Marina Simić

Faculty of Political Science – University of Belgrade
marina.simic@fpn.bg.ac.rs

Social construction of (post)postsocialist reality: ethnographic research into the everyday[1]

In this paper, I want to discuss the main proposition from Berger and Luckmann's seminal book, *The social construction of reality* (or. 1966) – the idea that the everyday is the arena through which the social world comes into being--and to pair it with the understanding of memories and everyday life in postsocialist studies. It seems that various disciplines dealing with postsocialism sometimes treat the memories of socialism as an untheorized background of the analysis. I propose that postsocialist studies should do better by actively engaging in understanding the memories of socialism (and its aftermath) as an active force in shaping the present that should be addressed not only through the narratives of the past, but through the concept of the "everyday." For that purpose, I deploy the contemporary Western idea of ethnography as a specific qualitative study of the present that can be a useful tool for the understanding of society and social reality in the way they are described by Berger and Luckmann. I believe that Berger and Luckmann's account may shed new light on some of the central topics of related to the post-Yugoslav predicament (like the state, society, morality, and "normality") and I offer new readings of some scholarly works that deal with these concepts (including my own).

Key words: social construction of reality, everyday life, ethnography, (post)postsocialism

Социјална конструкција (пост)постсоцијалистичке реалности: етнографско истраживање свакодневног

У овом раду анализира се једна од основних теза Бергера и Лукмана изнета у познатој књизи *Социјална конструкција стварности* (ор. 1966) по којој су простор и време свакодневице кључни за рауземвање начина на који настаје наша социјална стварност. Полазећи од постулата Бергера и Лукмана, ауторка указује на могућност употребе етнографије као теоријско-методолошког оквира за разумевање постсоцијалистичке трансформације у Европи. Објашњавајући значење овог појма, ауторка предлаже да се улога сећања (и на социјализам и на прве године „транзиције") у разумевању садашњице и замишљању будућности сагледа посредством анализе свакодневних пракси, уместо уобичајеног фокуса на наративе. Користећи наведени теоријско-методолошки оквир, ауторка нуди ново читање неких од централних тема

постсоцијалистичке трансформације у Србији, као што су друшто, држава морал и „нормалност".

Кључне речи: социјална конструкција стварности, свакодневни живот, етнографија, (пост)постсоцијализам

Introduction: what was postsocialism and what comes next

There is a hot debate about the scope and meaning of postsocialist studies. Some authors claim that social life in the region usually labeled as "postsocialist" "is not reducible to an outcome of the recent histories" (Empson 2011, 24). Others, like David Kideckel, reject the category altogether, as it defines societies by what they are not, rather than what they are (Kideckel 2004, 115). My understanding of postsocialism stems from the idea of postsocialism as a category "that marks the post–Cold War reconfiguration of power relations and the ideological and geopolitical fault lines that continue to shape the present" (Dzenovska and Kurtović 2015). In accordance with Dzenovksa and Kurtović (2015), I use the term "postsocialism" to denote "the specific features of actually existing post–Cold War liberalisms that come into view when we deploy socialism and postsocialism as heuristic devices" (Dzenovska and Kurtović 2015). Although I find Dzenovska and Kurtović's account extremely helpful, I would like to add the term post-postsocialism to postsocialist vocabulary in order to indicate the way in which people in the former Yugoslavia perceive chronology and by so doing to encompass the passage of time[2] which enables them to distinguish between "the transition" of the 1990s and the transition after "the transition" in the post-2000s.[3]

In that sense, it is obvious that (post)postsocialist studies has to deal with the past in its life in the present. There seems to be two main academic trends in dealing with such necessity. On the one hand, those who deal with the present seem to treat the memories of socialism (or those of the immediate transitional years of the 1990s) as an untheorized background of the analysis or representations of the past, while, on the other hand, those dealing with the past treat memories through objects and/or narratives disconnecting them from the contemporary practices of the current "posts." I propose that postsocialist studies should do better by actively engaging in understanding memories of socialism as an active force in shaping the present that should be addressed not only through the narratives of the past, but

---

[2] The passage of time is of crucial importance in/for postsocialist studies more generally. Some recent studies even use the term such as "(post)socialism" (see Thelen 2011, 2012; Dunn and Verdery 2011), but the debate surrounding this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. The issue of time will be addressed through the discussion of importance of time for Berger and Luckmann's account and its convergence with the study of postsocialism.

[3] Dzenovska and Kutorvić's (2015) account may imply „post-postsocialism" under the umbrella term "postsocialism" and, in that sense, I agree that post-postsocialism is still "part" of postsocialism understood as an exploratory tool, but I still find it helpful to add the new term for the reasons explained. Thus, I will use both terms interchangeably.

through the concept of the "everyday."[4] For that purpose, I will deploy the contemporary Western idea of ethnography as a specific qualitative study of the present that can be a useful tool for the understanding of society and social reality in the way they are described by Berger and Luckmann (1991) in their seminal work *The social construction of reality* (or. 1966). I believe that Berger and Luckmann's account my shed new light on some of the central topics of regarding the post-Yugoslav predicament (like the state, society, morality, and "normality") and my aim is to offer new readings of some scholarly works that deal with these concepts (including my own).

Everyday and memory in The social construction of reality…

Berger and Luckmann operate with a few basic principles: social order is the result of human actions. It is produced by humans through their current dispositions and practices. Thus, it exists only as a continuous human product. We cannot give it any other ontological status, since we will obscure its empirical manifestations. The process of institutionalization is based on the habitualization – it occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 72). This habitualization and its consequent institutionalization originate in everyday life making the "everyday" crucial for the social construction of reality. "Among multiple realties," the reality of everyday life "presents itself as the reality par excellence" (p. 35). It is constantly reiterated through every day activities, making the "everyday" and reality mutually constitutive.[5]

There is a temporal dimension to the everyday – it is embedded in the present. Raymond Williams (1977) considers time to be the most important aspect of our everyday experience of society. As Berger and Luckmann explain, "the world of everyday life is structured both spatially and temporally" (p. 40). According to them, it is organized around the "'here' of my body and the 'now' of my present" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 36); "both dimensions constitute the real of the subjects' consciousness" (Rizo García 2015, 23). Thus, in order to understand the social reality in any of its temporal dimensions, one has to study the here and now. Still, although social reality is embedded in the present, it does not exhaust itself in

---

[4] Although it was a staple of anthropological knowledge from the days of Malinowski in the late 1920s, the concept of "everyday" acquired a wider use in sociology and other disciplines after its theoretical elaboration in the works of Berger and Luckmann (1966), Henri Lefebvre (2000, or. 1971), and Michael de Certeau (1984, or. 1980), although it figured prominently in the work of Raymond Williams (1977) as well.

[5] For Luckmann and Berger "everyday reality" is considered to be "ordinary," "mundane reality" unlike "special worlds" of aesthetic or religious experience (or theory for that matter). It seems to me that this idea of the ordinary and the exclusion of the religious experience from it, stems from the Durkhemian sociological tradition that separates the world of the secret from that of the mundane (for example in the work of Mary Douglas) and Berger and Luckman equate the later with the ordinary. I find this equation problematic as it seems to me that there are numerous ways to consider religious experiences to be "every day experiences" if not mundane. Similar applies to Luckmann and Berger's idea of aesthetics.

the present, as "it also covers phenomena that occurred in the past" (Rizo García 2015, 23). But the present is the point from where the subject can experience the daily life in its gradual proximity or remoteness, both in temporal and spatial terms. This temporal remoteness, argues Burkitt (2004) in his take on Williams, "enables us to experience the social world as an objective formation of fixed and stable institutions and ideologies that are somehow separate from subjective experience" (p. 219). As Williams further explains, "thus, relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes" (Burkitt 2004, 219).

This is all well known to the students of memory studies. Despite some important oppositional voices, such as the famous French historian Pierre Nora (1996),[6] it is widely acknowledged that memory is the result of social practice, malleable phenomenon that is produced in the present and are also a function of it (cf. for example Radstone and Schwarz 2010).[7] The only way to approach the memory is through the study of the present. Put differently, the study of the present is by virtue of the necessity pertinent to its subject matter the study of memory. There are various possible ways to study the present (and memories as its constituent), but if we follow Berger and Luckmann's idea that social reality is constructed through everyday life, then ethnography, may be one of the most suitable ways of reaching it.

From everyday to ethnography

The most common understanding of ethnography is that it is a [method] of studying social and cultural phenomena *in action* (Murchison 2010, 3). Although ethnography can be about the everyday and/or mundane, it is not about any mundane. It is about the mundane (or the extraordinary for that matter) in the present.[8] In that sense, I find it important to separate the study of the everyday (however defined) from ethnography. In my view, ethnography is the study of the present

---

[6] It is important to stress that Nora's argument is not that "memory is objective" in line with van Ranke's idea of "objective history." Rather, he argues that in a modern society, lived memory is lost and we live in the constant simulacra of remembering. This is similar to Berger and Luckmann's concepts of "habitualization" and "institutionalization." They consider reality as everyday reality of intersubjectivity. In other words, reality comes to being through face to face interaction that becomes progressively anonymous as we distance ourselves from the here and now of the face to face situations. Still, for Berger and Luckmann, this is the process that applies to all societies across space and time, while for Nora, that is a historical specificity of modern (European) societies.

[7] Similarly, David Lowenthal, one of the most important historians dealing with memories, argues that any memory of the past must be seen as an "artifact of the present," inextricable from its surrounding context of ideas and institutions (Lowenthal 1985, xvi).

[8] Actually, ethnographies quite often deal with "the extraordinary" either in terms of frequency of certain phenomena or their interpretations as such by subjects involved. Their non-everyday quality usually forces ethnographers to ground their meanings in contrast to everyday practices and occurrences, which is also Berger and Luckmann's theoretical proposition.

through physical presence of the researcher who actively engages with his or her subjects. Ethnographies may be about the past in/through the present, but they are not the study of the past through the past itself (available through archives for example – although there might be ethnographies of archives production or their use). Hence, it is possible to study the everyday in the past, as did for example Sheila Fitzpatrick (2000) in her book on "everyday Stalinism" in Soviet Russia in the 1930s, or Andrea Matošević (2015) in his book on shock work in Yugoslavia. I believe that in order for a study of shock work in socialist self-management to be ethnographic, this specific dynamics of statecraft has to be "channelled through the recollections" of people involved (Jansen 2015, 28).

This is not methodological exaggeration about the proper use of the term "ethnography," or an attempt to impose a specific Anglophone theoretical vision of the concept. I am well aware of various ethnographic traditions in which the term figures as "the description of the people" that is not necessarily tied to the study of the present, but I believe that there is something to be gained from treating ethnography as the specific qualitative study of the here and now. It may be argued that the dynamic characterizing ethnographic research is aptly depicted as follows:

> "by assuming an intrinsic link between what is observed objectively and the subjective interpretation given to it, the researcher explains how people give objects and actions meaning in accordance with their beliefs and the conventions of society. Reality is thus appreciated as inseparable from human experience, with knowledge deemed as existing only in a social context" (Bray 2008, 301-302).

Jansen's (2015) book about yearning for "normal life" in Sarajevo, conceptualizes normality exactly in terms of lives (i.e., *experience*), which makes him question how to approach such elusive phenomena.[9] He casts light on the issues:

> "in Dayton BiH, everyone said that current life was not normal, and was not about to become normal any time soon. The shared concern with 'normal lives' could therefore not be studied empirically through a description of people's routines (the 'is')" (Jansen 2015, 43).

He asks how the presentist methodology of ethnography can approach "normal lives" "in a situation where they appear only as an absence, as the affectively overcharged object of evocations of what 'was' and what 'ought to be'?" (Jansen 2015). Furthermore, his emphasis on the future or, more precisely, on the hope for the future (there can also be hopes about the past) makes him rethink ethnography and its "presentist" character as ill-equipped to deal with the future. One possibility to avoid this predicament is to focus on memories in conjunction with their future oriented counterparts. This fits well into the traditional ethnographic

---

[9] The idea of normality figures prominently in scholarly analyses of the former Soviet Socialist Republics and post-Yugoslav spaces (Erdei 2006; Greenberg 2011; Simić 2014). Yet, what counts as "normal" may vary across the postsocialist world. Sometimes, the idea of normality is conceptualized through consumption (Crowley 2000; Fehervary 2002; Rasuing 2002), but it is not the only means through which people construct and understand it (see also Simić 2018b).

approaches that privilege the past in the present due to their focus on "what we can observe, and we can only observe what is" (ibid) that necessarily "includes traces of what was'" (Jansen 2015).

This approach resonates with Berger and Luckmann's main conceptions about the way society itself (not only social reality) gets constructed. According to them, society is an objectively existing entity, but it is built through the *practices* through which subjective meanings are expressed. In other words, through social actions, social meanings become social facts. That is society's "double character" – it is determined both through the objective facticity and the subjective meanings, which makes it "*sui generis* reality."[10] For that reason it is usually said that Berger and Luckmann's account reconciles Weber's and Durkheimian's respective sociologies in a singular sociological theory of knowledge.[11] This dual character of the social is a well-known anthropological premise that enables ethnographers to understand both natives' point of view and to explain it in the wider context (social, cultural, political, and the like). In line with Berger and Luckmann's main argument, ethnography is based on the idea that the key to knowledge is human experience, both in terms of its production and its understanding. In that sense, if we want to understand the postsocialist present, we need to ground it in the current circumstances from where we can look both at the past and the future.

(Post)postsocialist dissolution of the everyday

To my knowledge, there are no ethnographic studies of postsocialism that directly engage with Berger and Luckmann's account. Some other postsocialist studies-- although dealing with "social construction"-- do not mention Berger and Luckmann at all (for example Wilmer 2002). Still, it seems that Berger and Luckmann's account of the "order of everyday life" offers a perfect theoretical background for the understanding of the postsocialist "disorder." Berger and Luckmann state that phenomena of (social) reality are "prearranged in patterns that seem to be independent" of our "apprehension of them and that [they] impose themselves upon the latter" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 35). We apprehend that reality as *the ordered* reality of everyday life. Most ethnographic studies about the postsocialist condition immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall noted that for most people, alongside the Wall, collapsed ordered reality of everyday life. Nazpary (2002), for

---

[10] This subjective-objective split in sociological thought is usually ascribed to the traditions of Weber and Durkheim. For Weber, the only way to make sense of things sociologically is to understand their meaning for the actors involved. The aim of sociology is to understand subjective meanings of action (Weber 1978, or. 1922), while Durkheim famously proclaimed, the "first and the most important rule" of a sociological method is: "*treat social facts as things*" (Durkheim 1982, 60).

[11] Berger and Luckmann were determined to put their theory of knowledge aside from the mainstream of sociological theories of knowledge. Although it builds on Weber and Durkheim, it is widely accepted that their book "re-defines a materialistically based sociology of knowledge by founding a sociological theory on phenomenology and philosophical anthropology" (Dreher 2016, 53).

example, describes the 1990s in Kazakhstan as the time of "chaos" (*bardak*). Nazpary provides a neo-Marxist analysis, in which he writes that postsocialist chaotic mode of domination lead to

> "a total void which permeate[d] all aspects of life. […] The breakdown of social trust and the sudden emergence of the random and invisible logic of the market […] create[d] the experience of a very *ontological* disruption" (emphasis added, Nazpary 2002, 4).

Similarly, Pedersen (2011) writes that in 1990s, for the people in northern Mongolia this "relentless breakdown of the world as people had known it, was not conceived of as merely a transition from one political and economic system to another," but rather "a veritable ontological meltdown, as the once immutable institutions of the socialist welfare state (such as infrastructure, health services, and education) gradually crumbled to dust" (Pedersen 2011, 8). Pedersen's analysis differs from those of Nazpary, as he argues that *agsan* (quintessentially postsocialist phenomenon that refers to the disturbing condition of drunken rage) was "not simply understood by people in Ulaan-Uul as being caused by rising unemployment and the neoliberal downsizing of the state" (ibid, 4), but they embody the ontological quality of the world as such. In other words, it was not only about how people see things, but it was about the postsocialist world as it was (for ontology in postsocialist anthropology, see Simić 2018a).

The postsocialist condition is characterized by a constant sense of elusiveness and permanently fluctuating social norms making their changing quality seem to have become the new ordinary (for various postsocialist settings where the above applies, cf. for example Pedersen 2011, Brković 2017). However, it is disputable if this „ordinariness" is equated with normality. Thus, although socialist Yugoslavia was rather different from the Soviet Union or Mongolia, the fall of socialism created a sense of chaos that in subsequent years turned into a prolonged feeling of uncertainty and "permanent transition" usually called simply "situation" (*situacija*). *Situacija* denotes "the state of affairs as it is," which applies not only to the circumstances of the Serbian state (corruption or inefficiency, for example) but also to "moral and social degradation" that developed during the 1990s and has been going on ever since (Simić 2016, 94). It is "a place of specific liminality" (Jansen 2005, 99) that trapped people in the region in permanent transition of the future not-yet-to-come.

In order to understand both *the ontological quality* of the *situation* and *the feelings* of liminality (i.e., the social world as it is and the way we interpret it), we may again look at Berger and Lukmann's account. For them, the order of social reality is connected with the knowledgeable. As they further explain, "what is taken for granted as knowledge in the society comes to be coextensive with the knowable, or at any rate provides the framework within which anything not-yet-known will come to be known in the future" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 83). This knowledge is learned through socialization that further mediates the internalization of the objectivated structures of the social world" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 83). A properly socialized individual considers his social world as a consistent whole,

which makes him/her ready to explain both "its functioning and malfunctioning in terms of this 'knowledge'" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 82). Of course it does not mean that social institutions indeed function and integrate as they are "supposed to," as it sometimes seems in some functionalist explanations (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 222). Nor do people experience them as such.

Accordingly, in his study of the "last Soviet generation" – people who came of age in the early and mid 1970s in Leningrad--Yurchak (2006) writes that most people in the late socialist period considered official state ideology to have little relation to the everyday life experience. Still, they believed that "the system" was there to stay. He explains that for many, socialism was a system of human values that sustained everyday reality of "normal life" (*normal'naia zhizn*) (cf. very similar accounts for the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia in Jansen 2015). In line with Berger and Luckmann's main argument, the system was seen (even if falsely for the great part) as "omnipresent and immutable" (Yurchak 2006, 183-184) to the extent that its fall came to a great surprise for many.[12]

It seems that this surprise and disbelief stem from the idea that "normality" cannot disintegrate, since abnormality is simply unthinkable – without normality there is no framework that makes the future knowledgeable. I find this idea of normality particularly important for the understanding of the (post)postsocialist predicament. It can be applied equally to people, institutions, societies, and states in order to denote that something is ordinary in a good way: stable and predictable. It can be used for the description of the past, as for example in Yurchak's (2006) account of postsocialist Russia, but it can also be part of the hopes for the future as we saw it in Jansen's (2015) account of Sarajevo mentioned before. In both cases, the idea encompasses everyday life as including both the "official" practices of the state and state institutions and "unofficial" practices that seem to be outside of it.

My recent research in Serbia shows that "normality," understood as certain living standards, has been somewhat restored, but the yearning for normal life seems to be here to stay (Simić 2016). This normality refers to the totality of social fabric. These beliefs are were widely shared among people from various social strata. The people with whom I have worked since the mid-2000s belong to different social classes and age groups. Their common characteristic is that they do not belong to the new economic and political elites, but they are not "transition losers" either. They commonly perceive society as a structured form of social interaction with values, rules, and regulations resembling Durkheim's (Durkheim 1994, 2002) idea that society is brought into existence by people's moral beliefs and a sense of obligation toward one another. If this erodes, society begins to suffer from *anomie*, which is a condition of instability resulting from a breakdown of standards and values in a society as a whole (Simić 2016, 101).

---

[12] Everyday cynical distance between everyday practices and events organized by the Party (like parades, for example) opened up the space for the reconciliation between one's disbelief in official ideology and one's own participation in its reproduction (Yurchak 1997, 171). This cynical distance enabled the persistence of the (late) socialist system at least in the worldview of Yurchak's interlocutors.

Durkheim describes *anomie* as connected with *egoism* (Watts Miller 2003), while egoism is described as a "modern ill" – "morally unconstrained pursuit of self-interest" or "a self-absorbed withdrawal that numbs feelings of attachment to our milieu" (ibid, 4). "This is part of a pathology" that Durkheim later diagnosed as *anomie* — "unfettered, morally unconstrained and limitless desire" (Watts Miller 2003, 4). Durkheim insists that morality depends on the sense of obligation or duty for which we are motivated "by respect for the moral law's imperative authority, and by the will to control and order the crowd of our desires" (Watts Miller 2003, 11). In that sense, for Durkheim, solidarity is the very condition of social life and the source of morality (Watts Miller 2003, 25, see Simić 2016).

People deploy similar ideas of morality and order in understanding of community and society. For them, society as a whole is based on a moral order, while solidarity is understood as a cement of social life and moral order without which the society ceases to exist. Although the disruption of this moral order was rather sudden – a consequence of the 1990s fall [from grace of socialism] that produced "acute *anomie*" (cf. Besnard 2005 the classification of anomie in Durkheim's work) or temporary absence of norms--it seems that the anomic situation has become chronic." These ideas of normlessness have been variously used in local politics as a reason for its oppressive turn, but what interests me here is the liberating potential of the grassroot critique of social anomie in its everyday social and political nexus.

The collapse of socialism went hand in hand with the global neoliberal turn. As Boris Buden (2017, 347) wrote in the Afterword to the recent edited collection on post-postsocialism, "the world of late industrial modernity was collapsing, and turning its eyes away from the future" – a future in which there was no place for social welfare state and not for the society either. In accordance with Margaret Thatcher's famous proclamation "there is no such thing as society," it seems that the "age of society was politically over" (Buden 2017, 347). Consequently, the very idea that normality consists of participation in the "society" seems like an odd remnant of the past.[13]

In contemporary Western politics, the idea of community is usually opposed to the idea of society. In her critique of the idea of community, Joseph (2002) combines the insights of Marx and Judith Butler and claims that social formations are made possible through the performativity of (social and cultural) production that makes "capitalism the very medium in which community is enacted" (Joseph 2002, xxxii). She observes that the usual discourse of community "contrasts community to

---

[13] In the nineteenth century England, for example, "society" was usually understood as involving a particular group of people with certain social relations. People could be members of "society," or they could go, visit, or participate in "society" (society happened in particular places and times); but there were also people who were too humble to be acceptable to "society" (as in Jane Austen novels, for example). In other words, society was understood as very concrete: it meant a group of people who formed the elite and who interacted in a particular elite way, which also meant that it was strictly hierarchical and class based.

modern capitalist society structurally: the foundation of community is supposed to be values, while capitalist society is based only on value (economic value)" (Joseph 2002, 1). Still, I do not think that contemporary society "is a sort of death mask" for "the politically death concept" as Buden writes (Buden 2017, 347). Buden argues that "in its political post-mortem, society is a cultural artefact that no longer hosts real life but provides commemoration" (Buden 2017, 347). Yugoslav society, as a reified entity (as found for example in museums or some academic writings), might be exactly that. Yet, I think that the idea of society as evoked by the so called ordinary people in ordinary circumstances has not only a utopian, but also a hope evoking quality.

In that sense, I find the study of the present embedded in the physical presence in the present especially important. If people in the former Yugoslavia hold on to the idea of society that resembles contemporary Western idea of community without clear ideas about the future, that is because there is no predictable future, not because they are hostages of socialism. The lack of the predictable future makes the present opaque, not the other way round. In that sense, in contemporary post-postsocialist reality, the present is suspended. It is accessible either as a past or the future of (proper) capitalism yet to come. However, if we take everyday life to be "the arena for an effort towards 'disalienation,'" making a contribution to the art of living and forming a critique of the very everyday from which it stems (Lefebvre 1991, 40), then ethnography embedded in Luckmann and Berger's theory should provide fertile ground for its understanding.

Conclusion

To find the concept of everyday life taken as the "the single plane of immanence" in which official and unofficial "practices and articulation interrelate and affect one another" (Burkitt 2004, 211) is very important for the understanding of the postsocialist quandary. As Burkitt (2004) explains, "everyday life must relate to all daily activities" simply "because it is here that our social relations are produced and reproduced." It relates to "all activities and is the sum total of relations that constitute the human – and every human being – in terms of our collective as well as our individual experience" (p. 211). It can help us to avoid the split between the institutional and the non-institutional as two separate realms. Following Berger and Luckmann, it allows for the arena that can explain the ways in which the very social fabric is created. Therefore, I suggested ethnography as the apt methodology for such a task. It is important to stress that ethnography should be understood as the mode of understanding, not as naïve empiricism. "Being there" has a seemingly paradoxical ability to turn our attention to the non-obvious. As Murchison (2010, 26) explains, participant observation "allows the ethnographer to appreciate multiple perspectives and to engage different types and sources of data." It should "reveal things of which the participant is sometimes unaware, and in other cases participation is the only way to gain an experiential understanding of various components of cultural and social worlds" (Murchison 2010, 26). It could be argued if we pair debates about representation of memories "with the description of everyday lives

and situations" (Chushak 2013, 208), we may produce "a much more nuanced picture of the complex processes of construction of the past" (Chushak 2013, 208) *and* the present.

References cited

Berger, L. Peter and Thomas Luckman. 1991. [1966] *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.

Besnard, Philippe. 2005. "Anomie and Fatalism in Durkheim's Theory of Regulation." In *Emile Durkheim Sociologist and Moralist,* ed. Stephen P. Turner, 163-183. London and New York: Routledge.

Bray, Zoe. 2008. "Ethnographic Approaches." In *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, eds. Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating, 297-315. Cambridge University Press.

Brković, Čarna. 2017. *Managing Ambiguity: How Clientelism, Citizenship, and Power Shape Personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina.* New York and Oxford: Berghahn.

Buden, Boris. 2017. "Afterword: And So They Historicized." In *The Cultural Life of Capitalism in Yugoslavia: (Post)Socialism and Its Other*, edited by Dijana Jeleča, Maša Kolanović and Danijela Lugarić, 345-350. Palgrave Macmillan.

Burkitt, Ian. 2004. "The time and space of everyday life." *Cultural Studies* 18 (2-3): 211-227.

Crowley, David. 2000. "Warshaw's Shops, Stalinism and the Thaw." In *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, eds. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley, 25-47. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Chushak, Nadiya. 2013. *Yugonostalgic against All Odds: Nostalgia for Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia among Young Leftist Activists in Contemporary Serbia.* Doctoral dissertation (US). University of Melbourne.

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. [1980] *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Durkheim, Emil. 1982. [1895] *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press.

Durkheim, Emil. 1994. [1893] *The Division of Labour in Society*. London: Macmillan.

Durkheim, Emil. 2002. [1897] *Suicide: A Study in Sociology.* London and New York:

Dzenovska, Dace and Kurtović, Larisa, 2018. "Introduction: Lessons for Liberalism from the 'Illiberal East'." Hot Spots, *Cultural Anthropology* website, accessed on April 25, 2018. https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1421-introduction-lessons-for-liberalism-from-the%20illiberal-east.

Dreher, Jochen. 2016. "The Social Construction of Power: Reflections Beyond Berger/Luckmann and Bourdieu." *Cultural Sociology* 10(1) 53–68.

Dunn, C. Elizabeth and Katherine Verdery. 2011. "Dead ends in the critique of (post)socialist anthropology: Reply to Thelen." *Critique of Anthropology* 31 (3): 251–255.

Erdei, Ildiko. 2006. "It Takes Two to Tango: Encounters of 'East' and 'West' in Everyday Economies in Post-Socialist Serbia." In *Places of Encounter*, eds. Rajko Muršič and Jaka Repič, 151-168. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo.

Empson, Rebecca. 2001. *Harnessing Fortune: Personhood, Memory, and Place in Mongolia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fehérváry, Krisztina. 2002. "American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a   'Normal' Life in Postsocialist Hungary." *Ethnos* 67 (3): 369-400.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. 2000. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet   Russia in the 1930s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press**.**

Greenberg, Jessica. 2011. "On the Road to Normal: Negotiating Agency and State Sovereignty in Postsocialist Serbia." *American Anthropologist* 113 (1): 88–100.

Hann, M. Chris.1993. "Introduction: Social Anthropology and Socialism." In *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, ed. Chris M. Hann, 1-26. London and New York: Routledge.

Jansen, Stef. 2005. *Antinacionalizam: Etnografija Otpora u Beogradu i Zagrebu*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek.

Jansen, Stef. 2015. *Yearnings in the Meantime: 'Normal Lives' and the State in a Sarajevo Apartment Complex*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Joseph, Miranda. 2002. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Kideckel, A. David. 2004. "The Unmaking of an East-Central European Working Class." In *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia*, ed. Chris M. Hann, 114-132. London and New York: Routledge.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume One*. London: Verso.

Lefebvre, Henri. 2000. [1971] *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. London: Athlone Press.

Lowenthal, David. 1985. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matošević, Andrea. 2015. *Socijalizam sa udarničkim licem: etnografija radnog pregalašatva*. Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku i Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile u Puli.

Murchison, Julian M. 2010. *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Nazpary, Joma. 2002. *Post-Soviet Chaos: Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan*. London: Pluto Press.

Nora, Pierre. 1996. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Pedersen, Morten Axel. 2011. *Not Quite Shamans: Spirit Worlds and Political Lives in Northern Mongolia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Radstone, Susannah and Bill Schwarz. Eds. 2010. *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Rausing, Sigrid. 2002. "Re-constructing the 'Normal': Identity and the Consumption of Western Goods in Estonia." In *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism*, eds. Ruth Mandel and Caroline Humphrey, 127-142. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Rizo García, Marta. 2015. "Reality Construction, Communication and Daily Life – An Approach to Thomas Lukmann work." *Intercom – RBCC* 38 (2): 19-36.

Simić, Marina. 2014. *Kosmopolitska Čežnja: Etnografija Srpskog Postsocijalizma*. Beograd: Centar za studije kultue FPN.

Simić, Marina. 2016. "Moral (Dis)order and Social Anomie: Concepts of Community and Society in Post-socialist Serbia." *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* 64 (1): 93-105.

Simić, Marina. 2018a. "'(Not) turning in the Widening Gyre': (Im)possibility of the Ontological Turn in Eastern Europe." *Anthropological Notebooks* 24 (2): 61–73.

Simić, Marina. 2018b. "Teaching Postsocialism in a Postsocialist Country: Everyday as a Source of the Political." *Genero: časopis za feminističku teoriju i studije kulture* 22: 143-161.

Thelen, Tatjana. 2011. "Shortage, Fuzzy Property and Other Dead Ends in the Anthropological Analysis of (Post)socialism." *Critique of Anthropology* 31(1): 43–61

Thelen, Tatjana. 2012. "Economic Concepts, Common Grounds and 'New' Diversity in the Anthropology of Post-socialism: Reply to Dunn and Verdery." *Critique of Anthropology* 32 (1) 87–90.

Watts Miller, William. 2003. *Durkheim, Morals and Modernity*. London and New York.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilmer, Franke. 2002. *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia.* New York and London: Routledge.

Weber, Max. 1978. [1922] *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yurchak, Alexei. 1997. "The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretence, and the Anekdot." *Public Culture* 9: 161-188.

Yurchak, Alexei. 2006. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP.