena and identity categories and in some cases the interaction with ethnicity (see contributions by Ströhle, Sardelić and Musić).

As anthropologists like Jansen (2006) and Helms (2013: 39) observe, a related consequence of the excessive focus on ethnonationalist politics is the failure of many scholars

to consider Yugoslav successor states as post-*socialist* as well as post-conflict.<sup>15</sup> Despite its relative absence from the initial wave of scholarship on post-socialism (e.g. Andrusz, Harloe and Szelenyi 1996, Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Berdahl, Bunzl and Lampland 2000, Mandel and Humphrey 2002) Yugoslavia and its successor states offer instructional cases for scholars of post-socialism. In the context of Yugoslavia's mixed economy, heavily indebted by the 1980s, features characteristic of post-socialist dislocation across Central and Eastern Europe began to appear rather early with austerity measures induced by IMF/WB known as 'stabilisation' being pursued after 1981. Mass unemployment and the pauperisation of the working class in Yugoslavia during the 1980s might be conceived as a precursor to the socially devastating consequences of economic 'transition' across CEE in the decade after but literature making such links is in its infancy (but see Woodward 1995b, and Bockman 2011).<sup>16</sup>

### **Introducing the contributions**

This volume does not attempt to include contributions on all aspects of the trepidatiously broad categories of 'social inequalities' or 'social discontent'. These concepts are approached in differing ways by the authors. While the selection of chapters is not arbitrary it is necessarily selective and does not claim to treat all areas where inequality and class concerns manifested. Instead we aim to present recent scholarship which borrows both from Yugoslav social science and advances in contemporary social history and interdisciplinary

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<sup>15</sup> Indeed within former Yugoslav states public discourse the socialist past is frequently 'bracketed' (Gilbert 2006).

<sup>16</sup> One could make a similar argument for Romania but austerity in Yugoslavia was accompanied by a relative increase in political freedoms, mass strikes and quite lively public debate in the post-Tito era when compared to Ceaușescu's Romania.

methodological approaches. Although the chapters could have been presented in a different order, the logic of sequencing here is broadly in terms of beginning with texts which continue to explore the larger themes of this introduction and/or to address key social phenomena (chapters 2-5), before turning to texts which address ethnicised differentiations (chapters 6-8) as well as class and popular culture (chapters 9 and 10). We hope that this book will contribute to debate and, above all, to the further exploration of these and related themes.

**Ana Dević** provides an overview of the social, economic and cultural dimensions of the crisis of Yugoslav socialism in the 1980s, charting a growing disconnect between ordinary people and Republic-based elites. In a decade marked by popular discontent with deteriorating living standards, mass unemployment, especially high youth unemployment constituting a kind of ‘prolonged adolescence’, a lack of social mobility, and the corrupt behaviour of political elites, vibrant new youth sub-cultures developed which were often more in tune with a Yugoslav identification than were the elites. Her recovery of Yugoslav social science scholarship which charted significant differences in perceptions of the legitimacy of the League of Communists between different generations is an important corrective to accounts of the break-up of Yugoslavia framed primarily in terms of the unmitigated rise of ethnicised nationalisms.

**Brigitte Le Normand** addresses Yugoslavia’s large group of migrant workers [*gastarbajteri*] as an emerging transnational class with a contradictory relationship to the socialist regime, existing as both a safety valve in times of high unemployment and a challenge to dominant narratives of the success of the path of development under socialism. Labour migration constituted not only a clear alternative to the myth of social mobility under socialism, but also formed one basis for cultural and political resistance to many of the unreachable ideals of Yugoslav socialism. She traces not only shifting policy responses to migrants but also how these migrants were depicted in both pro-regime and more

independent films of the period. Migrants' continued ties to their homeland, and their dreams of return, resettlement and reintegration, often thwarted by political mismanagement and socialist bureaucracy, contributed to growing discontent and dissatisfaction with the regime itself.

**Rory Archer's** exploration of housing in Yugoslavia shows how the allocation of socially owned housing actually discriminated in favour of highly educated and managerial sections of the workforce and created the conditions in which poorer, manual, workers were forced to rely on an emerging, costly, private housing market. Through a close reading of housing allocation in Belgrade, the chapter traces increasing class segregation with some parts of the city home exclusively to Belgrade's economic, political and cultural elites whilst a growing army of industrial workers were forced to build their own houses in peripheral parts of the city or rely on an inflated, unregulated, and corrupt, private rental sector. Overcrowding and a shortage of adequate housing for all was a major impediment to labour mobility and economic development and, in crisis conditions, became yet another source of popular discontent with the socialist regime.

**Jana Bacevic** focuses on the relationship between education and class reproduction through a detailed examination of the reform of vocational education. Tracing the origins of the reforms to the structural conflicts and tensions emerging in the Yugoslav Federation in the late 1960s, she shows how the reform sought to reverse the reproduction of class inequalities, nullify intellectual critiques of Yugoslav socialism, and reassert the primacy of the working class as the agent of socialist transformation. There was an attempt to, effectively, abolish the distinction between manual and mental labour and to control and suppress expressions of discontent. The analysis points to the broader need to understand class not in 'objective' or essentialist terms but as a more flexible discursive category capable

of being mobilised and operationalised in different ways by different forces in particular historical conjunctures.

**Julija Sardelić** examines the position of Romani minorities in Socialist Yugoslavia in terms of the inter-relationship between socio-economic and ethnicised inequalities.

Complementing her study of policy prescriptions with a critical discourse analysis of the media portrayal of Roma in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, she argues that localised discourses and practices were of critical importance in situating Roma within a Yugoslav class system. She shows the fluidity of the concepts of both ‘ethnicity’ and ‘underclass’ as well as the deterioration of the position of Roma within the exclusionary citizenship categories of the newly established post-Yugoslav states.

**Isabel Ströhle** also uses the concept of ‘underclass’ in her analysis of social disparities and their political ramifications in Socialist Kosovo. Charting the gap between an emerging urban Albanian middle-class and subsistence farmers in isolated rural regions of Kosovo, she argues that the collectively shared experience of exclusion of the latter helps to explain the growing ethno-political radicalization of the 1980s. Although exclusion was multi-faceted, it was far from complete, with sections of the underclass exercising agency in terms of both political voice and also exit, through internal and external migration. The Kosovar underclass had just begun to be included, however fitfully, into aspects of Yugoslav modernization when the onset of the economic and, later, full-blown political crisis eroded hopes of catching-up and, indeed, loyalty to the Yugoslav socialist system itself.

**Goran Musić** addresses the role of striking industrial workers in opening up a series of controversial political issues in the second half of the 1980s. Through a close reading of the protest of blue-collar workers from the Belgrade suburb of Rakovica, the chapter questions dominant assumptions about the relationship between the labour movement and the

Serbian League of Communists. He shows, in particular, the complex relationship between micro-enterprise reforms and macro-level debates regarding the constitutional architecture of the federal state, with workers arguing for class-based rather than national unity, and for reducing social inequalities rather than expanding market-based self-management.

**Ana Hofman and Polona Sitar** explore the complex and contradictory positioning of female popular folk musicians, emerging as celebrities through their involvement in newly-composed folk music (NCFM). The chapter traces the female ‘star’ as symbolising both socialist woman and capitalist entertainer, embodying complex and flexible practices of social positioning and hierarchy, encapsulating struggles over the social worth of gendered, racialised and classed subjectivities. Existing in a liminal music market, these performers both transgressed dominant social and cultural values whilst sustaining and reproducing social stratification and economic inequalities. Female NCFM stars reflected the ideals and myths of Yugoslav society in a period of profound redefinition, reimagination and rearticulation.

The concluding chapter of the volume by **Igor Duda** addresses the role of a burgeoning consumerism in consolidating Yugoslavia’s particular brand of market socialism, bolstered by thirty years of economic growth which ended in the late 1970s. He traces how this consumer revolution impacted on the everyday lives of different social strata in contradictory ways. The popular television series *Naše malo misto* (Our small town) and the expansion of mass tourism are used to illustrate the complexities of adapting to rapidly changing social and cultural conventions. A reorientation towards foreign rather than domestic guests from the late 1960s onwards provided opportunities for a new entrepreneurial class to emerge, whilst consumerism led to an expansion of shopping trips abroad and a celebration of foreign made consumer goods. Yugoslavia’s modernisation, a hybrid form of socialism and capitalism, created demands for consumer goods which,

increasingly in the crisis-ridden 1980s, could not be realised by large sections of the population.

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