

'Art of the State:' Societal Pressures and State Responses in Late Yugoslav Socialism

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Abstract:

The collection of articles titled *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism* and published as a part of Routledge's Southeast European Studies revisits some of the numerous neuralgic spots of mid and late Yugoslav socialism. The authors engage with the work of Yugoslav sociologists of the time and further enrich their work with original qualitative sources regarding social stratification and reproduction of inequalities in terms of education, housing, ethnicity, gender, migration, political power(lessness) and consumer power. Though individual articles seem to be somewhat disconnected, the book's diversity in terms of contributors' disciplines and the topics addressed promises a good read for the experienced researchers and newcomers alike to the curious case of socialist Yugoslavia.

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Rory, Archer; Stubbs, Paul and Igor Duda (eds.): *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*. London and New York: Routledge. 198 pages, 115 GBP. ISBN: 978-1-4724-5954-1.

Abstract:

The collection of articles titled *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism* and published as a part of Routledge's Southeast European Studies revisits some of the numerous neuralgic spots of mid and late Yugoslav socialism. The authors engage with the work of Yugoslav sociologists of the time and further enrich their work with original qualitative sources regarding social stratification and reproduction of inequalities in terms of education, housing, ethnicity, gender, migration, political power(lessness) and consumer power. Though individual articles seem to be somewhat disconnected, the book's diversity in terms of contributors' disciplines and the topics addressed promises a good read for the experienced researchers and newcomers alike to the curious case of socialist Yugoslavia.

Particular aspects of the Yugoslav project and its 'third way' socialism are slowly regaining interest in the social sciences after over two decades of research focusing mainly on ethno-national issues. As the recent publication *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, edited by Rory Archer, Igor Duda and Paul Stubbs and other examples show (see among others Darko Suvin: *Splendour, Misery, and Possibilities: An X-Ray of Socialist Yugoslavia*. Leiden 2016; Dijana Jelača, Maša Kolanović, and Danijela Lugarić (eds.): *The Cultural Life of Capitalism in Yugoslavia:(Post) Socialism and Its Other*. New York 2017), the inherent contradictions of its development path call for a critical examination of the existing scholarship from and on Yugoslavia, but can also shed light on the way countries and societies of post-socialism deal with its current challenges like the galloping neoliberalism, economic hardship, political instabilities etc. Such works can also inform contemporary social science research severely crippled within the altered national contexts of SFRY after the 1990s.

Although offering rich data, the focus of this book is somewhat difficult to pin down. Besides the overarching topic of inequalities and the promise to 'bring class back in', the chapters are not grouped thematically, methodologically, temporally or geographically - nor is there a uniform concept of class. Rather, the collection seeks to provide a diverse outlook at the social stratification in Yugoslav socialism through a variety of case studies. The readers are presented with nine articles and an introduction dealing with class-based inequalities intersecting with ethnicity, gender, consumer power and political powerlessness, access to housing and education and their role in class reproduction, rural/urban divide as well as issues pertaining to the industrial and migrant working class milieus. The authors have unearthed a wealth of original archival and scholastic sources and individual voices in their struggles to achieve the "Yugoslav dream" through or despite of the actions of the socialist party-state. The inequities in question, therefore, are painted on a broader canvas of the state apparatus and the socialist system which, despite numerous reform efforts, failed to fulfil the promise of a classless society.

Ana Dević (p. 21-37) traces down main concerns of 'ordinary Yugoslavs' up to 1987 by looking at the work of prominent local sociologists from the mid-1970s up to late 1980s. Dević shows an almost complete lack of ethno-national themes at the grassroots level and, in parallel, the identity crisis of what has been colloquially known as the lost generation. Though Devic writes about discontent of the ordinary people, the article ends with lyrics by a Yugoslav new-wave band, EKV, about the upcoming changes and "just a few years left for us." An implicit criticism of Devic's article, or at least its ending note, can be found in Hofman and Sitar's work on folk music, who called the approach 'alternative elitist' (p. 157). Though there is no obvious follow up of Dević's article, Goran Musić's piece on blue-collar workers of Rakovica tells a complex story of perennial working class resistance to the ethno-national mobilization in Serbia (p. 132-154). In different ways, Jana Bacevic, Isabel Ströhle and Brigitte Le Normand show the various ways reforms failed to take root and actually resulted in reproduction of class differences along educational, occupational and ethnic lines while the migrant laborers (*gasterbajteri*) became "tragic figures" (p. 47) rather than viable examples of an integrated transnational working class. Rory Archer's article shows another neuralgic spot of Yugoslav socialism where inequalities felt most acutely, that is access to housing for the working class people – something Archer has been working on for a number of years ("Imaš kuću—vrati stan: Housing inequalities, socialist morality and discontent in 1980s Yugoslavia." *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 3 (2013): 119-139; Rory Archer: "The moral economy of home construction in late socialist Yugoslavia." *History and Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (2018): 141-162). The book closes with classic cultural studies contributions by Ana Hofman and Polona Sitar on celebrity culture in relation to social positioning and individual entrepreneurship and Igor Duda on the tourism, consumer culture and entrepreneurship in Dalmatia through the example of *Naše malo misto*, a TV series based on the writing of Miljenko Smoje.

As the editors acknowledge at the very outset of the book, the Yugoslav social science landscape was very vibrant and internationally recognized. Even in the 1960s, Yugoslav sociologists participated in international research projects investigating political elites in Yugoslavia (p. 3) and tackling numerous social concerns all the way up to the country's dissolution (p. 8-9). Notwithstanding the need to reevaluate and contextualize the secondary sources and further enrich it with qualitative data (p. 7-8), there are some downsides to the editors' choice of contributions and the structure of the book at hand.

Despite the authors' seeming awareness of the regionalism bias reflected in differentiation between "more and less developed regions", in their approach to studying social differentiation and social dynamics within the particular local communities, there is an ostensible lack of voices coming from societies of Bosnia, Montenegro or Macedonia. As the authors come from different disciplines, there also seems to be no smooth transition between articles, giving the impression that each of them tells a parallel history of the Yugoslav breakup through the lenses of a particular struggle or a social issue.

Overall, however, the authors critically assess the primary and secondary sources at hand, enriching them with a qualitative touch of personal experience, interview, ethnography, newspaper stories, film, etc. With its thorough historicization and contextualization of the available Yugoslav scholarship, this book is a valuable asset for all researching Yugoslav socialism against the backdrop of decentralization and market socialism, power struggles, class stratification and economic hardship, especially during its two final decades. Diversity in archival sources and methodological approaches promises to engage an audience with various academic backgrounds to revisit more or less common tropes of Yugoslav socialism.

German Abstract:

'Art of the State:' Gesellschaftlicher Druck und die Rolle des Staates im späten jugoslawischen Sozialismus

Der Sammelband *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, der als Teil der Reihe Southeast European Studies von Routledge veröffentlicht wurde, nimmt einige neuralgische Punkte des mittleren und späten jugoslawischen Sozialismus wieder auf. Die Autor_innen setzen sich mit den Studien von damaligen jugoslawischen Soziologen auseinander und bereichern ihre Arbeit weiterhin mit selbst erschlossenen qualitativen Quellen an. Diese behandeln die soziale Stratifikation und Reproduktion von Ungleichheiten bezüglich Bildung, Wohnraum, Ethnizität, Gender, Migration, politischer Macht(losigkeit) und Konsummacht. Obwohl die einzelnen Artikel teilweise nur lose verbunden erscheinen, verspricht die Vielfalt des Buches hinsichtlich der Disziplinen der Beitragenden sowie der angesprochenen Themen einen Erkenntnisgewinn sowohl für erfahrene Wissenschaftler als auch für Studienanfänger, die sich für das sozialistische Jugoslawien interessieren.

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