

WORKSHOP: *Post-Socialist City in a Social and Cultural Perspective*

Post-Yugoslav Area Research Center (PROP), Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies,
University of Warsaw
Center for Research of Nationalism and Culture (CINIK), Skopje, North Macedonia

Maja Babić, PhD
Charles University, Prague
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Studying the Post-Socialist City in Yugoslavia: An Examination of Multi-Disciplinary Methodologies and Theoretical Approaches

- Theoretical frames
Expanded abstract

Since the fall of communism in Europe in the early 1990s—and effectively, since the end of the Yugoslav federation and the subsequent wars that had plagued the Western Balkans for almost a decade—the study of the state-socialist South-eastern Europe has intensified and expanded. The scholars from the fields of social sciences and humanities pored over the particulars of Yugoslav communism of self-management and the aftermath of the Yugoslav dissolution and warfare that had defined the last decade of the past century in the wider region. The study of the state-socialist architecture of former Yugoslavia has been prolific since the early years of the twenty-first century, and the new and upcoming cohort of urban and architectural scholars has further amplified this trend, expanding and challenging the work of the previous generation. However, an already modest inquiry into the post-socialist city in the Western Balkans has been relegated to the secondary position to the ever-expanding study of the Yugoslav modernist architecture and its role within the socio-political mechanisms of the Cold War decades. In this discourse, the inquest into the post-socialist urban space remains lacking in the field of architectural studies; its analysis is mainly conducted within the methodological and theoretical frameworks of area studies, political sciences and history, sociology, and socio-cultural anthropology, rarely, if at all, in architectural and urban history.

To identify new trajectories of inquiry in the study of the post-socialist city and to examine the existing ones traversing different academic fields, I propose an inquest into the distinctive scholarly discourses dealing with the post-socialist urban space and the implications of ideological and socio-cultural remnants of the past era. I argue that the study of the multi-disciplinary nature of the scholarship examining the post-socialist city serves as a vital step in the more comprehensive examination of the (post-)Yugoslav architectural and urban space and the particulars and minutiae of its transformations. The contemporary studies of nationalism and its urban appropriations in the region, gendered spaces in Belgrade and anti-gender processes throughout the Balkans, feminist activism in Zagreb, Pride Parades in almost all the former Yugoslav states' capitals, and the expanding examination of the treatment of socialist heritage uncover a region in the process of extensive societal shifts. Nevertheless, these pivotal projects seldom examine the alterations unravelling in the background to the processes they investigate: the post-socialist city and its built environment, both a conduit and platform.

To conduct my project and for the upcoming workshop, I will identify and outline the different disciplinary strands and their foci in the study of a post-socialist urban space in general and post-Yugoslav in particular. I will follow this up with an analysis of the established discourses and their

points of interference and overlap. To conduct this work, I will also offer an analysis of academic trends scholars have employed in the study of the post-socialist built environment in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—the former Eastern Bloc states—where this inquiry had originated a decade earlier than in the war-plagued post-Yugoslavia. Scholars from the fields of sociology, urban geography, and socio-cultural and urban anthropology have been prolific in their scholarship production in the last thirty years and have established trends and trajectories we can discuss as likely venues in the future urban studies in the post-Yugoslav space, both their advantages and shortcomings. By investigating qualitative and quantitative methodologies and different theoretical approaches in the study of the East-Central European and Yugoslav post-socialist city, I will explore the post-socialist urban space in a more comprehensive manner, ultimately identifying conduits for future research.